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The Times and Life of Rose Smith in Britain and China,
1891-1985:
An Interplay between Community, Class and Gender

Gisela Chan Man Fong

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
History

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
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1998

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ABSTRACT

The Times and Life of Rose Smith in Britain and China,
1891-1985: An Interplay between Community, Class and Gender

Gisela Chan Man Fong, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 1998

This case study reconstructs and analyses the development and experiences of Rosina (Rose) Smith from her birth in 1891 in Putney, England to her death in 1985 in Beijing, China. Over the span of her lifetime, she was among other things, a communist local strike leader of women, a functionary in the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), and a propagandist journalist working for the Daily Worker in London and Xinhua in Beijing. The factors that might have influenced her in her choice of activities are discussed. The socio-political environments in which she operated are described.

The approach adopted in the thesis has been proposed by Peter Leonard. Instead of presenting Rose Smith as a separate and atomised entity, she is comprehended as an individual whose social identity was constructed by her gender, her working-class background, and her membership of the CPGB and the communist community with its distinct social and cultural norms.

The sources consulted for this study are Rose Smith's writings, her interviews given to Roland Berger, archival materials of the Communist Party, various British and Chinese newspapers. Several interviews with family members, friends and former colleagues of Rose Smith were also conducted.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ACP</u>	Australian Communist Party
<u>AEU</u>	Amalgamated Engineering Union
<u>AWA</u>	Amalgamation of Weavers' Associations
<u>BA-WC</u>	British Anti-War Council or Committee, also known as British Anti-War Movement
<u>BUF</u>	British Union of Fascists
<u>CC</u>	Central Committee
<u>CCP</u>	Chinese Communist Party
<u>CND</u>	Campaign for National Disarmament
<u>Comintern</u>	Communist (or Third) International
<u>CPGB, CP</u>	Communist Party of Great Britain
<u>CPSU</u>	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
<u>CS & MA</u>	Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association
<u>ECCI</u>	Executive Committee of the Comintern
<u>GMD</u>	Guomindang or the Chinese Nationalists
<u>ILP</u>	Independent Labour Party
<u>LP</u>	Labour Party
<u>LSI</u>	Labour and Socialist International
<u>MFGB</u>	Miners' Federation of Great Britain
<u>MMM</u>	Miners' Minority Movement
<u>NAC</u>	National Administrative Committee of NUWM

NEC National Executive Committee of the LP

NLCM National Labour College Movement

NMA Nottinghamshire Miners' Association

NMIU Nottinghamshire Miners' Industrial Union or
'Spencer Union'

NMM National Minority Movement

NMWM No More War Movement

NGSW Not Genuinely Seeking Work

NSDAP National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis)

NUM National Union of Miners

NUW(C)M National Unemployed Workers' (Committee)
Movement

PAC Public Assistance Committee

PB Political Bureau pr Politburo

RILU Red International of Labour Unions

TUC Trades Union Congress (Great Britain)

WBCG Workers' Birth Control Group

WCAWF Women's Committee Against War and Fascism

WCG Women's Co-operative Guild

WEA Workers' Educational Association

WIDF Women's International Democratic Federation

WIMC Women's International Matteotti Committee

WIR Workers' Relief Fund, in 1933 renamed as Relief
Committee for the Victims of Fascism

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a case study of a revolutionary and public woman, a functionary in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and a propaganda journalist working for the Daily Worker in London and Xinhua in Beijing. It discusses the development and experiences of Rosina (Rose) Smith, née Ellis from her birth on 10 May 1891 in a working-class home in England to her death on 23 July 1985 and her state funeral in post-Cultural Revolution Beijing.

The end of the Cold War, the split within the CPGB in the 1980s, and the breakup of the Soviet Union have encouraged new historiographical efforts on the CPGB in recent years. Former party activists, who were expelled from the CPGB either in the early 1930s or 1957, have published more reflective and critical recollections. (1) New political biographies on the CPGB's ideologue R. P. Dutt, the leader Harry Pollitt, and on Saklatvala, the only communist MP in the 1920s, have also appeared. (2) It is popular now to use personal correspondence and papers, oral evidence, and the microfilms of 'stenograms' of the closed and confidential Central Committee and Political Bureau meetings of the 1930s. These Minutes had been sent to the Comintern in Moscow and are now available on microfilm in the CPGB archives in Manchester. The use of these new sources

has encouraged a revision of the older approach that stressed the institutional, narrowly political developments and the Soviet-dominated character of the CPGB and its leaders. (3) Instead of stressing the Comintern's sole influence on leaders and policies adopted by the Party, the new scholarship presents leading party figures as having been moulded by their social background, the complex relationship between the CPGB's top leaders, and the interplay between Stalin and London. (4)

This new historiographical trend has not yet been applied extensively to the research on British communist women. In a recent study on the CPGB women were not even mentioned. (5) There exist only two publications on British communist women. One of those is the slim biography on Isabel Brown as a leading female cadre. As its subtitle makes clear, this biography does not want to be all-embracing. In the old hagiographic style it presents Isabel Brown as the dedicated, hardworking and supporting Party cadre, whose main party work is retold as "highlights" in her long years of unabated service to the CPGB. (6)

The other scholarly work was undertaken by Sue Bruley. (7) It discusses the ambivalent role that women played in the CPGB by analysing the following causes: the type of the scientific socialism as adopted by the Communist Party of Great Britain, the male-dominated CPGB apparatus, and the ever changing Comintern and national 'lines'. She shows that officially the CPGB encouraged British women to become party

members and reach the top echelons of the Party. In reality, women members and leading female cadres were rarely important politically. Some of them would hold the leading post of a numerically insignificant Women's Department, while others busied themselves in managing ably Communist 'front organisations' or worked on the CPGB's paper. Sue Bruley attributes the non-participation of British women in large numbers in the Communist movement to external and internal factors. Among the external factors she cites working-class women's heavy domestic duties, the strong belief of the British labour movement in the sexual division of labour, and the non-existence of a feminist movement with a mass base after 1914 in Britain. Consequently, campaigns related to women in the 1920s and 1930s were defensively arranged around issues of maternal mortality, equal pay and other social benefits. The internal factors were the Leninist structure of the international Communist movement and the CPGB, based on the organisational principle of democratic centralism, the CPGB's opposition to acknowledging that there is a 'woman's question', and the CPGB's adherence to a crude economic determinism which gave no consideration to social relations.

Nevertheless, some women must have felt that not all was lost for them within this Party, that of all the working-class organisations the CPGB was the best. This aspect is explored more fully in this dissertation by analysing the experiences Rose Smith had during her lifetime as a party cadre. This

study is not meant to be an internal party history that analyses Smith's relations with other local and national party leaders only. Using a social history approach, this thesis will set Smith's political activities into a local, national and international historical context, explore her relations with communists and non-communists of labour and women's groups in Britain and abroad. It is a study of her public life, so her private life as a wife and mother will be discussed only when it has bearing on her public performance.

In 1978, in an interview with Roland Berger, Smith made the following remark:

I want to show that my background was from the working class; I reflected the mood to some extent and the movements taking place, but my puzzle is how I can get myself out without being personal, but having in all the personal thing...The personal must be integrated and be an intimate part of the general picture.... So, I'd rather have it in the third person. (8)

Her statement serves to define the objectives of this thesis and the methodology applied to achieve them. The objectives consist of three components. Firstly, the thesis wants to unravel the "mood" and "the movements" that framed and stimulated Rose Smith's political commitment. The social composition and aims of each of these "movements," which Smith joined, will be examined and compared with each other. The how and why of Smith's participation, her expectations, frustration and at times the male prejudice that she confronted will also be analysed. In this way, the "mood" or atmosphere of the time will be elucidated. Secondly, Smith was

very conscious of her class background. She was proud to be a member of the working class. In order to understand to what extent her life as a working-class woman had been restricted by social and economic constraints of her class in Britain, the thesis also analyses Smith's settling in China, a country with a different history, traditions and language. The causes and the results of this transplantation for her as a political woman and for the welcoming Chinese authorities and colleagues will be assessed. Thirdly, the dissertation attempts to assess the validity and meaning of the notion of men or women as 'agents' or 'makers of history', as has been propounded by both the socialists and feminists in their writings. The life and work of Rose Smith as a member of an evolving communist movement serves as a medium for such a discussion.

In this thesis the approach propounded by Peter Leonard (9) is applied. He rejects the Freudian psychoanalytical biographies with their assumption that a man's and woman's individuality is primarily a product of the respective sexual biological make-up. (10) Instead, Peter Leonard argues that individuals should not be studied as separate, atomised entities. Even though an individual might have experienced the surrounding world in such a way, that individual must be comprehended and presented as a gendered class subject that is constructed by the biological nature and social relations, characteristic of a specific social formation at a particular period in history. (11) This view is shared by Smith, as shown

in the above quotation, when she contemplated on the form of her biography: "I'd rather have it in the third person."

In this thesis, I shall use 'community', 'class', and 'gender' as variables that control the process of changing social relations as experienced by Smith. 'Community' is a key sociological variable that is generally used in the analysis of social relations. In this thesis it is used to define a group of people that are linked together by factors such as occupation, common social norms, political belief, and nationality. In other words, I employ the term in the sense of 'interest community', as put forward by P. Willmott. (12) One characteristic of an 'interest community' is that it does not depend on a shared residence, but can and most of the time also is geographically dispersed. Another characteristic of an 'interest community' is that it refers to a process of social construction. Individuals and groups of an 'interest community' can actively construct its organisation and culture, "making it a resource and a repository of meaning and a referent of their identity." (13) Crucial in this construction of an 'interest community' is the definition of its boundaries, the line between community members and non-members, the 'insider' and 'the outsider'. This can mostly be done by the adoption of certain behavioural and cultural norms. Setting these boundaries, however, also involves wider socio-political structures within which the 'interest community' functions. Changes in these structures can serve as

external pressures either to strengthen or to deconstruct the 'interest community'. In this thesis, I treat the communist movement as such a kind of 'interest community', showing its process of gradual construction around distinct social and cultural norms, and its deconstruction in the interaction with various local, national and international working-class settings. The Sino-Soviet rift, discussed in chapter six of this thesis, is seen as the end phase of the dissolution process of this worldwide 'interest community'.

Rose Smith frequently referred to 'class', 'the working class', and 'class struggle'. She used such phrases as 'relationship to the means of production', as were commonly used as a kind of shorthand indicator of what Marx meant by class. Nowhere did she ever provide a clear definition of the meaning of 'class'. This is not surprising because Marx himself never produced a theory of class with any conceptual precision. (14) Nevertheless, she knew that class should be understood as historically specific and the capitalist class system is not applicable at all times and places. It consisted only of two classes which she saw to be interlocked in a social conflict. This conflict brought about class consciousness and political organization as two important markers of the existence of a class. She was aware that the two classes were not static but constantly changing social entities. Thus, in her speeches and writings she fuzzily referred to 'the people' against 'bosses', 'labour' against

'capital' or 'working class' against 'big business', the 'socialists' against the 'capitalists'. In such a context, her notion of working-class membership implied an awareness on her part of belonging solely to producers and their immediate dependents that had no decisive control over wages, conditions of labour and did not own the means of production. Finally, as will be discussed in chapter six of this thesis, she was willing to revise this concept of class in socialist China, when she spoke of "the heroic struggle of the revolutionary masses during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to defeat the capitalist roaders." (15)

'Gender' is a multi-faceted variable in this thesis. It refers simultaneously to the social organisation of the relationship between the sexes, to women's subordination, inequality and powerlessness in society, and to ideas about the identity of a woman or man. Through the described experiences of Rose Smith I want to show how gender is socially and culturally made, remade and imposed in everyday practices of the family, at the workplace and in strikes, in actions and debates of political groupings, through local and national power structures, and in cross-cultural contacts.

Thus, this thesis presents 'class' and 'gender' as constantly interconnected possibilities in Smith's life in Britain and China. Equally, her life has been influenced by the interrelatedness of 'class' and 'community'. Although 'class' and 'community' are related, they are not identical

and also not distinctly different. The intersection of these two sets is not an empty set. In other words, there is an area where 'class' and 'community' overlap.

In this dissertation I adopt the chronology of Rose Smith's life cycle. For the sake of assisting the analysis, I use, however, her 'occupation' pursued within the British Communist movement as markers for breaking down her 94 years into phases or stages. Except for chapter one and six, the boundaries should be seen not as fixed but overlapping timewise. Thus, chapter one will discuss Smith's becoming a Marxist. Chapter two examines Smith as a strike leader of women. In chapter three and four I shall discuss Smith's manoeuvring within the arena of party-and parliamentary politics and the more community-based political settings. Chapter five examines her role as propagandist in the Party press and chapter six deals with her life and work in China. As far as I know, Smith is only the second socialist woman, after Sylvia Pankhurst (16), who left the British shores to end her life abroad still working for her cause. Thus, contrary to the standard biographical approach seeing old age as the period of either diminishing responsibilities, gradual withdrawal or utter decline, this thesis will comprehend it as Smith's final act of uncompromising commitment to her political beliefs.

Several kinds of sources have been consulted in the process of examining and writing about the life of Rose Smith.

As a Communist Party cadre, propagandist and reporter for the Daily Worker she published numerous articles and pamphlets. They are of varying quality and therefore have been selectively used in this thesis. As Smith had the habit of distributing her belongings to trusted friends and colleagues in her life, and her family did not collect many of her letters, it was not possible to recover all of her paraphernalia. For personal security reasons she seems not to have kept personal diaries or notebooks.

The archival materials which proved very useful for her political career as a cadre were the Minutes of both the Politburo and the Central Committee of the British Communist Party from 1930 to 1938 and the Allan Hutt Papers at the British Communist Party Archives, now located in Manchester. I checked the opened Home Office Files No. HO45 on the CPGB which are held at the Public Record Office at Kew, London. I also consulted other library archives, notably the Archives of the International Brigades and Maude Brown Papers at the Marx Memorial Library in London; the Pankhurst Papers at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, the Selina Cooper Papers at the Lancashire Record Office, and educational records at the Derbyshire Record Office.

Various British national, local papers, socialist and party papers and Chinese newspapers were also consulted at local libraries, and the British Library, Newspaper Library at Colindale, London. These newspapers were a rich source. They

have the advantage of presenting the information about Smith's activities as strike leader, election candidate and public speaker at mass rallies in an orderly chronological sequence.

All this written material was supplemented by interviews with Rose Smith conducted by the late Roland Berger in 1978 in Beijing. Smith agreed to be interviewed by Roland Berger because he was a former member of the CPGB, a businessman of the London-based Group 48 trading with the People's Republic of China since its inception, and active Council member of the Society of Anglo-Chinese Understanding. These tapes provided many crucial biographical details about her life from childhood to her becoming a party organiser. They are now deposited in the Archives of the CPGB in the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester, U.K. However, as these oral recollections of Rose Smith were recorded late in her life, they have the built-in drawback of being interpreted or reflected memories. In order to reduce this bias, I have tried to check this oral source against other written available documentation and by contrasting it with written memoirs of working-class contemporaries.

Further, I undertook and taped several interviews with her friends, comrades, colleagues and Chinese authorities in Britain and Beijing in 1993 and 1995 respectively. An exchange of letters took place with comrades and colleagues who knew her, but whom I could not meet in person. At that time I also collected the photo materials that are included in Appendix I

of the thesis. Appendix II lists the names of important national leaders and politicians referred to in the thesis.

Rose Smith's daughter-in-law, the wife of the late Ted Smith, and her children in England granted me hospitality for one long weekend and recalled more Rose the person rather than Rose as the public figure. Percy Smith declined to provide material for my research project on his mother. I respect his attitude.

Finally, census materials and Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) and industrial reports commissioned by the British Government were also consulted as background materials for Rose Smith's activities in the various localities.

Assembling all these materials into a coherent history of the times and how they were experienced by Smith has made me acutely aware that my role as a historian is not to judge people and sensationalize events of the past. My task is, in the words of my former professor, Stuart R. Schram of the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University, to find out and record with as little bias as possible, how

ideas grow out of history; they also shape history. We may consider how the interaction of a tradition or traditions and a historical situation in the mind of an individual produces his [her] ideas. We may also treat a man's [a woman's] thought as a key to understanding his [her] acts and intentions. (17)

This thesis on Rose Smith in Britain and China is a modest attempt to do just that.

Throughout this thesis Rosina Smith née Ellis is referred to as Rose Smith or Smith both prior to and after her

marriage. I have adopted the current pinyin system of romanization for Chinese names and places. Chinese personal names have not been hyphenated. There are, however, a few names that are better known in their old form, such as Peking University and Sun Yat-sen, and they are used in the thesis in this way.

Endnotes

- (1) Harry Wicks, Keeping My Head. The Memoirs of a British Bolshevik (London: Socialist Platform, 1992). Malcolm MacEwen, The Greening of A Red (London: Pluto Press, 1991). Harry Wicks was expelled for his Trotskyist views in 1932, while Malcolm McEwen was expelled for his refusal to resign from the editorial board of The New Reasoner in 1957.
- (2) John Callaghan, Rajani Palme Dutt (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993); Kevin Morgan, Harry Pollitt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Mike Squires, Saklatvala. A Political Biography (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990)
- (3) John Mahon, Harry Pollitt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976) is an example of such a celebratory biography. The biographer was a member of the party executive and close friend of Harry Pollitt. Thus the biography is markedly uncritical both of Harry Pollitt and his policies. The shifts of policy, dictated by Stalin, are not adequately examined. No mention is made of Stalin's role in 1939.
- (4) See Kevin Morgan, Harry Pollitt. The biographer makes use of Harry Pollitt's autobiography Serving My Time: An Apprenticeship to Politics (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1940), private Dutt papers and Minutes of meetings of the CPGB's Central Committee and Political Bureau of the 1930s. He shows that H. Pollitt, often to the dismay of R.P. Dutt, tried to modify the Soviet line to suit British conditions.
- (5) Francis Beckett, Enemy Within. The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party (London: John Murray, 1995).
- (6) May Hill, Red Roses For Isabel. Highlights in the life of Isabel Brown (Preston: Preston Community Press, 1982).
- (7) Sue Bruley, Leninism, Stalinism, and The Women's Movement in Britain 1920-1939 (London: Garland Publishing, 1986).
- (8) Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, Tape recording, no. 1, Beijing, 1978.
- (9) Leonard, Personality and Ideology. Towards a Materialist Understanding of the Individual (London: Macmillan Press, 1984).
- (10) For the political implications of Freudian analysis, its role in Western political theory, and the understanding of the woman as the individual, see Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (New York: Pantheon, 1974).
- (11) Leonard, Personality and Ideology, 102-118, 171.
- (12) Social Networks, Informal Care and Public Policy (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1986), Chapter 6.
- (13) A. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (London: Tavistock, 1985), 118; on the construction of and sense of belonging to a 'community' see Z. Bauman, Thinking Sociologically (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 72-75, 106.

- (14) This vagueness of Marx's concept of class gave rise to a lively debate in academic circles. Anthony Giddens in his Capitalism and Modern Social Theory (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 36 argues that Marx sacrificed conceptual precision to his primary goal of explaining the structure and dynamics of bourgeois society. Stanislaw Ossowski in his Class Structure in the Social Consciousness (New York: Free Press, 1963), 73 maintains that "discrepant uses of the term 'class' were probably the less important for Marx, because, according to his theory, further social development would render them obsolete."
- (15) Rose Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," China Reconstructs (April 1977), 36-37.
- (16) For biographical details see Appendix II.
- (17) Stuart R. Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), 3.

Chapter 1

THE EARLY INFLUENCES, 1891-1919

This chapter examines the process of Rose Smith's socialization as a female member of the working-class during the period 1891-1919. Special attention will be paid to her upbringing in an artisan household and working-class neighbourhood of Whittington Moor near Chesterfield (1897-1919), to her schooling and to her vocational training outside the immediate school context. These are the particular social settings that moulded Smith into a class- and gender-conscious individual. This personal development is set in the context of economic, political, social and gender developments in Britain.

The aim of this chapter is to find out the factors that led Smith to accept the Marxian tradition of analysing power in British society.

National Developments, 1891-1919

At the time of Rose (Ellis) Smith's birth on 10 May 1891 in Putney, London, Britain was in the midst of a wide-ranging transformation which had been set in motion by 'The Great Depression' (1). From the mid-1880s to about 1891 the lower-paid and unskilled workers- gasworkers, dockers and shipyard

labourers in particular- had set up their own general unions, generally referred to by labour historians as New Unions, and thereby doubled the total trade union membership in Britain. During the next fifteen years, however, the employers' counter-attack contained this labour mobilization.

Strike actions of the New Unions for better wages and working conditions, and the Great Depression improved the standard of living of the British working class. The general reduction in the prices of industrial products and increased imports of cheap foodstuffs brought about a substantial improvement of the real wages. By 1900 the average real wage was one third above that of 1875. Better and more varied food, clothing and footwear became more affordable to working-class families. It was the poorer section of the working class, the unskilled, whose standard of living improved most. (2) Furthermore, the existing gap between the casual and the skilled 'labour aristocracy' (3) began to close and by the outbreak of the First World War a new semi-skilled stratum of workers had emerged during these years.

In British parliamentary politics the process of democratization continued at snail's pace, as the hegemony of Liberal and Conservative interests persisted. This led to an increased demand for independent political organisations of the working class. By the outbreak of the First World War the Social Democratic Federation (SDF, founded in 1884), the Independent Labour Party (ILP, founded in 1893), the Socialist

Labour Party, a party of Leonist-influenced syndicalists founded in 1903, and the Labour Party (founded in 1906) were all spokesmen of working-class interests. In the House of Commons the small and inexperienced Labour Party represented these interests. As it had neither power nor control, it only played the role of a pressure group. Consequently many socialist activists in the SDF, ILP and SLP soon searched for extraparliamentary channels to transform the British political system into their favour. The members of the SLP were active in trade unions and sat as elected members on trades councils. They emphasised industrial or 'direct action' as means of mobilising mass support for a 'general strike' in which the state and the capitalist system were to be overthrown. The members of the ILP and SDF, on the other hand, insisted on extending their power in local politics. They campaigned in municipal and county council elections on alternative programmes to those of the Liberal and Conservative Parties. In this they were aided by the changes brought about by the County Council Act of 1888 and the Local Government Act of 1894. The more democratic granting of the local franchise to both men and women and the establishment of elected councils had substantially reduced the landlords' powers. (4)

Some of the issues that most directly concerned working-class interests could be affected directly by these local activities. During this era public education was the domain of local administrators. Most socialists were aware that the

influence wielded by the working class depended very much on its level of education. On the other hand, it was the Conservative Party that designed these educational reforms. In order to mitigate Conservative intentions and influences, socialist and labour activists became architects of the education system at local level by supervising the implementation of national legislation. In 1891 free elementary schooling was introduced. Seven years later a Board of Education was established with the aim of coordinating the system under a President. The Education Act of 1902 completed this administrative reorganization. The School Boards were replaced by the County Councils and became responsible for both elementary and secondary education. These secondary schools were funded partly by the rates and partly by central government grants. Further, the Act of 1902 put upon the local education authorities the duty of training teachers. In Britain most primary school teachers were women of working-class backgrounds. Teachers' training began in the 1860s and by 1886 many teachers were taking the teachers' certificate by examination. Nevertheless, in 1902, 36 per cent. of the existing teachers had never passed the examination for the teachers' certificate; 55 per cent. had never received any formal teachers' training. So the rules were tightened by making the provision for teachers' training part of the duty of the local education authority. In 1903 new regulations for the training of pupil teachers were introduced; no trainee was

able to start in the course under the age of sixteen, or fifteen in rural districts. (5)

On the labour front, from 1906 onwards, Britain experienced another turbulent front as a result of another economic slump. This time, however, as a result of the growth in female employment outside the traditional category of domestic service, working women were keen to organise their own national and local trade unions. Whenever necessary, with the help of their unions these women undertook strikes for better wages and working conditions for themselves. Most of the time they were successful in these endeavours. Female organizations, such as the National Federation of Women Workers, would also scrutinize the welfare legislation which the Liberal government introduced from 1908 onwards. When provisions were detrimental to working women, the Federation would campaign nationally for amendments to the respective legislation. (6) Furthermore, these demands for equality at the workplace were soon linked by some women's organisations to the political campaigns of extending equal voting rights to women. Women claimed equal citizenship and assimilation into the political ranks of parliamentary politics. (7)

In August 1914 the First World War was declared and the various constraints on working-class and women's organizations were suddenly removed. From now on the fate of the British nation depended on the goodwill of and co-operation from the trade unions, the Labour Party, and women. During the war as

working men and women became conscious of their enhanced power in industry, trade union membership once again grew; there was an increase in industrial militancy inspired by the notion of 'direct action', and women were offered wider and better employment opportunities. It is within this national setting of an interplay between class politics and gender politics that Rose Smith grew up from an observer into a local activist.

A Working-Class Home and Family

During the past three decades scholarly work has analysed the effects of evolving British industrial capitalism on the construction of the working-class family (8) and the role and status of working-class women in the economy and the home (9). It has generally been assumed that the replacement of the artisan mode of production by machinofacture during the second phase of Britain's industrialization went hand in hand with the withdrawal of married women from paid employment. By the late-Victorian period separate spheres of activity for middle-class men and women, physically and ideologically defined, had come into their own. Men sought and found confirmation of status and power in the industrial workplaces and offices. Women sought their self-esteem in the suburban homes where they cared for the physical and spiritual needs of husbands and children. This sexual division of labour, in turn, consolidated itself in emerging middle-class values of 'respectability', 'domesticity', women's 'passivity' and

'vulnerability'. (10)

Some historians assert that a diffusion of these middle-class values to the working class took place. In particular the wives of artisans or of 'labour aristocrats' are said to have either willingly accepted or at least aspired to middle-class 'respectability' and 'domesticity'. Thus Eric Hobsbawm concludes that after marriage a woman "belonged to the proletariat not as worker, but as wife, mother and housekeeper of workers." (11)

Recent studies (12), however, have suggested that the compartmentalization of sex-roles in the working-class family in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period was not as clearcut as formerly assumed. At one time or another working-class women of all strata sought paid work after they were married and contributed these wages to the household economies. As some historians have cautioned (13), this was also reflected in the meanings which working-class men and women assigned to the notions of 'respectability' and 'domesticity'. At the turn of the century the older working-class social concepts of freedom, mutuality and collective strength were combined with values permitting independence, individualistic behaviour and appearances. Working-class 'respectability' and 'domesticity' should therefore not be comprehended as manifestations of embourgeoisement but as a gendered class defense. Working-class women and men sought to protect their social identity in Britain's restructuring society and economy where the upper

and middle classes did not accept the broad mass of people as their social and economic equals.

Furthermore, as Catherine Hall has rightly pointed out, "ideas about the place of women in the home are not constant." (14) They change with time in the same way as the family evolves as a socio-economic organism, responding to changes in the national economy. In this chapter Rose Smith's experiences of and reactions to growing up in an artisan household will serve as an example.

Rose Smith was the second child and eldest daughter of Samuel Ellis, a potter, and his wife Sarah, née Gardiner. Sarah was the daughter of an old and respectable Bristolian family of ship's carpenters and stone masons. Before marriage she had worked as a domestic servant and kitchen maid in a London hotel. In 1903 Smith's youngest sister Jenny was born, the last child of the family. By then the family consisted of two adults and seven children, three girls and four boys. It was a large working-class family but not uncommon throughout the late 19th century. It was only by the end of the interwar period that the working-class fertility rate had dropped substantially and two-child families ceased to be a middle-class phenomenon in Britain. (15)

No-one would ever doubt that people's ideas of class, status and gender grew from the occupations and power relationships between the sexes, and the physical space of the

home occupied by the family. Although in 19th-century Britain homes were designed as a retreat from the outside world, they were very much part of the outside world as affirmations of status. People were graded through the size of house occupied. Therefore the house structure resembled the social structure; and the home, the type of life lived in the house, served as the means by which the structure was translated into various types of social behaviour. (16) This point is made clear by the detailed description of working-class homes in most working-class autobiographies of that period. As the working class ranked low in Britain's social hierarchy, so were working-class homes, without exception, marked by poor living conditions and a more cooperative style of living.

The Ellis home complied with this assumption. The house had neither electricity nor an indoor bathroom. Circulation of air and admission of sunlight were poor. On the ground floor the sitting room or parlour was at the front and the dining or living room at the back. The living room was the central place in the Ellis' home. It served as kitchen, dining room, and the washhouse on Mondays. On Saturday nights the children took their baths in large zinc tubs there. It had a fireplace with a side oven and a boiler which did not hold much water and had to be filled from the top. The centre of the living room was the plain wooden kitchen table. As it was used for many purposes during the day, it was always scrubbed clean before the family ate off that table. On the first floor there were

the master bedroom and two bedrooms, one for the girls and one for the boys. The bedrooms had no furniture for a long time. Before the Ellises bought secondhand bedsteads from neighbours, they slept on palliasses on the floor. It was at the age of twelve that Rose Smith got a folding bed to sleep on.

According to Smith's recollection, the Ellis home was kept clean by continual dusting, shaking of rugs and laborious tidying up. To maintain a satisfactory standard of personal hygiene in such a large family demanded the cooperation of all family members. Of course not every family member complied always. The hot water supply, whereby cold and hot water had to be lifted out with a ladle, was a perpetual source of controversy. Not surprisingly, among her friends Smith was known for her very neat appearance and as a methodical person whose homes and fireplaces would strike the visitor by being well looked after. (17)

Most working-class autobiographies also describe gender relations within the working-class family. But there exists no uniform interpretation of the distribution of power. In some homes the balance of real power leaned more to the husband and father as the main breadwinner, and in other homes to the wife and mother as the central authoritative figure among her children in spite of her not having earned any regular wage for work outside the home (18).

The Ellis household was also marked by a sexual division

of labour that was not much different from other richer or poorer working-class households. Until around 1908, when the eldest children started to earn, Samuel Ellis was the only regular breadwinner. He was a talkative and literate man who was respected for being upright and forthcoming in his views by his workmates. He grew up in London where he had received a primary school education in the Ragged School organized by the Bishop of Lambeth at that time. During the socialist revival in London of the 1880s he had mixed in the progressive workingmen's circles. He admired Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, befriended the younger brother of John Burns, listened to William Morris' open-air lectures on socialism, and was in Trafalgar Square in 1886 when the police brutally charged a workers' demonstration. This incident was later known as 'Bloody Sunday' and both Samuel and Sarah Ellis would recount it from gendered angles in later life. While the father was pointing out the injustice faced by the mass of workers, the mother tended to stress the hardships that her immediate family had incurred as a consequence. The family had to leave London because Samuel Ellis had to look for a new job. (19)

Samuel Ellis was an active member of the potters' union. He had served his apprenticeship in pottery and had designed for Doultons in Lambeth and Fulham Potteries in London where he was working when Rose Smith was born. He loved his work as a potter although it meant making just functional crockery most of the time. By tramping and working in other potteries

for a while he sought liberation from a work monotony that threatened to dull his creativity. But having worked in several well-known potteries around the country had also sharpened his outlook on life and liberal politics, and intensified his sense of social justice, his willingness to protest and to seek his independence. (20)

Her father's tramping seems to have occurred mostly in Smith's infancy, when the Ellis family could still expect help from near residing grandparents, and later during her adolescence, when Sarah Ellis could depend on her eldest daughter's assistance in the household. Despite her father's frequent absences from the home Smith described him not as an aloof family patriarch but as a caring family-man. He liked his house to himself when he was in it, and his family around him:

I can remember my father coming round at night and tucking the clothes into my back. He always came in before they [parents] went into their room. He continued to do it when I was a grown woman with children- he'd come into the bedroom and tuck the clothes into our backs. (21)

He treated his family to tea and cakes in a workers' cafe and accompanied the children to streets shows in the neighbourhood. With great precision Smith remembered how he took only her to Puss in Boots in Bristol. It was her first pantomime and a special treat because mother had told him that Rose had been 'a good girl'. According to considerable oral evidence in the Essex Archives, Samuel Ellis' involvement in childrearing seems not to have been so much out of the

ordinary. It had become widespread in working-class families from the end of the 19th century. (22)

Sarah Ellis was a very gentle woman, who, like many of the working-class women of her generation was illiterate. As Smith stressed in her recollections, her mother was the central figure of the household, coming close to the Victorian working-class stereotype of the 'good wife and mother'. She was respected by both husband and children as a very self-contained, self-sacrificing and hardworking woman:

My father said after she died, "I'll never know her cask was so heavy when your mother was carrying it." She did carry the coffin in her quiet way of the whole of the family, come unemployment, come no pay on pay-day, come sickness, she always managed to find a way. (23)

Contrary to some socialist and feminist writers' views of housewifery as demeaning and oppressive (24), Sarah Ellis appears to have found satisfaction and pride in her status as wife and mother. She is described as having shown no signs of subordination. Once married she neither held nor really wanted to hold a full-time paid job permanently. This did not make her feel to be subservient to her husband. As a result of her husband's frequent absences from the home she was capable of managing family affairs completely on her own, supplemented her husband's wages by taking washing in, charring and tightening the expenses of the household. In this way Sarah Ellis would not just have authority and wield power by controlling her immediate environment on her own but also by owning an independent way in the household. In other words,

the sexual division of labour of the Ellis household was at times somewhat blurred as well as the power relationship between husband and wife. (25)

At the turn of the century her position was neither exceptional as a woman nor as one of the artisan working class. Compared with only 25 per cent in 1851, 90 per cent of wives were not in paid employment in 1911. As recent research has shown, there was most probably a combination of factors that encouraged Sarah Ellis and many working-class wives of her generation to adhere to full-time housewifery. (26) Most working-class married women preferred not to have paid employment because it would double their workloads. (27) Further, once a working-class mother went out to work on a regular basis, clothing and childminding costs had to be considered and these could double the living expenses. By the turn of the 19th century most of the older working-class children would attend school regularly. Female children would be less available to assist mothers in looking after their younger brothers and sisters. (28) This was certainly the case with the Ellises, as they were without any kin in the immediate neighbourhood who could look after their children for free.

But it was not only self-interest that made women, such as Sarah Ellis, to refuse regular full-time paid employment outside their home. The refusal was also determined by her perception of 'work'. Joan Scott and Louise Tilly (29) have

shown that the precarious economic conditions affected all sections of working-class women in one degree or another at that time. These women knew that throughout their lives they would be expected to work hard, with or without regular pay. Survival of a working-class family in capitalist Britain meant 'doing one's best' for every family member, and working together doing chores. It expressed one important aspect of the artisan wife's sense of 'respectability'.

Sarah Ellis certainly inculcated this moral value of 'work' and 'production' in her children in the home. (30) From an early age the girls and boys in the Ellis family were socialized into their sex specific role as workers. The boys did the strenuous physical labour around the house and yard, such as getting and storing the coal. Being the eldest daughter Rose Smith became the right hand of her mother in the household. She learnt to scrub the floors; to prepare 'pawks'(31) for the younger brothers and sisters; to cook 'dinners' consisting mostly of potatoes, a bit of meat and cabbage or turnips; to prepare herbal medicines; to mend clothes, darn socks and patch trousers. Naturally not all household activities pleased her. Smith mentioned the pegging of rugs out of hessian sugar bags and bits of scrap cloths. In the winter this was a favourite pastime for women but not for her. She recalled that as a child she was always made to do a row of pegging by her mother before she was permitted to go out to play. Another of her responsibilities was the weekly

cleaning with Berry's Blacking of her father's one pair of boots. They were impregnated with a thick layer of claydust. It was a dirty and tedious toil and one of her "bugbears," promising her no other reward than weeping over those shoes. She recalls, "I developed at one time a hatred of my father because I had to clean those blasted shoes." (32)

Both of Smith's parents were very conscious of the economic and social hierarchical make-up of the British working class and that their families had been skilled craftsmen with regular employment and higher wages for many generations. From early childhood onwards Rose Smith listened to stories about her ancestors depicted as strong supporters of self-help, thrift and capable of learning skills. Samuel Ellis liked to identify with the streak of radicalism as found in his family. He often mentioned very approvingly an ancestor who had become a committed Chartist and consequently had suffered for his political beliefs and actions by being deported from England for a few years. Samuel Ellis also had a strong sense of justice and was a fierce defender of his rights as a craftsman. As Smith analysed many decades later, this intellectual heritage influenced her ways of handling tasks in her life:

I found my working-class family's pride of craftsmanship urging me to make as good a job as I could. Incidentally I come from generations of craftsmen, potters, ship's carpenters, free stone carvers, cooks and kitchen maids whose proud boast it was that they were qualified craftsmen. (33)

In the daily life of the Ellises this 'respectability'

manifested itself in various ways. The family adhered to strict table manners and a certain decorum when eating their meals:

In some ways we were slightly higher standard insofar as we had a table cloth. We weren't exactly better off, but coming from a town to a mining area and my mother being a kitchen maid had worked in hotels and father, coming from London, we were used to a table cloth. (34)

Although the family members of the Ellis family never had many extra clothes, they always tried to look respectable when going out of the house to face neighbours. Smith's description of her father's dress showed him as having traits of a working-class individualist. He wore a cap until he changed to wearing a trilby when it came into fashion. He always wanted his trousers made by Woolfs, the London tailors:

A. He was a small-waisted man and they made the kind of trousers he liked and I remember he wouldn't go himself to buy them but he'd tell me the waist measurement- he measured his waist and measured the inner leg and I would go to Woolfs and order these trousers.

Q. And you'd chosen the cloth?

A. No, he always had one kind of cloth.... I don't know how much those trousers cost, I think they cost about 30s. in those days, but they were hand-tailored and he always wore a sort of dove-grey trouser. (35)

Trousers for 30s seemed quite an extravagance on the part her father at that time. The womenfolk were less well provided for. As Smith recalled, she never had a new dress until she was eighteen and earned it herself. She wore other women's cut downs. There also was just one pair of shoes between her and her mother.

Drinking in excess and the rowdy behaviour of a drunkard were also frowned on by the Ellises. Now and then, in moments of disillusionment, Samuel Ellis seems to have forgotten this axiom of working-class decency and drank to excess. But "even when he was drunk, he'd walk upright; the drunker he got the straighter his back." (36)

Sarah Ellis maintained her status as a 'respectable' housewife by her prudent management of money and scarce resources. Smith praised her mother's budgeting skills. Most working-class autobiographies of the period and studies by social investigators and historians provide similar stories about the housewives' strenuous efforts to budget well the meagre household finances. It was financial independence that gave dignity and a good reputation to a housewife and her family. Making use of 'charity' and getting into debts by demanding 'premediated credit' for the purchase of durables meant tarring the family's self-reliant status. (37) In the Ellis' case the furniture for the parlour was only bought after the two eldest children had started work and contributed their wages to the family economy. The family, however, did experience 'lean times' when Sarah Ellis had to seek 'crisis credit' from her local grocer. He usually granted it because she had the reputation of an honest woman who would pay her debts as soon as she could. This lesson of living thriftily and within one's means would stay imprinted on Smith all her life. She was very conscious that a simple lifestyle was one

important way to guard her independence.

In the Ellis family the children were brought up strictly. They were taught to respect others; the popular habit of substituting people's names, such as Sarah to Sally, was thought to be improper by her mother. Swearing was not tolerated; and answering back one's parents or any other adults could lead to severe punishment. The following recollection of a family row made her leave the family home. In 1915 one of her younger brothers had been forced to join the army as a result of her father's imprudent gossiping with his drinking pals. Smith was very indignant and challenged the rules of male power in the home by questioning the 'wisdom' of her father.

I was very angry about this and of course we were never allowed to raise our voice to our father and we didn't think of being impudent to him. But I told him that he was a bloody fool and I don't think I had ever sworn before in my life. But I just said the strongest thing I could think of, and especially as I had helped to bring this boy up. He was a very nice boy and I didn't want him to go into the army. So my father said I was too big for my boots and I was to get out. I went to Windsor. (38)

As in other contemporary working-class households (39), the relationship between mother and eldest daughter were the mainstay. They were very fond of each other. Smith understood that her mother had a hard life, little leisure and few pleasures. Except for shopping in the cooperative shop she rarely ventured outside the house. Now and then she withdrew and rested away from the family in her bedroom, drinking a pint of brown ale. The children had bought it for her from the

pub. At that time 'respectable' women stayed away from pubs.

Sarah Ellis never resented her eldest daughter's passionate love for books. She encouraged her and the other children to learn and to share with her what they had learned from their books and at school. Frequently in the evening she asked her eldest daughter to read to her. Therefore it is not surprising that Smith felt responsible and protective towards 'the old lady' and was willing to care for her in moments of illness. In 1917 when her mother was ill she gave up her teaching position as an infant teacher in a primary school in Windsor. She found herself a new job in a Chesterfield school and ran the household until her mother's health was restored.

However, Smith's recollections also make clear that Sarah Ellis and her daughter had different perceptions of domesticity'. They belonged to two different ages and generations of women. Smith developed her family ideal during the immediate pre- and postwar years when topics of family limitation, consumerism and its impact on the quality of family life, and the beginnings of scientific home management and childcare dominated the media in Britain. This, however, did not result in a substantial increase in the number of married working-class women working in full-time 'gainful employment' outside the home. In 1921 there were 8.9 per cent of married women engaged in waged work and a decade later this figure had increased to a mere 10.7 per cent. (40) The Victorian ideal of a housewife persisted but with some

modifications. A good working-class homemaker now gave birth to fewer children, made use of new household gadgets and lived in working-class housing that was better planned, furnished and had indoor toilets and electric light.

Smith did not remain immune to these general developments. Her attitude toward housework, marriage and children was certainly moulded by them. Her childhood experience together with her exposure to contemporary socialist writings on the 'Woman's Question' made Smith not being fond of housework. She considered it as one of the three entrenched conditions in capitalist society that fostered 'a woman's enslavement'; the lack of equal rights and economic equality being the other two. As will be shown in this thesis, all her life she fought in different settings to get these conditions changed for women. She always welcomed when working-class wives had greater access to labour-saving devices. But essentially she believed in the socialization of domestic labour. At the home level, this meant that every member of the family shared equally in doing housework; in society, it meant greater collective responsibility for housework. (41)

Another aspect of working-class life on which mother and daughter did not see eye to eye was marriage. By the time Rose Smith returned to Chesterfield she had married Alfred Smith, a sign painter and house decorator, before he was called up to serve in the trenches. It was a typical marriage of wartimes

and was not to last; in contrast to evolving pre-and postwar working-class courtships and marriage rites, there was no time to court and wed in the white dress. Later, as an old woman, Smith recalled it as follows,

I married in 1916... I married a man who had been in the SDF, a house painter and sign painter...It was one of those things when you think the man's going away, how much life have we got... I may never see him again and you think to yourself - well, he had the same ideas as I have and I might as well marry him as marry anyone else. I wasn't concerned with getting married at all because marriage wasn't my goal. I liked men but I liked their company so as to talk and explain things. That, unfortunately, ended in disaster. In fact, I was very unfair to ever have married him. (42)

Smith's statement reveals her rejection of the established feminine ideal underlying a working-class marriage that had been so clearly lived by the generation of her own mother. Instead of serving the interests and needs of her husband and the children, Smith sought an equal and intellectually stimulating companionship in her marriage. Like Alfred Smith, she wanted to change the social and economic class conditions of British society. But she also wished that such changes would ultimately lead to a more equal power relationship between husband and wife in the family. She sought to enjoy the same freedom, the self-fulfilment and the opportunities outside the home that her father had claimed for himself in his life. Thus as Smith confessed, marriage meaning just good housekeeping had not been her goal in life.

Her mother's hopes and expectations of her daughter's married life, on the other hand, had been moulded by the

perception of working-class standards of 'respectability'. It was important to know one's place within the subtle but evolving hierarchy of the working class and the class structure of British society. As already mentioned, by the early decades of the 20th century class boundaries between lower-middle class groups and the skilled artisans were fluid. New occupational and income groups began to challenge many of the prerogatives of the craftsmen elite. According to Smith, her mother was not only conscious of these social changes, she approved of them out of a clear sense of an artisan wife's class identity. For Sarah Ellis they acted as a guarantee for an improved working-class status and standard of living for her children in an unstable capitalist economy but certainly not as an opportunity of an upward social mobility or incorporation into the middle class. As Smith explained,

In fact, my mother was such a working-class snob that when I married a painter, an ordinary house decorator in 1916, she said I thought you'd marry at least a shop assistant! I want to put that in because a shop assistant in those days was a cut above, and I think it will put flesh and blood on a lot of what went on before in Britain. (43)

Smith, on the other hand, was not concerned with conforming to this type of sectional working-class thinking that was common and stifling for equal gender relations in craftsmen's households. She certainly did not want her status and power confirmed through that of a patriarch in her household.

With regard to children Smith also developed her distinct

points of view. She approved of birth control for working-class women. She gave birth only to twin boys. She also insisted that, if possible, infants should be raised with great care by a non-working mother or guardian in their early years as well as be given the widest possible educational opportunities by society. She referred with some indignation to "the exploitation of the children" (44) that had taken place during her childhood. In order that her younger brother and she could acquire some books, her brother read the Sunday newspapers to a neighbouring illiterate collier for 1d., while Smith used to walk about twelve miles out into the country area on a Sunday to earn 1s 6d., selling newspapers at 3d. per dozen.

Sanforth Street- A Working-Class Neighbourhood

It is now recognized that the working-class family is only one institution through which consciousness of class and gender was transmitted to its individual member. A parallel network of working-class neighbours also contributes to the perceptions, understanding and internalization of class and gender. Neighbours are people who live rarely further afield than a street and construct between themselves overt forms of social relationships, such as mutual visiting in the home, participating in recreation and various support schemes in times of need and crisis. It is in these forms of sociability of working-class women and men that class values and gender roles manifest and maintain themselves. This will be shown

through a study of Sanforth Street, where Rose grew up.

After short stays in Nantgarw (South Wales), a village of potters, and Bristol, where her grandmother Gardiner lived, the Ellis family settled in Whittington Moor, a suburban area of Chesterfield in 1897. The population of the town of Chesterfield and surrounding area amounted to slightly less than 40,000. It was the second largest town in Derbyshire and was economically controlled by four rich families owning the Markham Coal and Iron Works, the Sheepbridge Iron and Coal Works, the Chesterfield Tube Works, and the Robinson firm manufacturing pill boxes, bandages and surgical dressings. Samuel Ellis worked as a thrower in the Robinson pottery.

The Ellis family rented a house in Sanforth Street. Recent studies by both social and urban historians have emphasized that the residential segregation of working-class districts within British nineteenth-century urban conglomerations (45) and the use of public and private space within working-class streets and districts were of great significance for the daily life, culture and sense of unity of the working class. (46) Sanforth Street was a typical open-planned working-class street where everything connected with everything else. It had about one hundred houses which formed a 'terrace system'. Between every two houses there existed a tunnel entrance from the street into the private world of the back-yard shared by four families. In Chesterfield this tunnel entrance was called the 'jinnel'. The houses were 'parlour

houses' (47). Some had two rooms upstairs, some had another small room located above the tunnel entrance. The back-yard was cobbled. The street, however, had no pavement and no proper drainage at the end of the 19th century.

Socially Sanforth Street (48) consisted of various segments and a stratified working class. This was typical for industrial towns in Britain at that time. Smith recalled that the majority of the residents consisted of miners' families. But there was a sprinkling of shop assistants, clerks, and pottery workers. Some people worked at the Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company, some in the local jam factory. In other words, a few unskilled or blue collar workers lived side by side with the skilled, the artisans and the workers of the expanding service sector. The allocation of the houses in Sanforth Street was determined by the families' income. The better-off families of iron and steel, and engineering workers lived at the upper end of Sanforth Street. Their houses had a bit of a front garden. As potters the Ellis family belonged to the upper end of the median earners of the skilled labour group and therefore lived in a house with a front garden half way up the street. Fields bordered the bottom of the back-yard. The poorer working-class families lived in the lower half of the street in houses of two up and two down that opened up directly onto the pavement. In other words, the private sphere of these individual units was spacially less encapsulated than those with a front garden.

Like in older urban working-class quarters in Britain at the turn of the century, all the houses of Sanforth Street had their toilets placed at the bottom of their small backyard or garden. In those days they were known as closet. The poorer families shared one single water closet. In the section where the Ellises lived, each house had its private dry-earth compartment. Whenever the toilet was on the point of overflowing, the 'getters out' would be called to clear the nightsoil once a week. According to Rose Smith's description, Sanforth Street was running with filth during her early childhood. (49)

Many of the families that lived in the bottom half of Sanforth Street were of Irish descent. The Irish formed tight-knit units, were closely related to each other and devout Catholics. Most of the other residents were Non-conformists. Smith recalled that on Sundays they went to chapel or the prayer meetings of Salvation Army. On Sundays it was a common sight for the Salvation Army to come round "blowing its guts out and coming for halfpennies and pennies". (50) The Ellises felt indifferent to religion. They neither gave support to religious campaigns or activities nor claimed exemption on religious grounds for their daughter Rose at infant school. (51)

In spite of the various differences in occupations and religious beliefs, as Smith maintained, there existed a sense of class unity in Sanforth Street. In recent years scholars

have searched for the factors that created social cohesion of British working-class areas. Socialist historians tend to stress economic reasons of regular employment and better wages affecting all the households in a street. (52) Sociological studies (53), on the other hand, maintain that neighbourhoods are created by a network of codes or customs to which the inhabitants of the houses in a street adhere. And research by oral historians (54) advance that general adverse economic circumstances at the turn of the century demanded physical support and psychological sustenance among neighbours. Two reasons for the development of a common sense of mutual responsibilities and obligations are usually put forward by these scholars. The first reason is that by the end of the 19th century the governing class did no longer reside in working-class neighbourhoods and could not impose its philanthropic will on the rest. The second reason is that working-class people could not yet fall back on the institutions of a modern welfare state.

Smith's recollection of Sanforth Street makes clear that all the explanations were at work fostering a sense of class unity and solidarity. Although we do not have any reliable wage data for this area, we can assume that the families earned a weekly wages between 25s to 35. This was the average for the 'respectable' working class in this provincial town. As tenants the Ellises also paid more or less the same weekly rents, and lived according to "privatized and family-centred

values" (55) in their houses. One aspect of the 'respectability' was that all the households in Sanforth Street adhered to a sexual division of labour. The husbands were the main breadwinners and the wives did not generally work for wages outside their homes.

Sanforth Street also espoused certain customs. A family was called after the father's trade. The Ellises were known as the Potters by their neighbours. Another local habit was that neighbours visiting each other would use the back doors. Nobody in the street would ever open the front door for neighbours dropping by casually. 'Front-door company' was reserved for weddings or funerals.

In Sanforth Street the general rule was that in normal times most families in the street got on with their lives by keeping themselves much to themselves. But in times of crises, such as unemployment, illnesses, death and accidents at work, helpful neighbourliness would try to alleviate the plight of the individual or the family and thereby protect the community at large. (56)

Contemporary autobiographies and recent investigations particularly by Ellen Ross and Elizabeth Roberts have shown that the nature and the administering of this mutual help was very much gendered. (57) Smith's description of her neighbourhood of Sanforth Street in Whittington Moor confirms this. She remembered that frequent mining accidents and serious illnesses involved many of her neighbours. There was

a lot of tuberculosis (TB). Whole families were undernourished and suffered from TB. Some men were killed in mining accidents and others broke their backs and other limbs. Most families, as Rose Smith stressed, did not earn enough in healthy days to save for sickness and to pay for a doctor. Furthermore, the standards of services provided by doctors and local hospitals for the working class left much to be desired. Compared with some of her neighbours, the Ellis family was slightly better insured. Samuel Ellis' employer, the Robinson Company, issued cards or vouchers worth a certain amount for the use of their employees requiring hospital treatment. But, in general, it can be concluded that the lack of interests by the medical profession and by the State in the general health of the working class made it imperative for the street community to organise self-help schemes.

In Sanforth Street the menfolk were usually responsible for raising extra money for needy individuals or families. Once Smith's father found paid work for a needy widow to work under his supervision in the Robinson pottery and paid her an extra 6d. per week so that she could maintain her children. He also undertook communal activities of raising money or food by singing as a tenor in the 'smoking concerts' or giving a 'Cockney' man's performance of step-dancing at the local pub. But neighbourly relations were complex. Not every man in the street participated in these singing competition out of spirit of class solidarity. Smith recalled that during one of her

family's 'lean times' her father and a single Irishman from the next yard were the finalists. The Irish man lived with his married sister and won the competition:

He just won it over my father and he had no kids and he came home carrying this ham over his shoulder. This great big ham was the prize. I hated that man for the rest of my life. He didn't even cut the knuckle end off and sent it to us- with all those kids. (58)

Sarah Ellis regularly participated in the neighbourhood network of women. This network consisted of two parts. The first mutual help scheme involved women in a barter system that provided them with more nutritious food. In those days the miners' families were still permitted by law to keep pigs in their backyards. Sarah Ellis arranged with a neighbouring miner's wife that for the regular contribution of the vegetable peelings from her household to the neighbour's pig swill, she would receive some parts of the pig when it was slaughtered. This self-help scheme clearly reveals that wives, in the working-class household, as producers and consumers did not yet function as an integral part of Britain's maturing competitive capitalism. This position, however, gave these wives, who were dependent mostly on their husbands' wages, some independence and decision-making power.

The other kind of network functioned like an ad-hoc organisation in moments of need and crisis; it usually sprang into action through words of mouth among women on the doorstep of their houses and during shopping outings to the local corner shop. Its scope depended on the limited material

resources of each household in the street. It involved the traditional female duties of providing food, clothing, bedding, nursing care and above all the exchange of medical knowledge and home-made medicines.

As a result of continual childbearing and poor diets, women suffered more from poor health than men (59). There was no 'official' health provision for working-class women. They could not afford the services of a doctor because of exorbitant fees. However, they were willing to help each other as local midwives, advisers on home-made and cheap remedies, and providers of basic comforts in the home.

In Sanforth Street the wives had the habit of giving laudanum and Godfrey's Cordial as general painkillers and cough mixtures to husbands and children. Smith stressed that, as her parents had lived in London and Bristol, they were more aware of the addictive properties of this type of medicine and were scornful of it. As common in contemporary working-class homes with tight budgets, Sarah Ellis gave herbal remedies to her family. Every year the family brewed a herbal beer for use as a kind of general tonic. It was made from dandelions, burdock, comfrey and nettles. Colds and coughs were treated with brimstone and treacle. Sore throats were comforted with comfrey leaves grown in the back garden; they were scalded with hot water, put between two layers of flannels and then wrapped around one's neck. Menstruational pains were treated with a spoonful of ground ginger in hot water. (60)

Not surprisingly, working-class prescriptions for disease and disaster made an indelible impression on Rose Smith. Her friends remember her as a warm human being, sensitive to other people's needs and always ready to help and share her possessions with others. With regard to her own health, she never was overduly concerned with and was reluctant to take medicine. Only when her failing eyesight started to threaten her reading in her last years of life, did she willingly consult the doctors. Finally, when living in Beijing she must not have been surprised by the fact that the Chinese preferred Chinese herbal remedies to Western medicine.

Education

Nowadays it is generally accepted that schools and colleges are the most influential institutions in an individual's life, after the family. But they are not neutral agents encouraging a dispassionate search for truth or excellence. They are part of an educational system that transmits ideologies, values and attitudes to the learner in such a way that dominant social relations between classes and sexes are maintained and perpetuated. This was particularly so in Britain at the turn of the century. Both class and patriarchal privileges were upheld by the British ruling class when making educational institutions more accessible to the working class and to women.

This class bias of the British education system was early recognized by the working-class radicals. They made several

attempts to set up independent schools where skills of learning, thinking and argument were transmitted to both working-class men and women with the intention to strengthen the resistance to this class oppression. Unfortunately the same working-class radicals were less sensitive to gender bias in the education system. Women in working-men's colleges continued to experience major opposition from men whenever they stepped outside their traditional and prescribed role.

(61) What were Smith's experiences?

Smith represented the first generation of bright working-class girls in Britain that benefited from the emerging state education system in the period 1870- 1914. It was not uncommon for artisan parents, such as the Ellises, to take an interest in the educational achievements of their sons and daughters. Among the craft section of the British working class it was widely believed that the acquisition of skills and the awareness of one's own rights and duties in society were essential assets for the betterment of the individual working man and woman, and their families. There were however discussions about the quantity and quality of education which a working-class girl was to receive. While some advocated the former Owenite approach to women's education as a matter of equal right and of not trying too much to distinguish between a female or male curriculum, others were more inclined to support the educational intentions of the Mechanics Institutes' Movement. They were more akin to the middle-class

patriarchal and family ideologies. Their curriculum was geared to enhance the status of a thrifty, clean wife and mother.(62)

Whatever the educational content and aims, the upper stratum of skilled workers and artisans regarded education as a channel for self-improvement and before 1870 had been willing to pay school fees for a longer and wider education whenever their income permitted. Furthermore, throughout the 19th century the more affluent section of the working class had always been opposed to the notion that educational opportunities remained restricted to the propertied classes or to be imposed from above and selectively granted as a form of 'charity'. They had demanded that education should be given to everybody not as training in deference but for independence and after the Reform Act of 1867 also as a political right. Therefore the educational changes in the late Victorian Britain were welcomed as an acknowledgement of a long demanded right by the better-off stratum of workers. Economically they also favoured the relatively affluent working-class families who did not have to pay any longer school fees for their children's basic education. The Ellis parents' attitude towards education appears symptomatic of this 'mood' among the artisans.

Smith stressed that her mother was the ambitious pusher for all her children, "because she was illiterate herself [and] she had the idea that to be educated was to get out of the cesspool" (63) by getting a more secure job. The late

Victorian and Edwardian period witnessed a widespread belief in girls' education, allowing particularly working-class girls full scope to seize the opening career opportunities in the expanding service industries and the elementary educational sector. As they were mostly white-collar jobs they were relatively well paid. Women clerks and secretaries could earn between £39 to £65 a year, and a certified elementary school teacher's annual remuneration was around £ 100. These income levels were certainly much higher than what the majority of women of the generation of Smith's mother had only dreamed about. (64)

On the other hand, both Ellis parents would not yet perceive education as an avenue of upward social mobility. An education given to their daughter Rose was not meant to make her rise out of her class. (65) Wider socio-political conditions prevented that. Workers and their children were still confined to their own world because it was a family's wealth, income and status rather than a person's ability that continued to determine a child's level of education. The highest level of schooling a working-class child could aspire to was to complete a secondary school education. A university education was hardly a possibility for a working-class girl or boy. Smith explained as follows:

There was no question about me going to college because in those days nobody got grants. You had to have enough money to buy yourself three sheets, three blankets, dressing gown and nighties, three of everything. That was more than my family possessed with seven kids and a father and mother, you see. (66)

The type of school frequented by a working-class child also determined the child's academic achievements. Before 1870 Britain's elementary-school system had been an uncoordinated "geographical and pedagogic mosaic" (67) that was run and controlled by local enthusiasts, philanthropists, the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor, and the British and Foreign School Society. Single sex school dominated in urban areas. (68) The decades after 1870 therefore witnessed not only the establishment of an ordered national body of schools and the development of national educational policies but also the construction of new school buildings and the conversion of old ones in order to accommodate all the school-aged boys and girls of the working class. A specially raised school rate and central government grants funded all this. All these changes, however, did not encourage social mixing among the various classes, as each social class strictly controlled the entrance to its own set of elementary and secondary schools.

Smith obtained her education in schools that had always sponsored the instruction of working-class children. All of them had been founded by the Church of England or local do-gooders long before the 1870 Education Act in the spirit of 'civilising' the poor working girls or boys. Smith began her formal schooling at the age of around five at St. Augustine's Infant School, a Church of England School, in Bristol. After the family had moved to Derbyshire in early 1898, she was

admitted to the Webster Endowed School for Infants (69) in Whittington Moor on 7 February 1898. Her younger brother Thomas was sent to the same school two weeks later. (70) A narrow curriculum of arithmetic, spelling, essay writing, some history and some geography were taught to classes that were mixed. Needlework lessons for girls only, however, set the two sexes apart. She stayed at this school until 1903.

From the age of twelve to fifteen she obtained her secondary education with the help of a two-year Minor County Scholarship at Clay Cross Science School (71) in the neighbouring mining town of Clay Cross. The grant was approved at a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee of the Education Committee of the county, held at Derby on 28 July 1903. (72) Her father seems to have paid school fees for one extra year.

Smith described her Clay Cross Science School as a 'graded school', something like a grammar school. Since the mid-1870s this type of school had provided secondary education for the lower middle and upper working classes. Secondary education had until then remained very much a middle-class enclave and middle-class status symbol. From the 1890s onwards the 'graded schools' competed with the middle-class grammar schools for the privilege to send their pupils on to the growing number of new universities in Britain at the turn of the century. It was the 1902 Education Act that finally determined that the grammar school would top the internal

hierarchy of secondary schools. As Felicity Hunt's study of girls' education in graded schools of Bedfordshire has shown (73), this hierarchy favoured and was boosted by different school fees, school resources, school's reputation and emphasis on a more girl-orientated, less academic curriculum. It had restrictive implications for working-class girls' post-school occupational destinations. Most girls went straight to jobs. Clerical work and elementary school teaching were the major occupational destinations for graded school girls. (74) By 1900 three-quarters of elementary teachers came from the working-class in England and Wales. (75)

Smith stressed that the Clay Cross Science School provided her with a general all-round education laying emphasis on the cultural and physical development of the pupil. She was taught mainly domestic, literary, physical and scientific subjects which provided a sufficiently good basis for her subsequent training scheme of pupil-teachers for the public elementary school-sector. Her pupil-teacher training began in 1906.

But to reach that far, Smith had to overcome not only the examinations as stiff hurdles of selectivity but also the systemic class and sex discrimination in the British educational system. It was the common rule that a smaller number of scholarships for poor elementary pupils were awarded to girls than to boys. In 1903 the Derbyshire Education Committee approved twenty-two scholarships for all the

secondary schools in Chesterfield. Three scholarships were awarded to Chesterfield Grammar School, three to Chesterfield Girls High School and sixteen to the Clay Cross School of Science. Out of the sixteen only six were given to girls. Four of the girls, including Rose Smith, were only given grants for two years, a sign that they were to become pupil-teachers; the remaining twelve were given awards for three years, allowing the pupils to sit for civil service and university entrance examinations. (76) These figures show that in Smith's case the class discrimination was more severe than the sex discrimination and therefore might have impacted her class feelings rather than her outlook on gender relations. She was made to perceive that her class belonging rather than her gender would curb her aspirations.

Secondary schooling, above all, sensitized Smith to the rigid and complex class structure of Britain. It manifested itself not only in the relationship between classes but also in the relationship between the various strata of her own class, the working class. Although Smith's secondary school seems to have had an economically homogenous make-up of pupils, the contact between class mates was not always very happy-go-lucky. Snobbishness and fear to become socially ostracized by one's classmates were always lurking and had to be countered by a relatively poorer pupil such as Rose Smith:

I remember one agonising experience when I was going to school...[One day] there was no money to buy worsted and not even cotton to draw the ends together to cobble under the foot. And I pinned it together with an ordinary pin

and I walked the two miles to Chesterfield station and two miles from Clay Cross station up to the school, and under the heel of one foot was just a bloody mess from the head of the pin breaking into my foot. But, you see, the other students were better off than I was....I didn't want them to see me with a hole in my stocking because children can be very cruel to you. (77)

Ellen Wilkinson, Smith's contemporary and eminent Labour leader, was also awarded a bursary and told a similar story in her memoirs. (78) Therefore, it seems that scholarship-educated pupils did not necessarily develop feelings of alienation towards their class but rather an intensified class pride. The three years at Clay Cross Science taught Smith to compare, to analyse and to doubt. It gave her confidence in herself as a person, pride in her own achievements, determination to search for knowledge and to master the odds. She linked up with like-minded peers in the district. By the time she left the school she wanted to help to change the world.

In 1906 she became an unpaid monitor for one year at the Webster's Endowed School. In summer 1907 she passed the Pupil Teachers' Examination. For the next two years she taught as a pupil teacher earning five shillings a week, at Newbold St. John's Church of England School. In April 1909 she sat as one of the twenty-one candidates of Chesterfield and district for the examinations required for obtaining the Preliminary Certificate. On 3 July 1909, Smith's name was among the successful candidates on the list printed by the Derbyshire Times. Gaining the Preliminary Certificate qualified Rose

Smith to go on to university, but the payment of university fees was completely beyond the total income of the large Ellis family. Thus her formal schooling and training had come to an end.

For the next ten years Smith pursued her career as an infant teacher in Chesterfield and Windsor. She taught writing and basic arithmetic to classes of about fifty working-class girls and boys of the ages between three and five. They were seated in old-fashioned galleries. Many of the children came from poor single parent families, were rather neglected and often behaved spitefully. Therefore, as Smith admitted, her main duty really centred around childminding and disciplining the infants. (79)

Pastime search for knowledge and class fairness.

In 1909 the political climate in Britain was tense. There was hardly a day that the headlines of British newspapers did not refer to social unrest in the provinces or the political struggles in London. A constitutional crisis was evoked in 1909 when the House of Commons passed the People's Budget by 379 votes to 149, but the Lords rejected it by 350 to 75. A head-on collision occurred between Lords and Commons over which House should have final power in such important matters as finances.

Then in late 1909, in the midst of the uproar over the People's Budget, the House of Lords as the final Court of Appeal gave judgement in favour of a railwayman named W.V.

Osborne. A year earlier, as a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, Osborne had asked for an injunction to stop his union from spending its funds for political purposes. This Osborne Judgment incensed the Labour and trade-union movement in Britain. Rose Smith and her friends became involved in long, nightly discussions over its implications for the finances of the relatively young Labour Party. By cutting off the subscriptions of trade unionists the party was bound to lose the bulk of its income. And could the Liberal Party really be trusted by the workers? Had not some leading Liberals welcomed the Osborne Judgment as a way of "standing up to the Socialists." (80)

Two years later she witnessed how the national railway strike turned violent in her home town. The Chesterfield railway station was set ablaze, and Chesterfield's Mayor had to read the Riot Act three times. The local police, supplemented by fifty troops of the West Yorkshire Regiment, repulsed the demonstrating crowd with repeated bayonet charges. For the first time in her life Smith ran away from the forces of law and order. (81) She felt she needed to understand these class relations and national politics. The only course offered in Chesterfield at that time was the tutorial class on Political Science, organised by the Workers' Education Association (WEA) since 1908. For a fee of 6d. per annum she became a student member of the Chesterfield branch. (82)

By 1911 the WEA had become the fastest growing national organisation for working-class education in Britain. The tutorial courses were open to working-class women on the same terms as working-class men. Still, in 1912 women comprised only 13.8 per cent of these classes. There were several factors that seem to have made wage-earning female workers reluctant to join these classes. Firstly, it was more difficult for a female worker to pay the fees. In these pre-war years a male worker's average weekly wage was 18s., while a female worker was earning only between 7s. 7d and 7s. 3d. a week. Secondly, working-class women seem to have been discouraged by the male organisers' attitude of letting rather than wanting them to attend tutorial classes on history, local government and economics. (83)

The aim of these classes was to give working-class students a higher education so that they could serve their class. They were envisaged as future mediators between classes and leaders in their trade unions, or their workshops, or working-class representatives on public bodies. To help them in this pursuit of a public career and in the spirit of Edwardian liberalism the WEA curriculum consisted of the following 'useful subjects': Economics, English Literature (1785-1900), General English History, English History (1815-1908), Modern World History, and Political Science. (84) These subjects would be taught with 'impartiality' or political neutrality to the working-class students because it was

thought that was the only way "of developing their own powers of enjoyment, and of enabling them to exercise an influence for good in the social life of the factory and town." (85)

In retrospect it appears naive to think that in the early 20th century adult educationalists of the Committee consisting of representatives of the WEA and Oxford University could believe in a 'neutral' education. No major redistribution of power between classes in British society was to be achieved when Oxford dons determined course contents and insisted on teaching the social science course in the traditional spirit of constitutionalism to a few selected working-class men and women. Furthermore, there was certainly no 'impartiality' at work with regard to women in these courses. Working-class women's educational needs, career aspirations and achievements were perceived to be rooted solely in a curriculum reflecting men's cultural ideas and constitutional concerns and were measured by standards of male excellence.

In Chesterfield, due to the generosity of Miss Violet Markham (86), the tutorial class was given the use of the Toynbee Room at the Chesterfield Settlement. Rose Smith pledged to attend regularly the weekly one-hour lecture followed by one-hour discussion, and to submit an essay every fortnight. Her class consisted of twenty men and six women. Smith stressed that the female members attended more regularly than the men, whose absence was often caused by working overtime and attending to other public business, such as trade

union activities. (87) According to her recollections, most of her class mates were not really of the manual working class but rather shopkeepers and elementary school teachers.

Mr. F. W. Kolthammer, an extension lecturer of Oxford University and the editor of the WEA's monthly journal The Highway, taught the course. He was a specialist on Local Government. Smith recalled that Kolthammer was a 'friendly chap' without the usual signs of Oxfordian condescension. When he was a boy in the East End of London he had gained an inkling about the search for knowledge by this Chesterfield group of 'respectable' working-class men and women; she enjoyed writing papers and participating in class discussions from various standpoints on topics of political philosophy. She soon learned to argue her point of view in such a way that "Kolthammer thought I had a future in it [political science]." (88) Meanwhile she led a women's class on Greek legends at Chesterfield WEA branch in 1913. (89)

By summer 1914, however, Smith had questioned the 'political neutrality' of the WEA teaching. When she was offered a place and the payment of fees at Lady Margaret Hall to be trained as a WEA lecturer, she decided to reject this offer:

Well, I realized, I could not work for the WEA because I had really rubbed shoulders enough with the Marxists to know that the WEA was not going to say what I wanted. Some of them [WEA lecturers] may have been very sincere people like Cole, Cameron, A. L. Smith, they may have been quite good thinking people but they were not revolutionaries. And I realized by then that it had to be a complete overthrow. But of course you have to remember

that there was a great deal of controversy in the socialist movement about the inevitability of gradualism at that time. (90)

Three factors led her to this important decision that would set her on her particular ideological path. Firstly, as one of the promising young working-class women who had studied at least for three full years with the WEA, she had been selected by the Chesterfield WEA group for the summer schools at Balliol College in Oxford in 1913 and 1914. All in all, slightly more than 200 working-class women and men followed the classes in each year. Women comprised 13.5 per cent. of them. Smith stressed that the occupations of the male students of her classes was diversified. Her classmates consisted of potters, railwaymen, miners, and building workers. The female students were mostly elementary school teachers, clerks, and shop assistants. Some men were members of the ILP, some of the SDF/BSP, and others held syndicalist views of industrial unionism as propagated by the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and the Central Labour College (CLC). This variation in leftwing outlook among the students often encouraged a more critical reception of the lectures given by the Oxford dons. Particularly those CLC-sympathisers were eloquent and quick in their challenging repartees and Rose Smith thought that "there was something more than words" (91) behind their arguments. She realized the worth of these ideas for her own situation as a working-class woman.

Secondly, during the frequent mixed group discussions at

Balliol College Rose Smith noticed that certain tutors were patronizing toward these working-class students. So she felt uneasy about an education that encouraged students to deal with ideas as mere abstractions.

Thirdly, her association with members of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) had also contributed to her insight. (92) The Chesterfield SDF branch was founded by a dozen local socialists in early 1905. The membership gradually increased due to regular meetings of the branch in the Assembly Room of the Market Hall, open air lectures at midday and in the evenings on Sundays at the Market Place, and by providing speakers at other local miners' demonstrations. Often prominent speakers, such as Harry Quelch, Dan Irving, and Mrs. Rose Jarvis, included Chesterfield in their national circuit. Smith's contacts with this SDF branch began at the time of the General and Local Elections of 1906. At that time the county of Derbyshire was 'a very hotbed of New Liberalism' largely due to the support given by the Derbyshire Miners' Association to the Liberal Party. James Haslam, the Derbyshire Miners' leader, was the Liberal candidate who won the general election and sat as 'Lib.-Lab.' M.P. in the House of Commons.

During these and later elections campaigns, the Chesterfield SDF adopted the typical SDF strategy. With regard to the national level of politics it would issue manifestoes condemning the Lib-Lab pact and asking the workers of Chesterfield to abstain from voting in general elections. In

the local politics of municipal reform, on the other hand, it regarded increased political involvement as 'stepping stones' to revolution. It nominated candidates for the positions of Elective (Borough) Auditor and accountants, and Municipal elections. (93) Naturally all this intervention of the local Social Democrats 'caused a flutter in the professional doves' of Chesterfield, was widely reported in the local press and aroused the interest of Rose Smith in local and national politics. In the next few years she would attend many of these local SDF meetings. Around 1909/1910 she took up SDF membership. But it was the split within Ruskin College and the establishment of the CLC in Oxford over the issue of independent working-class education that was the immediate cause for her open commitment to Marxism. (94)

Smith's SDF activities opened up new horizons in two distinct ways. She was introduced to Marxism as an analytical framework which helped her to interpret history. Having very little knowledge about Czarist Russia and imperial China, she found it easier to digest the group discussions on the nature of the 1905 Russian Revolution and the 1911 Chinese Revolution and their repercussions for European nations in this way.

The SDF activities also fostered in her a sense of belonging to a community with history and traditions. There were the occasional trips to the old farm house where a left-wing couple known only as 'Harry and Polly' served Sunday teas for 8d. or 9d. As they had once known Eleanor Marx, Edward

Aveling, Olive Schreiner and Havelock Ellis, Smith would listen with great fascination to their personal reminiscences, their character evaluations of these socialist icons, the descriptions of their personal struggles for finding love and equality in human relationships during the heyday of socialism in Britain. She felt she needed to know more about this period and socialist thought.

She bought SDF political pamphlets, read regularly the SDF journal Justice and became aware of the distinct socialist approach when interpreting world and national political events. She carefully studied The Manifesto of the Communist Party and familiarized herself with classes and class struggles in existing society. Then, with the help of Lewis H. Morgan's Ancient Society she learned to perceive history as a social process, producing successive 'stages in the evolution of society'; she consolidated this materialistic conception of history by learning about the role of production and reproduction in society as explored by Frederick Engels in his The Origin of the Family. She purchased the first edition of Olive Schreiner's Woman and Labour in 1911 and began to ponder the status of women in society for the first time in earnest. Olive Schreiner's demand for training opportunities and labour for women appealed to her. Like many women of her own generation then, she began to believe that women would overcome their powerlessness through their economic independence. (95)

Smith's belief in women's emancipation by economic means was also fostered by the developments in British politics and within the SDF. In 1906 the Liberal Government had come to power and soon afterwards embarked on laying the foundation for Britain's welfare state. It was the introduction of the National Insurance Act of 1911 that triggered off many heated debates among socialist and labour activists. This bill had two parts, one providing unemployment insurance and the other health insurance. The question of whether material improvement for the working class was best attained through these state reforms or by independent working-class actions was central to all these discussions. According to Smith, members of the small Chesterfield branch of the SDF also continuously quarrelled over this issue. Most likely because her association with the WEA had given her a sense for public service, she rejected this ideological wrangling as wasting time. She recognized that this National Insurance Scheme promised greater security to working-class men and women in times of unemployment and sickness. On the other hand, there was the danger that low-paid and irregularly employed female workers had to contribute to the new National Insurance Scheme out of their meagre wages and might be worse off. In order to prevent such an outcome she regarded trade union involvement as a viable alternative strategy. This, however, smelled of a betrayal to most SDF members in the branch. They were against trade unions. In the branch, therefore, she associated mostly

with those 'rebels' who had come under the influence of the Central Labour College and industrial unionism as a strategy of working-class independence and power and had been the instigators of the 1911 railway strike in the town. (96) It seemed to her that such a strategy could also be applied to women workers.

So she informed herself about the programme of the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW) and gave her support to its campaigns to monitor the implementation of a statutory minimum wage and 8-hour working day as laid down by the Trade Boards Act of 1910. She also assisted the NFWW's struggle to alter the part dealing with the health insurance of the National Insurance Bill of 1911 in favour of low-paid women workers.

In Chesterfield the Robinson Company was the main employer of women workers. Whilst teaching Smith became active in her spare time as 'a voluntary trade union organiser' amongst these female workers producing cardboards and surgical dressings. About 1,000 cardboard box makers, surgical bandage- and pottery workers finally combined and formed a Friendly Society for girls at the Roller Skating Ring, West Bars, on 26 June 1912. Sissie Holmes was its first secretary. (97)

The First World War

The outbreak of the First World War further showed Rose Smith the limitations of Marxist socialism in Britain. Not only did it suffer from various internal dissensions, show no

real interest in politicizing working-class women, but it would also reject one of the most distinguishable axioms of the socialist movement: the international solidarity among working-class men and women in times of a capitalist-instigated war.

Smith attended her second WEA summer school at Balliol College when the First World War was actually declared. The next weeks and months became a 'very confusing time' and 'a very trying experience' for her. Like any other politically engaged person on the left before the war, Smith thought that the European nations would avoid a clash, that a world war would be economically impossible, and that socialists should not support their individual national governments in any war effort. (98)

Then, in August 1914, "the socialists all threw in their hats" (99) and renounced internationalism. In Oxford, amongst her own Marxist classmates, she found some "who were obviously whiffling and whaffling about how they stood in relation to the war." On her return to Chesterfield she found the small SDF group splitting on the war, too, and those few "who opposed it [the war] strenuously, they had a hard time." Women did not behave differently either. Smith watched how some women felt so pro-war that they "were completely swept off their feet." In the big cities "there were all these society dames and middle-class women going about giving white feathers to anyone they saw [not] in uniform." The suffragettes

"switched off their campaign." Famous female performers in the music halls, such as Vesta Tilley and Nellie Wallace, "were really whipping it up, putting on the jingoistic stuff and whipped up the recruits into the army."

Smith found herself in "a curious predicament," was deeply shocked, felt politically betrayed and isolated. As a woman she found it difficult to understand how some women could be so jingoistic and willingly send their husbands, sons, and boyfriends to be killed; how men could talk one way and the next week reverse their views entirely out of some mystical political expediency.

So she decided to change her personal life. She married Alfred Smith, returned to Chesterfield and went into munitions production. But she was so horrified by some of the working conditions, she organised the women first into trade union membership and then into pressure groups demanding better work and safety. (100)

Conclusions

Rose Smith's upbringing in a large artisan family and neighbourhood of a medium-sized industrial town and in a nation, where class compositions and political allegiances were in flux, had moulded her into a woman who was hardworking, groping to increase her general knowledge, tidy, caring and responsible. She had a sense of collectivism and solidarity as well as wilfulness and a drive for independence as an individual, and a desire for self-fulfilment as a woman.

She was conscious of her humble background and of the unequal power relation in her working-class home. They, in turn, stimulated in her an eagerness to analyse the causes of inequality and injustices in society. Although she associated with men and women of various socialist shadings and came to accept the Marxian concept of class and class struggle, she was turned neither into a strict leftwing ideologue nor was inclined to become one. But her commitment to public service, acquired in the days of her attending WEA classes, was sharpened and made her search for practical ways to improve the living and working conditions of the ordinary working men and women around her in peace and war times.

Endnotes

- (1) For a lively debate on this term among historians see S. B. Saul, The Myth of the Great Depression (London: Macmillan, 1969).
- (2) E. J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 159-165.
- (3) Robert Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain. c. 1850-1914 (London: Macmillan, 1981), 52-62; P. Stearn, "The Unskilled and Industrialization: A Transformation of Consciousness," Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 16 (1976): 249-282.
- (4) B. Keith-Lucas, The English Local Government Franchise: A Short History (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952). On women in local government before the First World War see Patricia Hollis, Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).
- (5) Arthur Balfour. House of Commons. 24. March 1902, Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 4th ser., vol. 105, col. 852-4. Frances Widdowson, Going Up into the Next Class. Women and Elementary Teacher Training, 1840-1914, Explorations in Feminism, no. 7 (London: Women's Research and Resources Centre Publication, 1980); P. W. Musgrave, Society and Education Since 1800 (London: Methuen, 1969).
- (6) At that time the disparity in male and female wages was more than 2:1. See Paul Thompson, The Edwardians. The Remaking of British Society, Table 3 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), 14; Norbert C. Seldon, Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976 (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), 51-77. Sheila Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions (London: Ernest Benn, 1977), 114-143. Anne Godwin, "Early Years in the Trade Unions." In Women in the Labour Movement. The British Experience, ed. Lucy Middleton (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 94-112.
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- History 17, no. 1 (1975): 36-61; Eric Richards, "Women In The British Economy Since About 1700: An Interpretation," History 59 (1974): 337-357.
- (10) Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).
- (11) Eric Hobsbawm, "Man and Woman: Images on the Left." In Workers: Worlds of Labour (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 94.
- (12) Andrew August, "How Separate A Sphere? Poor Women and Paid Work in Late-Victorian London," Journal of Family History 19, (1994): 285-309; Sonya Rose, Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth Century England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 126-153; Carl Chinn, They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England 1880-1939 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Sally Alexander, Anna Davin, and Eve Hostettler, "Labouring Women: A Reply to Eric Hobsbawm," History Workshop Journal 7 (1979): 174-182; Duncan Bythell, Sweated Trades: Outwork in Nineteenth-Century Britain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).
- (13) Brian Harrison, "Class and Gender in Modern British Labour History," Past and Present, no. 124 (1989): 121-158; Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Respectability," Journal of Social History, XII (1979): 336-353; Geoffrey Crossick, "The Labour Aristocracy and Its Values: A Study of Mid-Victorian Kentish London," Victorian Studies XIX, (1976): 302-328.
- (14) Catherine Hall, "Married Women at home in Birmingham in the 1920s and 1930s," Oral History 5, no. 2 (1977): 62-81.
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- (17) This characteristic of Rose Smith was highlighted by Dora Cox. Interview by author, Pontypool, Wales, 21 October 1993.
- (18) For examples of both approaches see John Burnett, ed., Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education, Family from 1820s to 1920s (London, 1982); Doris Nield Chew, Ada Nield Chew: The Life and Writings of a Working Woman (London: Virago, 1982); Grace Foakes, My Part of the River (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974); Peter Keating, ed., Into Unknown England, 1866-1913 (London: Fontana, 1981); Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1978).

- (19) Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 1, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (20) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording nos. 1 and 3; Claude Esteron, "Unforgettable Rose of Beijing," Morning Star, 19 August 1985, 2.
- (21) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5.
- (22) Catherine Hall, "Married Women," 76.
- (23) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 7, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (24) August Bebel, Die Frau und der Sozialismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974); Ann Oakley, The Housewife (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).
- (25) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording nos. 3 and 5.
- (26) Joanna Bourke, "Housewifery in Working-Class England 1860-1914," Past and Present, no. 143 (1994): 172-177. Jane Rendall, Women in an Industrializing Society: England, 1750-1880 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 85; L. Tilly and J. Scott, Women, Work and Family (New York: 1978), 195; L. Tilly, J. Scott and M. Cohen, "Women's Work and European Fertility Patterns," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 6 (1976): 462.
- (27) Elizabeth Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 137-9.
- (28) Gareth Stedman Jones, "Working-class Culture and Working-class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of the Working Class," Journal of Social History 7, (1974): 486.
- (29) Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, "Women's Work and Family," 41-42.
- (30) Recently some scholars have suggested that housework should be perceived as 'family work', based on moral obligation. See Nancy Rollins Ahlander and Kathleen Slauch Bahr, "Beyond Drudgery, Power, and Equity: Toward an Expanded Discourse on the Moral Dimensions of Housework in Families," Journal of Marriage and Family 57 (1995): 54-68.
- (31) Working-class babies were always breastfed. 'Pawks' were fed to three-months old babies. They were pieces of stale home-made bread soaked in boiling water for a few minutes, drained between two saucers, and then made tasty with a drop of milk and some sugar. Older babies were also given mashed potatoes.
- (32) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 1 and no. 4, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (33) Rose Smith, How I Became A Journalist. A Speech delivered to postgraduates of the Institute of Journalism, Beijing, 28 October 1978, 2-3.

- (34) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 2, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (35) ibid., Tape recording no. 6.
- (36) ibid., Tape recording no. 3.
- (37) Paul Johnson, Saving and Spending: The Working-Class Economy in Britain, 1870-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 144-192; Paul Johnson, "Credit and thrift and the British Working Class, 1870-1939." In The Working Class in Modern British History. Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 147-170.
- (38) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 3.
- (39) Peter Willmott and Michael Young, Family and Kinship in East London (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954).
- (40) Catherine Hall, "Married Women," 67.
- (41) Rose Smith, conversation with author, Beijing in spring 1982.
- (42) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4. On the rules of working-class courtship and marriage rites since 1900 see R. J. Gillis, For Better, For Worse, 260-284.
- (43) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 1.
- (44) ibid., Tape recording no. 1; see also her article "Enemies of Children. End the torture of Society's Victims," Daily Worker. 7 January 1952, 2. There exists no other substantial documentation on Smith's raising of her children than what was provided to the author in interviews.
- (45) This point is stressed by John Foster's study of early 19th century Oldham and Standish Meacham's analysis of the English working class in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. See John Foster, "Nineteenth-Century Towns- a Class Dimension." In The Study of Urban History, ed. H. J. Dyos (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), 281- 299; Standish Meacham, A Life Apart. The English Working Class 1890-1914 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 25.
- (46) "Public Place and Private Space. The Victorian City and the Working-Class Household." In The Pursuit of Urban History, ed. Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 212-233; M. J. Daunton, House and Home in the Victorian City (London: Edward Arnold, 1983).
- (47) J. J. Clarke, The Housing Problem. Its History, Growth, Legislation and Procedure (London, 1920), 118.
- (48) Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 1; no. 5, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (49) ibid., Tape recording no. 3 and no. 7.
- (50) ibid., Tape recording no. 3 and no. 2.
- (51) Admission Register to Whittington Moor (Webster Endowed)

- School (Infants), 7 February 1998 : D 3615/2/1.
- (52) E.J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 284-297.
 - (53) Elizabeth Bott, Family and Social Network (London: Tavistock, 1978), 103-105.
 - (54) Standish Meacham, A Life Apart, 30-59. Elizabeth Roberts, A Woman's Place, 183-201.
 - (55) G. J. Crossick, An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society. Kentish London 1840-80 (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 146.
 - (56) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 6, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
 - (57) Elizabeth Roberts, "Neighbours: North West England 1940-70," Oral History 21, no. 2 (1993): 37-45; Ellen Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London Before World War I," History Workshop, no. 15 (1983): 4-27.
 - (58) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4.
 - (59) Pat Thane, "Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England," History Workshop, no. 6 (1976): 34; Laura Oren, "The Welfare of Women in Labouring Families: England, 1860-1950." In Clio's Consciousness Raised, ed. Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 226-244.
 - (60) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording, no. 3 and no. 6. For a general background on the use of alternative medicine in working-class families, see Mary Chamberlain, Old Wives Tales. Their History, Remedies and Spells (London: Virago, 1981), 94-138; 159-259.
 - (61) M. MacDonald, "Schooling and the reproduction of class and gender relations." In Schooling, Ideology and the Curriculum, ed. L. Barton, R. Meighan and S. Walker (Lewes: The Falmer Press, 1980), 29-49.
 - (62) Winifred Horrabin, Working Class Education (London: The Labour Publishing Co, 1924). On working-class women in 19th century working-class educational institutions see June Purvis, Hard Lessons (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Barbara Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem (London: Virago, 1984), 230-237.
 - (63) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 6. See also Pamela M. Graves, Labour Women. Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918-1939 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 57-59.
 - (64) Frances Widdowson, Going Up into the Next Class, 68.
 - (65) For a discussion of the idea of the educational ladder see Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), 331-332.
 - (66) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 6.
 - (67) J. S. Hurt, Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918 (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1979), 59.
 - (68) June Purvis, A History of Women's Education in England

- (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 21.
- (69) Mr. L. Greaves, the Central Librarian at Chesterfield Library, provided the following information about this school in his letter, dated 25 February 1994, to the author: The Peter Webster School was established in Old Whittington, to the northeast of Chesterfield, as a result of a bequest from Peter Webster, who in his will of 1674 set aside £200 to purchase land and pay a schoolmaster to teach "20 of the poorest and meanest men's sons" English and Latin. By 1829 the school had 30 pupils. In the 1870s the Old Whittington school was enlarged, and new schools built at New Whittington and Whittington Moor, the latter taking the name of the Peter Webster School. After 1906 all the schools were run by Derbyshire County Council.
- (70) Whittington Moor (Webster Endowed) School (Infants) Admission Register July 1897- July 1898: D 3615/2/1.
- (71) The most famous founder and paternalist sponsor of this school was George Stephenson, the railway engineer and builder of the first railway (the Stockton-Darlington line) in 1825. For the early days of Clay Cross Science School see Marion Johnson, Derbyshire Village Schools in Nineteenth Century (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), 43-44.
- (72) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 6; 1903 Minute Book of the Education Committee, D 919C/1/17/1.
- (73) "Social Class and the Grading of Schools, Realities in Girls' Secondary Education 1880-1940," in The Education of Girls and Women. Proceedings of the 1984 Annual Conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain. London: History of Education Society, 1985, edited by June Purvis, 27- 46.
- (74) Wendy Robinson, "Pupil Teachers: the Achilles Heel of Higher Grade Girls' School 1882-1904?," History of Education 22, (1993): 243.
- (75) Pamela Horn, "The Education and Employment of Working-class Girls 1870-1914," History of Education 17, (1988): 79.
- (76) Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Derbyshire. The Technical Education Committee Minutes. 28 July 1903: D919C/1/17/1.
- (77) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 2 and 3.
- (78) See Ellen Wilkinson's autobiographical recollections: "Ellen Wilkinson." In Myself When Young by Famous Women of Today, ed. The Countess of Oxford and Asquith (London: Frederick Muller, 1938), 403.
- (79) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (80) H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 251.

- (81) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no 7. Public Record Office, London. Chief Constable of Chesterfield to Home Office. 18-19 August 1911. HO 45/10656/212470/79.
- (82) Albert Mansbridge founded the "Association to promote the Higher Education of Working Men" in 1903. In 1905 it changed its name to "Workers' Educational Association." On its origins and early days see Roger Fieldhouse, The Workers' Educational Association: Aims and Achievements 1903-1977 (New York: Syracuse University, 1977); Mary Stocks, The Workers' Educational Association. The First Fifty Years (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 9-63; Albert Mansbridge, An Adventure in Working-Class Education (London: Longmans, Green, 1920). The Chesterfield branch came into being in 1909. See The Highway 2, no. 16 (1910): 63; ibid. 5, no. 58 (1913): 199.
- (83) This is also confirmed by the statistics of 1912 for the Chesterfield class. See Albert Mansbridge, University Tutorial Class (London: Longmans, Green, 1913), 185. On women students' reluctance to register for W.E.A. classes see A. Maude Royden, "'A Chance for the Women.'" Commentary on the Joint Committee of WEA and Oxford University Extension Delegacy," The Highway 1, no. 3 (1908): 46-47.
- (84) For origins and aims of these courses see the Dean of Christ Church, "University Problem in Relation to Labour," The Highway 1, no. 1 (1908): 8-9; Oxford and Working-Class Education. Report of a Joint Committee of University and Working-class Representatives on the Relation of the University to the Higher Education of Workpeople. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908; new edition by Sylvia Harrop, (Nottingham: Nottingham University Press, 1987), 241-268.
- (85) On impartiality see Oxford and Working-Class Education, 143-44, 176 and 180; Roger Fieldhouse, "The 1908 Report: Antidote to Class Struggle?," ibid., 30-47.
- (86) Violet Markham (1872-1959), a local and national social reformer, established the Chesterfield Settlement in 1903. Schools for mothers and crippled children were held there along the lines of Mary Ward's Passmore Edwards experiment. Rose Smith referred to her as someone belonging to those who called themselves "Radicals" but really was "a local do-gooder." Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4. For a recent academic study on Violet Markham's social and political work see Jane Lewis, Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991), 262-301; on settlements in Britain see Martha Vicinus, Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women (London: Virago, 1985), 211-246.
- (87) This is also confirmed by A. Mansbridge, University

- Tutorial Classes. A Study in the Development of Higher Education Among Working Men and Women (London: Longmans, Green, 1913), 184-185.
- (88) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 6 and no. 7. For an examination of the ideological boundaries of the WEA education, see Roger Fieldhouse, "Conformity and Contradiction in English Responsible Body Adult Education, 1925-1950," Studies in the Education of Adults 17 (1985): 121-135.
- (89) The Highway 6, no. 63 (December 1913), 58.
- (90) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 7.
- (91) ibid.
- (92) In 1881 the Democratic Federation was founded by H.M. Hyndman in London. In 1884 it changed its name to Social Democratic Federation and soon grew into a national organisation propagating a very economic-deterministic version of Marxism.
- (93) Justice, 17 March 1906, 2. ; 18 August 1906, 6. 20 October 1906, 6 ; Henry Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910 (London: Macmillan, 1967), 236- 238.
- (94) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, tape recording no. 7.
- (95) ibid.
- (96) Bob Holton, British Syndicalism 1900-1914 (London: Pluto Press, 1976), 105.
- (97) Workers' Life, 26 April 1929, 3 ; The Mansfield, Sutton & Kirkby Chronicle, 19 April 1929, 9. On the "Friendly Society" see Robinson Historical Ledger. Ref. B.78/2; for a photo of the foundation meeting on 26 June 1912 see Chesterfield and District Local History Society, ed., Robinson & Sons Ltd. Chesterfield 1839-1989 (Chesterfield: Lowlander Publications, 1989), 20.
- (98) Georges Haupt, Socialism and the Great War. The Collapse of the Second International (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- (99) All quotes in this paragraph are to be found in Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 7.
- (100) Claude Esterson, "Unforgettable Rose of Beijing," Daily Worker, 19 August 1985, 2.

Chapter 2

A LOCAL STRIKE LEADER OF WOMEN, 1919-1934

In this chapter consideration is given to Rose Smith's 'direct action' as a leader of women in the last two British mass strikes of the interwar period 1919-1934. During the General Strike and Miners' Lock-out in 1926 she organized the miners' wives in the mining town of Mansfield in Nottinghamshire. In 1930-1934 she gave organisational support to the striking female textile operators during their labour dispute against the More Loom System in Burnley and surroundings of northeastern Lancashire.

Smith frequently referred to 'direct action' in her writings of the time and also in her reminiscences in later life. What is meant by 'direct action'? As we learnt in the previous chapter, before the First World War she had associated with socialists in Chesterfield who were toying with syndicalist ideas. The term 'direct action' was an intrinsic part of syndicalist doctrine. (1) Like the Marxists, syndicalists believed in the fundamental antagonism between workers and capitalist employers, but stressed that instead of political parties only the trade unions could represent workers' interests and lead successfully the class struggle. In syndicalist parlance, therefore, 'direct action' referred

to such workers' industrial actions as strike and boycott that were conducted by the workers without any intermediaries. The aims of these actions were to improve their immediate working conditions and in the long term to change the existing social order. As unions were however more or less exclusively male organisations, this type of workers' struggle did not promote women's interests as such.

Recently Berenice A. Carroll (2) has discussed the definitions of the concept of 'women's direct action' with its strong non-violent component in various historical and national settings. She shows that women also resorted to collective resistance in the name of social change and when their interests were at stake.

As Mansfield and Burnley were dominated by two distinct occupations, which in turn required different patterns of involvement on part of women during labour disputes, this investigation will therefore focus on Smith's motivations for breaking out of her private existence of a housewife and becoming an organiser of women; on what kind of 'direct action' were made use by her in each location; and on what impact might her engagement in 'direct action' have had on the participants, the rank-and-file and other organisers, and on local antagonists. In this way, it is intended to highlight the degree of disparity and points of possible blending between the two modes of 'direct action'.

In order to understand the local power constellation in

both British towns and regions and how it affected the life of Rose Smith, it is necessary to provide a brief introduction to the main trends in the British economy. These trends shaped labour relations and gave rise to a small community of leftwing organisers in Mansfield and the Burnley area during the period under discussion.

Britain, Mansfield and Burnley, 1919-1934

Shortly after his demobilisation from the British army Alfred and Rose Smith moved to Mansfield. As the town was experiencing the overall but shortlived postwar economic boom, the couple had soon established themselves there. Alfred Smith set up a successful business as a sign painter and house decorator. Rose Smith occupied the position of a housewife and mother. In 1920 she gave birth to their twin boys, Ted and Percy.

A year later, however, the boom came to an end and Mansfield was sucked into the process of restructuring of the British economy and labour relations. As a result of some panic-stricken abandonment of wartime economic government controls, foreign competition, the contraction of world trade, and finally the 'Great Slump' after the international financial crisis of 1929-1931, Britain's staple export industries of coalmining and textiles contracted. By mid-1930s these industries had become the core of the 'Depressed Areas' of the British economy, characterised by deteriorating working conditions and huge pools of unemployed. In order to maintain

some control over their immediate work situation and to safeguard their living standard, the men and women employed in the mining and textile industries decided on mass strikes.

Simultaneously the period witnessed the dismantling of the wartime machinery of the government, which had required the collaboration of the trade unions to ensure smooth functioning, and the return to the strict separation of the industrial and political spheres of working-class action. British trade unions resumed their traditional role of an opposition to the government of the day. Labour unrest of the 1920s was to be marked by the resurgence of sectional divisions, as workers tried to preserve wartime gains when faced with rising unemployment and demands from employers for wage reductions. This defence of sectional labour interests further weakened the rank-and-file resistance that had been built along class lines since the early 20th century, while the power of the union leaders was strengthened. This centralisation of power within the trade union organisation was not necessarily for the advantage of women workers in times when men and women tried to keep and/or competed for scarce jobs.

In many ways Mansfield and the Burnley textile area were microcosms of all these national developments. In the first half of the 1920s the population of Mansfield was around 44,500 and the two main industries were the hosiery factories and coalmines. (3) The hosiery factories employed mostly

unmarried girls though some married women were employed on an outwork basis. Another job opportunity for unmarried women was the domestic service on the aristocratic estates in the surrounding Dukeries. (4)

In Mansfield, most of the men were employed by the mining companies operating ten pits within a radius of five miles of the town. At that time the fourth stage of the coalfield's expansion was taking place which included the sinking of the Blidworth Colliery in 1924, the opening of new shafts at Harworth, east of Mansfield, from 1919-24 and at Ollerton from 1921-27. However, from the moment the Smiths had settled in Mansfield, they witnessed this local industry being interrupted by threats of and the actual occurrence of labour disputes. In 1919 the Mansfield District Committee of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association (NMA) demanded the nationalization of the mines and the abolition of the butty system. (5) Two years later the town's life was shaken by the most costly and bitter national mining strike, in which the coalowners demanded wage-cuts, increased working hours and a return from national to old district agreements. The miners were defeated and many miners left the union. The NMA was completely drained of its funds and was deeply plunged into debts which took five years to clear. In spite of this financial crisis the Mansfield District Committee became more militant and with the help of a more leftwing programme tried to rewin support for the union among the local miners. (6)

According to Rose Smith's recollections, this was not an easy task. As the new pits of the Mansfield district were large, they required many men. By the mid- 1920s each colliery around Mansfield employed on an average between 1,000 to 1,500 men. Comparatively better working conditions, higher wages and the availability of better company housing encouraged the migration of both unskilled labour from rural areas and experienced miners from other coalfields in Britain to the Mansfield area. Most of these men and their families settled in the new colliery villages of tied houses with modern drainage, electric lighting and indoor plumbing. Social control over the inhabitants was exercised by the mine owners through the adoption of sacking any unionised employee who challenged company policies, and through the provision of recreations and education facilities by the management of the mining companies. The mining companies believed that they could create a stable and more loyal labour force in this way.(7)

Thus, in the immediate post-war years the mining settlements around Mansfield gave the appearance of being homogeneous occupational communities and thereby of being able to serve as great pools of working-class solidarity and unified actions against employers and the capitalist system. In reality, these mining villages were not one-class societies for the following reasons. Firstly, most of these 'model' villages had their own hierarchies of accommodation ranging

from small huts for the sinkers to the large mansions of resident mine managers. Secondly, as the pits were "cosmopolitan" (8), social and working relationships between men working underground had to be forged all the time. Thirdly, in political allegiance the whole mining area was not of one colour. In the villages where the coalowners had political influence, the miners and their wives voted for the Conservatives. The town of Mansfield, however, had changed from a stronghold of the Liberal Party into a Labour seat by 1918. (9) Fourthly, mining companies encouraged substantial differences in pay for the same type of work between the various collieries in the county of Nottinghamshire. The Mansfield coalfield in the Eastern Area was known for its higher wages than in other coalfields in Nottinghamshire. At the beginning of 1925 a contractor's wage ticket at Welbeck colliery in the Mansfield district is reported to have amounted to £19 10s, thirty-two shifts having been worked by this group of miners. This was good money compared with many other parts of the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Therefore the majority of the Mansfield miners felt less aggrieved over wage rates and were harder to convince to join strike call of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). (10) Finally, as in other mining communities, there was the strict separation of the spheres of life for men and women. Officially the miners' wives were categorized as 'unwaged', but in reality their domestic labour must be understood neither as an

unproductive nor as a separate additional task. As recent research (11) has shown, it was an integral part of the capitalist industrial structure of the production of coal and the hegemonic control of coalfield society by government and coalowners. As the men worked shifts, so too did the women at home, preparing meals, baths, mending clothes, keeping the house 'as clean as snow', and reproducing the workforce. Thus, housewives were crucial for the mining economy as a whole.

On the other hand, they were also a very vulnerable group due to their housebound existence. Economically, they would quickly slide into poverty when husbands' or sons' wages were lost or reduced through illnesses, injuries or death in mining accidents, and labour disputes. Politically, housewives were difficult to organize and mobilize because they existed in their individual households. These conditions generally inhibited the development of a common class identity and shared political aims and goals that could provide a sense of power. As Rose Smith recalled, the houseproud and domesticated miners' wives of the Mansfield coalfield manifested this powerlessness, as they neither had the time and inclination nor were expected to exercise influence on community affairs.(12)

In contrast, in Lancashire female cotton operatives have always played a prominent role in the formal economy and in local politics. The study of Jill Liddington and Jill Norris (13) has shown how local working-class women gave their

support to the suffrage movement of the early 20th century. With regard to industrial struggles female textile workers had been in the forefront since the first half of the 19th century. (14) It was the First World War that further strengthened the economic position of women in the cotton industry. According to Michael Savage (15), as men were drafted into the army and munition plants competed with the mills for female labour, Lancashire's cotton employers had to hire women at higher wage levels. Women worked for such kind of jobs as tenters, carders, beamers, warpers, piercers, and weavers. It was also then that weaving became predominantly a female occupation. The exception were the northeastern weaving towns where large number of men continued to work.

Thus, by the end of the war the Lancashire cotton industry was characterised by three distinct features. Firstly, women workers very much outnumbered male workers. Roughly speaking, there were seventeen women workers to every ten men in the cotton industry, whereas in all other British industries which came under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, there were only four women to every ten men. Secondly, in the cotton industry the proportion of women who continued to work after marriage, was higher than anywhere else in Britain. The Census of 1921 showed that 28 per cent of the female operatives were married, whereas, for the whole of England and Wales, only 14 per cent of females in all occupations were married. Thirdly, there was the large number of families which

relied upon a joint income or 'family wage' to which the wife and other female members of the family equally contributed. The 'family wage' provided the basis for the relatively high living standard in such weaving towns as Blackburn, Darwen, Accrington, Burnley, Colne and Nelson at the end of the war. By then the basic production process had been mechanised and women weavers routinely overlooked the machines and ensured through constant cooperation with co-workers that production was not interrupted by too many unnecessary interruption. They were the most experienced skilled workers of the textile industry, generally worked four looms and earned an average weekly wage of £ 3 in 1920. Further, most of the weavers were unionised. In 1921 the Amalgamated Weavers' Association (AWA), the second largest union in Britain, recorded 225,000 members of which the majority were females. In some areas these women had developed their own traditions of militant actions. (16) In the northeastern weaving towns, on the other hand, it was common for both men and women to take on together work issues in industrial conflicts.

Burnley was such a town and its population was 98,258 in 1931. The town specialised in the coarser trade of medium weight grey cloth. As there were no other major industries in the town's vicinity, 70 per cent of the insured population in the Burnley area was attached to the weaving sheds housing 30,000 looms. Both men and women worked as weavers. For generations, recruitment to the mill was largely by children

following parents into the trade. On leaving school a girl or boy at age 14 would spend a few weeks learning on the shop floor under the supervision of an older weaver before being moved on to be in charge of a couple of looms and finally to four looms earning a full wage. In the weaving sheds women worked under similar conditions to men, ran the same number of looms and were paid the same wage rates. According to Diana Gittins' and Sue Bruley's research (17), in the families where husbands and wives did identical work in the weaving sheds, the couples also shared household duties. It was also not uncommon that the partners encouraged each other to participate in some kind of political and social work in the party and locality. (18)

In 1929 there existed about fifty local weavers' associations which had been loosely federated into a county amalgamation (AWA). Their permanent and salaried secretaries were appointed for their technological and mathematical knowledge and for their skills in negotiating the rates and dealing with workers' grievances. By the interwar period these union leaders were known for their respectable style of contention and attempts of enlisting the employers' trust during the bargaining sessions with the employers. (19) In union work men led and dominated the policy-decision-making process although the union membership was family based. Fathers and mothers could pass on membership to their children. Generally, women seem to have found it difficult to

attend members' evening meetings because of their domestic duties and this resulted in some kind of women's underrepresentation in the leadership circles of local weavers' associations. It seems not have disadvantaged greatly female workers' interests when the British cotton industry was enjoying a monopoly position on world's markets and peaceful industrial relations boosted the family wage. However, gender problems between male union leaders and female rank-and-file operatives came to the forefront after the end of the postwar boom.

As a result of the industrialization and the rise of economic nationalism in East Asia, formerly Lancashire's principal export markets, the British industry experienced stagnation and a steady decline; mass unemployment and stiff competition for obtaining and maintaining one's job affected the cotton operatives. The hardest hit sections of the industry were those producing the simpler and coarser types of goods. Thus, in 1927, a quarter of the unemployed in the cotton industry was concentrated around Burnley and Blackburn. In 1930, this proportion had risen to more than one third.

As recent research has shown (20), the employers wanted to maintain the industry's competitiveness by wage cuts, increased working hours and changes in work practices. It was this new production system and the Labour Government's Anomalies Act of 1931 that sparked off the operatives' militant upheavals from 1930-1934 in the weaving sector of the

cotton industry. Rose Smith agitated in both these strike waves of the mid-1920s and early 1930s.

The Community of Leftwingers

Rose Smith's career as a socialist working-class agitator began in Mansfield. As the research of both Jaclyn Gier and Sue Bruley has shown (21), miners' wives engaging in institutionalized forms of protest and political activism were by and large exceptions in the interwar years. There were four obstacles that active female socialists had to overcome in mining communities. There were the physical barriers of getting away from the home, of having access to basic Marxist texts, of becoming knowledgeable about the male world of the pits and its issues, and of coping with the patriarchal attitudes of men themselves. How did Rose Smith get the better of these hurdles in Mansfield?

Recently Pamela Graves' (22) study on Labour women explores how working-class women were encouraged to find a place in the male world of organized labour politics during the interwar period. She maintains that in the early 1920s the Labour Party being organizationally weak and ideologically not very set could not yet claim dominance over labour politics. At the national polls it was not the second largest party and locally was still building up its own base of male and female supporters. As a result local politics could be lively and provide opportunities to men and women of humble background but with a social conscience to enter the political arena and

test their ideas in various ways.

This is what Rose and Alfred Smith found in Mansfield. In the early 1920s political debates were instigated in the main by a thriving branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), an emerging Labour Party branch, and a handful of syndicalists of the local Socialist Labour Party (SLP). The latter also dominated the affairs of the Mansfield Area Committee, the union branch of the NMA. They opposed the parliamentary politics of gradual reform and welfare capitalism that were preached by the ILP and Labour Party. To counter the labour movement's political incorporation, the syndicalists propagated industrial unionism and direct action as the only means to create a workers' society in Britain. (23) Such a work-circumscribed, stern political programme by itself seems not to have appealed straight away to the working-class housewives of the Mansfield area. As will be shown later, it was the committee syndicalist activities during the miners' dispute that had an impact on women's attitudes and actions.

The ILP and Labour Party branches, however, consisted of many couples, both partners being equally active in arranging and participating in peace meetings and discussions, and other more pleasurable social activities. Politics, in other words, was experienced by these men and women as a style of community life consisting of gathering of people of like minds, with the same ideals for class justice and enthusiasm and as an endeavour to translate them into reality through political

action. To what extent these party activities favoured more equality in gender relations, is difficult to assess due to lack of documentation. It is only known that by the mid-1920s there existed an active local Women's Section of the Labour Party and some Labour women are recorded to have later risen to prominent local positions of County Councillors, Aldermen, and Mayors in Mansfield. (24)

However, the SLP did leave its mark on this emerging working-class political elite of Mansfield as the promoter of the independent and self-reliant working-class education in Britain. It helped to establish and finance the National Labour College Movement (NLCM). (25) According to Rose Smith's recollections, a small and predominantly male group of influential people inside the miners' union and the stockingers' union established a branch of the NLCM shortly after the miners' lock-out of 1921 for the following three reasons:

There was a great urgency about our studies for already the leaders of the Labour Party had betrayed the workers on the war issue; then there was the threat from the coal owners that they wanted to increase the hours of work and decrease the wages. Many of the more militant miners in the absence of a political party were strongly influenced by the syndicalist movement and there was deep opposition to the Liberal-Labour politics of the trade union leaders. (26)

The branch was fairly active locally and nationally and consequently its organizer, the stockinger Charlie Brown (27), was elected to one of the three vacant places on the Executive Committee at the NCLM Conference at Crich in December 1922.

(28) Two years later the Mansfield Labour College ran six classes in which 160 students had enrolled and ten affiliations were claimed. Both Rose and Alfred Smith attended regularly these study classes. Like the other classmates they believed that only a solid analytical understanding of industrial history, Marxist economic theory and the doctrine of class struggle would help them to argue for class justice more efficiently. (29)

As the students' body of the NLCM however consisted of men and women often with the bare minimum of formal education, it was imperative for the tutors to be good and strict pedagogues when introducing the students to the theories and definitions of Marxist terms. The students were expected to memorise Marxist terms and to read the set texts at home. At the class the text would be read over paragraph by paragraph, then questions were put and answered. Smith recalled that once Charlie Brown explained Marx's concept of surplus value for many weeks. Due to her lack of training in economic theory she finally resorted to reading Tressel's book The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist. She found its discussion of Marx's concept in a literary setting "so much simpler than that theoretical stuff." (30) Her husband, on the other hand, ploughed through the whole of Karl Marx's Das Kapital.

By attending these classes Smith slowly deepened her literal knowledge of Marxist texts and acquainted herself with industrial history and the laws of evolution as seen from a

Marxist point of view. She quickly learned how and where to get information, to analyse texts and daily political events carefully. Like many working-class women of her generation, she looked with much impatience at the world of working-class poverty around her and yearned to apply her knowledge to improve living and working conditions of her class.

At the Labour College Smith also developed and maintained close interpersonal relationships with her class-mates. By the mid-1920s the colleges were in the process of expanding. They appealed to a more popular audiences and freer discussions took place at class meetings. In retrospect, Smith stressed that specific social and educational skills were required from her,

This meant that I had to learn to approach all kinds of people, how to make them want to talk, how to be a good listener, know how and when to start a conversation and how to bring it to a close without offence. (31)

As a result of her diplomacy, conducted with quiet tenacity and with the support of like-minded male friends, she had become the secretary of the Mansfield and District Labour College by early 1925. (32) As Alderman German Abbott recalled, under her industrious leadership the college expanded further. (33) Evening courses, weekend and day-schools were organised at which leaders of various trade unions were guest speakers. With discussions of union matters or general party politics she had to be careful how she organized the meetings and whom she would invite as guest speakers. As much as possible she tried to avoid being

labelled as an extremist and to stage successful meetings by not offending too many. On the weekend of 3 and 4 October 1925, Rose Smith chaired meetings of a Delegate Conference held at the Mansfield Town Hall and Kirkby Market Hall in preparation for a possible Miners' Strike. Local and district miners' union leaders were the guest speakers. A. J. Cook, the Secretary of the MFGB, had been invited as the main guest speaker but cancelled this engagement due to illness. Smith remembered that Cook's non-appearance at the meeting had suited the moderate miners' leaders in the locality. They had initially objected to her getting Cook to the Mansfield Labour College because "he was left and was backed by the Communist Party." (34)

As in many other Labour Colleges in Britain at that time, many of the tutors and students of the Mansfield college were individual members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The Mansfield local of the CPGB consisting of slightly more than a dozen members came into being around 1922 under the direction of the Sheffield District of the CPGB. Members of the Socialist Labour Party of Mansfield and Alfred and Rose Smith were its founders. (35) Meetings were held at the Smiths' home. Rose Smith was the only woman attending. It was convenient for her. Like a good working-class wife looking after her family and the family's budget she extended her duty to being host to the local's members and to the management of its finances. Many years later she recalled,

But I had to wait for nearly a year before I was admitted into full membership because I was a woman and a housewife and had small children. However you must not think that it looks as bad as it sounds because you have to understand the background. In the coalfield women were mainly confined to their homes. (36)

Being fully aware of the deep-seated male prejudice of these local male SLP comrades, she knew that she could only be politically active if she won the support of her co-workers; as she confessed, "for without that we could not meet and work on anything like equal terms." (37) In 1923, she officially joined the CPGB and "won my stripes in the movement." (38)

There were other factors that helped Smith to be accepted into the ranks of Mansfield's leftwing activists. Nationally the country faced another parliamentary election in 1923 and the socialist and labour movement was all set to win it this time. Housewives, female workers, co-operatives, and trade unionists were called upon by all working-class parties to become politically aware and active electors. By 1923 more than 100,000 women had joined the women's sections of local Labour Parties and nearly 79,000 had become members of local branches of the Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG) in England and Scotland by 1924.

Although Smith did not believe that an elected Labour Government would be a panacea, she envisaged it as the first step into the right direction in British class politics. In this she was fully supported by the CPGB's leadership that was pursuing 'United Front' tactics towards the Labour Party at that time. (39) So Smith joined the Mansfield Labour Party

because "the Party instructed me to join the Labour Party, because I had never touched them before. You see, I've been more left than that." (40) She worked particularly well with the women in the Labour Party and soon afterwards was "elected by unanimous vote as president of the Labour Party area committee" (41) and served as a delegate to the Labour-dominated Trades Council of Mansfield. It appears that her collaboration with Labour was also influenced by her personal understanding of the local power balance between political groupings, their common intentions, and the generally passive political role of the miners' wives at that time. She knew the local branches of the ILP, the Labour Party, and CPGB would not succeed in improving the living standard if they just argued faithfully for their respective party dogma and tactics. For Smith realistic and principled actions had always to speak louder than words in politics. (42)

In 1923 Smith also was an active member of the Mansfield branch of the WCG (43). She had been familiar with the work and programme of the WCG since her mother had become a member of the Chesterfield co-operative. The programme of the branch gave wholehearted support to campaigns for better maternity and family welfare and working-class women's rights to free information about birth control. These were all women's issues Smith firmly believed in. Furthermore, right from its foundation days the CPGB had favourably projected the co-operative movement as "a form of the movement of the broad

masses" (44) serving in the transition period as "a weapon in the hands of the proletariat in its fight to secure the realisation of Socialism." (45)

In the early 1920s the Mansfield WCG was still a relatively small organisation of about seventy wives of artisans, shopkeepers and the slightly better-off workers employed in the hosiery and mining industries. Rose Smith felt at ease with them because of age, similar social background and their commitment to women's equal opportunities with men without negating women's different political interests and areas of expertise as working-class wives and mothers. She befriended Mrs. Read, the Secretary of the branch. Both women were of similar character, frank, caring and liked to be efficient organisers.

The impact of the branch on wives in the surrounding mining villages was however negligible. The colliery owners and aristocracy in the Dukeries regarded the local co-operative movement as a menace of political extremists and prevented the leasing of land for the purpose of erecting co-operative shops or made it hard for the co-operatives to hire premises for their meetings. (46)

The catalyst for Smith's becoming of a socialist strike leader of women was the local branch of the Miners' Minority Movement (MMM). Ideologically the MMM was part and parcel of the continuing syndicalist tradition of direct action in the mining industry. (47) In late 1923 the Mansfield MMM branch

was founded by a group of leftwing miners who were very dissatisfied with their NMA leaders' actions. Some, such as Edgar Davies and Geo Williams (48), were CP members, but many were not and had no intentions to join the Party. This group of miners brought out factory bulletins dealing with local conditions and economic demands of the rank-and-file miner. Rose Smith was approached by these MMM men to help them with the production and distribution of their articles and leaflets. In the process of this propaganda work she became fairly knowledgeable about the workings and problems of this exclusive man's world.

According to her recollections, it was the MMM and not the CPGB that prepared for the eventuality of a national miners' strike from 1925 onwards. The co-operative movement was approached for credit and assistance, and the WCG as working-class married women's organization was lobbied to attend delegate meetings and undertake direct action.

It was also the men of this local MMM that suggested to Smith to take up public speaking in the Mansfield coalfield. A checkweighman by the name of Jack Owen acted as her strict tutor and arranged her debut in the neighbouring mining settlement of Kirkby. Standing on a three-legged stool, "knees knocking together" and feeling "as if my inside is dropping out" (49) she delivered her speech, which she took a fortnight to prepare, in just ten minutes. But she soon learned that when speaking publicly to a chance audience she had to limit

to one or two points and had to come back to them several times. In a community of housebound women such female behaviour might appear to be revolutionary. However, as Smith admitted, she had certain advantages,

I was in my early thirties and well, not so bad-looking, as they said. And there was a great deal of curiosity about women speaking. Obviously I was not a suffragette, in any case the women had got the vote by then- the middle-class women who won it- and so you had something in your favour. (50)

By setting herself apart so self-consciously from the middle-class suffragettes, Rose Smith took the position that there was no natural solidarity among women; for her only the class-based solidarity of the working class would bring meaningful and lasting changes for women and men.

A year later, during the General Strike and miners' lock-out, she was already well-known for her passionate but well reasoned "rallying of the troops." (51) She knew how to present working-class grievances, particularly those of miners' wives, as issues of the community whose solution demanded a new and wider solidarity. For her this miners' conflict was not just 'a man's job', but the women of the coalfields had to take part in their men's struggle from a separate-but-equal position. Already in summer 1925 she had written in a letter

Wherever there is a definite issue before the men, there is a definite issue before the women- both attack it from a different angle, and I would like to see a definite method of attack before each section, so that all locals experiencing the same problems may function according to one plan of campaign. (52)

A few weeks later, in front of Mansfield's women leaders of the WCG, ILP and Labour Party she expounded the political position for the eventuality of a miners' strike that irrespective of their political allegiance women should co-ordinate all their activities to one end- the overthrow of the system that created the exploitation of the workers and their families,

We sent our boys to fight the Capitalist War for "Freedom" 1914-1918 and today we will arrange ourselves beside them in the workers' only real fight- "The Fight for Bread", for a decent standard of living and the overthrow of this vile system, and the ownership of the mines and factories by the workers to be run in the interest of the workers. (53)

Hers was a political position that tried to incorporate women as equals into the syndicalist perception of a workers' state. A. J. Cook, the Secretary of the MFGB, seems to have toyed with somewhat similar ideas, when in March 1926 "he prophesied that the time was rapidly approaching when every miners' wife would be in a special section of the miners' union" (54) at a Women's meeting in Mansfield. It was this aspect that, during the summer of 1926, the National Minority Movement (NMM) tried to institutionalize by making, in Tom Mann's words, "trade unionism as the real concern of every family, not exclusively or chiefly of the men." (55) Working-class women of all categories and ages were encouraged to become parts of trade unions, which catered for large numbers of women workers, Co-operative Guilds, and trades councils and thereby to mould the policy of these institutions. Wives and

daughters of trade unionists were accepted as associate members of the NMM. In this way, the NMM wanted to foster a sense of unity, based upon class rather than sectional and sexist mobilization, that aimed at projecting and bringing about a new social order. (56)

Further research is still needed to uncover the impact of this type of thinking on other British mining communities during that period. So far only Jaclyn Gier's study has mentioned that in the South Wales coalfields the identification of both women and men with the entrenched gender ideal of the Welsh Mum prevented these NMM influences to take roots. (57) With regard to some reactions to the NMM ideas and proposals by the established trade union leaders, Rose Smith mentioned that "Bevin (58) hated the guts of everyone of the members of the NMM." (59) After all, these NMM attempts at reorganising the trade union movement did challenge the interests of the existing male union bureaucracy at local and national levels.

Rose Smith's direct action in Mansfield, 1926

The story of the General Strike and the miners' ensuing nine-months lock-out in 1926 has been well documented and written about. Suffice it to say that the miners were kept out of work from 3 May 1926 to late November 1926, when they were forced by starvation to return to work on the coalowners' terms.

With regard to the involvement of miners' wives in these

struggles very little systematic analysis of regional information has been made. Jaclyn J. Gier's study of the South-Wales coalfield concluded that women's protests borrowed heavily from traditional forms of women's collective action, while the male labour movement offered little support for women's agenda. In contrast, from the aforesaid we have seen that in Mansfield the male labour movement seems to have been more inclined to incorporate the womenfolk into their struggles. What did this imply for the forms of direct action?

During the General Strike the Mansfield Trades and Labour Council followed TUC instructions and set up its Committee or Council of Action. It consisted of representatives of fourteen pits, Labour Party and Trades Council delegates. Rose Smith became Assistant Secretary of the Council of Action as well as a member of the miners' strike committee during the ensuing lock-out. She certainly carried great responsibilities on her shoulders and was determined to live up to the trust that these men had put in her. Her husband supported her by looking after their twins during her absence and by agreeing to the use of their house as a "the distribution, propaganda and recouplement centre for the miners in Mansfield." (60)

Thus, Smith was associated essentially with the institutionalized forms of direct action of women in Mansfield. The miners' strike committee aimed at a community protest that should remain orderly, non-violent, conducted in class unity against the coal owners and engender feelings of

solidarity among the locked-out men, and among women and men. Rose Smith was entrusted with organising the Mansfield miners' wives, conducting negotiations on community issues between striking population and authorities, and reporting about the mining community's actions in short articles submitted to the papers of the leftwing labour movement, such as the Sunday Worker and The Workers' Weekly.

Being sensitive to the dichotomy of private and public spheres defining the relationship between women and men in Mansfield, Smith initially made house visits encouraging the miners' wives to attend their husbands' union meetings and to join the men in their demonstrations. She also gave them a hand in organising separate miners' wives' demonstrations with much singing of the 'Red Flag' and banners reading 'No district agreements, no increase in hours, and no decrease in wages!'

The longer the industrial dispute dragged on, the more urgent became the task to fight the coalowners' employment of blacklegs or 'scab' labour. Traditionally miners' wives regarded 'scab' labour as a moral betrayal of their communities and did not shrink from using violent means as individuals or in a group to set things right. Temma Kaplan has argued that such forms of female protest originate from "the division of labour by sex which assigns women the responsibility of preserving life. But, accepting this task, women with female consciousness demand the right that their

obligations entail." (61) More recently Judith Gerson and Kathy Peiss have presented this female consciousness as being "dynamic and malleable." (62) It is seen as the outcome of processes of negotiations and domination, and their reciprocal interaction, as well as the result of women's structural location in the community. Rose Smith's recollections of a stone-throwing miner's wife during the miners' lock-out make this process clear.

In Mansfield it was the older wives who took the law in their own hands against 'scab' labour. On one occasion an old woman tried to prevent a bus of blacklegs from setting out to the pithead by putting a brick through their bus window. The challenged and enraged men then caught, pinched her bottom and forcibly took her inside the bus to the mine. Smith, the only woman on the miners' strike committee, was then contacted to bail the woman out.

As Smith regarded this incident merely as a proof of "class feelings running very high," (63) she tried to instil feelings of class solidarity in these blacklegs during the negotiations. She did not condone the old miner's wife violent attack on the men but argued that in the ongoing class struggle the men's refusal to work was an essential weapon of defending their right to work and protect their women and children. This was particularly necessary because the capitalist employers had initiated this lockout of the miners.

For the old woman, on the other hand, the confrontation

and negotiations with these blacklegs made her more insistent about her rights as a woman. When Smith had finally convinced the men to free the woman, she defiantly demanded that "You brought me in a bloody car and you'll take me back in a bloody car." (64) The men bowed to the social rules of the mining community and drove her back to the market place in Mansfield. Thus, Rose Smith as the advocate of class thinking and the old miner's wife as representative of a female awareness had successfully contained the 'scab' betrayal in this particular incident.

The miners' strike committee also undertook its own community-based actions against blacklegs in the Mansfield coalfield. Their purpose was either to strengthen the striking people's sense of class unity or to protect the NMA as the working-class organisation from a breakaway union initiated and financed by the class enemy, the coalowners. Smith was delegated by the miners' strike committee to mobilize the miners' wives for these actions.

In mid-June 1926 about seventy miners of Blidworth, the new village built and controlled by the Bolsover Company, became notorious strike-breakers. So the Mansfield District Committee organised a protest march of miners and their wives, some with babies in prams, to this village. Smith was in charge of money collections to be taken en route, to look after the food and drink for the demonstrating men and women, and to give the final report about the march at the Mansfield

Market Place on its return late at night. The colliery management called on the police to cordon the village off and ordered the miners' families to stay indoors. Although the marchers' purpose of pressurizing the blacklegs and shaming their families was not achieved, socially the march was a success for the Mansfield men and women had been pulled together as an active community. (65)

Two months later, there were clear signs that miners' resistance was weakening in the Mansfield coalfield. Outcropping [collecting coal from the surface] had increased and rumours about a breakaway union in the Midland coalfields circulated. The Area Committee of Mansfield realised the seriousness of the situation and called a conference of delegates of the miners' lodges. It was then decided that a more solid front among the miners' wives had to be constructed. So Rose Smith, with the help of other local labour activists, set up teams of female and male pickets. They were on duty day and night, 'singing home' a 'scab' whenever needed. Women's street committees further exerted extra pressures on the wives of the offenders by shaming them in public. With applying this women's direct action systematically to the actual situation, the spread of blacklegging in Mansfield was contained at that moment in time. (66)

From about June 1926 onwards, the MFGB's strike pay to the locked-out miners began to decrease and then stopped

altogether. Nationally pressures were also mounting not only from the ruling authorities but also from conservative forces within the labour movement, including the Labour Party. In the Mansfield coalfield general social and economic distress soon became visible. Its effect was twofold: firstly, the norms defining gender relations revealed a new complexity, as women and men bargained with each other for sparse resources in this mining community. Secondly, Smith and other local labour activists found it harder to organise a committed mass defense of working-class social rights and to be successful in the negotiations with the authorities.

The handling and outcome of the question of poor relief to single miners makes this clear. In Mansfield it was the most dominant social issue at that time. The Board of Guardians of Mansfield was unwilling to give any relief for single men. As single men made up a considerable number of the workforce in this developing coalfield, colliery owners tried to use them as pawns in their strike-breaking game. (67) This was well understood by Rose Smith and other labour activists of the women's section of the local Labour Party and the local WCG. Smith spoke at public meetings at the Market Place, stressing the acceptance of poor relief as a right. She would demand the raising of the scale of relief and the awarding of it to single men as a grant and not as a loan. She also was in the forefront of women's demonstrations to the workhouse, called 'the Grubber', where she and Labour councillors met

with the Clerk of the Board of Guardians. As she recalled, the female demonstrators all "wore pawn tickets like medals on their chests." (68) It was a visual representation used by these Mansfield women as a form of direct action demanding rectification of their plight. Many of these women had been forced to sell or pawn their wedding ring, their most precious possessions, so that their families could be fed. The local liberal press then reported on the multi-layered interaction between political activists and gender conscious male and female spectators:

On each side of the street the marchers were watched by a fair number of female and male spectators. Some of the marchers animated the watching crowd to join them with the words "You'll get nothing standing there." Some joined, others refused. One man in the crowd remarked that "it was a poor beast that would not fight for its cubs" and he was met by the rejoinder from a woman close by that "they would all be better at home attending to their children." (69)

With regard to food and clothing provisions the mining community of Mansfield was also forced to undertake its various emergency measures. As in other mining towns during past miners' strikes and this lock-out, soup kitchens were organised by groups of women with or without the support of local churches and the cooperative movement. Rose Smith was not directly involved in this type of communal effort, although she seems to have kept abreast with it. She recalled humorous scenes of teams of ordinary men and women being engaged in activities which E. P. Thompson has regarded as manifestations of the "moral economy." (70) Nightly poaching

of sheep and wildfowl on the aristocratic estates in the Dukeries was a demonstration of defending the people's common right to food. It also was a source of meat supplies to these privately run soup kitchens. (71)

In contrast Rose and Alfred Smith's contribution focused on turning their home into the depot of the Workers' Relief Fund (WIR) (72) for clothing and foodstuffs sent from abroad by international labour agencies in the spirit of class solidarity. The distribution of this international aid was conducted by Rose Smith without any political bias but aimed at maintaining a united front of workers and their families in Mansfield. With the help of the various miners' lodges in Mansfield she sent the main bulk of these goods to the families most in need. WIR parcels were also distributed directly to families on the Westfield Recreation Ground in Mansfield, in Sutton-in-Ashfield and at Mansfield Woodhouse in the autumn of 1926. WIR supplies were also shared among the Women's section of the local Labour Party in the name of the Lady Slessor Fund [Labour Party Fund], and the Trades Council of Mansfield. With the start of the new school year, the problems of children's boots reached a crisis point in Mansfield. Realizing that innocent children would be deprived of their right to education, Smith immediately offered her yard to fourteen miners to work there as cobblers mending shoes for the school children. (73)

The reaction of the forces of law and order to strikers'

and wives' direct action finally led to violent confrontation. Women were harassed, ordered indoors, pushed brutally aside at public meetings. Arrests of men and women increased. As a well-known public speaker Smith knew she was under close watch by plain-clothed policemen. And many a time she felt that "this might be it" but then "I find a passage would be opened through the crowd for me and these young pit boys had constituted themselves as my body-guards, pretty strong fellows." (74)

One day when she and her followers were off guard, the authorities decided to teach her some caution. On 21 June 1926, A. J. Cook, the Secretary of the MFGB, passed through Mansfield and addressed a big audience estimated between 7,000 and 12,000 men and women on the Westfield Lane Recreation Ground. Smith sat next to him on the platform. In his speech A. J. Cook gave his support to the granting of workhouse relief to single men as 'a right to life'. After the conclusion of this meeting a mass demonstration of single men was led by Alderman Norris, Walter Owen and Rose Smith to the workhouse. On the way skirmishes with the police occurred; a woman got hurt and three men were arrested. On the following day Smith was despatched by the strike committee to the police station to enquire about these arrests. It was in the police station that she was also arrested and charged under the Emergency Regulations with having "committed an act likely to cause disaffection among the civilian population" (75) while

making a speech at the Market Place the day before. Although Smith denied having made any provocative statement, the magistrate fined her four guineas. It was her first brush with the forces of law and order. She took it in her stride, conscious that many other activists suffered the same fate during this class conflict. She remembered her father's words "We've never bred a quitter. You stick it out, believe in it, you stick it out." (76)

In October 1926 the Mansfield Board of Guardians stopped the payment of poor relief to the families of the locked-out miners. The State, the local authorities and the coalowners were determined to starve the miners back to work. By early December the MFGB had to surrender and the struggle for unity within the federation had begun; for the NMA it meant a struggle of survival because it was challenged by the new Spencer's Company Union; for Alfred and Rose Smith it meant to salvage as much of their business and savings from the victimisation unleashed by the coalowners against activists. In May 1927 The Plebs announced that as a result of the boycott of their business the Smiths had been forced to sell all their belongings and had left the town. (77)

The defeat of the General Strike and lockout, the loss of the family home and livelihood in Mansfield forced Rose Smith to reassess her personal situation, achievements and future plans. After many discussions with close friends and family members, some of whom warned her of possibly dire consequences

for her family life if she continued to work for the CPGB, she decided to remain committed to the NMM and Party and to work for them for the following reasons: her decision to embark on a revolutionary path in Mansfield had essentially been motivated by a deeply rooted desire of obtaining social and economic equality which had been denied to her class for so long. This resolve of hers had not been weakened by the defeat of the miners. The almost spontaneous manifestation of moments of solidarity among working-class organisations in the community and shifting boundaries of gender relations during the industrial conflict raised her hopes in social changes she ardently desired. As she admitted in 1978,

I continued to speak and help with the organisation of the coming struggle, mindful that there was no real security for my children and seeing my husband's business dwindling. It was a hard decision to make. I could see it slipping away, but I realized that there could be no security for my children until the whole working class was liberated. (78)

The General Strike and miners' lock-out also had its impact on Mansfield women's perception of their public role in society and labour movement. While the local CPGB recorded fifty new women members, other women sought their political identity in new organizations or unions of miners' wives that were attached to the MFGB and sometimes also affiliated to the Labour Party. Mansfield was one of the towns where such a section existed. It seems that the ideas of the NMM's leaders for women to stand shoulder to shoulder with their men in matter of community and labour matters had survived the defeat

of the miners. The cosmopolitan nature of the Mansfield coalfield and its mining culture, which was much less entrenched than that of the family pits in South-Wales, might have contributed to this development. (79)

The Burnley and Darwen Strikes, 1930-1934

Meanwhile in Lancashire's weaving sector of coarse goods employers, organised in the Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association (CS& MA), were grappling with how to offset a shrinking export market. It was the Burnley employers who proposed the more looms system to the Burnley Weavers' Committee in 1928. It implied that an operative was to increase the ration of four looms to six or eight. It was claimed that this new arrangement cut total production costs by between two to seven per cent and resulted in a saving of twenty per cent in weaving wages. The question was then taken over by the Central Committee of the AWA who realised the issue had implications for the whole of the county.

Traditionally the AWA had never opposed the introduction of new technology as long as it did not make the weaver's workload harder and allowed her/him to share in the profit. In the late 1920s the AWA was also not unwilling to find solutions to the problems the industry faced. Therefore, after some lengthy negotiations about a standard wage of 50s. and other guarantees, the AWA agreed to a 12-months experiment of increasing the number of looms per operator. At the beginning, March 1929, the the scheme was applied only on four per cent

of the looms at ten mills in Burnley.

What the AWA had however not expected was the Great Depression and its destructive effects on Burnley's employment market a few months later. Unemployment and short-time working soon hovered around the 50 per cent mark in the area. Continuing to operate the more loom system under these conditions began to arouse rank-and file opposition in the town. At the end of March 1930 the Burnley Weavers' Committee issued a strong recommendation against renewing the experiment, stating that there was no guarantee that the more loom system would "enable us to recoup an appreciable volume of our lost trade." Instead, the result would be "the displacement of a large number of weavers, many of whom would never again obtain employment in the cotton trade." (80)

In October 1930 the employers proposed their new wages list and two months later announced the introduction of eight-loom working where they chose. (81) On 5 January 1931, eight Burnley mills working the eight-loom system went on strike. Two days later the Burnley employers began a general lock-out. At a special AWA meeting, the members turned down the executive's request to obtain powers to negotiate the issue with the employers. The County lock-out lasted from 17 January to its call-off by the employers on 13 February 1931. Thereafter tempers cooled.

The more looms experiment in Burnley was shelved till spring 1932, when some firms in Burnley tried to reintroduce

the more loom system as well as wage cuts. After much unsuccessful negotiation with the employers and internal trade union wrangling over whether or not to call a strike, the Burnley Strike started on 24 July. A month later spinners and carders joined the strikers in the county. On 27 September 1932, the strike ended after each sector of the cotton industry had signed the Midland Agreement. The weavers were faced with a wage cut of 1s. 8d. in the £ and the acceptance of the more loom system by the AWA. (82)

Rose Smith who had arrived in Burnley as a CPGB party organiser and spokeswoman of the Communist trade union movement or National Minority Movement (83), participated in both events. In autumn 1930 she tried to draw the attention of the rank-and-file operatives to the new political campaign for the Workers' Charter.

This campaign opened in August 1930 with the publication of Harry Pollitt's pamphlet entitled "The Workers' Charter". The aim of the campaign was to break down the barriers between CPGB and the industrial workers. Having just returned from Moscow, where she had attended the Fifth World Congress and the First Women's Conference of the Red International Labour Unions (RILU), Smith was naturally inclined, as she wrote, to do "hard spade-work" amongst factory women, who showed "growing dissatisfaction" and by "making the women's committees strongholds for the support of Revolutionary Trade Union organisations." (84) So she propagated the NMM's 'call

to action' in meetings, public speeches and reports. She is also thought to have written the Textile Minority Movement's agitational pamphlet against the introduction of the more loom system. It was intended for a weavers' rank-and-file readership who was to be aroused against their AWA officials.

The pamphlet's premise was that the weavers' trade union officials by negotiating with the cotton masters were "not against the more loom system in principle, but at the moment are putting up a sham pose to deceive the weavers on the question of the fall back wage." (85) She further argued that the more loom system was an all-side attack on women workers. It increased the female weaver's workload in the weaving shed, involved heavy wage reductions for the women, made older women unemployed and be replaced by men, and encouraged the transfer of unmarried jobless women weavers into the unskilled and lowly paid domestic service. So she demanded that all operatives strongly opposed the more loom system, arbitration and continued to fight for the retention of the old Piece Price List and for a 25 per cent increase in wages; a £2 per week minimum wage for all cotton workers and for the immediate abolition of all fines and compensation for bad materials. (86) Essentially it was a programme reinforcing and defending existing conditions in the weaving sector for which she lobbied in the next two years.

Smith's tasks were multifaceted during these years of industrial strife in northeastern Lancashire. With the help of

local Communist operatives inside and outside the weaving sheds she tried to organise a network of revolutionary strike committees consisting of both men and women, and played the role of coordinator between their activities in the area and advisor on practical organisational and theoretical matters. In this way she collaborated with Jim Rushton, Arthur Riley, Amy Hargreaves, Bessi and Harold Dickenson and many others. While they taught her about the problems of the northeastern cotton industry and explained to her the power constellation within the local labour movement of each town, she served them as speaker who was known for being well informed about the industry. As she recalled, she also acquired this knowledge in the local reference library shifting through the trade papers, company and trade union reports, and the local paper for more local colour.

I learned to use this acquired knowledge to create a bridge between the workers and myself when trying to assemble meetings at mill gates. I used the bridge as a verbal tool to direct their attention to the root cause of their parlous plight and to direct attention to the need for class action. (87)

Naturally she also participated in all kinds of mass actions, led demonstrations to mill owners' residences, joined the picket lines in front of the various mills. Occasionally there were pitched battles at the mill gates with 'knobsticks' [blacklegs] trying to enter or leave, and police trying to protect them. Smith also served as go-between between these regional activists and the CPGB's executive in London that was far removed from the industrial conflict but sent out

instruction on how to proceed in it.

Thus, at one of the Central Committee meeting in September 1931 Rose Smith advised the London comrades to devise their directives with more caution in order to avoid making too many organisational errors. It was necessary to "know in our localities the tempo of the fight developing inside particular factories so that we are able to decide where we shall concentrate and what shall be the basis of our factory grouping." (88)

She then cited three mishaps from the Burnley lockout to show how the organisation at each stage of a strike needed urgently to be improved. Firstly, in Cleckheaton the Communist agitators succeeded in getting the girls out on strike one morning but had forgotten to book a room to discuss the purpose of the industrial strife with the strikers. So the girls drifted back to work and nothing was achieved. Secondly, she advised that some thought should be given to how to end a strike or lockout, particularly when the majority of the strikers were willing to go back to work. In 1931 the CPGB had instructed their local members not to return to work. The consequence was, Smith recalled with bitterness, that "our own comrades were isolated, and now everybody looks upon them as poor fools, with contemptuous pity." (89) Thirdly, Smith reminded the executive that "three months after this magnificent fight, the cotton textile bureau calls a conference and no one is present beyond our usual circle."

(90) Therefore she demanded that more attention had to be paid to the 'follow-on' after the strike. Militant actions needed to be consolidated through a programme in peace time otherwise lasting change was not brought about.

In summer 1932 Rose Smith once again reported to the Central Committee during a discussion on party building. It had been rather a self-critical and gloomy gathering in London. So Smith tried to counter this pessimism by registering some of the CPGB successes in Lancashire. This time she believed that "we have broken down some measures of isolation" (91) in the Shuttleworth-Mill strike at Earby, a neighbouring town of 6,000 inhabitants. 1,300 weavers had struck. She attributed this change to the nightly propaganda meetings held on the activities of the rank-and-file strike committee. They raised the political level of local comrades who in her righteousness were described by her as "politically backward".

With regard to building 'a trade union opposition' during a strike she advocated that "we must look for the most developed workers and draw them into our confidence and make them a fraction to work within the body of the rank-and-file strike committee." (92) These 'developed workers' were seen by her as the vanguard in the class struggle forging gender and various sectional class interests into one united front. They had to cooperate with local sympathetic and supportive union officials, on the picket lines to foster solidarity between

the female unemployed and the striking weavers, between men and women as well as between unionised and non-unionised workers during strikes.

By mid-August 1932 women predominated on the Provisional Strike Committee in Burnley; some took the platform, other acted as collectors of funds for the Relief Committee and maintained a solid strike front despite being denied Public Assistance Relief. A month later they had managed to spread the strike to other sections of the cotton industry. Rose Smith regarded them as "heroic cotton workers" and published stirring calls to them to be wary of AWA leaders who "have agreed to assist the National Government to get us back into the sheds again;" who "are now trying to convince us that the National Government through Arbitration will see that we get a 'fair do'." (93)

But she realized that after many weeks of strike women as mothers and wives faced tremendous hardships at home. So she once again linked up with the WIR which promptly collected £2,200 for the Lancashire miners around Britain. In Burnley she set up a WIR group, served as the chairman of its executive committee (94) and was once again in charge of distributing food parcels to needy weavers which food convoys had brought to the town. Further, she organised another twelve WIR groups in the county. After the end of the strike they continued to raise support for Hunger Marches and special relief to necessitous mothers and children. (95)

In 1933, the economy showed some modest signs of improvement which came useful for the revival of the Labour Party and the engineering union in the region but did not positively affect women's employment opportunities in the declining cotton industry. In London Smith tried to awaken the Central Committee to this fact. She argued that concerning women already organised in the trade unions of textile workers and clothing workers the CPGB "should make a special effort to see that the women are drawn into leading positions in the Union. I think if we can do this it will give us some status in the unions." (96)

In Lancashire, a few months later, she used the Darwen strike to fight this sexual division within the weavers' trade union. In late November 1933, 160 operatives started their strike at the Hope Mill. The bone of contention was that the employer tried to extend the more loom system Agreement of January 1933 covering plain cloths (97) to the production of fancy cloths in the mill. In addition, the cotton master had also proposed a reduction of 25 per cent in the operatives' wages. As in southern Lancashire some 'rogue employers', i. e. non-members of the CS&MA, were already making a habit of breaching the January 1933 agreement by adopting the more loom system to higher grades of cloth, the AWA leaders decided on negotiations with the CS&MA for a legalised extension of the more loom system to fancy cloths. An extension, however, was not what the majority of 'fancy weavers' desired, as it would

involve much more careful supervision of work process and the machinery for lower wages. So the Darwen Weavers' Association had called this strike officially to make the AWA adhere to their wishes.

After six weeks of strike the employers tried to reopen the mill having 75 per cent of the looms being run by black labour. The strikers were adamant and forced about the mill's reclosure. Some of them then approached Rose Smith and Jim Garnett for assistance and advice on how to strengthen their own leadership. Both obliged.

For Smith it was an opportunity to encourage female workers to become active trade unionists. She arranged a special meeting with these women and listened carefully to their viewpoint. Afterwards she related her findings to a meeting of about 150 strikers at the Weavers' Institute, to which she and Jim Garnett had been invited on 10 January 1934. Consequently a Strike Committee of fifty was set up, including some members of the Weavers' Executive. A female operative was elected secretary, and a large number of women also served on four subcommittees that were in charge of organising mass picketing, propaganda, collections, and socials. The Strike Committee immediately got down to work, and Smith gave a helping hand to it behind the scene.

Soon women pickets at the mill gates were reported to amount to ninety. Other labour organisations were contacted in town and a mass demonstration in support of the strikers'

demands was held under their auspices on 18 January 1934. Hundreds of women workers marched behind banners of the Trades Council, the Darwen Weavers' Association, the Labour Party, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) and the CPGB. Finally, there were the efforts of the Strike Committee to extend the strike to all the mills in Darwen. A striker's paper was published and meetings of solidarity in other local mills and at mill gates became common events.

The AWA in Manchester was contacted by the Darwen Weavers' Association to provide the necessary financial assistance. The AWA's General Council refused full financial support with the argument that unemployment had depleted the union's coffers to such an extent that assistance for Darwen would mean a levy on other districts which they could not afford. On the advice of Smith, the second mass demonstrations of cotton workers was organised in Darwen two weeks later. Its intention was to show how the local operatives themselves could organise an extension of the strike movement in the town.

It was a delicate undertaking that demanded much perseverance and courage from these women. They faced opposition from Church, press, employers and scores of police, imported from neighbouring towns, who did everything in their power to break the resistance of these operatives. Women were forbidden to stand on their doorsteps, were visited at home and warned by the police. The Strike Committee countered by

approaching the Trades Council to mobilise all its affiliated membership against this police tyranny.

The conflict was finally settled by the 1934 Cotton Manufacturing Act which legalised weavers' wages and was accepted by the weavers in a ballot. (98) Rose Smith, however, regarded it as a betrayal of the female operatives caused by a lack of political will, as her comment made at a meeting of the Politburo reveals,

In Lancashire there is no attempt to deal with the question of cotton politically, and that is one of the reasons why we fail to win the people over to the Party. They are prepared to follow the policy of Naesmith [*] where they believe that they are going to get increased wages. (99)

At first glance this seems rather an unfair assessment to make of Lancashire men and women who undertook 'direct actions' for nearly five years trying to save their industry and livelihood. It is particularly unfair in the light of the CPGB not having developed a viable alternative industrial policy for the region which would have protected working women's interests and rights through the creation of new jobs. But what Smith essentially admitted in the above statement was that she and other comrades had failed in Lancashire to convince the people that women working and earning wages should not be seen as an economic necessity to keep living standards but as an intrinsic political right.

Furthermore, she realized that it was impossible to achieve political power for working-class men and women through industrial strikes and trade unions, as the

syndicalist tradition had propagated. Having not succeeded in winning working-class support by 'direct actions', she tried the more traditional arena of political struggle. This is the theme of the next two chapters.

Conclusions

In response to deteriorating conditions in the mining and cotton textile industries of interwar Britain Rose Smith joined various political and women's groups to maintain the working-class rights and living standard in the respective communities of Mansfield and Burnley. Being somewhat under the influence of syndicalist thought she believed that strike actions on the part of the workers and the community would bring about more power and justice to the working class.

In Mansfield, a town characterised by strict sexual segregation and division of labour, Smith took up the role of a leader of miners' wives. She and other women tried to adapt traditional and more morally based forms of women's protest to a trade union controlled, institutionalized political struggle. The result was that after the end of the industrial conflict some of the local female activists set up their own political union of miners' wives working for women's influence and incorporation in the labour movement.

In Burnley, where wives and husbands worked as partners in weaving sheds and homes, Smith was involved in strike activities safeguarding the right to work of women and women's wages as the necessary constituent part of the 'family wage'.

As she regarded women's right to work to be primarily political, her contributions through the 'direct actions' in the locality attempted to transform the existing trade unions into political organisations responsive to rank-and-file interests and pressures.

Endnotes

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- (32) Plebs 17: 53.
- (33) I am grateful to Fred Westacott for an excerpt from Alderman Abbott's letter, read at the farewell dinner to Rose Smith on 4 March 1960 in Chesterfield.
- (34) Plebs 17: 415; ibid.: 453. Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5.
- (35) The decision of the Mansfield syndicalists to become a part of the newly founded CPGB local must be understood as a response to a decision made by the leaders of the national movement of Shop Stewards in Britain. It was at the Comintern meeting in 1920 that the attending British group of syndicalists decided to be integrated into and commanded by the Comintern. See Wayne Thorpe, "The Workers Themselves," 125-160; for the effects of this

- decision on the SLP see R. Challinor, The Origins of British Bolshevism, 257-277.
- (36) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9.
- (37) Smith, How I Became A Journalist, 3.
- (38) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9.
- (39) Jane Degras, "United Front Tactics in the Comintern 1921-1928." In International Communism, ed. David Footman. (London: Chatto-Windus, 1969), 9-22.
- (40) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4.
- (41) Workers' Life, 26 April 1929, 3.
- (42) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 8; no. 5.
- (43) On the history of the Co-operative Women's Guild see Naomi Black, Social Feminism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 107-159; Jean Gaffin, David Thoms, Caring and Sharing. The Centenary History of the Cooperative Women's Guild (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd.), 1983; Catherine Webb, The Woman With the Basket. The Story of the Women's Co-operative Guild 1883-1927 (Manchester: Co-operative Wholesale Society's Printing Works, 1927); Evelyn Sharp, Buyers and Builders: The Jubilee Sketch of the Women's Co-operative Guild 1883-1933 (London: Women's Co-operative Guild, 1933). The Mansfield branch of the WCG had been founded as an auxiliary of the Mansfield Co-operative Society in December 1908. It was Mansfield's first separatist organisation for married working-class women. Mrs. Read was the elected branch Secretary from 1916 to 1940. See Henry Brown, Mansfield's Co-operative Advance 1864-1950 (Mansfield: Mansfield, Sutton and District Co-operative Society Ltd., 1950).
- (44) "Communism and Co-operation," The Communist, 30 December 1922, 6.
- (45) ibid.
- (46) R.J. Waller, The Dukeries Transformed, 88-89.
- (47) The Miners' Minority Movement came into being in 1923 as part of the National Minority Movement. It built on the Shop Steward movement, a militant rank- and-file trade union movement of the war period in Britain. For a general history, see Roderick Martin, Communism and the British Trade Unions 1924-1933. A Study of the National Minority Movement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
- (48) 'Geo' might be an abbreviation for 'George'. Rose Smith and G. Williams himself used the name of 'Geo Williams'. See Rose Smith, "March of the Women," Workers' Weekly, 18 June 1926, 2; Geo Williams, "Best Men in the Country," Workers' Weekly. Miners' Supplement, no. 2.
- (49) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9.
- (50) ibid.

- (51) Mrs. I. Hackett, interview by author, Tape recording, Mansfield, 13 November 1993: She stressed that Rose Smith had "no air of frivolity about her." During the General Strike Mrs. Hackett, then a young teenager, had accompanied her father many times to the public ground where Rose Smith delivered her rousing speeches.
- (52) Workers' Weekly, 14 August 1925, 6.
- (53) Workers' Weekly, 9 October 1925, 4.
- (54) Workers' Weekly, 26 March 1926, 4
- (55) Tom Mann, "Trade Unions a Family Affair," Sunday Worker. 25 July 1926, 7; 13 June 1926, 8; Report of the Third Annual Conference of the NMM. Battersea 28-29 August 1926; "Women Wend Their Way To Battersea," The Woman Worker, no. 5, (August 1926), 1.
- (56) R. J. Holton, "Revolutionary Syndicalism and the British Labour Movement." In The Development and Trade Unionism in Great Britain and Germany 1880-1914, ed. W.J. Mommsen and H.G. Husung (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 269-70.
- (57) Jaclyn J. Grier, Miners' Wives, 317. It is interesting to note that in the United States the syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) or wobblies took a stance, similar to that of the NMM, towards the involvement of wives in unions and industrial conflicts. See Ann Schofield, "Rebel Girls and Union Maids: The Woman Question in the Journals of the AFL and IWW, 1905-1920," Feminist Studies 9, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 334-358; Meredith Tax, The Rising of the Women (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 125-163.
- (58) Ernest Bevin (1881-1951) became leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) in 1922. He served as Foreign Secretary in Attlee's postwar government.
- (59) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9.
- (60) Peter Wyncoll, "The East Midlands." In The General Strike 1926, ed. Jeffrey Skelley (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), 178; German Abbott, letter.
- (61) Temma Kaplan, "Female consciousness and collective action: the case of Barcelona 1910-1918," Signs 7 (1982): 545.
- (62) Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiations, Consciousness: Reconceptualizing Gender Relations," Social Problems 32, no. 4 (1985): 325.
- (63) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4.
- (64) ibid.
- (65) ibid.; Sunday Worker, 13 June 1926, 8; Workers' Weekly Miners' Supplement, 18 June 1926, 2.
- (66) Workers' Weekly, 27. August 1926, 1.
- (67) Patricia Ryan, "The Poor Law in 1926". In The General Strike, ed. Margaret Morris (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 371.
- (68) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording

- no. 5.
- (69) The Mansfield & Kirkby Chronicle, 11 June 1926, 5.
- (70) E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" and "The Moral Economy Reviewed." In Customs in Common (New York: The New Press, 1993), 185-258 and 259-351.
- (71) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5.
- (72) The WIR came into being in response to the disastrous famine in Russia in 1921. Its headquarters were in Berlin and Willi Münzenberg was its General Secretary. In 1926 George Lansbury was the Secretary of the British Section of the WIR. By that time the WIR still represented a broad spectrum of leftwing forces of the British labour movement. On Rose Smith's WIR work, see The Mansfield and North Notts. Advertiser, 17 September 1926, 7; The Workers' Weekly. Miners' Supplement, 17 September 1926, 2.
- (73) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4; the Slesser Fund was set up by Lady Slesser in response to the dreadful conditions which miners' wives and children had faced during the Miners' Strike of 1910. On the Slesser Fund and the work of the Women's Section of the Labour Party during 1926, see Marion Philipps, Women and the Miners' Lock-out (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1927), 77-81.
- (74) Smith's interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5 ; The Woman Worker, no. 6 (September 1926), 3.
- (75) Manfield and North Notts. Advertiser, 25 June 1926, 8; 2 July 1926, 8; The Mansfield and Kirkby Chronicle, 25 June 1926, 5.
- (76) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9.
- (77) Plebs 19: 182.
- (78) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 9.
- (79) Jaclyn J. Gier, Miners' Wives, 286-299; on Mansfield section see Sunday Worker, 10 April 1927, 7; 27 June 1927, 3.
- (80) Cotton Factory Times, 4 April 1930, quoted by H. A. Clegg, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889. Vol. II. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 491.
- (81) Since the mid-19th century the weavers' unions had established a uniform list of rates of pay for various kinds of weaving. The importance of these lists were in standardizing the rates of pay from one mill and one town to the next, and in ensuring that women and men were given the same rates for the same work; Amalgamated Weavers' Association. Leaflet no. 2 (December 1930)
- (82) The Midland Agreement provided earnings of £2.05 for a weaver operating six looms as against an average of about £ 1.75 on four looms. It also included various guarantees

- against exceptionally low earnings. See A. Bullen, The Lancashire Weavers' Union (Rochdale, 1984), 59.
- (83) By that time NMM was already a faltering organisation. As a result of the CPGB's new sectarian policy of "class against class" the Minority Movement was under constant pressure of being liquidated as a separate organisation and merged into the overall CPGB structure after 1929. In November 1932 it had virtually disappeared. See Roderick Martin, Communism and the British Trade Unions, 122-178.
- (84) Rose Smith, "The First Women's Conference of RILU. Decisions of Immediate Importance That Must Be Carried Out. 'Equal Pay For Equal Work'," The Worker, 10 October 1930, 5.
- (85) The pamphlet was entitled Fight The Eight Looms; "Women in the Unions," Daily Worker, 14 October 1930, 2.
- (86) The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) was formed during the summer of 1921 at a conference in Moscow, which was attended by R.P. Arnot, Tom Mann, Harry Pollitt and Ellen Wilkinson, later the Minister of Education in Attlee's Labour government. The RILU's aim was to "win unions from the policy of class collaboration to that of class struggle." Its opponent was the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions to which most British trade unions were affiliated. See B. D. Vernon, Ellen Wilkinson, 1891-1947 (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 62; J. Klugman, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Vol. I. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1968), 109.
- On Smith's public speaking engagements see Roderick Martin, Communism and the British Trade Unions, 147; Daily Worker, 11 October 1930; 24 October 1930;
- (87) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 8-9; on the local comrades see Sue Bruley, "Gender, Class and Party": 94-96; Bessie Dickenson, James Rushton and his Times 1886-1956 (Salford: The Working Class Movement Library, n.d.); Margaret McCarthy, Generation in Revolt. London: Heinemann, 1953), Chapter 8.
- (88) Minutes of the Central Committee Meeting of the CPGB, 14 March 1931.
- (89) ibid.
- (90) ibid.
- (91) Minutes of the Enlarged Central Committee Meeting of the CPGB, 4 June 1932.
- (92) ibid.
- (93) The Weekly Worker, 13 August 1932, 6; The Cotton Strike Leader, 10 September 1932.
- (94) Minutes of WIR Burnley, 3 November 1932; they are handwritten by Rose Smith.
- (95) Searchlight, (November 1932): 11.
- (96) Minutes of the Central Committee Meeting of the CPGB. 17-18 February 1933.
- (97) The January 1933 Agreement allowed only more looms

production of cloths that were made up to and included five lifts and with not more than 200 threads to the square inch; cloths made with two ends in a dent not to exceed 120 reed; cloths made with three or more ends in a dent not to exceed 140 reed.

- (98) Daily Worker, 11 January 1934, 3; 15 January 1934, 3; 20. January 1934, 6; 1 March 1934, 3 ; 5 April 1934, 3.
- (99) Minutes of the Politburo of the CPGB, 18 November 1934

[*] Andrew Naesmith (1888-1961) Oldham Weavers Association and later of Todmorden and District Weavers Association. Assistant Secretary, AWA, 1925-28; Secretary, 1928-53.

Chapter 3

THE FORMAL POLITICIAN, 1926-38

In this and the following chapter I shall examine Rose Smith's activities as a working-class politician during the period 1926-1938. Anna Coote and Polly Pattulia have shown that there are two ways for a woman to gain a sense of power and to wield more political power: the individual route and the collective route. (1) In this chapter the first way will be analysed and 'political' will refer to Smith's activities specifically identified with formal, hierarchically structured institutions of politics. Her involvement in 'informal' politics via the more women-community based path, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Smith's involvement in formal politics centred around two tasks: firstly, shortly after the end of the miners' lockout she committed herself to a full-time career in the CPGB and therefore was concerned with constructing a distinct political interest community, the party organization, and with extending party influence. Secondly, Smith tried her fortunes in formal party politics by standing as a candidate of the CPGB in parliamentary and municipal elections. The locations of Smith's formal political career were Mansfield, the weaving district around Burnley in north-eastern Lancashire, and

London.

The questions discussed in this chapter are: how did Rose Smith arrange her personal life as a member of the communist community? How successful was she as a party cadre? To what extent did her gender and her political allegiance to the CPGB determine the outcome of her political work? Did the status of the CPGB within the national political system, its political programme and strategies impact decisively Smith's success as a public figure? Finally, how did the evolving political structures in two working-class occupational communities affect her? The last question is particularly important for the understanding of the CPGB's impact during that period, as we are still lacking a systematic study on the CPGB's performance in British municipal politics. Before we can answer all these questions it is necessary to provide a national setting for Smith's political career.

The Politics of Class and Gender, 1926-1938

The period 1926-1938 witnessed the completion of the process of democratisation of the British political system, begun with the passing of the Reform Act of 1832. Both the working class and women were integrated on equal terms into the national polity. Thereby they were able for the first time to have some, albeit indirect, influence over parliamentary decisions. In 1928 the enactment of the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act enfranchised women between the ages of 21 and 30 and allowed a woman to register as a

parliamentary voter in respect to her residence. By that time, as a result of the 1918 Representation of the People's Act, already nine million women enjoyed the vote, and under 5.3 million new female voters, the 'flappers', were added to the polling list of the 1929 general election. The majority of them, namely 3.29 million, were aged between 21 and 29. Another 1.95 million women were over 30 years old and included resident domestic servants, unmarried women occupying furnished lettings, unmarried women residing with relatives, and widows living with their married children. Finally, 1.9 million of men aged 21 and more were enfranchised in 1929. All in all, the electorate was expanded from 21.7 million in 1924 to 28.9 million in 1929. (2) Thus the process of establishing a mass electorate that all existing parties could mobilise for their own cause, had been completed.

As recent research has shown (3), since the election of 1918 the Labour Party had vigorously solicited the uncommitted women's votes with the clear intention to expand its strength. Being aware that the new female electorate could succumb to the demands of the feminist movement or contribute to unexpected swings of class crossover that could prevent the party from winning the election, all Labour election manifestoes of the 1920s had tried to counter this by paying special attention to women in a paragraph or sentence. It explained to women voters the party's commitment to a policy of sexual equality and the eradication of social injustice and

economic exploitation of women. Furthermore, during the 1920s the Labour Party appears to have been keener to adopt working-class women candidates than either the Conservatives or Liberals. For the four general elections during the period 1918 to 1924 Labour selected 50 women candidates compared with 23 Conservative women candidates and 38 Liberal women candidates. (4)

By late 1924 the Labour Party had become the main working-class party at the parliamentary level of politics. It was the second party in the state, had formed the First Labour government from December 1923 to October 1924, and had achieved 33 per cent of the national poll even in its election defeat in 1924. In order to prove to the country that in future it was the only possible and respectable alternative government to the Conservatives, it began to clear its own ranks of individual communists holding dual membership in 1925 and then kept on publishing proscriptions directed against joining any of the Communist-organized campaigns. Thus for the Labour and Conservative parties the 1928 Enfranchisement Act and the 1929 general election were important events, as they could decide which of the two parties would hold the majority status in the political system.

However, what the Labour Party failed to do in these interwar years was to form governments or parliamentary oppositions that either introduced socialism or fought for any breakthrough on a major aspect of domestic and foreign policy.

After its disastrous election defeat in 1931, which shattered the parliamentary Labour Party, the party sluggishly combatted such unfair social legislation as the Anomalities Act of 1931 and the Means Testing. With regard to the position of Labour women, as Pamela Graves' study has shown, the party leaders were reluctant to share power with women and supported the idea of separate gender spheres on part of both men and women. (5) It was also slow to develop policies against Fascism abroad and the activities of emerging Fascist groups at home.

It was in these areas of policy neglect that the CPGB tried to make its political gains as a revolutionary alternative to the Labour Party during this period. Between 1929-1935, under the influence of its new party line of 'Class Against Class', the CPGB became a much more centralized and hierarchical organisation aiming for 'scientific management' of party affairs. This was achieved as a consequence of the close collaboration between obedient CPGB leaders and the Comintern. In Britain the CPGB contested both the Labourites and ILPers as 'social fascists' and the Conservatives as capitalist class foes in national and local elections. (6) Its membership dropped from 10,000 in 1926 to 5,400 in November 1932. (7) From 1934 the CPGB's adoption of the popular front policy, confirmed as the official new line by the 7th Comintern Congress in 1935, halted this steep decline. Once again British Communists supported Labour candidates in

elections, reapplied for affiliation with the Labour Party, and reformed their own party organisation. But it was the rise of Hitler in Germany and the threat of Fascism that finally reversed the CPGB's declining membership. On the eve of the Second World War the CPGB had 17,000 members.

With regard to the mobilization of women by the CPGB Sue Bruley's (8) study has shown that during the 'Third Period' the CPGB leaders were inclined to integrate the political work among women into the general party structure. New highranking female cadres came to the forefront who acted like "the persona of pseudo-men." (9) Like men, they associated women with the home and did not consider the possibility of women's issues that might relate to themselves. Can by any chance Rose Smith be regarded as such a type of female cadre?

Rose Smith- The Communist Community

Rose Smith's rise within the CPGB was closely linked to the efforts of constructing a revolutionary working-class community and a revolutionary party, changing of lines and drives for recruiting in this 'Third Period'.

This section analyses the social composition, social norms of the communist community, and their implications on the individual member, such as Rose Smith. The building of the communist community was the second attempt on the part of British socialists to transform oppressive patriarchal living patterns under capitalism. Barbara Taylor's study (10) has analysed the dialectics of the first socialist experiment of

community building. In the mid-19th century, the period of rising competitive industrial capitalism, the Owenites experimented with new forms of social and economic relations. In spite of strong opposition from various quarters of British society they tried to create the collective family, communal property, and free love in separately located collectives. The 20th century communists saw themselves as countering the oppression of worldwide monopoly capitalism. So they erected an international socialist movement. As analysed by Raphael Samuel (11), it consisted of national socio-political interest communities that existed indistinguishably in wider society and were directed by the Communist Party. But in their personal lifestyle the communists were predisposed to maintain the earlier libertarian working-class traditions.

As this thesis attempts to show, for the individual female member of this communist community, such as Smith, this meant coping with old and new contradictions in the arena of class and/or gender politics. Her commitment to the communist movement led her to a crossroad in her private life. As an individual and a woman she had the option between a family-based existence and that of a Party organizer within the 'fold'. The first mode of living implied essentially at that time that Smith had to content herself with the role of a wife, mother and homemaker who would adhere to the rules of the sexual division of labour in and outside the home. In contrast, the world of British Communism was built on

'comradeship' and 'party-mindedness' that promised her different rewards.

Comradeship involved friendship circles in Britain and abroad, neighbourhood networks with childminding services, and workplaces up and down the country. In other words, the conception of comradeship incorporated the working-class notion of collective strength through mutual assistance, trust and reassurance. But its function was to serve as a kind of regulator equalising social relations among communists. A comrade was to be a class-and-gender neutral member of this communist community. Further, a comrade was also to transcend the boundaries of nation and of race. This will be discussed in chapter five and six of this thesis.

In the first years of the CPGB's existence the majority of the membership came from skilled labour households. (12) Female members were mainly the wives of comrades. It is only in the 1930s that leftwing intellectuals joined. These founder-comrades were bonded together politically through similar experiences of their changing status. Nearly all of them were workers and trade unionists of the old staple industries that were challenged by the upcoming 'new industries' producing consumer goods and promoting services. This ongoing restructuring of the British economy implied two main changes for the working class. It became socially and status-wise more homogeneous and within the world of trade unions large amalgamated organisations of a general type

rather than the older crafts union finally came into their own. Among many of the CP members these developments aroused many mixed feelings and encouraged the search for finding social stability among like-minded people bonded by fair amounts of trust, friendliness and personal intimacy.

The centre of this communist collective was the Party. And it was during the 'Third Period' that the Party would mould its members into a closely-knit community by prescribed rules of behaviour and by making greater demands than ever before on each member. There were constant reminders to show 'spontaneous loyalty', 'obedience' to leaders, party 'rulings' and 'lines', and not to let family life interfere with the 'Building of the Party'. In return for the commitment to the Party the communist community offered its member a sense of belonging and purpose. And to Rose Smith, the female member of this political community, party involvement would particularly mean a sense of liberation from the restrictions of conventional family life, allowing her to submerge the personal in a public existence.

On the other hand, it was this exclusiveness of the communist community in the 'Third Period' that must be seen as one of the factors that compounded existing problems in the Smith household and eventually contributed to the failure of Rose Smith's marriage and to the complex relations between her and her sons.

In 1927, the Smith family had financial problems arising

from its resettlement in Watford, an industrial town north of London. Rose Smith had to seek paid work outside the home. As a married woman she was barred from returning to teaching in a school. (13) So economic circumstances and social expectations of a married woman forced her to accept positions as a kitchen maid in a printing firm and as an assistant to a highly skilled technician who split animal hides into paper-thin skivers on razor sharp precision machines in a leather tanning factory. She also worked in a food factory, where the newly-invented Bedaux Timing System (14) was being operated. In the company of other women she scooped up and trayed chocolate sweets in a robotlike fashion behind a conveyor belt, watched over by 'experts' with stop-watches timing every action and irritatingly noting down what they considered time-wasting movements. (15) These jobs neither gave her control over the work process nor boosted her sense of achievement as a producing individual and a wage-earning woman.

Meanwhile the CPGB's finances and membership were shrinking. To counter it, the leading comrades looked for and encouraged reliable members who would support the Party in the class struggle. Although it meant undertaking endless hours of hard 'organizational work' for meetings and recruitment campaigns, these tasks provided a sense of responsibility, purpose and dignity for the individual member. On the other hand, this party work meant little financial reward and adhering to discipline. In Smith's eyes these requirements

must have appeared as the lesser evil in her situation and she decided to become a party organiser in summer 1927.

In contrast, Alfred Smith was the more individualist craftsman and artist in the mould of the socialist and craftman-artist William Morris. He disliked much of the industrial workerism that the CPGB propounded at that time. In Rose Smith's words, he "was one of that type of socialist who would not want to work in a factory but had to be his own boss and to enjoy his independence." (16) He might also have objected to the Party leaders' endless preaching of how he should run his home for the sake of the 'cause'. (17) Within the Smith household tensions appear to have mounted around the couple's equal sharing of housework. While it is recalled that Smith complained that her husband did not help her sufficiently with her domestic chores, he might have accused her of overdoing party work at the expense of her female homemaker's duties. Around 1930 Rose Smith decided to leave Alfred, but the couple never divorced. After their separation Alfred Smith became an art collector and dealer. He gradually faded out of the sight and memory of Rose Smith and her children. By 1946 Smith had become a widow.

In later years she would never talk much about her married life. Somewhat in passing she would admit that her marriage "had ended in disaster", but "For me life really began at 40!" (18) It seems that in order to assert her independence she had adopted the definition of the emancipated

woman as single mother available to her in the socialist culture of the time. Her life was to be a restless public existence, full of action and little time to reflect, constant travelling and setting up homes in different places and continents.

To a certain extent her relative silence on her private life also reveals the mental state of a prescribed 'good' comrade in this communist community. Social relations between comrades, between comrades and renegades, and comrades and non-Party family members or people were clearly regulated. It was the general rule that comrades would immediately ostracize someone who had openly questioned the prerogatives of the Party and refused to undertake self-sacrifice. This person was labelled as not having been 'true' to the Party. In Smith's eyes Alfred Smith must have appeared as such an untrue character.

Smith's CP membership did not mean that she broke relations with the non-communist members of the Ellis family. Her relationship with parents, brothers and sisters remained warm and friendly. Mutual help of one kind or another continued to be provided. After the Smith family's departure from Mansfield in 1927, one of Rose Smith's married brothers accommodated her and her two boys in his home in the Lake District for a while. This gave Alfred Smith more freedom to look for work and a new place for the Smith family to settle. Smith had a particular fondness and respect for her youngest

sister Jenny who was to her the incarnation of a decent working-class wife and mother. Jenny Eyre spoke of her eldest sister as 'the teacher' but did not feel enthusiastic about her being with 'the movement'. But as the Ellis/Eyre relatives were 'non-party people' who had not yet warmed up to the cause, she would neither discuss politics nor her political views and activities with them. In this way Rose Smith followed Party instruction, but it was also done out of consideration for the security of her relatives. It was better that they all inhabited two mental worlds as 'them and us'.(19)

Concerning the moral standard of the individual communist member, the attitudes of the Owenite socialist movement of the 19th century seem to have prevailed in this interwar communist community. Generally, it was not usual to pry too much in other members' private life. Living together outside marriage, brief affairs between comrades, whether married or unmarried, and divorces were not regarded as attacks on Christian morality and civil marriage. As long as this sexual behaviour did not harm other members, it was tolerated, particularly as it conformed to much older behavioural patterns of British working people.

There also existed a inherited sense of socialization of motherhood among the British communists. Single women with children were helped in their child-raising duties as much as possible by other comrades without prying too much into the

woman's past and present circumstances. In 19th century Britain it was common in working-class homes for a child to be raised by grandparents, aunts and uncles in the event of illegitimacy, orphaning or desertion. The British communists widened the base of this parenting system by including non-kin comrades as surrogate mothers and fathers. In the case of Rose Smith, her two teenaged boys were never left unsupervised. They were raised with the help of various communist friends. Often they shared a household with other women and their children in Burnley and London. In the event of these child-rearing facilities not functioning, it was Jenny Eyre who took the children in her Chesterfield home. After her retirement to Chesterfield in 1955, Smith, in turn, enjoyed babysitting the children of younger communist couples so that they could organise and attend political meetings away from home.

But as Smith experienced in her political work and as shown later in this chapter, in the 1930s this revolutionary mode of living could raise suspicion and hostile opposition among the non-communist working-class women. They represented the new family norms that had taken deep root among working people by that time. After a century of enforcement of a marriage law, which forbade extramarital relations, British working-class women and men willingly replaced common-law marriage by legal marriage. Motherhood was not any longer separated from matrimony. Children conceived out of wedlock that earlier working-class generations had accepted as

'chancellings' were now regarded as a mistake that a decent woman should not have committed. The majority of working-class people did not approve of divorce in spite of the liberalization of the divorce codes in the interwar period. (20) In a poll taken on this question in the 1940s only forty-two percent of men and women supported divorce procedures, with women being considerably more against than men. (21)

The strength of these social norms and their permeating ability can also be seen from the fact that Smith's own children became opposed to her socialist ways of child-rearing. Her frequent and sudden absences from the home during her sons' adolescence made mother and sons relate uneasily to each other. Smith seems to have regarded it as an unfortunate conflict between socialist and bourgeois ideologies within the family under capitalism but saw no reason for defending her mothering. In spite of tremendous odds outside her control, as a single mother she had always provided her children with sufficient material comfort and chances to educational success. This can be seen by the fact that both sons were upright individuals who had a secondary education leading to secure professional careers. (22) She might have avoided divorce because of its perceived stigma that would have aggravated her teenaged sons' growing up without their father; she had also adhered to principled moral behaviour and is remembered to have admonished one of her adult sons to get married instead of dating two girlfriends simultaneously. This

showed that she had cared for her twins and not neglected them. When asked why she had not arranged her child-rearing along more conventional lines, her only answer was "It was necessary." (23) It seems that as an emancipated and dutybound person there was no other answer. She had willingly made personal sacrifices for her belief in changing society through class struggle. Thus, on 10 November 1942, Smith filled in the required Party Registration Form under the heading "Conditions and Atmosphere of Family" as follows, "My family has no atmosphere- it has a record of WC [Working-Class] Struggle back to [the] Chartists." Until her death she remained the mother fiercely defending her independence as a socialist woman. Her grown-up sons meanwhile were free to hold their own views on mothering and lifestyles in accordance with those prescribed by capitalist society. (24) This attitude of hers should become clearer when her life in Beijing is discussed in the last chapter of this thesis.

The training of a Party Organizer

To become a full-time Party organizer engaging in 'mass work' involved undergoing training for Smith. By the late 1920s the CPGB had developed two training channels for its working-class leaders. At cell level the party secretaries selected keen and loyal candidates to be sent to attend educational classes at the Lenin School in Moscow for eighteen months or more. (25) The second way to advance to 'responsible' Party positions was to be adopted and coached by

a superior and then to be tested in positions of leaders of Communist 'cells' and 'locals' around the country according to the Party needs of the moment. Finally a call to become a member of the Party's Executive was issued for the selected few who had proven themselves worthy. Smith followed the second path of training, possibly because it suited her family commitments.

Her cadre training began in the Watford CP local. It was one of the few fairly active branches of men and women. Meetings were regularly held in a member's house but were essentially more political discussions rather than devoted to any serious theoretical study. These meetings started with political reports on the international situation and the rest of the time was spent on how to translate political events into 'targets' and 'campaigning issues' in the locality. It was all practical party work, such as organizing leafletting, choosing the 'correct' fighting slogan, and 'going out chalking'. For Smith this type of party work was just a continuation of her activities in Mansfield.

Sometime in 1928 Beth Turner, the second National Women's Organizer of the CPGB, 'adopted' Smith as her 'trainee' in the Women's Department on a part-time basis. This move was in accordance with the CPGB's policy to recruit more women into the Party ranks and to train new women cadres as a way of building a 'sounder' mass base. Smith occasionally attended party meetings in London, with her travelling expenses being

paid by the Party.

Rose Smith and Beth Turner got on well with each other due to shared experiences and political views. Both had grown up in craftman's families. Beth Turner was a former woollen weaver from Lancashire. Around 1928, as shown in the previous chapter, the main political task of the Women's Department was to protect the interests of the female textile workers in the depressed areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. So Smith was sent to Oldham to be tested by the Party and to harden herself into a 'loyal' (26) and trusted party organiser.

The reports about her good 'mass work' in Lancashire and the adoption of the new line 'Class Against Class' favoured her rise to positions in the CPGB's Executive. At the CPGB's Conference at Leeds in November 1929 the 'Bolshevik method' of electing the Party's Executive was adopted. Harry Pollitt became the General Secretary, R. Palme Dutt the theoretician of the CPGB. Annie Cree, Kathy Duncan and Nellie Usher were the only female members of the Central Committee (CC) after December 1929. No woman served on the Politburo (PB). In July 1930, Smith was invited to give a report at the CC meeting. It was then that Annie Cree proposed that a suitable female candidate from Yorkshire or Rose Smith should be made in charge for women's questions on the CC. (27) During a discussion on Inner Party Organisation of the PB Harry Pollitt suggested that "Comrade Rose Smith was to remain in charge of the [Party's Women's] Department" and was "to be invited to

all CC meetings and where special women's questions are discussed to be invited to attend PB." (28) The meeting unanimously accepted this proposal. On 6 August 1931, at a PB meeting she was then coopted by an unanimous vote on the PB. For security reasons this position also required the use of a pseudonym and she was referred to as 'Comrade Reade' in the CPGB's official documents. (29) Smith remained in charge of the Women's Department until spring 1933, when it was dissolved on Comintern's instruction and the PB became totally responsible for work among women. (30) She, however, continued to be a reelected member of PB and CC until 1938. Her area of expertise within the Party continued to be women's issues and industrial matters.

Once the Party leadership felt that Rose Smith had become sufficiently committed to the CPGB's vision and policies, she was then selected to join several delegations visiting the Soviet Union. There were two types of visits that foreign cadres could make. The general introductory tour gave the visitor a brief glimpse of changing conditions in factories and social institutions under Soviet communism. The other type was the 'political business trip', where the high ranking cadre took part in meetings and discussions about 'old and new lines'. Smith experienced both types of brief visits in the Soviet Union.

Smith's first visit to the Soviet Union occurred on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in

October-November 1927 and was meant to provide a broad introduction. Her next two visits to Moscow were as an international Party functionary. In summer 1928 she was a member of a British Women's Delegation of fifty-five attending the 6th World Congress of the Comintern. In August 1930 she was a British delegate to the RILU's Fifth Congress, taking part in the political discussion on the economic situation in capitalist country and finally putting her signature to the Resolutions of the Congress. She also attended the Conference of the Chiefs of Women's Departments of European Communist Parties, arranged by the Women's Secretariat of the Red International Labour Union (RILU), held at the end of RILU Congress. (31) Finally, in early 1933 she attended as the National Women's Organizer a series of Commissions organised for all Communist Parties in regard to discussions on the work amongst women. As Smith had certainly not had this dream of walking along such political corridors in her youth, these visits must have given her a sense of personal achievement and power.

The aim of the visits to the Soviet Union was threefold. Firstly, 'political business trips' were important means to enhance the principle of 'democratic centralism' and to foster organizational and ideological unity within the international Communist movement. They were a means of conveying secret information. Decisions taken in Moscow were reported only to the inner core of Party leaders on the cadre's return to his

or her country. In her capacity as a supporter of Red Trade Unionism and as National Women's Organiser Rose Smith made several trips to Moscow between 1928-1933.

Secondly, the visits to Moscow gave foreign cadres the opportunity to meet the communist elite of the Soviet Union. The highlights of Smith's stays in the Soviet Union were her several meetings with Joseph Stalin and her talks with the icons of the Communist women, Aleksandra Kollontai, the first woman ambassador to be appointed by the Soviets, Clara Zetkin, the German revolutionary, and N. Krupskaya, Lenin's widow. N. Krupskaya presented her with a signed photograph. (32) For someone like Rose Smith who regarded herself as the representative of the downtrodden in her own class-ridden British society, this VIP treatment must have appeared as the realization of her vision of a society that would give equality of opportunity to all people.

Thirdly, the foreign cadre was to comprehend the Soviet Union as the centre of the 'new civilization'. The new balancing of the relations of production and the forces of production in the factories, and the Soviet welfare system as manifestations of socialist justice and equality were to be studied and had to be introduced to a wider audience on the visitor's return to his or her country. This is precisely what Smith and the other members of the 1927 delegation did.

Smith travelled in the company of Beth Turner, Lily Webb, Fanny N. Deakin and a woman known only as 'Mrs. Maxwell'. They

were a team of hardworking and fairly intimate women propagandists, the mainstays of the CPGB's Women's Department at that time. The small delegation visited Leningrad, toured mines, factories and crèches, and finally joined the colourful and joyful scene of 1,200 women delegates at the All-Russian Conference of Women in Moscow. Each member of the British delegation submitted a short article to The Working Woman. While Beth Turner was astonished at the curbing of illiteracy among women since the Revolution, Fanny Deakin thought it "wonderful to sit in what was the palace of the Tsar discussing the building of Socialism." Smith was struck by the "bright and happy atmosphere" of a crèche at a textile factory in Moscow, the children's nutritious meals, such as "sandwiches of caviare," children's furniture and toys, and the regularity of care given by staff and doctors with no costs for the working mother. Compared to the childcare facilities for British working-class children at that time, this Moscow crèche was "paradise." (33)

By 1936 Smith had become a seasoned cadre. She then acted as tutor to the next generation of working-class leaders. As part of the adopted 'Popular Front' policy, the CPGB made new attempts at Marxist education. A Workers' School and Education Centre was set up with R. Page Arnot as its Principal at the Marx House in London on 30 October 1933. John Strachey and John Mahon taught courses on Political Economy and Trade Unionism respectively. During the academic year 1937-38 Rose

Smith joined the women's team of lecturers, consisting of Salme Dutt and Joan Beauchamp of the CPGB, and Ester Henrotte of the WCG. They were in charge of the supplementary classes on the "Historical Position and Present Problems of Women." (34)

The lectures on 'Present Problems of Women' were constructed around the analysis of available statistical materials taken from various British sources. The interwar years witnessed statistical materials coming into their own right in social investigations on working-class women. Organisers of WCG, Industrial Women's Organisations, Women Public Health Officers' Association, and leading female Communist cadres all had the habit to study carefully government reports on health, housing, education, and poverty. They also instigated the systematic collection of data on working-class women for their own reports. Joan Beauchamp's book, entitled Women Who Work and published in 1937, belongs to this category. It provided and analysed data on female workers in various industries of this period. She must have used it as a basis for some of her lectures.

The ideological party training to which Smith was exposed during the 'Third Period', centred around 'unity of theory and practice'. She studied carefully manuals where the handling of party work was taught 'scientifically' with questions and answers given. The aim of such education was to teach comrades what to think rather than how to think. As the training manual

of 1924 makes clear, 'democratic centralisation' determined foremost the structure of the organisation:

(a) A central guiding and directing body invested with complete authority over the Party as a whole (corresponding to Central Government).

(b) Local Organisations to carry out instructions of the Centre (corresponding roughly to civil servants in the provinces).

(c) Local organisations to keep centre in touch with rank and file of Party and (subject to central approval) to indicate local policies required by local conditions (corresponding to County Councils). (35)

'Democratic centralisation', however, also determined the social norms and code of political conduct of an individual Party member and Party organizer within the organization and political meetings. It implied the submission of the individual to the organization, submission of minorities to the majority, submission of lower organization of to higher organizations and submission of all the divisional organizations of the Party to the Central Committee. In Britain this communist prerogative was strictly enforced by the CPGB leaders during the 'Third Period' in particular.

Rose Smith - The 'Good' Party Cadre

The outcome of such a training was the type of 'good' Party functionary who was the representative of the working class regardless of sex. This cadre distinguished himself/herself by three essential characteristics: first, a sense of self-effacement and sacrifice; second, a willingness to submit him or herself to the discipline of the Party; and third, the ability to voice 'constructive criticisms' concerning Party

work. A member was allowed to criticise the 'mechanics' of Party work but not the adopted Party policy.

Smith's Party career throws some light on what this could mean for a woman who was willing to prove her worth for the Communist cause. According to her, it forced her to cope with 'tough' situations. She had to go against the established norms of proper behaviour of a 'respectable' working-class woman and become the object of police harrassment, arrests and imprisonment. She had to put up with moments of intense fear, financial insecurity and hunger not because objective economic circumstances forced them on her as working-class woman, but because she held on to a political belief and organisation whose premise she did not question. On the other hand, as she recalled, such risky life had its compensations. She learned more about her own nature:

I never questioned it [political life] but very often I went frightened. And I have this capacity when I am frightened to upsplit seconds [*], to get over it very quickly. (36)

Further, she looked at this party work as a positive way to increase her knowledge, ingenuity, adaptability, and self-discipline. All were of course desirable qualities for a self-reliant woman Party organizer. She was a person who loved challenges. Life appeared less boring.

In July 1929 she was reported to be on her Party mission to the spinning town of Oldham in south-eastern Lancashire. (37) Her task was to do the 'pioneering work' of setting up a new party cell. After much hard work she finally succeeded in

doing so. Oldham's cotton mills used American raw cotton, which Smith described as "awful stuff being full with muck," (38) to produce a more uniform and break-resistant yarn mostly in a ring-spinning process. But as a result of the decline of the Lancashire cotton industry's principal export market in East Asia, Oldham's mills suffered a slump reaching a crisis point around 1928-29. Firms were forced to reduce their yarn prices; workers were asked to accept wage cuts and finally were threatened by unemployment. To the Communist Party leadership it all appeared as the right setting to revive the revolutionary tradition among the workers. The CPGB was still an unknown political entity in this area of Britain, but where changes in political allegiances were taking place. In the 1929 general election the Labour Party had won 41 of the Lancashire 66 parliamentary seats and thereby driven the Conservatives back to their strongholds of Liverpool, the Manchester suburbs and seaside resorts. (39)

As she was a total stranger to these cotton communities, her first challenge was to blend in socially by remaining as inconspicuous as possible. On her arrival in Oldham, Smith had one male contact who proved not very useful. By describing him "as frightened as a rabbit," (40) she depicted herself as being politically braver and somewhat superior to him. As a single woman she found it difficult to obtain lodging. She finally moved in with two Irish women because:

They did not know me. I did not know them. They needed the money and they did not question. I looked a decent

person. And it was difficult in those days for a woman to get lodgings because no good woman was on her own and they would not trust you with their menfolk. (41)

Smith's next task was to familiarize herself with the work process and technology of a cotton mill through the descriptions given by her landlady's daughter who was a cotton operative. Now and then the old lady would lend her a shawl to take the girl's lunch into the mill. She also spent many a mornings in the town's library, reading newspapers and companies' files. Often she would join the fish and chips' queues, not to buy but to listen to the workers' conversations. Finally, she held open-air meetings on soap boxes in the park on Sundays, secretly 'chalking' her meetings [chalk-written announcement of a meeting on the pavement] the night before. She did not like this task for two reasons. It was illegal to 'chalk' and to speak in certain places and this provoked police harrassment. She also had her distinct personal qualms:

I am still despite my experiences as a strike leader a somewhat modest woman. I found it rather embarrassing to have to kneel down in the street and chalk a meeting because I have been brought up always to sit with my knees together and that a woman never bends down in the street to tie up her shoelaces and expose her posteria. You did not do it. You just went on with your bootlace lumping about rather than bend down. (42)

By the time Smith went to the textile areas, she had the reputation of an accomplished public speaker who could handle ad-hoc working-class audiences at open air meetings with some ease. But there were occasions when the entrenched social norms of the working class made her dumbfounded. Once Smith

addressed a strike meeting in this textile area. She happened not to wear her wedding ring and had her two sons in their early teens with her. A woman in the audience took this as a bad example and made loud comments to the effect that Smith was an unmarried woman flaunting her two children in public and therefore should not be trusted. Smith realized the danger of a hostile crowd confronting her when a man in the audience saved her by saying: "She's done what you'll have done if you've got two kids to feed, she'd pawned her ring." (43) The audience was receptive to this message and Smith's ensuing speech went smoothly. This incident clearly showed that in those early days of female public agitation a speaker's credibility did not just depend on her working-class background, her ability to project economic grievances as matters of class exploitation but also, as discussed earlier in this chapter, on the social conventions of the 'moral respectability' adhered to by working-class wives in interwar Britain.

Finally, there were Smith's difficulties of coping with the authorities. During the week she sold copies of the Oldham Millworker to female workers at their factory gate meetings. The factory managers reacted to her revolutionary agitation with anger and fear that the established channels between managers and trade union officials would be undermined. Therefore they urged their employees to "leave it to the Trade Unions." (44) Naturally, the forces of law and order took

notice of all her public activities, too. And when the Party had finally sent some Young Communist Leaguers to help her to direct actions in the woollen trade dispute in the area at the end of 1929, the authorities decided to remove these Communist troublemakers from the scene. Rose Smith was arrested near the Kinders Mill in Greenfield on 14th January, 1930 and charged with a breach of the peace and an assault upon the police while in custody. She pleaded guilty to having made "objectionable remarks to people going to work" (45) but denied the second charge. The magistrate fined her £1 in each case with the alternative of 14 days' imprisonment. Smith had no money to pay the fine, neither had the CPGB in London. It had to set up a Defence Fund to raise the money. Consequently Smith suffered her first imprisonment for the cause. But the Party tried to make some political capital out of this case. The Daily Worker accused the Labour Government and its 'direct agents' to have prosecuted Smith, the working woman, under the Anti-Trade Union Act. (46)

Smith's second arrest together with that of the two local Communists Amy Hargreaves and Tom Gilbert, took place during the strike activities against the more-loom system in front of Queen's Mill in Burnley on 9 October 1931. The National Government had called a general election for 27 October to solve its political crisis. Smith had come to Burnley on the invitation of the local Communist Party to run as their candidate. Arthur Henderson, Foreign Secretary in the Second

Labour Government and Leader of the Party after MacDonald's defection, was the Labour candidate in Burnley. G. Campbell was the candidate of the National Government. In Burnley unemployment was rising and the ruling authorities felt their political fortunes waning. So Smith was accused of coming into the borough for the express purpose of using a trade dispute as a means of stirring up the agitation in the town and creating as much disturbance as possible. Once again she was charged with disorderly behaviour and with inciting persons to obstruct the police. By that time Smith had already a list of other fines for similar political offences to her name as a militant working-class woman. So at the trial the magistrate called her a 'professional agitator'. Inspector Roberts, who had been in charge of the police at the scene of the workers' demonstration, and D. O. Dyke, the notorious detective constable with the Burnley Constabulary (47), gave corroborative evidence of Smith's 'disorderly manner'. During the trial she not only argued her case as 'political' but also publicized the CPGB's line:

I submit that from the first moment of my coming to Burnley I have been under police surveillance. It is obvious from the evidence given here this morning that three police officers were specially told off [*] to watch me. My object in coming here is to carry the banner of my Party, the Communist Party, the workers' party, against the National Party, and against the Labour Party's sham opposition. I have been at these demonstrations as a worker who takes a live interest in any attack upon the workers' standard of life, practically all the week, just the same as I have been on the Exchange and in other parts of the constituency. It is my duty as a prospective candidate to understand the needs of the workers. Well, any way, the case that

the advocate stated this morning was not a case against an individual, but against a political party in opposition to the views he holds. (48)

She was sentenced to three months with hard labour in Manchester's Strangeways Jail. On Boxing Day 1931, well after the general election she was released. (49) The Burnley seat was won by G. Campbell, the candidate of the National Government by a 13. 2 per cent majority of votes. Arthur Henderson polled 43 per cent and Jim Rushton, who had replaced Rose Smith as Communist candidate at short notice, won 0.8 per cent of the votes.

Fortunately there exist some documentary evidence of both Smith's private reaction as a woman and her public reaction as a Communist to these imprisonments. In Communist parlance at that time, imprisonment was 'going to college'. In prison she found herself in the company of drunks, pickpockets and brothelkeepers. Most of these women had committed petty economic crimes out of desperation to keep their heads above water and to protect their families. While she justified her incarceration as having joined a community of victims of the unjust capitalist system, her co-inmates were puzzled at her imprisonment "for asking blacklegs to stand by the workers out on strike against less wages" and asked her whether it was "right" to be a Communist. (50) It was this experience in prison and a comment of one of her political comrades on her imprisonment that made her, the private and decent working-class woman, question the usefulness of becoming a 'political

prisoner' at the Enlarged CC meeting in London as follows:

I went to speak at Darwen the other day, and the Chairman introduced me as an "ex-jail-bird." The women say "Why did you?" and I have no answer to workers on why I went to prison. Many workers do not understand and it is bad to have such introductions. (51)

Publicly, however, Smith toed the party line and showed that her experience had not shaken her revolutionary resolve. In an article written for The Worker she advocated that the only possible reply to this ongoing intimidation against women pickets and demonstrators, their arrest and heavy sentencing was to entrench the Party organisation in the workshops and to lead the fight against the more-looms system, the Bedaux system, and longer working hours uncompromisingly everywhere in Britain. (52)

By the beginning of 1932 Rose Smith had come a long way. She had risen from a comrade challenging the status quo in British society and assisting other syndicalist workers in their 'direct actions' to a cadre of the CPGB's Executive coordinating workers' strike actions and being consulted on practical and ideological matters by others. She was known to be frank and helpful. Political experiences had hardened and seemingly turned her into a disciplinarian demanding obedience to the line. However, she was more concerned with equality when obediently adhering to lines rather than outright submissiveness. She objected to the application of different standards of discipline to Party leaders and the ordinary membership in the CPGB. (53)

Slightly more than a year later the CPGB's leaders began seriously to consider to break out of their self-inflicted isolation within the labour movement by advocating a new 'united front from below' with and within other labour and women's working-class organisations. Fearing that this new organisational approach decided at the top of the CPGB could be misunderstood by comrades in the branches and lead to "a watering down of the Party's policy [ideology] in order to enter into a bloc with local Labour Parties," Smith suggested that much "more publicity to the content of our work" had to be given. To make her point clear she cited an incident from the Rhondda branch as an example:

[Labour claims] that there is only one difference between the position of the workers under capitalism and under a workers' dictatorship. The workers here are being exploited for capitalism, and in the USSR the workers are exploited to develop production. I think these statements are very significant, and more attention must be given to them. We must give all our work and propaganda a bolshevik content. (54)

As National Women's Organizer Smith also adopted a similar attitude towards the whole Party. With regard to work among women, she did not want 'lipservice' but demanded commitment and hard work on part of all comrades. In mid-January 1932, at the behest of the Comintern, an enlarged meeting of the CC discussed the resolution on the National Minority Movement, described as a "small organisation, boxed up in itself and thereby isolated from the masses in the factories and trade unions." (55) The intention of the CC meeting was to come to a consensus to close down this

organisation. For Smith it was the first CC meeting that she attended after her three-month long imprisonment in the Manchester jail. Having been closely associated with the NMM and its aims for many years, she joined the CC members who came to its defense. She argued that the NMM should not be solely blamed for its isolation. The CPGB should also scrutinize its methods in which 'mass work' had been conducted. To prove her point, she sternly but with a tinge of impatience referred to the CPGB's indifference towards work among women:

This is a vital aspect of Party life. I did not choose to work amongst women, but I realised that this was important. Today we are holding an important meeting, and not one woman is invited to this Conference. Local Party committees do not discuss work amongst women. As far as I can see, no woman is going to the National School. [J.T.] Murphy raises it with me and gets heated about it; and it's time that some other departments understood that this work is important. (56)

Her complaint about the Party's lack of support for her work among women was not new. In her first report on Work Among Women submitted to the CC and PB for discussion in July 1930 she had already mentioned that she found this work difficult due to isolation in the Party organisation. At that time such male comrades as William Gallacher, W. T. L. Tapsell and Idris Cox had admitted that "the Women's Department had been badly neglected" and "the Party had no special women's policy." (57) And in late September 1930 the Central Women's Committee had been reorganised and linked to the Industrial Committee of the Party with J. T. Murphy as the responsible PB

member. It had been hoped that at least at the head office in London the work among women would not come to a standstill while Smith did 'mass work' in the provinces.

Why were there no changes two years later? Was it because, in Pamela Graves' words, "women were almost always an organizational, not a political, concern" (58) in the CPGB? There is no doubt that in 1930 Rose Smith attached importance to work among women primarily out of a desire to create a more gender- and occupationally balanced party membership in a new recruitment campaign. Her main concern then had been to analyse the composition of female Party members and to report that it only consisted of 3 per cent of industrial workers and 70 per cent of housewives. She had then maintained that propaganda work was "now on the downgrade swing to the fact that the old channels of Co-operative Guilds, Labour Parties etc. is now closed to us, and we must therefore interest them by linking up their demands with those of their menfolk." (59) On the other hand, she had also countered the idea prevailing among her male comrades that "unless a woman is employed in industry, she cannot take her place in the class struggle." (60) She was against this kind of pure industrial workerism and emphasized that "all women can be used, women of the minefields, railwaymen's wives can be used in the development of the struggle against rationalisation." (61)

Two years later, there was certainly a shift in tone in her presentation of reports on work among women. (62) Women

were no longer percentages but human beings who were able to analyse their plight, voice their demands and strike when necessary. Smith had lived, worked and struggled among unemployed textile operatives in Lancashire. She knew how they suffered as a result of the application of the Anomalies Act and the Means Test. She had travelled to the coalfields and met the miners' wives. She was also aware that women organised in the Labour and Liberal Parties and Co-operative Guilds were not taking these capitalist attacks quietly. But the CPGB failed to draw these militant women into its ranks. She thought it was time to raise her 'honest criticism' at the Party's Executive meetings. It did not 'doubt' the principles of Party's policies but only their implementation. So it was a 'constructive criticism' as expected from a 'good' cadre.(63)

Her analysis of the Party's style of work was the outcome of her inspection tours to branches around the country. She fully approved the fact that nowhere the CPGB had adopted "the bad tactic" of approaching women "from woman to woman in separate organisations as applied by the Labour Party and the Cooperatives." (64) Nevertheless, to her great disappointment, she found that the allocation of Party tasks was still undertaken according to gender lines in all the branches. By allowing women only to do social work within the Party, women were inclined to be "a floating membership." (65) She was also critical of the Party's 'formal manner', as most of the time

it intimidated women as newcomers to political meetings. Rose Smith also objected to the use of a certain type of esoteric political language in meetings and party publications and asked "could we not simplify our political language so that the women understand it?" (66) She understood well that new recruits were not made to feel part of the whole Movement, when political meetings were conducted according to formal agendas, reports and older comrades monopolising discussions instead of letting the new comrades express their opinions. She wanted this kind of 'formality' replaced by more spontaneity in the meetings. More opportunities should be provided for members to seek contacts in personal conversations. As she concluded, "We must prove to the workers that we can at least play together." (67) As a result of her own branch work in Lancashire she had become aware that new female party members needed to be handled with greater sensitivity. She objected to new women comrades being sent out canvassing and participating in demonstrations as their first party tasks. Male comrades should be aware that as a result of their upbringing "it is a very difficult thing especially for a woman new into the Party to go out selling the paper, or to go canvassing." (68) Smith demanded that female cadres needed to be trained well and with care so as to give them self-confidence. She pointed her finger accusingly at the Communist District Organisers of whom not one of them had "thought that there is a woman with sufficient intelligence who can be sent

to be trained. The comrades do the work, but they are not intelligent enough to be sent to the National School." (69) She repudiated the Party leaders who kept on talking about setting up special training classes for women but never implemented this plan, and who made poor use of female cadres on their return from training at the International School in Moscow. Finally, in response to a male comrade's comment that he did not know what were the questions which interested women, she referred emphatically to such 'key issues' as the feeding of children at school as a way of breaking down "the enslavement of working-class women inside the home," (70) the attacks of unemployed women under the Anomalies Act and Means Test, housing and rents, the increase in the cost of living, and religion. She thought these women's issues had to become part and parcel of general party campaigns of the day. She was convinced that if the Party explained these topics properly, it would get the women to join its rank and work for it.

In the early 1930s Smith's work among women frequently overlapped with other 'mass work' of the CPGB. She found it difficult to combine class and gender issues in successful struggles. As Britain's financial crisis deepened after the 1929 Wall Street Crash, the Party's leadership turned its attention to the unemployed workers organised by the National Unemployed Workers' (Committee) Movement (NUW(C)M). Its aim was "to lead and direct the struggles of the unemployed against the central and local Government authorities on the principle

of "Work or Full Maintenance at Trade Union Rates." (71) The National Organiser was Walter (Wal) Hannington. In May 1930 the number of registered unemployed stood at 1,770,000. Many of them were women. By early April 1930, 15.2 per cent of women workers were unemployed in the cotton industry, 13.7 per cent in the woollen industry of Lancashire; nearly 4,000 of them were deprived of benefit payments by insurance officers on the 'Not Genuinely Seeking Work' (NGSW) clause. Many of them became members of the autonomous women's sections of the NUW(C)M. It was at the 6th National Conference of the NUWCM in 1929 that Mrs. Youle of Sheffield, who was not a member of the CPGB, had successfully moved a resolution that demanded the establishment of these women's sections, and that also recognised the distinctive position women had in relation to the state's unemployment benefit institutions:

This conference, appreciating the special persecution meted out to unemployed women by Labour Exchange officials; due to the present organisational defencelessness of women claimants and recognising the important part that women play in industry under present day conditions, pledges itself, wherever possible, to develop women's sections of the NUWCM in every locality.
(72)

Since the early 1920s consultations had been conducted between the NUWM and the CPGB. The 1930s would witness a much closer cooperation but also many more occasions of tensions between the two organisations. Rose Smith's involvement with the NUWM makes this clear. In Lancashire and Yorkshire Smith's party work centred around places with high female unemployment but where women had been active in welfare politics, the

suffragette movement and industrial strikes in the past. (73) Both political organisations decided to make use of this tradition of women's political involvement for their new campaign. Smith was made to be in charge of two forms of action. Firstly, it fell on her to set this mobilisation of the women into the women's sections into motion and to secure their commitment to the NUWM in the region. Secondly, in spring 1930, the Third National Hunger March was organised, and for the first time a women's contingent from the derelict textile centres was to march, too. Rose Smith was in charge of coordinating the recruitment work for this first women's contingent.

The Third Hunger March was to "expose the capitalist policy of the Labour Government in its treatment of the unemployed," (74) which did not differ from that of previous Liberal and Tory governments. In particular, it was to challenge Margaret Bondfield, the Minister of Labour, who refused to abolish the NGSW clause and thereby forced unemployed women textile workers to accept alternative employment in domestic service with much lower pay. (75) The march of about 1,100 men and women started on 30 March 1930 and was divided into twelve contingents, coming chiefly from Scotland, Durham, Northumberland, Plymouth, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, Derby, Staffordshire, South Wales, Midlands and Kent. From 19 April to 1 May 1930, the women's contingent of twenty-two women joined the marchers

from Bradford to London under the leadership of Rose Smith and Maud Brown of the central Women's Department of the NUWM.

Organisationally this Hunger March was reported to have been a success. However, Rose Smith and others in the CPGB Executive thought otherwise. In the course of a lively discussion on the unemployment question at the CC meeting of 19-20 July 1930 the relatively poor turnout and relationship between the Party and the NUWM was examined. William Gallacher thought that with regard to the march the NUWM had been "hesitant," had not shown "enough faith in the unemployed workers and workers generally." He therefore advocated "the necessity of bringing in the unemployed movement as a live activity in the Party." Wal Hannington refuted this blame by pointing out the Party's undemocratic work style. He declared that so far the Party had neither instructed the NUWM leaders at their National Administrative Committee (NAC) meeting in January 1930 nor had the Politburo leaders asked for the NAC report. They had "just demanded finally the organisation of the march without any previous consultation with NUWM leaders" and so "the preparations for the March were too sudden." (76)

Smith had been invited to provide her views on the women's march. She was frank and stated that the march "displayed all the weaknesses that the Party is subject to at the present moment." She criticised the lack of cooperative organisation within the Party and between the Party and the NUWM. She regarded it as "very bad" that the Executive had

mislaid her already submitted report on the First Women's Hunger March and had also not informed her that she had been expected to give an additional report at this CC meeting. For her it revealed a disregard on part of the Party leaders for women and the work among women. From the point of view of united front work between the CPGB and NUWM she asserted that the march had been a failure. The underlying reason for this was that both the CPGB and the NUWM were ignoring women's interests. She stressed that the NUWM had neither assisted her with the recruitment of women for this march through their own local branches nor made efforts to integrate this women contingent into its organizational plan once the march was on its way. This complaint must be understood within the social context of Britain. It was not regarded as 'proper' for any respectable working-class female marcher to be seen sleeping in the same building with male marchers.

Little attention was given by the NUWM to the Women's contingent. I went into Lancashire and Yorkshire and set up nuclei of these united front committees in the various towns. When I go back to Lancashire I find that absolutely no provision has been made for the reception of the marchers. [Rose Smith was only responsible for the recruitment of women; the male colleagues of the NUWM were responsible for arranging accommodation and food supplies for the women contingent] In Bolton we were only able to draw one non-Party woman into the March. I think, Comrades, that this is a very serious position, particularly when we realise that only about three women were not members of the Party. (77)

To Smith, however, the most serious shortcoming of the NUWM manifested itself in the NUWM membership's predominant desire to attain 'immediate demands' of increases in the

levels of benefit or the removal of the NGSW clause rather than of long-term 'revolutionary' goals of the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers' Socialist Republic. She said,

Even where we had branches of the NUWM, the membership was on the basis of getting something back for their contributions. They believe that the NUWM only exists for fighting for claims. What was true of the women was also true of the men's contingents to a very large extent. (78)

Nevertheless, Rose Smith thought that not all was lost yet, as the impact of this march on female participants showed. All those female marchers who went back to their districts had become political activists. And with an air of female defiance challenging the patriarchal outlook of her comrades she concluded:

It [the women's march] has proved to me that we were miles behind the masses of the working women, and we can get support wherever we go if we make the correct approach. (79)

The NUWM did its best to respond to these criticisms. At the 7th National Conference it adopted a new programme confirming the development of women's sections with limited administrative autonomy at branch level and of campaigns around the special women's questions. In 1931 the women marchers focused on the abolition of the Means Test. But despite these constitutional promises, the actual agenda of the NUWM remained male-orientated and women remained organisationally marginal. Thus, in June 1932, when Wal Hannington submitted another report on the NUWM's work for

discussion to the CC, Rose Smith reacted that she still "felt very sore about the whole thing" and had "to confess there is no movement amongst unemployed women at the present moment." (80) But she would never declare defeat. As a strong believer in women's equal rights and in united front work as means to obtain them, Smith always offered her organizational skills to local organizers of women's marches in Lancashire; in spring 1932 she was one of the 800 marchers and passionate public speakers of the Lancashire Hunger March from Colne to Preston. For this local agitational work Rose Smith suffered her third arrest.

But all in all, her local involvement in NUWM's collective action was the more effective form. It won for Lancashire's unemployed men and women the right to appeal to the County PAC and forced the setting up of a Commission to inquire into the administration of Transitional Payment. As a writer on the event she would afterwards maintain that unemployment must be comprehended as a symptom of a particular phase of the capitalist system which demanded constant vigilance on part of working people. Therefore the winning of certain concessions from the authorities did not mean

that the Unemployed of the County can rest on their oars. Capitalism will become harsher in its legislation and more brutal in its administration. Continuous agitation, positive organisation, are an urgent necessity if the Unemployed of Lancashire are to be rescued from further destitution and degradation. Moderate, respectable people who desire peace at any price may not like this method of protest, butthere can be no peace in Lancashire whilst poverty and unemployment stalk the County, and the Means Test haunts the homes of half

a million of our unemployed comrades. (81)

And it was in this spirit that Smith also continued to march in all the national marches of the decade as well as serve as a hardworking member of the London Reception Committee encompassing every shade and nuance of the left by the mid-1930s. Besides its Secretary Pat Devine and Maud Brown, it included Ellen Wilkinson M.P., Dr. Edith Summerskill (both Labour MPs), Tom Mann, John Mahon, Jenny Lee and Aneurin Bevan, the future Health Minister in Attlee's Government. (82)

In early 1933 Smith attended a series of Commissions for all Parties in Moscow and on her return proposed to the PB a new Comintern line that was to strengthen the work among women. It asserted that capitalist countries faced another deep crisis. Male workers were dismissed in large numbers and made to become an army of reserves for a future war. In the factories female workers replaced the men as a reserve of women for the home front during the war period. Simultaneously these working women were seen to become more militant and the Communist Parties were instructed to lead the struggles of these women. Organizationally this was to be achieved by a gradual liquidation of central women's departments in the Communist Movement and by making the Politburo of each Communist Party solely responsible for the work among women. (83)

Although Smith thought that "perhaps it is not wholly true of events in Great Britain so far," (84) she supported

this Comintern line for two reasons. Her experience as National Women's Organizer for half a decade had taught her clearly that not all Party members were sufficiently conscious of the importance of the work among women. She therefore hoped that this organizational change would make discussions about women's questions not being any longer restricted to National Congresses or to party women. At a personal level she was also beset by secret feelings of frustrations and impatience that this work among women was thankless and politically too restrictive for women cadres. As will be shown in the following two chapters, the dissolution of the central Women's Department freed her for politically more challenging 'mass work' after 1933.

At that time, however, she remained totally unaware that this dissolution of the Women's Department was another form of Bolshevik male party-mindedness. It promoted, in a Weberian sense, a centralized command structure 'from the top downwards' allowing for supervision and control of subordinates at each hierarchical level. Thereby it gave another boost to male power at the expense of that of the already disadvantagedly positioned female minority in the CPGB organization.

Five years later, Smith somewhat realized her wrong judgement. But she was by far too Party-bound to urge working-class women to seek alternative non-hierarchical organizational forms. She moved the resolution on the re-

establishment of the Women's National Bureau at the 14th CPGB Congress. This Women's Bureau was to coordinate the work of Women's District Committees and local Women's Groups. Once again this new parallel structure of the Women's Committees was perceived as arms of the Party extending into the localities. By becoming the vehicle of class education for working-class women and the ground of preparing women for positions of leadership in the CPGB, the Party tried to increase its membership and influence among its 'symphasisers'. (85)

In other words, Smith uncritically advocated that working-class women could participate successfully in the CPGB if they wanted to do so and were 'shown the light'. She assumed, as Rosabeth Moss Kanter (86) has done in her study of women in corporations, that power differences rather than gender differences led to different experiences, work and fortunes of men and women in the party. She tended to believe that gender would become insignificant once women have acquired organizational power through better training, raised consciousness and their own hard work. Smith's experiences in an age of working-class party constructions and her personal party 'career' are some of the reasons that prevented her from perceiving the party organization as an essentially male-conceived and structurally male-biased organism.

Thus, this research on Smith's activities as cadre involved in party building has shown that the lack of the

CPGB's appeal among working-class women should be understood as a dialectical interaction between three factors: the blind adoption of Bolshevik 'lines' that gave insufficient attention to women's issues, the Party leadership's inclination to treat working-class women solely out of a consideration of organizational expediency; and the Party's intrinsically male-biased structure that seems to have reinforced the other two.

Standing For Election

This section will examine the complex interplay between class and gender issues as handled by Rose Smith within the power structures of two working-class occupational communities during two elections.

It was the general election on 31 May 1929 that became the first real test for the CPGB's new election policy during the 'Third Period'. Its aim was not "to strengthen the workers' illusions about Parliament as a means of achieving emancipation" but "to show the workers that only a resolute struggle to smash the power of the capitalists can bring about emancipation." (87) The Party put forward twenty-five candidates. Three of them were women and stood in constituencies that were industrial centres and had been fairly solid Labour seats since 1918: Helen Crawford in the heavy engineering town of Bothwell, Lanarkshire, Isabel Brown in the mining town of Motherwell, Lanarkshire (88), and Rose Smith in the mining centre of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Smith was the most recent member of this female 'triumvirate'.

Compared to the other three main political parties, the CPGB selected a higher percentage of female candidates in this election. The percentage of female candidates for the Communist Party, Labour Party, Conservative Party, and the Liberals was 12 per cent , 5.3 per cent , 2.1 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. According to the Sunday Worker, the three women had been selected because they "are tried and trusted fighters, all have suffered for their principles, all are working daily to free working women from the double slavery which capitalist society imposes on them, the slavery of class and the slavery of sex." (89) But when the election manifesto of the CPGB is compared with that of the Labour Party, the CPGB's main rival in this general election, the Communist disposition towards women appears less favourable. It was briefly asserted that the CPGB would work for "full economic equality for women and men, including equal pay for equal work." The gist of the Manifesto, however, centred around the formation of a 'Revolutionary Workers' Government' that would "nationalise the land, mines, railways, large factories, shipyards, banks and foreign trade." The Labour Party, on the other hand, appealed to women voters on a wider programme. It announced it would fight against "other anomalies and injustices -legal, social and economic- especially affecting women and children." It would also encourage women to support "the important question of universal peace" and thereby "to terminate for ever the

futility of a civilised country squandering human life and wasting its national resources in war." (90)

By spring 1929 Smith had been absent from Mansfield for two years. But she still had some good friends in the town who enthusiastically welcomed her back and briefed her about the local circumstances. During her absence, the power of the coal owners had been greatly enhanced in the Mansfield coalfield. Their open and determined defiance towards the NMA had borne 'good fruits', albeit at the expense of the ordinary local workforce. During the last months of 1926 they founded the Nottinghamshire and District Miners' Industrial Union (NMIU) with the connivance of the Nottingham miners' leader, George Spencer. Thus locally this union was known as the 'Spencer Union' or 'the Gaffers' Union'; Rose Smith's friends referred to it as the 'Scabs' Union' and had tried in vain to contain its chilling impact. In 1929 the coal owners not only financed and staffed the union office with their own nominees of 'butties', but they had also succeeded in making it the only allowed union for their employees on their colliery premises. Thus, most of the lodge officials of the NMA neither worked nor collected union dues any longer at the pits. The NMA union membership fluctuated up and down, as ordinary members feared the victimisation of being made redundant when they were reported of holding the NMA membership card.

The adoption of Smith, the former local strike leader of women, as their Communist candidate in the Mansfield

constituency by these radical elements of the local NMA branch was therefore a clear sign of leftwing defiance. The opposing camp of mine owners seems to have comprehended this choice in this way, judging from the following commentary after the election:

The figures have revealed also the very insignificant number of adherents to the Communist cause to be found throughout the district. The extent of the propaganda carried on by this party in this district for some time past has given many people the idea that the tenets of Communism were making a considerable appeal among the working class, but the number of votes given for the Communist candidate destroy any apprehension on this account. (91)

The 1929 general election was a four-corned contest in the Mansfield constituency. For the first time in the history of the constituency the Labour Party's choice fell on Charles Brown who was not a miner. (92) He was a former hosiery worker, a member of the Mansfield Board of Guardian and Vice-Chairman of the Sutton Urban District Council. To Rose Smith he was her former mentor and colleague at the Mansfield Labour College. The Liberals were represented by William Collins, the headmaster of the Sutton-in-Ashfield Central Schools, and the Conservatives by S. R. Sidebottom, an Oxford-trained barrister from London. (93)

On 24 April 1929, the government announced that Parliament was to be dissolved on 10 May and the election was to take place on 31 May 1929. Rose Smith began her "campaign among the women electors in Mansfield, . . . , with a swing." (94) With the help of an enthusiastic team of Mansfield women

friends she campaigned hard and with endless enthusiasm against her political opponents. Her style of electioneering was similar to that of most female candidates of the 1920s. Rather than addressing the traditional mass rallies as did most male politicians she adopted the more subdued techniques of a people's candidate. (95) On average she addressed about ten to twelve small street meetings and factory gate meetings attended by not more than one hundred people a day. They were announced by bell ringing in the same way as she had staged her public meetings during the miners' struggle in 1926. By linking up with these past stormy days, she tried to show that she understood the electorate's worries and problems and was once again willing to fight for their rights as their MP. While she addressed the crowd, her helpers canvassed from house to house handing out leaflets and Smith's photograph, signed and with verses of The Internationale printed on its reverse side. Being conscious of the reluctance of the miners' wives to get involved in politics, Smith also arranged special gatherings for women and her Election Committee issued a weekly women's bulletin explaining the aims and demands of the CPGB's class-based Communist Manifesto. She also did not neglect to address the middle-class voters in the town. She replied to the questions on her stand to the League of Nations, unemployment and housing, which Mr. H. Williamson, the Honorary Secretary of the Mansfield Men's Adult School had sent to all candidates. The answers were published in The

Mansfield and North Advertiser. But the use of her crude revolutionary language, in which she spoke of a 'League of Capitalist Thieves', 'working class preparation of direct action against war', and 'the confiscation and rationing of big house property by local authorities' reveals a political naivety as well as a class disdain toward this section of voters on her part. (96)

What impact did the CPGB and Smith make at the polls? Nationally the Labour Party won the 1929 general election and formed the Second Labour administration under Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister. The CPGB, on the other hand, only polled 50,634 votes. This result was worse than that obtained in the 1924 general election where only eight Communist candidates had polled 55,346 votes. In 1929 twenty-one of the twenty-five CP candidates forfeited their deposits; among them were all three female candidates. Nine of the twenty-five candidates collected under 2 per cent of the votes cast in the constituencies. Of the three female candidates Smith came last with obtaining 533 votes or 1.1 per cent of the votes cast. Helen Crawford polled 5.1 per cent of the votes in Bothwell and Isabel Brown 3.4 per cent in Motherwell. When we compare her result however with that of other CC male members standing in English constituencies, such as J.T. Murphy in Hackney South (1.1 %), W.T.L. Tapsell in Stepney, Limehouse (1.0 %), W. Hannington in Wallsend (1.8 %), and F. Moore in Hamilton (1.6 %), Smith's election result is in the range of the votes

gained by CP candidates. In particular it does not appear to reflect a voters' dislike for her as a woman candidate. She just shared in the electoral failures of the CPGB. (97)

In Mansfield the polls recorded a high electors' turnout of 59,735 electors or 81.2 per cent. The electors were evenly distributed among men and women. The Labour Party succeeded in holding the seat. Charles Brown got 28,416 or 58.6 per cent of the votes. (98) As mentioned earlier, Smith got only 533 votes. She expected more, particularly as people had personally promised to give her their votes on the eve of the polling day.

Why had her campaigning not been translated in more votes? Ernest Cant, the local Communist organizer at that time, reported that it had been neither caused by her character nor by an unsupportive constituency party. She had tirelessly electioneered. In Mansfield "she was received remarkably well" as a good candidate, "was well assisted by the women comrades" and despite her defeat Smith had immediately been "readopted as prospective candidate", for whom "the comrades have pledged to find the finances." Further, on the Sunday after polling day, three thousand sympathetic people turned out to hear her final speech. Ernest Cant therefore thought that the cause must be found in the electoral system of Britain. The four-cornered contest had aroused fears that a splitting of the votes between the two working-class parties could result in putting in the Tory

Party in Mansfield. Thus Charlie Brown, a leftwing Labour Party candidate, had reaped most of the votes in "a last minute stampede." (99)

But why had not all the votes been given to Rose Smith as the representative of the allegedly more working-class-conscious CPGB? Both the Communist press and Mansfield's local press (100) hinted at a debate between Smith and A. J. Cook, the General Secretary of the MFGB, as the immediate cause for this stampede. Arthur Cook had been one of Rose Smith's close political friends during the miners' struggles in 1926. Several times he had stayed overnight in her house when he had come to address the miners of the Mansfield coalfield. Three years later, on the eve of polling day, he had come to Mansfield to reply in person to "Rose Smith's Open Letter to A. J. Cook," which she had circulated among the crowd. According to Ernest Cant, "here he villified and abused Comrade Rose Smith and others who in 1926 had been his mainstay and closest adherents." (101) Although no copy of this document is now available, we can assume that the contents of Rose Smith's 'Open Letter' differed not much from similar correspondence sent privately to A. J. Cook or published in the Communist press by leading Communists, such as Harry Pollitt, Arthur Horner, the South Wales miners' leader, and others. By early 1929 their old friend Arthur Cook had become in their eyes 'the deserter' or 'the renegade' after he had spoken against the Party's divisive policy of

encouraging rival unions and putting up candidates against the Labour Party in the 1929 election. In his view, it divided the workers and gave power to their enemies. In Mansfield, that night, he must have given Rose Smith to understand this during their debate. As he still was and would remain the most trusted miners' leader in Mansfield, the miners and their wives heeded his words on polling day and turned against the Conservative Party and the 'Spencer Union' as their immediate class enemies by voting for the Labour Party.

In January 1932, the CPGB's Central Committee adopted a resolution demanding a complete overhaul of the Party's 'mass work' in the factories and trade unions. In the electoral field it also led to changes. From 1933 onwards Communist candidates used municipal elections as platforms to win over working-class voters to the Party. It was also directed against the Labour Party that had begun to expand its ward organisations in Conservative-controlled boroughs.

At the beginning of August it was announced that a by-election in St. Peter's Ward, Burnley was to be held on 8 August 1933 to replace the Conservative Councillor Joseph Bestwick whose term of office was to expire on 1 November 1933. Councillor Bestwick had been promoted to the Aldermanic Bench. The ward was known for its overcrowded accommodation housing some of the poorest people in the town. The aim of the Labour Party was to secure complete control in the ward. (102)

To the surprise of the Burnley News, the town's paper

sympathetic to Labourites and the 'reformist' trade unions, Rose Smith submitted her nomination as the Communist and third candidate in this contest. The other two candidates were George Hale (Labour), the Secretary of the Burnley District Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) and a former councillor, and Harry Hartley (Conservative), an owner of a butcher shop and whose family had a century's association with the ward.(103)

Working-class women achieved equality in the local franchise and eligibility for all local government offices in 1914. Labour women soon recognized that in their capacity as local councillors they could provide practical help to working-class families in their town by overlooking the implementation of maternity and child welfare, better housing and educational possibilities for children of their class. Therefore neither Smith's decision to stand in this local election nor her house-to-house canvassing for social issues of 'free meals' for school children, overcrowded housing conditions, and against the more-looms system were at first glance unusual actions. (104)

She knew that in Burnley school meals were a very sore point with many poor families, particularly with wives and mothers. Out of 13,000 school children less than 1,000 received free school meals. (105) In an efficiency drive for savings and better management of the town's finances by the Conservative-dominated Town Council fewer funds had been

allocated for the provisions of these meals. Poor families were told to make up for it and saw one extra shilling per week per child be taken off their relief. Thus, the issues she addressed during her campaign directly affected the quality of life of the families in St. Peter's Ward. For Smith this 'free meal' issue was however more than a class issue whereby the town's resources were to be shared out more fairly. As a socialist woman she comprehended it as an important emancipation issue. She knew that many working-class wives felt that the preparation of meals for their school children was their sole prerogative and should not be interfered with by the paternalist Town Council or the expanding welfare State. 'School meals' were suspected to be another means of social control. Rose Smith thought otherwise and told her male comrades at the CC meeting that

There is this question of feeding school children. Some [women] say they would rather their children came home. I think if we explain this properly we can get the women to drive for this. One of the drives we want to make is to break down the enslavement of women inside the home. We have to destroy this among the working class. (106)

Thus, in her election campaign she tried to present the issue of school meals as bringing about the socialization of housework that working-class housewives in the ward should welcome rather than oppose it. 'School meals' were not a personal stigma for the poorer working-class families and an attack on established working-class life-styles.

Meanwhile the other two candidates projected themselves as worthy representatives of the people by lobbying for

support for a fairer distribution of power among the political parties on the Town Council. Social changes would then follow if they were elected. (107)

The poll was slightly larger than was anticipated. 1,482 people out of a total electorate of 2,362 (1,095 men and 1,267 women) voted in this municipal by-election. Unfortunately we do not have any figures how many women voted in this ward election. George Hale (Labour) won the election with 826 votes against Harry Hartley (Conservative) and Rose Smith (Communist) with 585 and 71 votes respectively. Thus St. Peter's Ward had at last become a Labour seat. The Labour Party had now 15 councillors and one alderman, a total of 16 votes in the Council, while the combined Conservative and Liberal Parties had 16 votes. (108)

What had gone wrong again for Smith in this election? Although we do not have a detailed analysis of her electoral defeat in either the Communist or local press, a letter of an anonymous 'old Socialist' gives us an inkling. He was against two communist tactics. Firstly, he objected to the communist emphasis on revolution because "it would hurry the people into a physical-force revolution before they were intellectually prepared for it." The Burnley general election result of 1931 was cited by him as a case in point. At that election working-class voters, by being unable to distinguish between socialist tactics, had turned against socialism and elected the candidate of the reactionary National Government. Secondly, in

an allusive comment to the activities of the Communist Minority Movement during the more-looms industrial conflict in the locality, the correspondent showed his opposition to "the theory that a minority has the right to rule" and that "the local Communists were absurdly inconsistent when they protested against the action of Burnley Weavers' Association officials on the more-looms question, such action being in defiance of the mandate given by a majority of the members." (109)

In other words, Smith polled so few votes in St. Peter's Ward not because she was a woman or campaigned on women's issues, but because voters disliked the tactics of the Communist Party. In the eyes of the working-class voter who desired social and political reform, these communist methods were divisive and would only do damage to long-term working-class interests in the whole town. In order not to let the landlord and capitalist class benefit a second time, the voters of St. Peter's Ward chose the Labour candidate. He must have appeared as the most promising candidate due to his strong local working-class connections and experience. Not only did he represent the numerically growing and therefore more powerful of the two contesting working-class parties, but he was an active trade unionist of the AEU, the union which was emerging to determine the type of working-class politics in the region. It was known not to be particularly supportive of women's issues. (110)

Smith never stood for elections again. She must have realized the futility of such power-seeking exercise for herself. In both of her election endeavours she appeared not to have been able to comprehend the 'moods' or feelings and thoughts of the local people. Nevertheless, it could be argued, she did indirectly help the labour movement. By her candidacy she probably brought about a more solid Labour victory than was actually expected in these towns.

Conclusions

The British communist community with its own well defined rules and social norms became the support group of Rose Smith, a single mother and her two sons. The Party provided her with the organisational structure, the ideological framework and the tasks as an agitator and female cadre.

Her training as a cadre was gender-neutral in its ideological content and in its practical activities. Its aim was to create a loyal, firm, self-reliant and disciplined functionary who could co-ordinate revolutionary activities effectively, would challenge the authority of the capitalist order but not the authority and power of the Party leader.

Smith welcomed and accepted the physical and mental harshness of the cadre training as her challenge to the existing capitalist system and its entrenched unequal gender relations. Her firmness on political principles and lines mixed with a good dose of practical organisational skills allowed her to join the inner circle of power in the CPGB.

As National Women's Organiser Rose Smith soon realized that power was not equally distributed between men and women in this revolutionary working-class party. Thus, the women's question became a definite political concern for her in meetings and engagements outside the Party. She understood the plight and oppression suffered by most working-class women and made it her duty to alleviate it. Therefore she demanded from her own male comrades that the causes for the gender inequality within the Party should be carefully analysed and addressed. She fought against the Party's disregard for women's issues and demanded that they be made an integral part of any political campaign. She also attacked the stifling formal style of party work that intimidated women to join the organisation. In other words, Smith does not quite fit Sue Bruley's portrait of the female cadre as 'the persona of pseudo-men'.

With regard to her candidacy at local and national elections, it was a complete failure not due to her but to the CPGB's political standing within the national political system. The CPGB promoted female candidates in elections, but the British electorate was against revolutionary methods of changing society. However, by standing for election Smith served as the prism for the CPGB. It gave this revolutionary working-class party the chance of publicising its programme at local and national level of British society.

Endnotes

- (1) Anna Coote and Polly Pattulia, Power and Prejudice. Women and Politics (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), Chapter 1.
- (2) Martin Pugh, Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959 (London: Macmillan, 1992), 150-151.
- (3) Jorgen Rasmussen, "Women in Labour: The Flapper Vote and Party System Transformation in Britain," Electoral Studies 3 (1984): 47-63.
- (4) F.W.S. Craig, British Electoral Facts 1832-1980 (London: Parliamentary Research Services, 1981), 120.
- (5) P.M. Graves, Labour Women. Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); M. Pugh, Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959, 154-234.
- (6) Recent historical interpretations of the nature of this Moscow-CPGB relationship during the 'Third Period' differ somewhat: Francis Beckett, Enemy With. The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party (London: John Murray, 1995) maintains that the adoption of the 'Bolshevik line' was primarily promoted by the party's ideologue R. Palme Dutt, the Young Communist Leaguer William Rust and the practical politician Harry Pollitt; Noreen Branson, History of the CPGB. 1927-1941 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985) however puts the blame for the party's adoption of Stalinist policies on Manuilsky and the Comintern. For an analysis of the 'Moscow line' in a more international setting for the period 1928-33 see Kevin McDermott, "Stalin and the Comintern during the 'Third Period', 1928-33," European History Quarterly 25 (1995): 409-429; for the period after 1933 see E.J. Hobsbawm, "'The Moscow Line' and international communist policy, 1933-47." In Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics, ed. C. Wrigley (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 163-188.
- (7) Harry Pollitt, The Road to Victory. Opening and Concluding Speeches at the 12th Party Congress. November 1932, 50.
- (8) Sue Bruley, Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939 (London: Garland Publishing, 1986).
- (9) ibid., 123.
- (10) Barbara Taylor, Eve and The New Jerusalem. Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (London: Virago, 1983), 183-260.
- (11) Raphael Samuel, "The Lost World of British Communism," The New Left Review, no. 154 (November/December 1985): 3-53; "Staying Power: The Lost World of British Communism, Part Two," The New Left Review, no. 156 (March/ April 1986): 63-113.
- (12) Kenneth Newton, The Sociology of British Communism. (London: Allen Lane, 1969).
- (13) The marriage bar for women teachers remained in effect

- until 1944. See Alison M. Oram, "Serving Two Masters? The Introduction of a Marriage Bar in Teaching in the 1920s." In The Sexual Dynamics of History, ed. The London Feminist History Group (London: Pluto Press, 1983), 134-148.
- (14) Charles Bedaux (1888-1944), a French engineer, developed this timing system and became a billionaire as a result of it.
- (15) In the capacity of a worker-correspondent Rose Smith wrote a short piece on her experience: "A Day in a Chocolate Factory," The Working Woman (January 1928).
- (16) Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (17) For an example of this kind of moralising to communist couples by the CPGB leadership see Harry Pollitt's letter to the newly weds Tom Wintringham and Elizabeth Arkwright in David Fernbach, "Tom Wintringham and Socialist Defense Strategy," History Workshop Journal, no. 14 : 65-66.
- (18) Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 4; Pat Adler, interview by author, Tape recording, Beijing, 9. May 1995; Jenny Eyres, interview by author, Tape recording, Chesterfield, 14. November 1993. Despite my insistent probing during the many interviews I conducted with direct family members and her political friends in England and Beijing I was unable to collect further information about Rose Smith's husband than what is provided in the thesis. Only one of her co-workers at the Daily Worker mentioned to me that in a conversation Rose Smith referred to the husband as 'a brute' once but did not further elaborate.
- (19) (i) Joan Smith, interview by author, Shipley, 13 November 1993; (ii) Jenny Eyre, interview by author, Chesterfield, 14 November 1993; (iii) Fred Westacott, interview by author, Chesterfield, 14 November 1993; (iv) Liu Qinghe, interview by author, Beijing, 4 May, 1995.
- (20) John R. Gillis, For Better, For Worse. British Marriages, 1600 to the Present (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), Part III; David Levine, "Industrialization and the Proletarian Family in England," Past and Present, no. 107 (1985): 168-203; Eric Richards, "Women in the British Economy Since About 1700: An Interpretation," History 59 (1974): 337-357.
- (21) Matrimonial Survey, 1947 as quoted in John R. Gillis, For Better, For Worse, 302.
- (22) One of Smith's sons received a grammar school education, became a lecturer in nursing and insisted on a non-wage earning wife and mother as central figure in the home. The other son continued the family's artisan tradition as a fully qualified carpenter and active trade unionist. Rose Smith is said to have been closer to this trade unionist-son. Both sons served in the British army

- during the Second World War. Unfortunately there is no information available about the sons' views on the absent father.
- (23) Betty Chandler, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995; Joan Smith, interview by author, Tape recording, Shipley 13 November 1993; Margaret Smith, interview by author, Tape recording, Shipley 14 November 1993; Sheila Taylor, interview by author, Tape recording, Morpeth, 16 November 1993.
- (24) For Rose Smith's views see Chapter 2, endnote (78); Pat Adler, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995; Sheila Taylor, interview by author, Tape recording, Morpeth, 16 November 1993.
- (25) Training at the Lenin School is described in Harry Wicks, Keeping My Head. The Memoirs of a British Bolshevik (London: Socialist Platform, 1992), Chapter 4; Margaret McCarthy, Generation in Revolt (London: Heinemann, 1953), 177 ff.
- (26) 'Loyalty' refers to the unconditional submission of the member to the Party's will, as enshrined in the Party rules since 1921. See James Klugmann, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, vol. I (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969), 49.
- (27) Minutes of the CC Meeting of the CPGB, 19-20 July 1930.
- (28) Minutes of the Political Bureau of the CPGB, 25 September 1930.
- (29) Minutes of the Political Bureau of the CPGB, 6 August 1931; 17 September 1931.
- (30) Minutes of the PB of the CPGB, 17 February 1933.
- (31) On her 1927 visit see Sunday Worker, 6 November 1927, 7; Supplement to The "Working Woman", December 1927, 3. On her 1928 visit see Workers' Life, 3 August 1928, 1; on her 1930 visit see Resolutions of the 5th World Congress, RILU, Moscow 15-26 August 1930; Daily Worker, 26 August 1930; Eddie Frow, interview by the author, Tape recording, Salford, 10 November 1933. Eddie Frow was a member of this British delegation.
- (32) For a copy of this original photograph, given to me by Fred Westacott during my interview on 14 November 1993, see Appendix I. The original photograph is in the possession of Fred Westacott in Chesterfield. For some biographical details on the three revolutionary women see Appendix II.
- (33) Rose Smith, "Visit To A Creche," Supplement to The Working Woman, 3.
- (34) Marx Memorial Library, London: Prospectus 1937-38, Marx House, 12. At that time the Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School attempted to counteract the burning of books in Germany through education and the collection of Marxist-Leninist literature. See Helen E. Roberts, "Years of Struggle: The life and work of Robin Page Arnot," Labour History Review 59, no. 2 (Autumn 1994), 59 and 62.

- (35) CPGB, Manual of Party Training (London, 1924), 45-46.
- (36) Rose Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K. [*] The meaning of the expression of 'to upsplit seconds' or 'to split second' is 'for a very brief moment of time'.
- (37) "Want to Know the Truth," Sunday Worker, 28 July 1929, 7.
- (38) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, Tape recording no. 5
- (39) J. K. Walton, Lancashire. A Social History 1558-1939 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 349.
- (40) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 5, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (41) ibid.
- (42) ibid.
- (43) This story was related to me by Rod Smith, Rose Smith's grandson. She had told him about this event. Interview by author, Tape recording, Shipley, 14 November 1993.
- (44) Sunday Worker, 28 July 1929, 7.
- (45) Transcript of hearings at the Magistrate's Court see Oldham Evening Chronicle and Standard, 23 December 1929, 5; The Standard, 18 January 1930, 16.
- (46) "Rose Smith! Prosecuted by Labour Government- Pour In Your Pennies To The Defence Fund," Daily Worker, 23 January 1930, 9.
- (47) On D. O. Dyke's undercover activities see Andrew Bullen, "Watching and Besetting: The Burnley Police and the 'More Looms' Disputes, 1931-1932," North-West Labour History Society, no. 5: 1-10.
- (48) Extract is quoted from the transcript of hearings at the Burnley Magistrate's Court as published in the Express and Advertiser, 14 October 1931, 4; [*] 'told off' is an error made by the newspaper. For other reports on her arrest and trial, see The Burnley News, 14 October 1931, 6; Smith's description of her own arrest see The Worker, 17 October 1931, 6.
- (49) The Worker, 26 December 1931.
- (50) On her first imprisonment see Rose Smith's article "Prisoners on Exercise," The Daily Worker, 1 February 1930, 9.
- (51) Minutes of the CC Meeting of the CPGB, 17 January 1932.
- (52) Rose Smith. "Capitalist Violence Against Working Women," The Worker, 16 January 1932, 6.
- (53) Minutes of the CC of the CPGB, 17 January 1932.
- (54) Minutes of the CC of the CPGB, 25 March 1933.
- (55) Minutes of CC of the CPGB, 17 January 1932
- (56) ibid.
- (57) Minutes of PB of CPGB, 10 July 1930; Minutes of CC of CPGB, 19-20 July 1930.
- (58) P. M. Graves, Labour Women, 167

- (59) Minutes of PB of CPGB, 10 July 1930.
- (60) Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 19-20 July 1930.
- (61) ibid.
- (62) Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 4 June 1932.
- (63) On the use of 'criticism' within the Communist movement see Lenin, "What is to be Done?" Collected Works, Vol. 5, 365; "Freedom of Criticism," Communist Review. (June 1931): 239; The CPGB Training Manual. The Role of the Party (London, 1957), 19.
- (64) Minutes of CC Meeting of the CPGB, 17 June 1933.
- (65) Minutes of PB Meeting of CPGB, 16 February 1933.
- (66) Rose Smith's Report on Women's Work. Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 4 June 1932.
- (67) Rose Smith, "Resolution On Work Amongst Women." Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 19-20 June 1930.
- (68) Smith's Report on Women's Work. Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 4 June 1932.
- (69) Minutes of Enlarged CC Meeting of CPGB, 17 January 1932.
- (70) Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 4 June 1932.
- (71) The National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (NUWCM) was founded in 1921 as a militant organisation to campaign on behalf of the unemployed. In 1930 it was renamed The National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM). Its executive body, the National Administrative Committee (NAC), was formed in November 1921 and Walter (Wal) Hannington was appointed National Organiser. He was also a founder member of the CPGB and was elected to the CPGB's Central Committee in November 1929. From its beginning, the communist domination of the NUWM made it highly suspect to the leaders of organised labour. It was in 1927 that the TUC openly condemned the CPGB and also turned its back on the NUWM. The Home Office also regarded it as a "subversive organisation" and it was kept under close scrutiny by the Special Branch.
- (72) Report of the Sixth National Conference of NUWCM, 1929, 22.
- (73) Jane Mark-Lawson et. al, "Gender and local politics: Struggles over welfare policies 1918-1939." In Localities, class and gender, ed. Linda Murgatroyd et al (London: Pion, 1985), 195-215; J. Liddington and J. Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Suffrage Movement (London: Virago, 1978).
- (74) Marx Memorial Library: Wal Hannington, "Why We Are Marching" (London, 1930), 6 and 9. In Maude Brown Papers. 375. 2.
- (75) Minutes of the CC Meeting of CPGB, 19-20 July 1930. For a recent re-appraisal of Rose Smith's point of view see Ralph Hayburn, "The National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1921-36," International Review of Social History 28 (1983), 290-291; for a more general assessment of the Communist failure see Harry Harmer, "The Failure of the Communists: The National Unemployment

- Workers' Movement, 1921-1939: A Disappointing Success." In The Failure of Political Extremism in Interwar Britain, ed. Andrew Thorpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 29-47.
- (76) Minutes of the CC Meeting.
- (77) ibid.
- (78) ibid.
- (79) ibid.
- (80) Minutes of CC Meeting of CPGB, 4 June 1932.
- (81) For Smith's arrest during the women's march in Preston see Daily Worker, 2 March 1932; 20 April 1932; The Weekly Worker, 23 April 1932; 25 July 1933; Lancashire Daily Post, 24 July 1933; Nelson Gazette, 1 August 1933. The preface is written by Smith and Bob Edwards (ILP) to Phil Harker, Lancashire's Fight For Bread. Story of the Great Lancashire Hunger March (Preston: Lancashire Marchers' Council, 1933). Phil Harker was the Lancashire NUWM Organiser at that time.
- (82) Letter addressed to the People of London by the Committee responsible for the London Reception to the Marchers. 1936. In Maude Papers: Box NUWM Bulletin & Circulars, 1936.
- (83) Sue Bruley discusses at some length the reasons for the closure of the CPGB's Women's Department within the international setting of the Comintern. The Women's Department of all European Communist Parties were affected by this Comintern decision. However, she incorrectly assumes that the closure of the CPGB's Women's Department had taken place already in 1931. See her Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939, 226-232.
- (84) Minutes of the PB Meeting of the CPGB, 16 February 1933.
- (85) Rose Smith, "The Communist Party's Approach to Women's Questions. What Is Being Done," Discussion 2, no. 8 (January 1938): 8-12.
- (86) Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Basic, 1977).
- (87) Workers' Life, 14 May 1929, 1.
- (88) Helen Crawford was a well known CPGB member since the party's inception. Although in the 1929 general election, she campaigned on the Communist Manifesto, she had been nominated by the Bothell Divisional Trades and Labour Council, which had been disaffiliated from the Labour Party. See Workers' Life, 28 September 1928, 3. For further biographical details Isabel Brown, 1894-1984, see Dictionary of Labour Biography. Vol. 9, ed. J. Bellamy and John Saville, 20-32; May Hill, Red Roses for Isabel (Preston: Preston Community Press, 1982).
- (89) Sunday Worker, 12 May 1929, 7.
- (90) CPGB Manifesto "Class Against Class", 1929; Labour Manifesto "Labour's Appeal to the Nation", 1929.
- (91) The Mansfield and North Notts. Advertiser, 7 June 1929,

- 7.
- (92) The Labour Party's choice of Charles Brown instead of a candidate representing the NMA in Mansfield reveals how much the power of the NMA had been weakened after 1926.
- (93) The Mansfield, Sutton & Kirkby Chronicle, 19 April 1929, 9.
- (94) Workers' Life, 19 April 1929, 3.
- (95) Women's electioneering style is discussed by Martin Pugh, Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959, 101; on Smith's campaigning style see Workers' Life, 31 May 1929, 4; 14 June 1929, 4.
- (96) The Mansfield and North Notts. Advertiser, 10 May 1929, 7.
- (97) F. W. S. Craig, Minor Parties at British Parliamentary Elections 1885-1974 (London: Macmillan, 1975): Communist Party of Great Britain.
- (98) F. W. S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election: Constituency Results, 1885-1974 (London: Macmillan, 1975), 428; John Stevenson and Chris Cook, The Slump (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), 128-129; Alan McKinnon, "Communist Party Election Tactics- a Historical Review," Marxism Today 24 (August 1980): 21-22. For a contemporary Communist critique of the policies concerning the international situation, which were adopted by the Comintern's Sixth Congress and which had some bearing on the CPGB's electoral campaigning and outcome in 1929, see Richard, "Die Lehre der englischen Wahlen," Gegen den Strom 2, no. 2 (8 June 1929): 11-12. I am grateful to Mike Jones for sending me a copy of this article.
- (99) Workers' Life, 14 June 1929, 4.
- (100) ibid.; The Mansfield and North Notts. Advertiser. 31 May 1929, 10.
- (101) The correspondence between Harry Pollitt and Arthur Cook is reprinted in Paul Foot, "An Agitator of the Worst Kind", A Portrait of Miners' Leader A. J. Cook (London: Socialist Workers Party, 1986), 22-24; between Arthur Horner and A.J. Cook, see Workers' Life. Miners' Page, 12 April 1929; 26 April 1929; statement of PB of the CPGB, see 1 May 1929.
- (102) Burnley News, 5 August 1933, 10; Express and Advertiser, 5 August 1933, 11; Daily Worker, 12 August 1933, 6.
- (103) Burnley News, 2 August 1933, 8.
- (104) For description of Rose's campaigning efforts see Daily Worker, 7 August 1933, 3; 12 August 1933, 6;
- (105) Daily Worker, 7 August 1933, 3.
- (106) Minutes of the Central Committee Meeting of the CPGB. 4 June 1932; for some recent theoretical discussions on the socialization of domestic work, see Lise Vogel, Marxism and the Oppression of Women Toward a Unitary Theory (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 151-175; Emily Blumenfeld and Susan Mann, "Domestic Labour and the Reproduction of Labour Power: Towards an

- Analysis of Women, the family and Class." In Hidden in the Household, ed. Bonnie Fox (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1980), 267-307.
- (107) On party representation on the Council see Burnley News, 1 July 1933, 16; 5 July 1933, 5; 8 July 1933, 4;
- (108) Burnley News, 9 August 1933, 8; Burnley Express and Advertiser, 9 August 1933, 8.
- (109) Burnley Express & Advertiser, 12 August 1933, 4.
- (110) For a stimulating analysis of the changing dynamics of local politics see Michael Savage, The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics. The Labour Movement in Preston 1880-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Chapter 4

THE INFORMAL POLITICIAN, 1926-38

In recent decades scholars studying politically active women have revised the narrow meaning of 'politics'. In the past it meant active party membership and electoral participation at both national and local level. It is now recognized that community activism and voluntarism on part of women must also be understood as an integral part of 'politics'. This becomes particularly important if the impact of women's contributions to the shaping and implementation of social policy, social services and their redistribution are to be analysed. In this chapter 'informal politics' will refer to this type of political activism. (1)

Recent research on interwar Britain (2) has found that emphasis on gender differences after the First World war produced a shift in feminism. As we have discussed in the preceding chapter, the male establishment played the class card telling women to join the class-based political parties. As a result, British feminists became split along class lines. For a working-class woman class remained the vital factor in determining her motivation for and restrictions on her involvement in politics in two ways. Firstly, as the male power structure espoused maternalism, working-class feminists

adjusted to this by demanding policies that would improve the conditions of life for women rather than asking for equal rights. Secondly, as separate feminist organizations were not encouraged to develop, a working-class woman whose family was poor and not socially mobile, could only improve her personal resources and achieve a sense of power by joining a group of women or an organization of men and women in her locality that was linked in some way to existing party structures.

This chapter will discuss Smith's own motivation to fight for social justice for the men and women of her class and how far she motivated others, particularly women, in such community based activities during the period 1926 to 1938. Her participation in discussions and activities on birth control, housing, cost of living, and against the spread of fascism took place at a time when the construction of the CPGB's organization was less turned on itself, less exclusive and self-serving. Both in 1926 and from 1933 onwards the CPGB encouraged connections with sympathetic left-wing organizations and individuals outside the Party. During the early part of the 1930s Moscow also stopped directly subsidizing the Party. (3) As Henry Pelling has argued, by the mid-1930s the CPGB was a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary situation. And the adoption of a more accommodating 'line' towards the labour movement was a recognition of this reality on the part of the Party without having to abandon its basic beliefs. As the following analysis

of Rose Smith's informal political activities in areas of welfare and women's issues in various local settings will show, Smith followed suit. Her struggle for the protection of the rights of working-class men and women allowed her to exercise independent judgment and was organizationally made somewhat easier. But due to the distribution of power and the strength of the British state, it was not necessarily more effectively realized.

Birth Control

During the Miners' Lock-out, in mid-summer 1926, general social distress became visible in the Mansfield coalfield. The MFGB's strike pay to the locked-out men had stopped. Women had great difficulties in making ends meet and children began to go hungry in Mansfield and the surrounding villages. Rose Smith who was in charge of organising the miners' wives, was pushed into the position of defending the social rights of the women in her community. It was then that she was briefly drawn into a discussion on birth control.

Since the end of the First World War the size of the average working-class family declined rapidly and this was welcomed by all birth control agencies that regarded overpopulation as a cause for working-class misery for decades. The Society of Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress (CBC), founded by Mrs. Marie Stopes in 1921, presented then for the first time birth control as a matter of safeguarding the health of working-class mothers and children,

and thereby also the quality of the race. Other women's organisations, such as the WCGs, and the Workers' Birth Control Group (WBCG), used Marie Stopes' arguments in their birth control campaigns. (4)

In order to fulfil these goals birth controllers demanded a better dissemination of birth control information to working-class women in government funded and managed health centres and clinics. This however was neither permitted by the governments in power nor supported by the male-dominated political parties. From 1924 this issue became rather divisive within the Labour Party. Not only did it alienate the rank-and-file Labour women from the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) but also from Dr. Marion Phillips, the head of the Women's Sections. The higher echelon of the Labour Party stuck to its uncompromising position because it feared the birth control issue would alienate Catholic voters from the party and also felt women were acting too much as a separate interest group inside the party.

In 1924 the WBCG was established in order to campaign forcefully against this official Labour Party position. Its chairperson was Mrs. L'Estrange Malone, and its secretaries were Dora Russell and Frieda Laski. Most of its members were recruited from the rank-and-file membership of the Labour Party, the WCGs and other birth control societies. For the next six years this group of women lobbied for working-class wives to be granted the same right as upper-and middle-class

women to decide how many children they wanted and to have access to the latest scientific knowledge. (5)

In 1925 NEC, however, tried to stop this birth control movement from disrupting Annual Party Conferences by the following ruling "That the subject of birth control is in its nature not one which should be made a political Party issue, but should remain a matter upon which members of the Party should be free to hold and promote their individual convictions." (6) A year later resolutions still continued to appear at the Labour Party Conference. So the NEC took advantage of the disruptions caused by the General Strike and forbade discussion of any resolution on birth control which had already been put forward at three successive conferences and on which a ruling had been made.

This attitude of the Labour Party leadership infuriated the women of the WBCG. A nationwide campaign was launched to enlist supporting protest letters from all working-class circles in order to get the issue of birth control for the working-class women replaced on the agenda at all annual Labour Party conferences. As the miners' union held a powerful block vote in the Labour Party, the WBCG appealed to the MFGB. The 1926 miners' lock-out with food shortages and rising personal debts for miners' families reinforced the WBCG's arguments that miners' wives would benefit most from free information on and equal access to family planning.

Smith was a well-known woman leader who had wide

experience of the conditions in the mining area of Nottinghamshire. She was a strong believer in birth control and in having equal access to contraceptives and birth control information. She got to know A. J. Cook, the secretary of the MFGB, during his visits to the Mansfield coalfield. He was a very fair-minded man who had much sympathy for the plight of the miners' wives. In turn, the women of the coalfields respected and trusted him. Whenever it was known that he would speak at a public meeting, the womenfolk attended in large numbers to listen to 'their Arthur'. Smith was aware that his opinion would have a favourable impact in the mining villages. She also was on good terms with William Paul, the editor of The Sunday Worker, to whom she or other reporters sent their accounts on ongoing strike conditions in their area from her home telephone.

So Smith enticed A. J. Cook to state his views about birth control, which were published under the headline " 'Worker's Wives Must Have More Leisure', Says A. J. Cook" in the Sunday Worker (7). This interview subsequently led to an exchange of letters between Smith and Dora Russell. All three protagonists agreed that it was absolutely essential and fair that scientific birth control information should be available for working-class women as it was for the women of the privileged classes. All three also concurred with the urgent need for working-class family limitation but advanced different motives. These reasons were symptomatic of the

thinking of the interwar generation.

Both A. J. Cook and Smith argued their points as solely in the name of class justice but from different angles. A. J. Cook stressed, more in line with syndicalist thinking on this matter (8), that the dissemination of scientific birth control to workers' wives would "free our comrades and give them more leisure and even greater amount of energy to work shoulder and shoulder with us men in the class struggle;" (9) it would promote better care, food and education for working-class children and contribute to the well-being of parents, children and the British nation. In other words, A. J. Cook's motives for advocating the small-sized working-class family were of a non-economic, more women-focused nature. By freeing the working-class wife from frequent childbearing and lack of rest, A. J. Cook envisaged that relations between the sexes, between generations in the family, and between classes in the society would become more equal. As Gittins' oral research in Burnley and the Rhondda Valley has shown, this attitude to birth control seems to have already been quite widespread among working-class women of this interwar generation. (10)

Smith's arguments dealt with contraceptives for miners' wives solely in economic terms. She objected to the fact that "the subject of birth control has become a hardy annual at all women's conferences" and warned that miners' wives were "getting impatient of all this discussion when up against the actual problem." Contrary to widespread assumptions by middle-

class birth-controllers that miners' wives were totally ignorant of or opposed to birth control matters, she depicted miners' wives as "being eminently practical" because "they have had to solve the problem with the limited information to hand." In essence a miner's wife treated "the problem of limiting her family ...just as pressing as that of how she is to get Katie's next pair of shoes." Surely, sometimes women had been driven to handle this problem in the same way as "desperate diseases require desperate remedies," meaning abortions in mining areas.

For her, however, the issue of birth control was not just a woman's matter, but "the present economic system is directly responsible for the fact that one sees everywhere prematurely aged and delicate women, victims of too frequent child bearing, coupled with insufficient food and rest." She demanded that the spread of birth control information had to be accompanied by better wages and improved housing which would make safer contraceptives more affordable to miners' wives. Otherwise these women would continue to be driven to "desperate remedies." In other words, Smith assumed that improved material conditions of the miners' family would automatically result in total agreement between husband and wife when making a decision to limit the size of the family. Her reasoning was somewhat closer to that of the CPGB. It was believed that a change in the economic system would in itself bring about sexual equality in the family. (11)

Dora Russell presented herself as the feminist spokeswoman of the WBCG "fighting desperately, even within our Party [Labour Party], to see that every maternity centre in every corner of the country combines maternity care with scientific birth control advice." (12) She was upset that Rose Smith had spoken contemptuously about the WBCG stand at the Labour Party conference. Dora Russell insisted therefore that miners' wives had to be vigilant concerning their rights as women, for the coming into power of workers would not automatically benefit women's rights:

Mothers will not get their needs attended to until they organise and fight too. And it is no use just saying "Yes" to everything the men in the Labour Party or the trade unions put forward.

The moment the Workers came into power we should have the organisation to keep the men up to the promise.... The men in the movement are not just hard-hearted about the question- though a great many of them are. They have not understood the problem because the mothers have always suffered in silence. (13)

In reply Smith agreed with Dora Russell and provided her with further factual details of the economic hardship of a miner's family which was borne essentially by the woman in the household:

Under the present wicked social system the fear of increasing the family burden haunts working women day and night...

I am convinced that Dora Russell, who criticised me in Sunday Worker, would feel as I do, when I speak to a miner's wife who is trying to feed her children on a relief voucher of 25s. per week. Six stones of flour, six lbs of sugar, seven lbs of margarine, two lbs of lard, one lb of tea, two lbs of soap- this is a week's ration for nine children. On top of this she is haunted by the fear of being "caught." (14)

Dora Russell replied favourably a week later that "the

strongest possible argument for the policy of the Labour Women's Conference on Birth Control and for the propaganda of the Workers' Birth Control Group is Rose Smith's reply to me."(15)

A few months later, at the 1926 Annual Labour Party Conference, the leaders of WBCG moved a resolution to get NEC's three-year ban lifted on birth control discussions. Dora Russell once again appealed to the attending delegates of the MFGB to make them realize that to the women birth control was as important as the seven-hour day was to the miners. Her speech included a citation of A. J. Cook's words which had been taken from his interview arranged by Rose Smith for the The Sunday Worker. (16) When the vote was taken, the women had won the right to further discussion by 1,656,000 for and 1,620,000 against. It was and would remain a narrow and precarious victory, because it had been achieved in the main by the miners' votes. The miners were well known for their anti-feminist stance in the labour movement and seem to have voted for this women's issue solely as a sign of acknowledgement that the women had strongly supported the men during their ongoing industrial dispute. (17)

Nevertheless, it can be said that indirectly Smith had done her bit to help the Labour women and the miners' union at a crucial moment in their struggles. In summer 1926, the Miners' Federation found itself isolated and jilted by most of the labour movement. Smith had then smoothed the way for

Labour women and Dora Russell, an upper-middle-class feminist, to come in contact with the miners' union. They became temporary allies, as each had its respective merits.

Wages and the Cost of living

After 1933 Britain gradually moved out of the trough of its economic depression. Mass unemployment was falling, industrial production was rising, and consumer spending was reaching new levels. For the National Government these developments did not only indicate that a rising standard of living was in the offing but that its social policies had also favourably contributed to this success. Statistical investigations commissioned and published by the Registrar General, the Board of Education, the Ministry of Health at national level, and by local Medical Officers of Health were mostly optimistic in tone and announced great advances on such fronts as rising working-class wages, declining maternal and infant mortality rates, consumption of more nutritious food, and better housing. Recent research into the impartiality of these government statistics by Charles Webster and into the campaigns of Labour women in the 1930s by Pamela Graves (18) have revealed that a substantial and very vocal resistance to this official view was maintained by independent social investigators and the organised working-class women groups. They accusingly pointed at the large areas in Britain where stark poverty, ill-health and bad housing persisted and were further aggravated by the National Government's cuts in

unemployment benefits and social services.

By the mid-1930s Smith actively supported this opposition with the help of her pen. She wrote popular Communist pamphlets that sold in the thousands, and articles in the Daily Worker attacking low wages, maternal and infant mortality, and malnutrition. The data and quotations she used as evidence were carefully extracted from official sources and reports and works of such undaunting contemporary social critics as Fenner Brockway, Allen Hutt, Wal Hannington and Sir John Boyd Orr. (19) Her aim was to inform the men and women of her class about the underlying rules in the ongoing struggle against social injustices and to make them more efficient defenders of their rights. This role of a teacher came only natural to Rose Smith, a woman who had devoted her life to the alleviation of hardship among the poorest of the British people. Furthermore, she saw the 1930s as a point of convergence for the interests of the working class and of the women. In the face of hostile policies of both Labour and National Governments, working-class female activists had no other choice than to comprehend their campaigns as part of a larger class struggle rather than to continue to fight male power structures of their respective organisations and of the labour movement. As Pamela Graves' study has shown, this was certainly the stand that Labour Party women took during this decade. (20)

By the mid-1930s Smith singled out two policies of the

government that adversely impacted the living standard of working-class families in the old industrial centres of Britain. One was the policy of low wages which employers and government in its silent toleration permitted in the depressed industries of textile and mining. The other was the government's agricultural policy which caused a rise in food prices.

In early 1935 a miner's average weekly wage amounted to 44s 6d. Out of this wage a miner was still to deduct the costs of tools, oil, explosives and pit clothes. In the eyes of the miners and of Smith this income was "a starvation wage," particularly when workers in the new industries of food, drink and tobacco processing could earn an average weekly wage of 56s 6d. Therefore in the early months of 1935 all sections of the Miners' Federation united to press for a nationwide increase in wages for their members. Both employers and government, however, dragged their feet to consider this demand. So in summer 1935 the Miners' Federation launched its national campaign to inform the general public. (21)

Once again Smith decided to espouse the cause of the miners and their families. In a short pamphlet entitled "The Price of a Dinner," she called for actions of solidarity among women in the Guilds, the Labour Party Women Sections, and the Women's Institutes. She stressed that this struggle for a wage increase was certainly also a struggle for the health of women and children in a miner's home. Low wages were undermining

their health. To give more weight and respectability to her point, she then quoted the opinion of Professor R. Neville Moss of Birmingham University, as it had appeared in the Journal of the British Medical Association:

When wages are very low one of two things happens, either the miner has to do with less food, and in consequence reduce his work output, or he maintains his work output and dieting standards at the expense of his family. (22)

Smith also took up the wage issue with regard to women wage-earners in segregated work situations. In the spring of 1937 Britain's manufacturers, shop-owners and hotel proprietors in London busied themselves with making money out of the coronation of George VI. At the same time they were involved in negotiations over pay increases with their employees' trade unions. Driven by a desire to expose the exploitative nature of this business world, Smith investigated the working and pay conditions of these girls and women producing the coronation ware, the mugs and the jewellery, and waiting on visitors from the provinces and from abroad. In descriptive articles in the Daily Worker she reported about women working in the potteries behind locked gates for an average wage of 26s a week, an eighteen-year-old freehand painter for a weekly wage of 18s., and skilled women enamelers and girl polishers averaging a £1 per week in Birmingham's profitmaking jewellery enterprises. To her it all smacked of "big returns from sweated labour," a ruthless "slavery" of female workers, and she demanded a "living wage" for these women. (23)

With regard to women working side by side with male workers or even replacing male labour at a much lower pay in British industries in the 1930s, Smith was aware that these unequal wage conditions could be to the detriment of the whole working class by bringing down the general level of wages in the industry of the men as well as the women workers. To counter such a development on the labour front, she advocated increased unionisation of women demanding equal pay for equal work for women workers by a systematic and steady levelling up of women's wages. (24) In the second half of the 1930s she therefore gave her support to the resolution moved by Miss Godwin, Secretary of the Women Clerks and Secretaries' Union, and adopted by the Trade Union Congress in 1937 that "greater consideration should be given by the unions to the effect on the wages of male workers of an unequal wage standard for men and women and the need for establishing a rate for the job, irrespective of the sex of the worker." (25)

The government's agricultural or food policy was the second policy that Smith scrutinized and attacked for its intrinsic capitalist class nature. In the 1930s British food production and food consumption were influenced by the steep decline in the prices of land and farm products that had hit Britain in 1921 and reached its lowest in 1933. Farmers reduced sharply the acreage under the plough and reverted to pasture and cattle farming; and an annual exodus of 10,000 people from the land added to the rising total of unemployed

in these years.

The National Government was compelled to act. In order to maintain the level of home produced foods, tariffs and quota restrictions were imposed on a wide range of agricultural imports. Sugar beet factories, that had opened and expanded with the help of public funds since 1921, were amalgamated into the British Sugar Corporation in 1935, three of the directors represented the National Government. In 1932 the Wheat Act gave subsidies to growers of wheat and the Act of 1937 to producers of oats and barley. But the most important steps taken by the Ministry of Agriculture were the Agricultural Marketing Acts of 1931 and 1933. They set up compulsory schemes, provided that two-thirds of the producers concerned, who were also responsible for two-thirds of the productive capacity, voted in favour. They were to set up boards that fixed the prices of farm products and limited production to the estimated amount marketable. There were boards for hops, potatoes, pork, bacon, and milk. Government policy also encouraged the emergence of large-scale enterprises in the sector of the distribution of foodstuff. A large share of London's milk trade was controlled by United Dairies.

From 1935 onwards wholesale and retail prices of food and other goods rose rapidly in Britain. Wages, on the other hand, rose much slower. During 1936-37 the average increase in wages amounted to 3 per cent, while the cost of living increased

nearly three times. Simultaneously the National Government devoted itself to its new defence programme, slowing down production of numerous goods for civil demand by supplying raw materials first of all to the armament producing industry. In 1938 Britain was spending 25 per cent of Government's expenditure on armaments. Most of this money was raised by taxation. (26)

Many female labour activists therefore concluded that the increasing cost of living could not be separated from the Government's war preparations. In May 1936 Mary Sutherland, the general woman officer of the Labour Party, in her speech to the conference of Labour women asked the Labour Party to amplify its agricultural policy in regard to nutrition, to formulate the policy passed on the need for the adequate provision of nutritious foods. She pointed out that 41 per cent of working-class families, 48 per cent of the adults and 54 per cent of the children had to live on less than the weekly sum of 3s. per person for food. And she spoke angrily against those government officials who said that malnutrition was due to inefficiency of mothers. (27)

In the following months several deputations of women of the Labour Party, the Co-operative Movement and the Women's Institutes were sent to Government Ministers to protest about this deplorable state of affairs. Smith, however, thought that a nation-wide campaign against high food prices and war preparations should be organised to compel the National

Government to make political concessions. At the Politburo meeting of 29 October 1937 she expounded her understanding of the meaning of 'nation-wide'. She maintained that the issue of rising prices was not only of direct concern to working-class women but also to the small shopkeepers, the middle class, and the local authorities. As she said, a campaign could win the retailers' support because "put up prices means that their sales are reduced;" in regard to the middle class, she believed that it felt "the squeeze probably more than the working class broadly speaking, because their over-head expenses are bigger than ours...and it means that a rise in the cost of living seriously affects their standard of living (28);" the local authorities and public institutions, such as hospitals, also found it difficult to balance their books, as they had to pay out more for the milk they provided to pupils and patients as the result of cuts in government grants. In other words, she wanted a broad people's front that harnessed various class and gender interests in a united campaign against the National Government.

The Party leadership agreed to it; after all, her demands did not deviate from the Party's general policy of the People's United Front. In May 1937 the campaign had already been adopted as part of the women's work undertaken by the Party's Women's Department restored by the 14th CPGB Congress. (29) So at the October meeting R. P. Dutt only reiterated the aim of this campaign as follows:

People do not need agitation to tell them that the cost of living is going up- what they need is to know what is to be done about it and our object is that we should be able to answer that question in clear terms and direct a line of fight. (30)

In this spirit, Smith composed her pamphlets and articles (31) on malnutrition and the rising cost of living, of which the government's food policy was a vital aspect. Through them she addressed especially the women and her 'line of fight' focused on the class nature of the government's food policy. Rose Smith was against taxes on food, selectively applied import quotas, public subsidies to food producers, monopolistic pricing and marketing concerns, as they were really in the interest of the producers. For the poorer half of the population who was already unable to purchase sufficient nutritious food, this food policy meant much dearer food. This, in turn, would aggravate malnutrition, increase such diseases as bronchitis, tuberculosis, enteric fevers, and lead to premature deaths of undernourished mothers and children. As she pointed out, the maternal mortality rate through childbirth in England and Wales had not changed since 1911. It still was four women out of every 1,000 mothers that did not survive at childbirth in 1936-37. She therefore called on women to join the national campaign against rising prices:

..because it is the first duty of any community to feed the children, we must unite to oppose the high price of foodstuffs, to compel the Government to withdraw the high taxes on food and prevent them imposing any additional ones, to stop profiteering in the essential food of the people, and if subsidies have to be guaranteed to food producers, to ensure that these subsidies are used to cheapen products for the workers and not to swell the

bankbooks of the well-to-do. (32)

She poured scorn on the statements of the Ministers of Health, Sir Kingley Wood and Sir Hilton Young, in their annual reports that the past year had been "a good year for health" and "the saving of maternal and infant lives gained in new significance by a decrease in infantile mortality." (33) She admitted,

True it is that we have abundance of "goodwill" and legislation in regard for the welfare of women and children...For the Law "permits", but does not enforce. Neither does the State Exchequer provide the necessary money for the local services. Instead, it thrusts additional burdens upon the already impoverished local authorities, and in this curtails the operation of the essential services." (34)

Therefore with regard to the Minister's claim of a decrease in infantile mortality, she asserted it was due to the enlightenment and greater sacrifice of the parents rather than any really fundamental improvement in the services. For the Mothers of Britain she had only one advice, to oppose vigorously a government which gave precedence to expenditure for War over expenditure for Social Services. She called it "the most vigorous defence of all our democratic rights" and thereby admitted that the struggle for a new balance in class and gender power was to be a long-drawn out one under capitalism.

Better Housing for the Working Class

Better housing for the working men and women was the second issue that Rose Smith always wholeheartedly supported,

particularly when she was living in the declining textile area of Lancashire. In these old cotton towns the back-to-back housing with no ventilation, proper lighting, heating and sanitation were the remnants of the darker side of Britain's industrialization. And the interwar depression allowed only a stunted growth of building in this region. This in turn led to working-class outburst of anger and frustration.

It was in summer 1934 that Smith participated in a conflict for decent working-class accommodation in Colne. Colne is situated near Burnley in Lancashire and had a population of 23,000. Its Town Council consisted of twenty-four male elected councillors of whom eleven were trade unionists and belonged to the Labour Party. This Labour group however was not politically very united and consistent. Often Labour councillors voted on issues either with the faction of independents, as represented by the Mayor of Colne, or gave support to other Tory or Liberal councillors. This weakness of the Labour faction also manifested itself in the 1933-34 Council discussions on how to make use of a government grant on slum clearance in the town.

In order to examine the endeavours of Colne's Town Council and of Rose Smith in greater detail, it is necessary to understand them within the context of Britain's housing legislation as passed from the onset of the First World War to the early 1930s. These laws circumscribed not only the expanding role of the British state in housing but also

working-class rights and expectations. As Jennifer Dale (35) has argued, the housing legislation of this period followed the ebbs and flows of the nation's class struggle. From 1915 to the end of 1921 industrial conflicts and housing struggles in all major cities haunted the British government. In response housing acts were passed as a part of concessions to the working class. New housing construction was commissioned by local authorities rather than on a speculative basis by private entrepreneurs. There was the introduction of rent controls that covered most working-class housing in the private sector, and of a system of exchequer subsidies for working-class houses.

During the period 1921 to 1933 the working class was largely on the defensive and housing construction progressed slowly. In fact, most earlier working-class gains with regard to good quality standards and equal access were whittled away by new Housing Acts under Conservative administrations. In 1933 state assistance confined to slum clearance as stipulated in the Greenwood Act of 1930 remained the only subsidy. Local authorities were to leave the construction of new working-class housing projects to private enterprise. Once again the market for decent working-class accommodation had become restrictive and its standard was depressed.

This gradual erosion of working-class rights to decent houses led to many local defensive struggles against the national cutbacks on housing provisions. In this way ordinary

working men and women also tried to maintain some measure of control over their housing and other social conditions. Disputes raged among local councillors, and between councillors and local residents. In the main they centred around two issues: Firstly, how was public housing to be funded? Should the burden fall on the consumer, the local ratepayer or the national taxpayer? Secondly, how should public housing be distributed? Should it be provided for all in need or only to particular groups in the town?

The second issue was of course of particular importance to working-class women. Their fixed amount of housekeeping money had to provide for the material essentials of food, housing and clothing of the household. Thus they stood to gain most from the state provisions of subsidized rents and government-funded rehousing in slum-clearance schemes. On Labour-controlled councils, as Hannah Mitchell's and Selina Cooper's memoirs make clear and Pamela Graves' more nationwide study has confirmed (36), Labour women as elected officials would work for better housing and other welfare issues that directly affected working-class women and their families. Nevertheless, during this interwar period working-class women still remained the most underrepresented group on most town councils and thus the most likely ones to lose out in local housing conflict situations. (37) It was therefore imperative for these women to get organized and get their views transmitted through local pressure groups, such as the WCG and

tenants' associations, and through sympathetic male officials in the council chambers.

Like the elected Labour women councillors, Rose Smith was anxious to offer advice and help on any matter affecting the standard of living of working-class families. So she kept abreast of the legislative changes and certainly comprehended the conflicting intentions of both the Conservative and Labour laws on working-class housing. Already on September 13, 1925, in her capacity of Secretary of the Mansfield and District Labour College, she had arranged for Jack Hamilton of the Liverpool Labour College and the First President of the NCLM to lecture on "The Housing Muddle" and to give a talk with slides on "Builders and Building." (38)

Unlike the Labour councillors, however, Smith was too much of a working-class militant to envisage that a more efficient Labour representation in local government and its defense of social welfare measures were the successful route to socialism. This type of municipal socialism as formerly preached by the Fabians and then absorbed by the Labour Party was certainly rejected by her. She remained firmly convinced that class conflicts had ultimately to be solved at the national level. On the other hand, by the early 1930s she had also realized that state attacks on social services for the working class needed to be contained by making use of local resistance as a weapon in the class struggle. This stand of hers was clearly shown during the tenants' struggle against

the local authorities of Colne. She set out to bring forth a class defense that was based on the united actions of working-class men and women. (39)

After some lengthy and indecisive Council meetings, Colne's Housing Committee was instructed to deal with the slum clearance in Colne. It chose Windy Bank as the first of the town's four slum areas. Windy Bank comprised 88 damp, rat-and insect-infested houses without modern amenities that had been built about two hundred years earlier. They were mostly let as furnished rooms to 100 families, nearly all of them unemployed or single mothers with children.

Many of these people had come to Colne from neighbouring local authorities where they had been refused the same assistance. Thus to some of the councillors of the Colne Housing Committee they were the 'undesirables' or 'off-comers' who needed not to be rehoused in Colne. The Greenwood Act of 1930 did not state sufficiently clearly whether people occupying only furnished rooms in slum areas were or were not entitled to being rehoused. It was this flaw of the Act that the unsympathetic Colne councillors tried to exploit in a difficult situation.

The government grant limited the Town Council of Colne to the construction of 62 new houses only, and 75 applications had been received from the Windy Bank area. The building for the slum clearance began in August 1933, but by the following spring it was clear that the Council was short of new

accommodations. (40) Thus the Corporation rent collector informed the tenants in Windy Bank that there were no accommodation available for them. This led to a growing number of refusals to pay rent in the following weeks and consequently four evictions on 28 May 1934. All of them were women, with children, some deserted by their husbands, and they had their furniture dumped into the street.

The slum clearance that had been regarded as an opportunity for helping the poor section of the community had turned into Colne's 'Windy Bank Scandal'. For the next three weeks public protests were made at the Town Hall and eventually the evicted families were returned to the properties with a notice that two weeks later they were expected to leave. Three days later street disturbances occurred and the front door of the Mayor's private residence was severely damaged. (41)

While councillors cross-examined plans and motives and argued with each other in the council chamber, the tenants of Windy Bank, with the help of the Colne Central Labour College class, had set up the Tenants' Defence Committee. Bill Whittaker became its secretary. (42) It arranged deputations to the Housing Committee demanding alternative accommodations for everybody, attended public Colne Council Chamber meetings, and organised open-air tenants' meetings.

Rose Smith arrived from Burnley to give her organizational advice to all these tenants publicly and behind

the scene. She linked up with Miss Howley, an active resident of Windy Bank, who helped her to meet privately Windy Bank's tenants. In this way she learned about women's specific grievances. She advised the people of the Windy Bank area to pay any outstanding rents, as non-payment would only play into the hands of those councillors who wanted their evictions. Publicly she took part at least on two occasions.

On 15 June 1934, a day before the scheduled evictions were due to restart, Smith chaired a meeting at the request of the Colne Tenants' Defence Committee. It was to discuss and unanimously vote for the resolution of ratepayers demanding the Town Council to provide suitable accommodation for any people de-housed by the slum clearance scheme. A leaflet opposing any further effort to evict defenseless women and children had been issued and ministers of religion and trade unions had been approached in the town. Consequently the meeting was attended by several hundred people and the atmosphere was very tense.

In her opening remarks Smith reminded the audience of the need to remain united when confronted with an unfair implementation of the housing legislation. She said that the government should be blamed for having let the people down because "the majority of the men who lived in the area were heroes in 1914-18, men who if they would go out to fight were promised homes fit for heroes to live in." On the following morning three hundred men from all over town turned up to

police the area until an announcement was made by the Corporation rent collector that there was a misunderstanding and no evictions would take place. As long as the tenants paid their rents, alternative accommodation would be found. This was a major victory for Windy Bank's poor.

In order to make the Council keep its word, another rally was staged under the auspices of the Colne Tenants' Defence Committee on 17 June 1934. Once again Smith made a public speech, in which she encouraged the audience to stay firm in their rightful demands and to understand the struggle for decent working-class houses as being driven by the capitalist mode of production and convenience of the rich and powerful for the past one hundred years or more. She stressed that at the beginning of Britain's industrialization Colne's manufacturers had built Windy Bank "in order to house the workers to whom they paid sweated wages. To-day the descendants of those workers were unable to get jobs, and they wanted to turn them into the streets." (43) With regard to the Colne Town Council, which the working families of Colne had elected, Smith pointed out that

they did not care where the people went so long as they went out of the town, but other councils were saying the same thing. If they allowed people to be thrown into the street in Windy Bank they would have the same situation in other areas...Landlords said they would not have tenants from Windy Bank, and if they said they would not find them accommodation, there was no alternative but the streets. They should not allow that to happen. (44)

The Tenants' Defence Committee then proposed the construction of another type of subsidized house with a higher

rent. This was unanimously accepted by Colne Town Council and announced at its final public Council meeting on this issue in August 1934.

For Smith this announcement was a victory of a contradictory nature. On the one hand, as she had desired, the immediate welfare needs of the most disadvantaged of Colne's working poor, single women with children, had finally been addressed in a non-discriminatory way by Colne's Town Council; the women of Windy Bank had won their right to decent housing and had gained confidence by winning their right in this housing struggle. On the other hand, the housing concessions granted by the Town Hall were not a complete victory for Colne's working class. The construction of more council houses for higher rent was to benefit the private sector in Colne in the end, too.

It was this contradictory nature of the social legislation concerning working-class housing that Smith particularly addressed in her writings on rent strikes and overcrowding in the second half of the 1930s. By then, the gradual retreat from the supervision of rents by the National government had become evident. It was a move whose effects Rose Smith closely studied by reading government reports, listening to parliamentary debates and talking to ordinary working men and women. In 1935 the Overcrowding Act gave the local authorities the responsibility for fixing the local rent levels. It stipulated that council house rents should reflect

'market values' and a memorandum of the Act stressed that persons who can afford to pay for accommodation provided by private enterprise should not be accommodated in subsidised houses. Simultaneously rent control in the private sector was dwindling away, as houses were either demolished with state compensation or renovated for higher rents. These measures, however, did not solve the problem of overcrowding that affected about 3 million people in Britain by the mid-1930s.

At that time Conservative economists explained Britain's economic recovery by using as evidence the housing boom in the industrial areas outside those of the old staple industries. As nearly 3 million houses were under construction, mainly for private sale, they asserted that any persistent housing problem was increasingly a localised one. It was caused by somewhat incompetent local authorities that were not very successful in tackling those problems such as overcrowding which they were meant to solve.

Rose Smith, however, had serious doubts of regarding the ongoing improvement in housing conditions in the country as leading to major advances towards a different and better society. She comprehended the housing sector as a constituent part of Britain's capitalist economy and its attendant social relations. In an article called Overcrowding she asserted:

The housing policy in Great Britain has never been directed towards meeting the needs of the people. The first consideration has been the interests of the landlords and the convenience of the employers of labour. ...Capitalism and capitalist government are not concerned to abolish the Housing shortage- their financial

interests would be at stake. (45)

Therefore, in her eyes, overcrowding in such major conurbations as Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester and London was essentially a problem deliberately caused by the capitalists in the past. In the present it was maintained by the National Government's housing policy encouraging building racketeers. The decontrol of rents of the private and public housing sector encouraged capitalist intentions. Municipal authorities of the old industrial centres, already heavily indebted due to unemployment and the depressed economy of their areas, were further plunged into debts by the government's decentralised approach to the housing problem.

In her black and white world of British society, the building societies became "the real villains of the piece" (46), encouraging fast and shoddily finished construction of new housing estates. In the mid-1930s there were under a thousand building societies in Britain; but they were the foremost investment agency in the country lending over £ 130,000,000 p. a. Under the slogan 'every man his landlord' they directed their attention to the better paid industrial workers. Smith suspected that invariably the building societies had an agreement with the builders whereby they could sell the houses and share the profits with the builders. (47) For Smith this trend toward occupier-ownership among the working class appeared as

the tragic story of foreclosed mortgages, of life savings lost, of empty cupboards as price of bricks and mortar,

of jerry-built property demanding constant repair outlay, or of heavy mortgages binding the workers to slavish conditions in industry....They [building societies] are...chaining the people to a small piece of property which shall weaken their power of resistance to class injustice. (48)

It is therefore not surprising that Rose Smith welcomed working-class resistance to a housing policy that catered much more to the sectional interests of the capitalist class than to those of the working class. She eagerly attended conferences and reported about strikes in the Daily Worker, that were organised by residents' associations and tenants' leagues around Britain. They opposed Council rent increases, challenged landlordism and demanded a revised method of reviewing rates that would be more in favour of the emerging section of working-class house owners. One of the most successful tenants' defence groups of these years was that in Stepney, East London. Its secretary was Michael Shapiro, a London University lecturer specialising in land and town planning, whom Rose Smith met and interviewed. Many years later, they met again in Beijing where they spent the last years of their lives. (49)

What pleased Smith most of this working-class housing defence movement was that more and more working-class women joined its ranks in a leading capacity. She thought it was important to meet, interview and report about them in her articles on housing. She believed it is was time to replace the image of working-class women as poor victims of housing struggles by one of staunch protectors of rights they had won.

Some of Smith's interviewees were seasoned activists, such as Miss Monica Whateley, a member of the Labour controlled London County Council, who had taken an active part in the pre-war suffragette movement. Others, such as Mrs. Ella Donovan and Mrs. Elsy Borders, were local Communist activists who tasted their first exposure to politics. Mrs. Ella Donovan presided during a session of the conference called by the Stepney Tenants' Defence League in March 1939. By quoting the views of one female tenant on Mrs. Ella Donovan in her article, Rose Smith projected an image of an effective leader, who had become a model for other women tenants:

She shows how we are no longer afraid of the landlords, but have turned the course of events until we have now got them on the run. (50)

But in Britain the 1930s were not only inflicted with internal social problems but also, as in many parts of Europe, with rising Fascism. For such a politically committed person as Smith, it demanded active opposition.

Building the Anti-Fascist Front

Smith's support of an anti-fascist front at local, national and international level also reveals the complex interplay between class and women's issues during the period 1933-1936. Anti-Fascism did not become the main focus of the Comintern until March 1933, when its Executive called for "a united front of struggle of the proletariat" of all countries. (51) By that time Fascism had made substantial inroads in central and western Europe, caused in the main by the

depression and by weak or weakened political structures. In Germany Hitler became Chancellor on 30 January 1933. In Britain in October 1932 the British Union of Fascists (BUF) had been founded by Sir Oswald Mosley in response to the National Government's refusal to adopt radical reforms to cure unemployment and to halt the decline of Britain's political system. The BUF was modelled on Mussolini's movement and was overtly sympathetic to the Nazis. By the summer of 1934 its membership had reached about 40,000 which were mainly distributed among its two strongholds in and around London, and in Lancashire and Yorkshire. The Olympia Meeting staged by the BUF in London on 7 June 1934 with its violence was the turning point for the organisation. Its national membership declined to the low figure of 5,000 in late 1935. But in the following four years it rebounded to a total of 22,500 by September 1939.

It is generally estimated that about 20 per cent of the BUF's membership were women. (52) From March 1933 they were organised in Women's Sections. By 1934 these women attended BUF classes on First Aid and fencing; other women helped to build up the BUF electoral machine as public speakers or as canvassing personnel. Some BUF women managed to hold responsible positions in local politics. In Lancashire the active Blackburn and Nelson branches were managed by two Women's District leaders. Nellie Driver of Nelson is the better known of the two, as she left behind an unpublished

autobiography, entitled From the Shadows of Exile. (53) As will be shown later, Rose Smith as the Communist party organiser in the area watched the growth of these local BUF branches with apprehension.

The CPGB began its organisational work of an anti-Fascist front at home and abroad in April- May 1933. (54) It issued invitations to the Labour Party, the TUC, the ILP and the Cooperative Party to unite in a campaign against Fascism. (55) The Labour Party Executive rejected the Communist type of united front and instead called on the British workers to strengthen the trade unions, the Cooperative movement and the Labour Party, the "spearhead of political power against Dictatorship- Fascist or Communist." (56) The ILP and CPGB, on the other hand, joined hands in a united front against Fascism between May 1933 and March 1934.

In accordance with the CPGB anti-Fascist policy Smith attended the Labour Women's Conference at West Hartlepool in May 1933 in order to establish new contacts with Labour women. She felt that there was a big section of women inside the Labour Women's Sections who were dissatisfied with the Labour Party leadership and in favour of creating a united front against Fascism. They could be used to pressurize the Labour Party leadership to change its stance. As her report to the CC shows (57), she soon found out that it was not as easy as she had assumed. After five years' of Communist sectarian politicking, the CPGB had really become an isolated

organisation.

As her first stumbling-block Smith mentioned that the Party had given very little consideration to the policy, the nitty-gritty, which she should put forward at this Labour women conference. Furthermore, neither the small Communist Party group of West Hartlepool nor Smith had any contact in this conference. So she spent most of her time finding delegates with whom she could discuss the question of an anti-Fascist united front of working-class organisations. She finally managed to get a few contacts, such as a woman in Birkenhead, who was willing to raise the issue of the anti-Fascist front in the quarterly meeting of the Yorkshire and Cheshire Labour Women's Sections.

But Smith's approach to Ellen Wilkinson (58) was less successful. By that time Ellen Wilkinson was well known and respected in the British labour movement for her integrity, her effectiveness as a speaker, and her hard trade union work, particularly on behalf of female workers. Holding on to leftwing views and realizing the growing menace of Nazism, she had travelled to Germany and spoke out as a socialist at the last democratic election in Germany before Hitler came to power. From 1931 to 1935 she was out of Parliament, but she remained prominent in debate in the Labour Party Executive and conferences. So it was only natural that Smith tried to seek out Ellen Wilkinson's help. But Ellen Wilkinson was not prepared to get the question of a united front raised at the

conference, because the conference's rank-and-file had not demanded with sufficient insistence for such a public discussion. Smith did not feel rebuffed but accepted that much more hard ground work had to be done among women in the Labour Party Sections as well as in the Cooperative Guilds. Therefore she urged the male members of the CC to give her their assistance,

The Party in its united front work is making a serious mistake if it does not take up the question of the hour to work inside these women working-class organisations. And I suggest that if we are seriously going to tackle this problem we should take up the issue of War, the Means Test and the question of education. The latter is a burning question. (59)

In order to remedy this situation and most likely with the consent of the Party's Executive, Smith then wrote her pamphlet entitled Women Into the Ranks!. It was published in August 1933. In essence it provided a Marxist definition and explanation of the meaning of Fascism for British working-class women in a specific national setting. Two years earlier, in the midst of Britain's political crisis, the CPGB had pronounced for the first time that Fascism must be equated with a decaying but struggling capitalism,

The whole dominant tendency of British capitalism is now in the direction of fascism, the discarding of the old forms of parliamentary democracy, which is characteristic of a late stage of capitalistic development marked by capitalist decay, and advancing class struggle. (60)

Thus, in the same vein of thinking Smith asserted that the dangers of Fascism for British women came essentially from the National Government in two ways. Firstly, the arrival of

Fascism was systematically prepared by the governments' betrayal of welfare promises made during the Great War and the oppressive legislation, such as the Anomalies Act and the Means Test, that maintained low wages and unemployment benefits or denied them altogether particularly to women. Secondly, the National Government prepared the ground for Fascism by recreating the 'war mind' of 1914 by giving government grants to 'keep fit' classes among women; by glorification of the military and encouraging women to make the men join the Territorial Army; and by supporting the capitalist press in its efforts to turn women's thoughts away from political action to the 'safe' matters of home, children and beauty. Smith warned that unless British working-class women were willing to join the ranks of united action against Fascism at home, they would experience the same class and gender oppression that the German working-class men and women were facing under Hitler:

No barriers of sex or sectional organisation must be allowed to break the ranks. Leadership marred with the preservation of narrow organisational interests must be overruled... "Unity in Action" has become the fighting slogan of the great masses of workers. Women, concerned with their freedom, concerned for the abolition of misery and war, must allow of no split in the ranks. The lessons of Germany must be taken deeply to heart. There can be no going backward for working women. (61)

Smith also carried out this campaign at the local level politics. By 1933 the worst of the textile strikes was over. But in contrast to other parts of Britain, where there was much talk about trade improvement, more employment

opportunities, and general recovery, Lancashire could not report any signs of moving out of its economic trough. The exports of cotton piece goods continued to fall from 2,198 millions in 1932 to 2,031 millions in 1933 and then 1,993 millions in 1934. The economic plight of many families in the county, caused by unemployment or much lowered wages, persisted unabated. It was then that the BUF made special efforts to recruit men and women into its ranks in this region. In its "Programme for the Cotton Industry" it proposed to reestablish the Indian market for Lancashire cotton goods by excluding Japanese cotton goods from India, by removing Indian Tariffs against Lancashire goods, by excluding foreign textiles from the Crown Colonies, and by stopping International Finance to exploit Indian workers. In order to attract more women recruits in the area, the BUF also began to tailor its propaganda policies. Mosley's Corporate State was projected as intending to grant women more say on matters of housing, health and education, better access to employment of their choice, and equal pay for equal work. (62) In other words, the BUF's propaganda appealing to working-class women was a curious mixture of socialist, feminist and jingoist ideas.

Meanwhile the CPGB's influence in Lancashire had remained marginal when contrasted with the great effort the Party had made to gain the confidence of the textile workers during their strikes. Its attempt of setting up a Red Trade Union

among female weavers that had condemned and boycotted negotiations with capitalist cotton employers on the introduction of the 'More Loom System' had fuelled the wrath of the whole organised male-dominated labour movement in the locality. They had accused the Party of being 'splitters' who were driven only by self-serving intentions.

From 1933 to 1934 it fell on Rose Smith and the local Communist group of Bessie and Harold Dickson, Jim Rushton, Doris Nutter and others to try to revise this CPGB's negative image by building an anti-Fascist labour front in the county. They pointed to the real dangers coming from the British Fascist movement that advanced ideas of an industry reconstructed on Corporate lines and fighting a trade war. In order to counter effectively the Fascist Cotton programme, Smith would emphasize that the question of cotton had to be dealt with essentially as a political rather than an economic problem. She recognized that the creation of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation and the introduction of new technology might in the short run result in greater efficiency and increased wages, but did not solve the real problem in Britain's capitalist economy, namely that of a underlying mal-adjustment of production and consumption.

Smith also did not share the Fascist view that cotton operatives could expect great improvements for their local industry if their mills were to enter into a fight with those of India and Japan in a dwindling world market. She maintained

that Lancashire's male and female cotton workers had more in common with the Indian workers than with the English capitalists. Therefore the British operatives were better advised to show international solidarity with the Indian workers in their liberation struggle and see it as a vital part of their own fight for a reorganisation of the British cotton industry on socialist lines. At a meeting of Nelson weavers protesting at a shooting at striking textile workers in Bombay in May 1934 Smith in her typical propagandist fashion said,

We Lancashire workers can learn from the strike struggles of our Indian comrades. Their strike committees of mill delegates show us how to organise our future struggles, and guarantee working class leadership. (63)

What did Smith achieve in this anti-Fascist struggle? As Smith had made a name for herself as an uncompromising Communist agitator during the local strikes, substantial diplomatic skills were required to break down the local CPGB's isolation. To achieve this, she had to find new channels of cooperation in the locality. Contrary to Noreen Branson's bright description of the Party's smooth transition away from the Third Period to a united anti-Fascist front with social democrats and 'reformist union' leaders (64), Smith found that there existed a local rearguard opposition to the Party's united front against Fascism. To overcome this she sought the help and support of women's organisations.

It was on 16 July 1933 that Smith wrote to Mrs. Selina Cooper, a well respected member on the left of the Labour

Party in Nelson, the following letter (65):

Dear Mrs. Cooper,

Although I have not had the pleasure of meeting you I feel that we are not entirely strangers to each other, for I have heard so much of your pioneer work from my friends. I am very anxious that that we women, who are concerned with bettering the conditions of the workers, shall discuss together what can be done to prevent the appalling spread of undernourishment, sickness and misery amongst the women of North East Lancashire. Doris Nutter and myself would therefore like to talk with you on Monday (17 July) evening. We will call upon you about 7 p.m.. I know that as an understanding woman you will excuse what otherwise may appear a liberty. I trust that this arrangement will not interfere with any of your commitments but we will understand if it is impossible for you to see us.

Yours sincerely,
Rose Smith.

It is known that through her friend Bessie Dickenson, a weaver and Communist activist in the fight against the 'More Loom System', Selina Cooper had become convinced that the CPGB was defending the rights of married women workers more than the Labour Party. It seems safe, therefore, to assume that she agreed to meet Smith, if not on 17 July, then some time later.

As Jill Liddington's biography of Selina Cooper reveals, the two women developed a fruitful relationship based on mutual respect and learning from each other; as Selina Cooper was one generation older than Smith and by then an experienced figure in local politics, Smith often visited and discussed with her all kinds of welfare matters affecting local working women. Smith also invited Selina Cooper to participate as guest speaker in women's meetings and local hunger marches that Smith organised and engaged in. Both women espoused the firm belief that one of the best ways of countering emerging

Fascist tendencies in the locality was to work on all fronts for the elimination of the dire poverty. (66)

By early summer 1934 it had become evident that the fight against Fascism in Lancashire was part of a two-front struggle- the first front being against the reactionary National Government and the second front being against the local Blackshirts. The local political scene heated up with the supporters of Mosley holding public meetings and Communists counter-demonstrations at market places in nearly every cotton town, often leading to police intervention. At the same time the weavers' union was negotiating with the employers as to the wages rates to be legalised under the Enabling Act or the Cotton Manufacturing (Temporary Provision) Act of June 1934. Within the union there existed considerable disagreement over how to equalise the existing two price lists that determined the operatives' earnings since January 1933. Smith fearing another sell-out of female workers as a result of such a two-faced capitalist attack, appealed for a united weavers' union,

Lancashire has become the centre for imperialist and Fascist propaganda. For all class-conscious workers it must become one of the main rallying centres of working-class united activity in the struggle against war and Fascism. It is necessary to immediately build up the united front in every cotton town for the fight for the uniform list, the end of the Midland and More Looms Agreement, the immediate payment of the fall-back wage, and the clearing of the Mosleyrites and Churchills from the streets and mill yards. (67)

In the following months disagreeing operatives' officials closed rank and produced a uniform price list which came in

operation on 15 July 1935.

On the international front, Smith observed the tightening grip of rightwing authoritarianism in a number of European countries. She soon realized that fighting against Fascism implied facing three enemies, namely the BUF, the National Government, and the continental Fascists. (68) In early February 1934 the Chamber of Deputies in Paris was the scene of a violent invasion by right-wing gangs. In Vienna the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party was raided by police and Heimwehr contingents. When the Social Democrats called a general strike in protest, Chancellor Dollfuss ordered the bombardment of a workers' housing project and the suppression of the Social Democratic Party of about 600,000 members. Nine months earlier he had already crushed the much smaller Austrian Communist Party of 2,600 members.

In Britain the National Government announced an increase in the Royal Air Force as the first step of Britain's rearmament programme in mid-July 1934. The next few months witnessed the Labour Party's gradual manoeuvring towards its policy of collective security; the CPGB and the pacifist British Anti-War Council (BA-WC) changed their hostile attitude towards the League of Nations and promoted collaboration with all anti-Fascist forces; and the members of the No More War Movement (NMWM), one of the oldest pacifist organisations in Britain, were losing interest in non-violence and demanded a socialist defense policy. (69) Female activists

played their part in all these organisations.

In summer 1934 Paris became the European city where international women's congresses of different social compositions were held and focused on Fascism and women's issues. In early July 300 upper-class and middle-class delegates from thirty different countries discussed the declining status of married working women in a Fascist political climate, and disarmament at the Congress of the International Council of Women in Paris. (70) From 3 to 7 August 1934 the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism (WWCAWF) staged its Congress of 1, 200 delegates at the Hall of the Mutualité in Paris. The WWCAWF was a branch organisation of the broadly based anti-Fascist World Committee Against War and Fascism which the Communist Willi Münzenberg of Germany had initiated at the Anti-War Congress in Amsterdam in June 1933. (71) The female delegates came from twenty-five different countries, held various professions and shades of socialist thought. (72)

The English delegation comprised sixty members of whom thirty-six were representatives of cooperative guilds; the remainder came from various trade unions, peace organisations, political parties, women's organisations, unemployed and United Front movements. Marjorie Pollitt, Katie Loeber and Rose Smith were among the Communist delegates. Mrs. Carmel Haden-Guest, a prominent member of Britain's anti-war movement and not a Communist, made the opening speech outlining the

purpose of this assembly of women. They had come to Paris "to face the facts as women, of the Capitalist causes of Fascism, militarism, unemployment, misery, armaments and war and to see how they, as women, could best fight against these things." (73)

In Britain the preparation for this Congress began in mid-June of 1934. Such notable political women as Mrs. Despard, Vera Brittain, Sylvia Pankhurst, Ellen Wilkinson and Marjorie Pollitt and others announced the forthcoming WCWAFW Congress and appealed for the cooperation of British women. (74) A national Organising Committee was set up with Hannah Laurie as the provisional Honorary Secretary and Sylvia Pankhurst as the Treasurer and located in the Featherstone Buildings at Holborn in London. Other women's organisations were contacted and local provisional committees were set up to select the candidates and to arrange for the reception of the delegates' reports on their return. (75)

Smith also got actively involved in this type of preparatory work. Since the summer of 1930 she had watched with some concern how working-class women shunned the CPGB and joined instead pacifist organisations and the Labour Party. She felt that the Party's sectarian way did not appeal to working women. (76) So when in 1934 the Comintern signalled that it was time to create a women's front against Fascism of all kinds of women's organisations, Smith complied with enthusiasm.

In Lancashire the campaign for selecting delegates to attend the Paris Congress began in earnest at the end of June and ended with the Manchester Conference on 29 July. About sixty women, mostly representatives of women's co-operative and trade organisations in Manchester and district, met and chose seven delegates. It was a lively meeting presided over by Rev. Mossop and dominated by the discussion and passing of a long resolution on Fascism and war that argued that the ascent of Fascism meant the degradation of women and the lowering of the standard of living. At the evening meeting in Stevenson Square Smith joined Councillor Larrad, Mrs. Maroney of the Australian delegation to the Paris Congress, Mrs. Walker of the Anti-War Council as a guest speaker. Smith's address, interspersed with extracts from the illustrated WCAWF pamphlet "Fascist War on Women," gave rise to many questions from the audience of over 1,000. She finally appealed for funds supporting the forthcoming WCAWF Congress in Paris and the crowd contributed to a collection of £ 1-11s. 6d. (77)

It was Smith's warm-hearted, self-composed, frequently humorous but direct manner that won her respect and many friends among the circle of labour women at the Paris Congress. Through this network she was elected as the third English member to the WCAWF Presidium on 3 August 1934. The other two members were Mrs. Ransom and Mrs. Wallhead-Nichol of the NMWM, the daughter of the ILP M.P. Richard Wallhead. On the last day of the international congress a world committee

was elected to which Smith also belonged as one of the five English members. The other four were Carmel Haden-Guest, Ellen Wilkinson, Marjorie Pollitt, and Muriel Wallhead-Nichol. (78) Although Ellen Wilkinson had just completed her book Why Fascism?, which was deeply critical of the somewhat mechanical analysis of Fascism and the handling of the Fascist movement by the communists, Smith collaborated without any hesitation with this dedicated socialist. After all, by then inside the CPGB's Executive there existed a fair amount of self-criticism concerning the 'Third Period'.

On their return from Paris the delegates were expected to continue with united front work among pacifist, feminist and bourgeois organisations in their home countries. In Britain it mostly meant attending reporting-back meetings around the country, encouraging as much press publicity as possible, and campaigning for the release of women prisoners in Nazi Germany and Austria. Once again Smith acted in accordance with these guidelines. On 22 September 1934, the British section of the WCWAWF convened a conference of delegates at Shoreditch Town Hall in London. Smith was among the speakers raising at some length the question of the medical officer's report comparing the amount spent on maternity and child welfare in Britain with the British Government's expenditure on war materials. She emphasized the necessity for taking part in the struggle for schemes of social well-being, and drew attention to all the government's oppressive measures against women that had

been adopted in past months. Her speech cited the feminist demands as expressed by the points of the Women's Charter that was submitted by the British Organising Committee to the Paris Congress a month earlier. Besides dealing with specific maternity and child welfare issues, this Charter focused on equal pay for equal work, a forty-hour week, the right of married women to employment, and relocation of maintenance funding of the armed forces to social services. (79)

It was in the context of putting public pressure on Fascist governments to release their women prisoners that Smith introduced Selina Cooper to the WCAWF. Selina Cooper's involvement revealed the intertwining complexity of the women's anti-Fascist work which in turn affected the Communist Party at the local level of British politics. Around September 1934 Smith proposed and secured Selina Cooper as member of a British WCWAWF delegation to Berlin and Munich in Nazi Germany. The aim was to lobby for the release of the wives of four anti-Fascist fighters from jail.

For Selina Cooper the meetings with Nazi officials, and relatives and friends of the imprisoned women was personally a harrowing experience that made her more than ever convinced that Fascism had to be defeated thoroughly. (80) For Smith's united front work in Lancashire it meant at last a breakthrough in the area of Nelson and Burnley in two positive ways. Inside the local Party it silenced the opposition that doubted the usefulness of united action among labour

organisations. Outside the Party it helped to dispel somewhat the suspicion of organised labour towards the CPGB. At the PB meeting in mid-November 1934 Smith reported as follows:

There are one or two good features in North East Lancashire at the present moment, mainly around the struggle against fascism and war, and it is significant that around these we have been able to make the first break to get the support of the Weavers' Union officials, because largely the campaign has been lifted out of the hands of the Party. [author's highlighting] When we sent Mrs. Cooper to Berlin there was opposition because she was not an elected delegate. But we were able to use her very ably in Burnley, with the result that they have been able to make an approach for us, and winning the people from the trade unions and Labour Party towards us. (81)

On the other hand, Smith also pointed out that Fascism and the Party's Popular Front policy would give rise to new dangerous contradictions dividing the local working class and thereby also negatively affecting the CPGB,

I feel that now our incapacity to grow exists in this jealousy inside the Party, and people outside the Party who are near to us. I have the feeling that particularly from the Accrington meeting people have not confidence in themselves that they can carry out the job. (82)

In retrospect, Smith's words were a foreboding. She knew the district well, as she had done party work around that area since 1927. During a visit to Accrington in autumn 1934, however, she felt the workers' hostility breathing down her neck for the first time. In conversations with local trade unionists and members of the Labour Party she learned that CP members had acquired the reputation of intolerance, of knowing it all, and of monopolising most of the discussion. Worst was, however, in Smith's eyes, that the same uncooperative behaviour was undermining established Party norms. The leading

local comrades, Regan and Cunnock had been instructed to prepare materials for the meeting with Smith, and neither of them had fulfilled their obligation. Gender relations within the branch had also been poisoned, as Smith's recollection of one of her conversations at that meeting showed:

I was speaking to a Party member on the necessity of bringing his wife to the meetings; he said, it was quite hopeless, "you must reason dialectically on this question." (83)

The Party's total neglect of free ideological debates and democratic consultation on policies for a national setting had resulted in a situation where members lacked in an independent analytical ability and a healthy self-confidence. The mouthing of undigested slogans and authoritarianism in personal conduct were just unconscious reactions by CP members to conceal their ignorance on matters of socialist doctrine. For Smith this position was more serious than the Party Executive had realized. She knew that the Fascist movement could easily take root among such a membership. And that is what happened some months later when the whole of the CP branch in Accrington was said to have joined the BUF. (84)

Smith moved to London in 1935 and extended her anti-Fascist work to countries outside Britain by collaborating with extra-parliamentary groups. In such a setting her activities were agitational and thus could only exert an indirect influence on the existing power structures in Britain. The dominant news and political discussions at that time -from February 1935 to summer 1936- were centred around

the Italian military preparation for Mussolini's Abyssinian campaign, the Italo-Abyssinian War in October 1935, the National Government's ambiguous stance towards Mussolini and Abyssinia's territorial integrity at the League of Nations in Geneva. As the Peace Ballot in summer 1935 showed, the mood of the British people was predominantly pacifist. In 1923 Abyssinia had become a member of the League, and it was the League's duty to safeguard the territorial integrity of each member state. Thus when Italy began to conduct a war on Abyssinian soil and thereby breached League principles, British public opinion demanded from its government to be a honest peace-broker and to support a policy of oil sanctions against Mussolini's Italy at the League of Nations.

The overriding concern of the governments of Britain and France, however, was the emergence of Nazi Germany and Mussolini was seen as a useful ally in the face of this threat. Therefore, on 26 February 1936, the British Cabinet assigned the Abyssinian question to a place of secondary importance by announcing "that there would be no question of applying an oil sanction unless the other oil producing or exporting countries co-operated." (85)

For the parliamentary opposition, the Labour Party, the Abyssinian crisis was a divisive affair. The majority of Labour MPs wanted, with the help of an oil embargo, to strengthen the League against Italian aggression. A Labour minority opposing sanctions consisted of those who either

feared that Britain might get involved in a war, or saw the League as "nothing but the tool of the satiated imperialist Powers." (86) The extra-parliamentary opposition consisting of the CPGB, various pacifist and women's organisations unanimously favoured economic and military sanctions as a means of coercing the Italian aggressor. It was in the course of ever increasing tensions during 1935 that they stepped up their collaboration at public rallies in London.

From July 1935 both the WCAWF and the Women's International Matteotti Committee (WIMC) organised their public meetings on the Abyssinian crisis in London. By then Sylvia Pankhurst was no longer a member of the WCAWF (87), but was the Honorary Secretary of the WIMC which had been founded in 1932. Its committee consisted of feminist professors, trade unionist leaders, suffragists, deputies, wives of late pacifists, and writers from France, USA, Spain, Ireland and Britain. Its aim was to give the widest possible publicity to the plight of Mrs. Velia Matteotti and her children living under house arrest and thereby grant them some protection in Fascist Italy. (88) Her husband Giaconio Matteotti, the secretary of the moderate Unitary Socialist Party, had been killed soon after he had exposed in his speech in the Italian Parliament the fraud by which the Fascists had obtained their majority in the 1924 Italian General Election. (89)

By the mid-1935 the WIMC had widened its campaign. It fought against the oppression of women under Italian Fascism

and against Fascism in Abyssinia in the same way as the WCAWF did. So it became common that both organisations invited each other to their meetings. (90)

Towards the end of February 1936 the crisis over the oil embargo reached its peak at the League of Nations in Geneva. It was at this point that Smith overcame any reservations she might have harboured against Sylvia Pankhurst, whom she thought energetic, a good socialist leftwinger but something of a snob. On 1 March 1936, she joined Sylvia Pankhurst and Rev. A. D. Belden of the Peace Pledge Union (91) as speakers at the WIMC meeting held in London's Trafalgar Square.

Sylvia Pankhurst's address stressed that world democracy was in peril if Fascist Italy triumphed over Abyssinia. She argued that a Fascist confederation could be prevented only if the Italian aggression were to be stopped. Smith used the occasion to present the Communist viewpoint. She regarded the Abyssinian War as a colonial conquest with Fascist characteristics that had to be vigorously opposed. She stressed that Italian punitive expeditions to Abyssinian villages were directed mainly against women and innocent children. This was a kind of terror that women in England should not condone by their silence and public inactivity. She proposed that since the British government had done nothing but planned for the betrayal of the Abyssinian people's interests, it could not be entrusted alone with the imposition of sanctions. It was British working-class men and women that

first of all should be in charge of imposing an embargo on Italy everywhere in Britain through their direct actions.

For the organiser and speakers the rally turned out to be a successful public exercise, as it stimulated discussion and resulted in the unanimous passing of a resolution calling on the Government to "get on with its oil sanctions or get out". (92) But seen from the wider perspective of contemporary international politics it was a minute and short-lived victory. On 7 March 1936, Hitler's troops marched into the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland, and the Abyssinian people, their rights and Western oil sanctions were relegated to the past. In May 1936 the Emperor fled from Abyssinia, Italy annexed the African country and handed the throne to the King of Italy.

Conclusions

Rose Smith's work as an informal politician focused on the implementation of government policies affecting the livelihood of the British working class, particularly of working-class women: birth control, better housing, higher wages and a lower cost of living. Being supportive of a kind of social feminism, she demanded that male-dominated institutions should become more willing to consider and incorporate women's unique qualities, abilities and needs. Smith was however aware that the political leaders did not give up power voluntarily. Power had to be taken. In order to rouse public awareness and interest among the underprivileged

men and women in this power struggle, she served as a passionate speaker at public meetings, wrote popular pamphlets and informative articles in the labour press, and offered her human and organizational skills to ad-hoc committees. She worked tirelessly for these causes and in friendly collaboration with like-minded socialists and socialist pacifists, mostly women, in and outside the organized labour movement.

It was these political activists who recognized by the mid-1930s that the balance of power between classes in Britain once again rested firmly in the hands of the Conservatives. The National Government entrenched itself by promoting the restructuring of the British economy on corporate lines and by handing over much of its former responsibilities for social policy to the local authorities. This meant that in order to achieve some protection for the poorer section of the working class working-class campaigns were defensive and were conducted at the local level of politics. It also meant that working-class activists buried their political differences and worked together. Smith's most effective actions took place in Lancashire. There, in collaboration with trade unionists and Labourites, she enjoyed organizing campaigns on social issues in which men and women participated.

Smith's own connection with the worldwide Communist movement gave her a strong international feeling that was intensified by the threat of rising Fascism. Being fully

convinced that working-class women faced the greatest oppression under Fascist governments, she supported the work of the WCWAWF and the WIMC as organizer and speaker. She was well aware that international solidarity was really espoused only by the active ten per cent of the British labour and socialist movement of which female activists comprised an even tinier proportion. She took it on herself to agitate particularly among working-class women to get informed about Fascism at home and abroad and to struggle against it everywhere out of a strong sense of class and gender solidarity.

Endnotes

- (1) For a general discussion see Rita Mae Kelly and Mary Boutilier, The Making of Political Women (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978), 113-69; Anna Coote and Polly Pattulia, Power and Prejudice.
- (2) On British developments see Susan Kingsley Kent, Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); H.L. Smith, ed., British Feminism in the Twentieth Century (Boston: The University of Massachusetts, 1990).
- (3) Francis Beckett, Enemy Within. The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party, 61.
- (4) On the appeal of Stopes' approach in Britain see Jane Lewis, "The Ideology and Politics of Birth Control in Inter-War Britain," Women's Studies International Quarterly 2 (1979): 33-48.
- (5) Pamela M. Graves, Labour Women, 81-98; Richard Allen Soloway, Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 280-303.
- (6) Labour Party Conference Report, Liverpool (1925), 44.
- (7) Sunday Worker, 20 June 1926, 7.
- (8) A.J. Cook's arguments resemble those made by the Wobblies in IWW's publications of the early 20th century and by Margaret Sanger in her Family Limitation. See Ann Schofield, "Rebel Girls and Union Maids: The Woman Question and the Journals of the AFL and IWW, 1905-1920," Feminist Studies 9, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 340-341.
- (9) Sunday Worker, 20 June 1926, 7.
- (10) Diana Gittins, "Women's Work and Family Size Between the Wars," Oral History 5, no. 2 (1979): 84-100.
- (11) Sunday Worker, 20 June 1926, 7; on the CPGB's standpoint on birth control in the mid-1920s see Sue Bruley, Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939 (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1986), 77-81.
- (12) Sunday Worker, 27 June 1926, 7.
- (13) ibid.
- (14) Sunday Worker, 4 July 1926, 7.
- (15) Sunday Worker, 11 July 1926, 7.
- (16) Dora Russell's speech in Labour Party Report (1926), 201.
- (17) Pamela M. Graves, Labour Women (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 95-96.
- (18) Charles Webster, "Healthy or Hungry Thirties?" History Workshop Journal, no. 12 (1981): 110-129.
Pamela M. Graves, Labour Women, 181-215.
- (19) A. Fenner Brockway, Hungry England (London: Victor Gollancz, 1932); Allen Hutt, Condition of the Working Class in Britain (London, 1933); John Boyd Orr, Food, Health and Income. Report on a Survey of Adequacy of Diet in Relation to Income (London: Macmillan, 1936); Lord

- Horder, Health and A Day (London: J.M. Dent, 1937).
- (20) Pamela Graves, Labour Women, 187-188.
- (21) For detail of this campaign see R. Page Arnot, The Miners in Crisis and War (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 145-193.
- (22) Rose Smith, The Price of a Dinner (London: CPGB, 1935), 4.
- (23) Rose Smith's articles in the Daily Worker: "Coronation Slavery on Potteries," 9 March 1937, 2; "Unknown Artists on Sweated Pay," 11 March 1937, 5; "Coronation Jewels, Slum Shops, Patriots are Prospering," 13 March 1927, 4, 6; "Waiters and Coronation 'Walk-Out'," 8 April 1937, 3.
- (24) Minutes of the CC Meeting of CPGB, 17-18 February 1933.
- (25) Rose Smith's articles in the Daily Worker: "Move Forward to Equal Pay For Women," 16 March 1938, 3; "Appeal for Fair Chance For Women," 17 March 1938, 3.
- (26) H.L. Peacock, A History of Modern Britain 1815-1975 (London: Heinemann, 1976), 241.
- (27) Conference of Labour Party Women, Swansea. 21 May 1936.
- (28) Minutes of the PB of the CPGB, 29 October 1937.
- (29) Rose Smith opened the discussion on the resolution affecting women at the 14th Party Congress. See "Women's Sections of Party To be Established," Daily Worker, 1 June 1937, 5; Rose Smith, "The Communist Party's Approach to the Women's Question," Discussion 2, no. 8 (January 1938), 11-12.
- (30) Minutes of the PB Meeting of the CPGB, 29 October 1937.
- (31) Pamphlets: Massacre of the Innocents (1935); Why You Pay More Now! (July 1937); Why We Pay More (November 1937); Articles: "The Rising Cost of Living," The Labour Monthly 19, no. 8 (August 1937): 487-490; Daily Worker, 5 August 1937, 4; 7 August 1937, 3; 18 August 1937, 4.
- (32) Why You Pay More Now!, 19.
- (33) The first quote comes from the 1936-37 report of Sir Kingsley Wood, Minister of Health from 1935-1938; the second quote comes from the 1933 report of Sir Hilton Young, Minister of Health from 1931-1935.
- (34) Massacre of the Innocents, 11.
- (35) For the Government's Housing policy during the interwar period see Jennifer Dale, "Class Struggle, Social Policy and State Structure: Central-Local Relations and Housing Policy, 1919-1939." In Housing, Social Policy and the State, ed. Joseph Melling (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 194-207; B. B. Gilbert, British Social Policy 1914-1939 (London: B. T. Batsford, 1973), 137-161; M. Bowley, Housing and the State 1919-1944 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966); Arthur Peter Becker, "Housing in England and Wales during the Business Depression of the 1930s," Economic History Review 3 (1950-51): 321-341.
- (36) Geoffrey Mitchell, ed., The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel. (London: Virago Press, 1977); Jill Liddington. The Life

- and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864-1946 (London: Virago Press, 1984); Pamela Graves, Labour Women, 168-178.
- (37) L. Oren, "The Welfare of Women in Labouring Families in England, 1860-1950." In Clio's Consciousness Raised, ed. M. Hartman and L. W. Banner (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 226-244.
- (38) Plebs, no. 10 (October 1925): 415.
- (39) I am grateful to William (Bill) Whittaker for this story and documentary evidence. Bill Whittaker became active in the Colne Labour Party at 16; he served as Colne Labour Party Secretary, was active in the Cotton Disputes of the 1930s when he joined the CPGB. He also was President of Colne's Twisters and Drawers' Association. In 1994 he was the only surviving member of the Colne Tenants' Defence Committee of 1934.
- (40) Besides Windy Bank Colne needed to demolish another three slum areas: Waterside, Primet Bridge, and Parliament Street. The Government subsidy was based on one house for five persons de-housed. Each slum area in Colne however needed one house for every three de-housed. All in all Colne had a shortage of 150 houses in 1934.
- (41) Colne and Nelson Times, 1 June 1934; 15 June 1934.
- (42) Colne and Nelson Times, 8 June 1934.
- (43) Colne and Nelson Times, 22 June 1934.
- (44) ibid.
- (45) Daily Worker, 10 February 1936, 4;
- (46) Rose Smith, "Fighting Housing Scandals," Daily Worker, 15 August 1938, 4.
- (47) Building societies which are unique to Britain, grew out of the Friendly Society movement of the working class in the late 17th century and are non-profit-making. Their activities are regulated by the Building Societies Act of 1874 and subsequent acts tightening controls over the societies' financial management. The societies' deposits are fed by regular small savings and loans are made to persons wishing to purchase their homes. But in the 1930s the building societies advanced only a proportion of the value of each house, so that, if values were to fall, the house-buyers would have to stand the loss, whereas the building societies would be covered to the full. A substantial decrease in house values could sweep away a very large proportion of the better-off workers who were buying their houses on the hire-purchase system. See G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, The Common People 1746-1946 (London: Methuen, 1949), 638-639.
- (48) ibid.
- (49) Author's telephone conversation with Jack Shapiro, the brother of Michael Shapiro, London, 19 November 1993 ; further personal information about M. Shapiro and the Stepney tenants' Defence League see Noreen Branson, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 196-

200. Rose Smith' s articles on housing in the Daily Worker, 15 August 1938, 5; 16 August 1938, 3 ; 17 August 1938, 5; 28 February 1939; 17 July 1939; 2 December 1939; on tenants' struggles in London also see P. Piratin, Our Flag Stays Red (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1948).
- (50) Rose Smith's interview with Miss Whateley: "You Must Be In Fight- A Woman to All Women," Daily Worker, 3 March 1938; on Ella Donovan: "100,000 Tenants Prepare for Rent Strike", Daily Worker, 20 March 1939; on Mrs. Elsy Border and her involvement with the Coneyhall District Residents' Association and the Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations see Noreen Branson, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 200-201.
- (51) ECCI, "To the Workers of All Countries," Labour Monthly 15, no. 4 (1933): 267-269 ; for a general background see Larry Ceplair, Under the Shadow of War. Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Marxists 1918-1939 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 31-56.
- (52) G. C. Webber, "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History 19, no. 4 (1984): 575-606; Stuart Rawnsley. "Membership of the British Union of Fascists." In British Fascism. Essays on the Radical Right in Interwar Britain, ed. Kenneth Lunn and Richard C. Thurlow (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 150-165.
- (53) Stephen Cullen, "Four Women For Mosley: Women in the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940," Oral History 24, no. 1 (1996): 49-59. Stuart Rawnsley, ibid., 154-157; David Mayall, "Rescued from the Shadows of Exile: Nellie Driver, Autobiography and the British Union of Fascists." In The Politics of Marginality, ed. Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (London: Frank Cass, 1990), 19-39.
- (54) R. P. Dutt, "Notes of the Month," Labour Monthly 15, no. 4 (1933): 211-216; 15, no. 5 (1933): 275-296.
- (55) Labour Monthly (July 1933): 461-463.
- (56) Labour Report "Democracy Versus Dictatorship." Reports of 33rd Annual Conference at Hastings (October 1933) (London: Transport House, 1933), 277-278.
- (57) Minutes of the CC of the GPGB, 17 June 1933.
- (58) Ellen Cicely Wilkinson (1891-1947), a trade unionist and Labour politician, became Minister of Education in Attlee's Government in 1945. See Betty D. Vernon, Ellen Wilkinson (London: Croom Helm, 1982).
- (59) Minutes of the CC of the CPGB, 17 June 1933.
- (60) CPGB. Capitalism or Communism (pamphlet), 22-23
- (61) Rose Smith, Women Into the Ranks! (London: CPGB, 1933), 14.
- (62) For the Fascist Cotton Programme see Blackshirt, 30 November 1934.
- On Fascist propaganda for women see Martin Durham, "Women and the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940." In The Politics of Marginality, ibid. 3-10; Martin Durham,

- "Gender and the British Union of Fascists," Journal of Contemporary History 27 (1992): 513-529.
- (63) Daily Worker, 18 May 1934, 3.
- (64) Branson, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 99-129.
- (65) Lancashire Record Office, Preston: Selina Cooper Papers. DDX 1137 3/34.
- (66) Jill Liddington, The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864-1946, 397-399.
- (67) "Weavers' Militancy and Jingo Propaganda in Lancashire," Daily Worker, 19 July 1934; for a background on the wage negotiations in the cotton industry during the period 1934-35 see Andrew Bullen, The Lancashire Weavers' Union. A Commemorative History, 59-61.
- (68) Her understanding of Fascism consisting of three components was of course prescribed by the Party's ideologue R. P. Dutt as propounded in his Fascism and Social Revolution (London: Martin Lawrence, 1934). For discussion see Kevin Morgan, Against Fascism and War (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).
- (69) The British Anti-War Council or Movement (BA-WC) was founded after the World Anti-War Congress in Amsterdam, August 1932; it was socialist pacifist in outlook and was Communist controlled. In 1934 it was renamed British Movement Against War and Fascism. The No More War Movement (NMWM) was founded in early 1921, consisted mainly of socialist pacifists. In early 1937 it merged with the Peace Pledge Union. See Martin Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
- (70) Marion B. Cothren, "What Do Women Want?" Nation 139, no. 3606 (15 August 1934): 184-185.
- (71) On the role of Willi Münzenberg (1887-1940) in the construction of and work for Communist front organisations, such as International Workers' Aid, League Against Imperialism, the Anti-Fascist Bureau, the World Committee Against War and Fascism, the Committee for War Relief for Republican Spain, see R. N. Carew Hunt, "Willi Muenzenberg." In International Communism, ed. David Footman (London: Chatto-Windus, 1969), 72-87.
- (72) For a breakdown according to nations and number of attending delegates see Inprecorr, no. 44 (1934): 1153.
- (73) The figure of 60 English delegates is derived from International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam: Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, File No. 291, Delegates' Report of WCAWF, Paris, 3-7 August 1934; in Inprecorr the number of the English delegation is given as 70, while Sue Bruley's study refers to 56 only: "Women Against War and Fascism: Communism, Feminism and the People's Front." In Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front, ed. Jim Fyrth (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 134.
- (74) Letter of 13 June 1934 by Hannah Laurie, Hon. Secretary

- of the British Women's Organising Committee for International Congress Against War and Fascism. In Manchester Guardian, 16 June 1934, 10; Daily Worker, 16 June 1934, 6.
- (75) For more information about the English Organising Committee and other English delegates, particularly Sylvia Pankhurst's shortlived participation see Sue Bruley, ibid., 134-139.
- (76) Minutes of the CC of the CPGB, 19-20 July 1930.
- (77) Only a copy of the German version of this WCAWF pamphlet entitled Frauen unter dem faschistischen Terror! could be traced. It was published by MOPR-Verlag, Zurich in July 1934 with the intentions of being circulated as discussion material at the WCAWF Congress in Paris. It includes case studies of imprisoned women not only in European countries but around the world. These case studies had been collected by the International Red Aid. On the meeting see Manchester Guardian, 30 July 1934, 16; Daily Worker, 30 June 1934, 6; 28 July 1934, 6; 4 August 1934, 6.
- (78) International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam: Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, File No. 291: Delegates' Report of WWCAWF, Paris, 3-7 August 1934.
- (79) ibid.; Daily Worker, 22 September 1934, 5.
- (80) Jill Liddington, The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864-1946, 412-415.
- (81) Minutes of PB of the CPGB. 18 November 1934. Rose Smith's commented on the T.R. Manchester Report.
- (82) ibid.
- (83) ibid.
- (84) M. McCarthy. Generation in Revolt, 329.
- (85) For background on this period see R. J. Q. Adams, British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement, 1935-39 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 16-55; Frank Hardie, The Abyssinian Crisis (Hamden: Archon Books, 1974), 34-56; Margaret R. Doxey, Economic Sanctions and International Enforcement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 46-58; Dispute Between Ethiopia and Italy (London: HMSO, 1936).
- (86) Elaine Windrich, British Labour's Foreign Policy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1952), 127-137.
- (87) On the relationship between WCACF and Sylvia Pankhurst see Sue Bruley, ibid., 136-137; Patricia W. Romerov, E. Sylvia Pankhurst. Portrait of a Radical (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 199-215, in particular 207.
- (88) International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam: Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, File no. 289 on the WIMC organisation and its aims.
- (89) ibid., File no. 152 on the treatment of Italian women under Fascism, in particular the persecution of Mrs. Velia Matteotti and her sympathisers.
- (90) ibid., File no. 289: Sylvia Pankhurst's reply of 9 July

- 1935 addressed to Miss Margaret Gollan, the Secretary of WCAWF. The WCAWF had invited Sylvia Pankhurst to be the guest speaker at the WCAWF meeting to be held on 26 July 1935 at Essex Hall, London. File No. 291: on 9 October 1935 Margaret Gollan sent a letter to Sylvia Pankhurst, declining an invitation to a WIMC meeting to be held at Hyde Park on 27 October 1935.
- (91) The Peace Pledge Union (PPU), a pacifist organisation, emerged out of the Sheppard Peace Movement in July 1935. On Rev. A. D. Belden see Martin Ceadel, Pacifism In Britain 1914-1945, 220-221, 223.
- (92) Manchester Guardian, 2 March 1936, 16; Daily Herald, 2 March 1936, 2; Daily Worker, 3 March 1936, 3.

Chapter 5

THE WORKING-CLASS JOURNALIST, 1926-1955

In the preceding three chapters Rose Smith has been described as an energetic and hard working political activist. She was keen to know as much as possible about the issues she was lobbying for or against. She also showed a good sense of judgement and the ability of putting information into perspective. Finally, she undertook all her hard labour for a slender financial reward. All these qualities were requisites for a good newspaper reporter. (1) And that was what Smith became in 1934, when she joined the Daily Worker as a Special Correspondent. In 1955, when she retired as a senior member of the staff of the reporting department, "she was just one of the crowd, holding her own in the rough and tumble of daily journalism." (2) She was greatly esteemed by colleagues and readers, particularly by trade union militants who supported the paper all over the country.

In this chapter I shall discuss Smith as a journalist. Her training and work as a working-class reporter, a foreign correspondent for the Daily Worker in Spain in the autumn of 1938, and as a Women's Page Editor before, during and after the Second World War will be analysed. As she worked for a daily that clearly expounded its socialist partisanship, it is

necessary to set this paper and Rose Smith into a historical context of the community of radical-socialist working-class journalists, and also of women in British journalism because such context set clear parameters for Smith's journalism. It is argued that the evolving revolutionary journalism of the Daily Worker, to which Smith contributed during the period 1926- 1955, mirrored a process of construction and deconstruction of the cultural community of British Communists.

I adopt the structuralist viewpoint of historians of the newspapers. It uses the Daily Worker and Smith as the lenses through which political developments were projected. The aim of this chapter is to examine Smith's role, motivations and frustrations as a female socialist journalist, and finally her evolving relationship with the Daily Worker through her written contributions. (3)

The Daily Worker-

A Medium of an Oppositional Leftwing Community

By the time Smith became a working-class reporter, Britain's socialist working-class press (4) which I shall discuss below, had been solidly established as an aspect of Britain's working-class culture. Like the radical papers of the early 19th century, the socialist press believed in their power to influence British politics. They pointed out government shortcomings, abuses, and exploitation, recorded conflicts in class interests between the working class and the

employing and propertied classes, championed or rejected the integration of the working class into the political system, and advanced its own theories of political economy.

Since the turn of previous century, Britain's socialist journalism became moulded by two main ideological schools, namely that of Labour Socialism and of Marxism. Labour Socialism was constructive, aiming to repair gradually the damage that capitalism had caused to Britain's social fabric and to integrate the working class into a larger Co-operative Commonwealth. Marxism, on the other hand, stressed the incompatibility of class interests and the need for the working class to seize power for itself as a precondition of creating a classless society. It required that the Marxist press would be oppositional, and that it should emphasize the defects of the existing order and point to Russian developments as an alternative after the successful Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. (5)

Another characteristic of this socialist journalism was that the overwhelming majority of these socialist papers were formally attached to a group or party since the late 19th century. In many ways they reflected the changes in Britain's electoral system and the wider range of political parties. Frequently the publication of party papers were proclaimed as a crucial step in the development of the party. A party paper often encouraged the party's activities; distributing the paper helped to strengthen the commitment of party members to

a distinct political and cultural community. This press provided party leaders, local organizers and growing number of sympathisers not only with a shared purpose but instructed how to redefine the wider social world with the help of the espoused socialist ideology. (6)

Until the publication of the leftwing socialist Daily Herald in 1912, all the other socialist papers had been weeklies. The Daily Herald survived as an independently funded and crusading leftwing newspaper of the labour movement until 1922 when it was compelled to accept funding from the TUC and the Labour Party and thereafter became the mouthpiece of the moderate leaders of the labour movement. In autumn 1930 the Daily Herald was completely taken over by the press barons of the Odhams Press.

It was the Daily Worker, launched on 1 January 1930 by the CPGB, that once again gave the British oppositional Left its voice. The world was still reeling from the shock of the Wall Street Crash of 1929, and in Britain it was compounded into a crisis of economic and political confidence. The launching of this daily was a political decision made by the CPGB in its 'Third Period'. As recent research by Francis Beckett (7) has confirmed, the paper was also founded on instructions and with funds from Moscow. For its first five years the Daily Worker was preaching sectarian policies. Some historians, however, have maintained that its written contributions of this period should be regarded as "a

remarkable piece of revolutionary journalism" and that it "represented a flourishing (if limited) revolutionary culture." (8) It is stressed that , in contrast to other contemporary dailies, including the Daily Herald, the Daily Worker carried a much larger number of feature-length articles; it covered more extensively European and colonial matters, and reported on the political struggle of women as well as the worlds of arts and sports.

The Daily Worker developed its own symbols and jargons. Belonging to the 'collective' as a 'co-worker' meant being a member of the Communist community that allegedly did not distinguish between leaders and the rank-and-file. Party members adhered to 'lines' or 'roads' instead of policies. Communists did not disagree with or criticised Party policy, but they had 'doubts' or confessed 'confusion'. It was also not advisable to be 'subjective' in one's views and work. Working for the Party was 'mass work'; it centred around recruiting and fundraising 'drives', and 'crusades' or constructing 'unity campaigns' or 'popular fronts'. Class struggle and Party work were 'planned' and 'organized' around 'key issues' and pursued in 'unity of theory and practice'. Their aim was to bring about the 'overthrow of the capitalist system' and its replacement by the 'workers' dictatorship' or 'proletarian dictatorship'. (9)

From 1930 to 1935, the Daily Worker fiercely opposed the National Government and the Labour socialism as adopted by the

British labour movement. After 1935, under the threat of an expansionist Fascist movement in Britain and on the European continent, the Communists tried to reintegrate into the mainstream of the British labour movement. The usage of Communist political slogans in Daily Worker articles was then very much curbed. A revival of the revolutionary language occurred in the paper from 1939 to 1941. During these two years the Nazi-Soviet Pact gave rise to the Comintern's new 'line'. The anti-Fascist stance of the Soviet government was revoked and the British National Government accused of conducting an 'imperialist war'. The British Cabinet responded in December 1940 by issuing a ban on the publication of the Daily Worker. (10) A few months later, the German invasion of the Soviet Union led finally to the anti-Hitler alliance of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. The ban on the Daily Worker's publication was lifted in 1942, and the wartime collaboration of British Communists with the National Government began in earnest. The sting was taken out of the paper's anti-government propaganda and the process of deconstruction of the 'revolutionary cultural community' of British Communists was set in motion. As will be shown later, this deconstruction manifested itself in disagreements and fierce discussions over editorial policies between the CPGB leadership and the paper's editorial staff as well as in worsening gender relations at the paper.

The editors of the working-class socialist press were

usually young men on the fringes of the British political arena. As they were too rebellious they could not get their political writings and views published through the existing conventional channels. Most of the time these editors had no or scanty experience of daily journalism. In 1930 this also applied to the original editorial board of the Daily Worker. William Rust, a twenty-six- years-old working-class Londoner and fierce believer in Britain's revolution being round the corner, headed the editorial board. As a lad he had briefly worked in the offices of the Hulton Press in Fleet Street and for a while he had edited the Young Worker for the Communist League. He also was the author of a number of articles and Communist pamphlets propagating the Stalinist lines of the time. The most experienced of the first editorial team were Walter Holmes and Allan Hutt. Both had worked on the Daily Herald. In addition, Walter Holmes had been the editor of the Sunday Worker, a weekly for leftwing socialists of various schools of thought from 1925-1929. Kay Beauchamp was the only woman editor who looked after the paper's woman page and later also after the paper's finances. She had worked for Labour Monthly which was started by R.P. Dutt; he was the most rigid and line-obedient Communist intellectual and member of the CPGB's Executive. (11)

Since the beginnings of the British socialist press it had been customary that contributors had not been journalists. They had neither any training as professional writers nor as

scholars. It was their desire to promote change that made them become crusading reporters. Reporting satisfied a need in them of explaining ideas and events to their fellow human beings. Many of them combined a high capacity of scepticism with a strong sense of injustice which the newspaper gave them an instrument to rectify. In other words, socialist working-class journalists were essentially political commentators who combined their political activities with political writing.

Before the First World War most editors were men. Since the 1890s middle-class women had been attracted to journalism as a glamorous new profession. They specialized on 'women's topics', wrote for the emerging women's magazines and were members of the Society of Women Journalists which had been founded in 1893. (12) A number of working-class women joined the ranks of journalists after the First World War. They tended to come from artisan family backgrounds and had a secondary school education. They were single and/or had experienced a failed marriage. Being strongwilled and somewhat 'social rebels', these women did not want to go into domestic service and factory work. They sought instead their independence, self-affirmation and intellectual challenges as 'worker correspondents' of working-class papers. Rose Smith was a case in point.

By the turn of the century the first practical guidebooks for female journalists and autobiographies of newspaper women had begun to appear in Britain. (13) Margaret Bateson, a

journalist herself, wrote in her book in 1895:

In journalism women have a more assured position than in almost any of the great arts and professions. Between men and women there is no question of rights and, I trust, very little of rivalry. If proof were needed of the good fellowship that exists, it is found in the absolute equality of treatment meted out to both sexes in the Institute of Journalists. (14)

In spite of this projected ideal of gender equality at the workplace, women were not to enter the domain of political writing at British working-class papers before the 1920s. Although the prewar suffrage movement had made politics as much a topic for women as for men, particularly from the middle class, women preferred to submit their commentaries to their own women's papers rather than joining the ad-hoc staff of established local or national papers owned and managed by men.

The Communist papers of the early 1920s reflected the tender beginnings of change in this respect, but even then women contributors, such as Peggy Rothwell, Helen Crawford, Cedar Paul, F. W. Stella Browne, and Lilly Webb, remained essentially captives of discussions on gender relations in the home and at the workplace. Outside this range of politics no other topic was thought to deserve the attention of these women journalists. (15) This was caused partly by the CPGB's failure to honour the political rights movement of the suffragettes and suffragists of the prewar period, dubbing it a middle-class feminism that was divisive for the working class in its struggle for socialism. The CPGB maintained that

true sex equality could only come with socialism. Partly it also resulted from the total lack of appreciation by most Communist leaders of the way society was structured to rob women of economic independence and keep them caged in the child caring, housekeeping role.

Consequently in the Daily Worker patriarchal attitudes prevailed in the male-dominated editorial board. William Rust was the first chief political editor; he resigned in 1932 after Pollitt's and Campbell's defeat of the Class Against Class line at the 12th CPGB Congress. Jimmy Shields, a woodworker by trade, became the next editor. Idris Cox took over the post in 1935; from 1936 to 1938 the CPGB's main theoretician R. Palme Dutt was in charge, then Dave Springhall followed for one year. John Campbell succeeded for a few months in 1939 before being demoted from editor to lowly reporter of the paper. William Rust resumed the editorial chair. After his death in February 1949, John Campbell was chief political editor till 1959. (16) The only woman editor of the Daily Worker was the women's page editor. The women's page was a standard feature right from the paper's beginnings. Neither with regard to the contents of the page nor to the hiring practices of its woman editor did the Daily Worker differ much from the mainstream conservative and liberal newspapers in Britain.

Nevertheless, Rose Smith was held in great esteem at the paper. She joined the paper in 1934 as a 'special

correspondent'. Six years later she was introduced in William Rust's pamphlet celebrating the paper's eleventh year as an "active fighter in people's cause and widely experienced in Labour movement. Imprisoned several times." (17) She was represented as a woman with stamina, fearless but caring, who could work on her own. This description clearly acknowledged her past varied political activities as an excellent qualification for her journalistic position. And that is exactly, how many decades later, Smith herself explained becoming a journalist. In Beijing she had been invited to speak to a young audience at the newly established Institute of Journalism. Most of the students had university degrees but very little practical experience as 'newsgetters'. So Smith decided to talk about her political experiences in the mining and textile areas of interwar Britain. She then explained what she meant by a 'news-getter', 'news', and the purpose of 'news' for a socialist working-class paper:

...I want you to realise that a journalist is not the technical result of days of sitting on a comfortable seat writing in a feather-bedded office. It means going where the news is or will soon be, recognising what news is, sifting the essential from a mass of material and tapping that rich source for the further understanding of the class position of the development of the struggle. It means both the accumulation of reliable information and knowing the sources of additional information. I was quite unknowingly storing up material which was to be of great help to me in future. (18)

In December 1940 Smith was the only woman listed among seven male writers of the Daily Worker. As a special brand of national and international revolutionary propagandists they

all had fairly similar curricula vitae and were not ideologically suspect by King Street and Moscow. Among them were Ben Francis, a former Welsh miner, and Jack Owen, who had been a Lancashire engineering worker. Walter Holmes had reported the Italian invasion of Abyssinia for both The Times and the Daily Worker. Another of Smith's colleagues was Jack Chen, a young Chinese artist with some close connection to the revolutionary movement in Shanghai and the Comintern in the late 1920s and 1930s. Before coming to Britain he had worked on the Moscow Daily News. In Britain he also served as an informative activist to the CPGB's China Campaign Committee in the late 1930s and early 1940s. (19) Jack Chen replaced James Friell, the paper's cartoonist 'Gabriel', when the latter was called up. (20)

From the mid-1930s the working-class journalists at the Daily Worker were firmly supported by a handful of male and female journalist-intellectuals. They came from the upper- and middle classes and had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge. These included Ivor Montagu, a younger son in an aristocratic family, and Sheila Lynd who belonged to a distinguished literary family. Sheila Lynd became the paper's woman's page editor. But as she was very versatile, she also wrote on any other subject with great skill. In 1934 the talented Claud Cockburn joined the staff and two years later, under the name of Frank Pitcairn, he reported on the Spanish Civil War from Barcelona. It was in the 1940s that Sam Russell became a

journalist at the paper. He had been a radio reporter in Spain and became the paper's Moscow correspondent and its Foreign Editor after the Second World War.

After 1942, when the propagation of 'class conflict' in Britain was not the Daily Worker's main aim, these journalists dominated in the paper's editorial board. It was then that the Daily Worker's whole journalistic staff won the right to membership of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ). At once this incorporation of the Daily Worker into Britain's existing newspaper world had an important side-effect. The right to use the special newspaper train provided by the railways was granted and copies of the paper were transported more quickly to the provincial towns.

Nevertheless, in Smith's words, "life with the Daily Worker was not easy." (21) Finance was always a central problem for the management of the Daily Worker, as it had been for other socialist papers in the past. From 1930 to 1942 the paper was financed by secretly supplied subsidies from Moscow and by the paper's 'fighting fund', the halfpennies and pennies of the working-class subscribers who were willing to make donations because they felt the paper supported them in their daily struggle against exploitation. From 1942 to 1957 the paper enjoyed a period free from Comintern tutelage. (22) From 1942 to 1948 the readership of the Daily Worker increased to 120,000 and then gradually declined to 63,000 in 1956. The outbreak of the Cold War and the introduction of the welfare

state in Britain are some of the reasons for this declining readership.

In the very early days of the paper wages were often not forthcoming and yet working-class journalists, including Smith, stuck to their job. The Daily Worker's editor, deputy editor and departmental heads as well as the rank-and-file journalists received the same pay. This principle applied throughout the paper. Secretaries, librarians, workers in the administration, circulation and fund departments all received the same wage. It was referred to as 'the party wage', because it was the same pay given to full-time Communist Party workers. The only exception to this principle of equality were the printers. They received the trade union rate which was very much higher than the pay received by the journalistic staff of the Daily Worker.

With regard to the wage levels for journalists, there existed in those years an understanding with the NUJ that the special circumstances of the paper justified the staff of the Daily Worker in accepting wages which were well below the union rate. Finally this understanding came to an end in the 1950s after which the paper's journalists were paid the union rate. The staff, however, then gave back the extra money as contributions to the paper. (23)

Smith's wage was just about adequate to support her as a single person with a very modest lifestyle. Wages were however not adequate to support families. So people with dependents

were usually married to partners in well-paid jobs somewhere else or were able to do freelance work in addition to their work for the paper. Before the Second World War several Daily Worker journalists had seconds job with Reynolds News, the co-operative, left-wing Sunday newspaper.

The other major problem of the Daily Worker and its staff centred around the important issue of the freedom of the socialist press. (24) Right from its first day the paper was faced with the fierce opposition by both the millionaire-owned newspapers in Fleet Street and the British governments. They made sure that this rebel press was systematically denied the normal channels and had to rely directly on sympathisers and supporters for its distribution. (25) The national boycott by newspaper wholesalers begun six months after the Daily Worker's launch and was to continue until 1942. Naturally Smith staunchly defended the paper. Wherever she travelled and spoke at meetings in Britain, she was accompanied by a poster advertising the paper and a stack of papers for sale.

Police raids of its offices and libel cases also restricted the paper's development before 1942. Persecution reached its peak on 21 January 1941 when the Newspaper Proprietors' Association and the editors of all the national newspapers were called together by the Home Secretary Herbert Morrison and told that the Daily Worker was being suppressed on government orders. It was only on 26 August 1942 that this government ban was lifted. It was the outcome of a more than

one-year intensive campaign staged by newspapers, such as the Manchester Guardian, the labour movement, the Labour Party, and even Lloyd George, the former liberal Prime Minister.

Smith spent this intervening time out in the provinces on propaganda work for the Party and the restoration of the workers' paper. For her "this was no feather-bed office job, just part of what a communist journalist has to expect and takes in his stride if he wants to make the grade." (26)

A fortnight after the lifting of the ban, the Daily Worker appeared again. But twelve of the paper's former eighteen journalists were in the Forces. A new editorial staff had to be recruited and once again trained on the job. Rose Smith returned as a senior reporter to the Home News Department of the Daily Worker in 1942. She was also a member of the CPGB's Industrial Department. As a result of the new recruitment there were eight women journalists at the paper in 1945, making about a quarter of the journalistic staff. Some had previously worked at other local papers. Florence Keyworth, who joined the Daily Worker in 1945, had previously been on the staff of the Sheffield Telegraph. After two or three years, however, the women journalists at the Daily Worker left to start families or take up other occupations. Their places were then retaken by men, some of whom had returned from serving in the Forces during the Second World War. In this way, the Daily Worker mirrored the situation in ordinary firms and government departments.

Some women, however, remained, including Rose Smith. There were three or four younger female journalists in the Reporting Department in the early 1950s. By then Smith was a pleasant-looking woman of robust appearance in her late fifties and early sixties, wearing her hair drawn back into a bun which suited her fresh, rather handsome features. She was known for her smiling and good humour. She looked after the female reporters in "a tough but motherly way." (27) Sometimes, one by one, they would accompany her on her reporting assignments to learn some of her interviewing methods. Her great strength as a reporter, as one of her younger colleagues emphasized, was "her ability to establish immediate rapport with the working people whom she interviewed." (28) She was perceptive and through interviews, by overhearing bits and pieces of conversation on street corners and during the normal workday routine of ordinary people she would determine the moods and undercurrents of social change. So she was a first-class ambassador for a working-class paper.

Worker Correspondent, 1926-1934

The socialist working-class party papers all dealt mainly with industrial and social issues affecting the working men and women and their dependents. Frequently these issues were boycotted by the conservative and liberal newspaper establishments.

From 1926 to 1934 Smith served her apprenticeship in

journalism by writing short factual accounts on strikes in Mansfield coalfield and Lancashire textile areas for the Sunday Worker, Workers' Life, and the Daily Worker. It was William Paul, the editor of the Sunday Worker (29) and a friend of the Smiths in their Mansfield days, who introduced Smith as a 'worker correspondent' to writing for his paper in 1926. By then it had become somewhat of a tradition of socialist papers to incorporate lower-level supporters in an interactive portion of these papers reserved for commentaries from below. William Paul also gave Smith the important advice that any investigation or looking for the 'truth' in public affairs meant to be always on the alert for possible news sources of grassroots information, for the formation of personal contacts with authorities in various fields of activity. As Smith would relate later,

...news stories very often have to be sought long before the action actually surfaces or is obviously surfacing and sometimes even before those who are to take part in the events are aware that they are pending. Foresight based on knowledge and investigation is really always better than hindsight if one aims to be the first with the news, and equally important is it to check, recheck and check again the facts and items. Moreover, one should never forget that stale news is no longer news. (30)

After 1927 Smith exclusively wrote under her name in the capacity of a worker correspondent for the Communist Party press. This implied that her supplied 'news items' were not only more authoritative but also strictly circumscribed by the role and rules of the party paper. Smith recalled,

I had to be familiar with Party policy on all fundamental issues, be thoroughly conversant with its campaigns then

underway, and help to push them forward through the medium of the written word--report anything which affected them--mobilize sympathy and support. It included agitation, propaganda and organisation. (31)

Her statement was essentially a rehash of the gist of Lenin's Where to Begin of 1901 in which he discussed newspapers as promoters of revolution and training grounds for revolutionary militants. (32)

As most of Smith's written accounts discussed industrial strife during the 'Third Period', their tone was very agitational. Their aims were to present a striking workers' revolutionary rank-and-file opposition to both exploitative employers and collaborating trade union bosses and to arouse feelings of solidarity for the independent strikers among the readers. The motto for all these articles was 'To get some human interest into the story'. Therefore her style was to let the main interviewees talk about their problems and views in such a way that the reader had to sympathise with the plight of the strikers, the underdog in British class-ridden society, and wanted to read the article to the end, then drew his own conclusions-- the ones Smith wanted the reader to draw but had deliberately refrained from spelling out in dreary verbiage.

The Special Correspondent, 1934-1942

In 1934 Smith was transferred to the Daily Worker as a 'special correspondent'. This occurred more by accident than design. She had neither thought of becoming a journalist nor did she object to her new 'trade'. In her eyes it was just

another means of communication with working-class men and women on behalf of the Party. The CPGB's Women's Department had been dissolved some months earlier, giving Smith as Party cadre more time for other kinds of propaganda work. As a result of the emergence of the extreme Right in Europe, the Party was preparing the ground for establishing a new collaborative relationship with other labour organisations in Britain. It naturally followed that the revolutionary slant of the Daily Worker needed to be reined in without compromising basic Communist principles. So the initial purpose of her transfer was to act as a 'language polisher'

to help popularize the language of the paper, which tended to be one of political slogans and directives, "musts" and "shoulds", quotations from the Marxist classics, rather than their interpretation applied practically to actual situations. I had also to try and get rid of what had come to be known as Communist jargon and write in simple, clear, but vivid English, for no worker after eight hours of work has either the inclination or the convenience of consulting a dictionary. (33)

It was in the following years that Smith was drawn more into producing her own articles and she then gradually built up her own filing system. Under scores of different headings she built up a store of factual information about trade union matters, housing, agriculture, government legislation, past events, as well as lists of contacts. She also kept meticulously diaries of coming and past events and engagements and also invested in a whole library of reference books. She regularly scanned the daily press for information about the movements in ruling-class circles, parliamentary and

government reports, and publications by banks, commercial and trade agencies. This collection of data was undertaken by her with the intention of being 'on the ball'. As a 'special correspondent' her main aim was to push the Party's policies and political campaigns forward.

As a novice in the editorial office in Cayton Street, London, she worked long hours, sometimes seven days a week. Often she took work home. To keep herself awake, she began to chain smoke. Yet the diversity of each day's labour became the best reward for all her efforts.

Her satisfaction with her new job was further enhanced by the fact that as a woman reporter Smith had equality with the men and was given similar assignments. Much of her work involved travelling about the country covering industrial strife, conferences of trade unions and other political organisations in the new cooperative spirit of party work. She became the first working-class female reporter specialising in the world of industrial affairs. For her the world of labour was always gendered. Her articles discussed men and women working and struggling together for a better existence. Her factual and informative accounts focused on unionised workers and such issues as wages, working conditions and the recognition of trade unions as workers' representatives in agreed collective bargaining procedures. She also wrote about unorganised women workers who were keen to organise their own union and to affiliate it to the TUC. In this way Smith

propagated the CPGB's 'new tactics' vis-à-vis the trade unions. The Thirteenth Party Congress, held in Manchester in February 1935, had endorsed the line of "activising the branches, district committees, and areas committees of the various unions and, where it exists, the workshop organisation of the unions". (34)

Smith's articles on labour relations in the coalfields of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire during the first quarter of 1936 were a case in point. They stressed the important roles played by miners' wives and the trade union leaders in achieving an industrial peace that was beneficial to both sides. In the last few weeks of 1936 four pits near Doncaster in Yorkshire downed their tools over a breach in the minimum wage clause of their agreement with the colliery company. The Yorkshire Miners' Association then was called upon to negotiate with the representatives of the owners for a return to work of the men as a precondition for the final settlement of this wage issue. Meanwhile, at the Nottinghamshire village of Harworth, the principle of free trade unionism in the coalfield was tested. The miners at the local pit went on strike in defence of twenty-five miners who had been sacked for being members of the NMA. The only organisation recognised by the coalowners was the company union or 'Spencer Union'. Eleven of the men and one miner's wife were subsequently imprisoned with hard labour; Mick Kane, president of the Harworth Lodge, was sentenced to two-years' jail. Others had to pay a severe fine.

Smith, familiar with the conditions of both coalfields, rushed to report about these happenings. As Mick Kane was one of her old friends and company unionism was a thorn in her flesh, she knew that this strike was to be the culminating episode in the ten-year struggle of the miners against this 'Spencerism'. So she put pen to paper to mobilise national support for the miners and their families among the Daily Worker's readership. She carefully explained the events, provided some typical pay sheets to refute the coal company's claim of paying good wages. In a spirit of working-class unity she listed the aid forthcoming from other labour organisations, and the MFGB's organisation of a ballot for a national strike. She cheered the men as 'working-class heroes' on their release from prison in the same way as she did not forget to pay tribute to the courage and determination of the supporting wives. As so often in miners' industrial conflicts, they were the most harassed group in the mining villages in 1936,

Every miner is agreed that the women are a grand help in the struggle. The women are driven by the urge to see that their youngsters get a square deal, and it is like a tonic to hear them declare that the men should have come out before. (35)

Within months the 'Spencer Union' was forced into liquidation and the Nottinghamshire miners were again united inside the MFGB. And in Yorkshire the coalowners agreed to comply with the minimum wage clause. All along Smith's reportages addressed these labour struggles and their final

solutions as an interplay of class and gender at the pit level, at the national level of union politics, and within the local community.

Smith also tried her hand at more educational and 'crusading' writing on the changing status of women in British society. The pieces she wrote were clearly expressed and supported by statistics. Her aim was to arouse women readers from their age-old apathy to politics and to get them to use their political power in trade union organisations. She thought this particularly important because the fluctuating performance of the British economy could adversely affect the employment of women. While, for instance, 1936 government predictions announced revealed growth, a year later industrial output in Britain was more stagnated.

In 1936 employers of labour did not conceal their preference for working-class youth and women in their early twenties, particularly in the new industrial areas of Outer London and the Midlands. There were six and a half million women occupied in some form of productive or distributive work. Of the total number of working women only three-quarters of a million or an average of one in five were organised in trade unions. As the employers took advantage of the weakness of organisation among women and of the lack of coordination between the men and women at the workplace, Smith lobbied for the urgent need of increasing the women trade union membership. She welcomed the awareness of the TUC to this

vexed question and to the organisation of advisory committees, week-end and day schools, and the issue of a monthly bulletin on women's questions to all trades councils. Nevertheless, she asserted that

Trade unionism amongst women is on the upgrade, the existing membership must be consolidated, women must be given far more scope in determining trade union administration and policy.

Sex limitations must be broken down, the factory become the unit of organisation, membership extended to every woman worker, and the trade union movement the pulsating life stream of the workers' struggle for improved wages and working conditions. (36)

When in late 1937 the British industrial improvement had come to a halt and management circles talked much about maintaining the competitiveness of British manufacture, Smith wrote an article with the headline "There's Profit in Speed-Up." It dealt with the application of the Bedaux system in the British factories. Labour output was measured by the use of a stop-watch and workers were paid by results. The Bedaux system was incorporated in Great Britain in autumn of 1926, following the miners' defeat in the General Strike. By the time of writing her article, Smith reported that about 240 different production units had applied this system and claimed a substantial increase in output at much lower labour costs. Production had been speeded up so that sixty men did the work formerly done by 100.

To Smith it seemed a clear victory at the expense of the work-force, that needed to be contained. In 1932 the TUC had already commissioned an inquiry into the Bedaux system. It had

recommended that further expansion of this type of management system in Britain should be stopped. Five years later, however, the TUC reacted lethargically to a possible employers' offensive by more subtle but similar changes at the workplace. So Smith tried to create some awareness and public pressure from below by publishing a summary of the main findings of this TUC investigation in her article.

It had been found that workers had always objected to this system on the grounds that correct wage and bonus calculations were difficult to assess, pride of craftsmanship, quality of work, and workers' health were sacrificed. However, in 1937, Smith showed, in a large number of instances where strikes of the workforce had compelled the withdrawal of the obvious application of the Bedaux system, modified and equally harmful forms of speed-up were still in operation. With the help of her contacts among shop stewards in the engineering industry, Smith conducted interviews particularly among women engineers in Birmingham about the effects of the 'Point System' that was used in their workshops. This had been introduced after the compulsory withdrawal of the Bedaux experts in this industry but

had led to considerable speeding-up of production, and displacement of labour, that in some instances women workers were now doing the work formerly done by three or four women, and that the dodge first employed of "swelling the pay packet" has now led to wholesale sacking of girls, and considerable reduction in wages.
(37)

Smith's intention was not to be antagonistic towards the

TUC but to encourage vigilance and unity in the labour movement when facing the exploitative class. This is also evident from the headline of another of her article "Unity to win a Better Life". This, of course, had been the motto of the CPGB's main political campaign throughout 1937. At the beginning of 1937 the CPGB joined with the ILP and the Socialist League, a leftwing pressure group inside the Labour Party, to launch a Unity Campaign "against the National Government, against Fascism, against War." (38)

From January to May 1937 public meetings were staged. They initially attracted large audiences. During these months Rose Smith travelled around the country reporting on the speeches of such leaders as J. R. Campbell and Fenner Brockway, that connected the Government's arms expenditure with the rising cost of living. Naturally in her usual partisan fashion, Smith described the audiences as breaking into applause and being behind the campaign to "revitalise the democratic Labour Movement." (39) The revitalisation meant the incorporation of Communist ideas into a more effective programme of the working class.

Smith's article on "Derelict Areas Need United Attack" attempted to be a contribution along this line. In November 1936, a "Distressed Area Commission" had been set up by NEC to consider the serious problem of persistent unemployment in the old industrial centres of Britain. Hugh Dalton headed this commission, aided by George Dallas, Barbara Ayrton Gould (both

NEC members), and Grant McKenzie, the assistant secretary of the Labour Research Department (40). By early 1937, several reports had been published on the conditions in Lancashire, Central Scotland, South Wales, Durham, the North East, and West Cumbria. The Labour Commission finally advocated a common policy for the alleviation of regional distress; the state had to take responsibility for the allocation of industry in these 'Special Areas'. (41)

Smith's article discussed both the strength and the weaknesses of the Commission's interim report. She was in agreement with the commissioners' criticism of "the Government's utterly disgraceful failure to show either determination, competence or human sympathy in its handling" (42) of the problem of the distressed areas. She felt, however, that the investigators' broad criticisms had been raised in previous Labour Party resolutions. Therefore this research was of no new value unless the Labour Party was willing to support immediate actions that would mobilise the workers to overcome the Government's inertia. She also agreed with the Commission's conclusion that capitalism was responsible for laying waste whole communities in the Distressed Areas.

But she contradicted the Commission's statement "that the Government is sunk in lethargy." (43) It was not "the Government's idle passivity," (44) she maintained, but the Government's four very definite schemes in relation to the

unemployed - the refusal of U.A.B. allowances equal to wages, making employed workers more and more responsible for the maintenance of the unemployed, the dilution of the labour force resulting in the weakening of the trade unions, and the rearmament policy - that would eventually create a far deeper depression for these areas. Labour's suggestion to locate more armament industries into the 'Special Areas' and to offer certain financial encouragements to these new industries only played into the hands of the rearming Government. However, she wholeheartedly supported the Commission's argument for State enterprises of a peaceful nature, manufacturing goods required in public service. Finally, she argued that Labour's "recommendations have much in common with the programme of immediate demands for which the Unity Committee now fights." (45) And unless "a nation-wide campaign to force the hands of the Government and the linking-up of all progressive forces" (46) was supported by the Labour Party, it might be in danger of being labelled with the very words it has applied to the Government, "idle passivity is a political crime." (47) Smith's piece was clearly written and supported by long quotes from the interim report.

It is of course difficult to assess what impact Smith's articles had on her readership. Certainly she wanted to encourage discussion in labour circles and thereby weaken from below the entrenched hostility of the leaders of both NEC and the TUC towards the CPGB and its Unity Campaign. However, in

June 1937 there were many signs that this CPGB campaign was petering out. But this seems not to have discouraged the Party's propagandists. On 8 January 1938, the Daily Worker announced the Great Crusade to take place from 17 February to 24 March.

The Great Crusade was in essence the Party's response to political tensions arising from the consolidation of Fascism in theatres of Europe and Asia. Japan had begun its march of conquest through China. Like all the other political parties in Britain, the Communist activists discussed the question of how to maintain peace and how to take a stand against Fascism everywhere. So two hundred public meetings centred around linking these international events with the economic struggles at home. Questions of peace or war, the coming of a slump, and the possibility of increased unemployment in Britain were the main themes. The Party's stand on preventing the outbreak of another world war comprised demands for the building of a peace bloc with France, Spain and the USSR, cooperation with USA, and an embargo on Japanese goods. With regard to achieving social peace at home, the Party advanced a programme embracing higher wages, the 40 hour week, holiday with pay, adequate retirement pensions, heavier death duties and super-taxes, and the establishment of new industries in the Depressed Areas of Britain. (48) In support of these demands Rose Smith served as woman speaker during the Great Crusade and as writer of articles on improving workers' health (49),

improved wage rates (50), equal pay for women workers (51), holidays with pay (52), and workers' pensions (53) in the ensuing months. Most of her articles were reports on various annual trade union conferences and TUC meetings where these issues were discussed.

In a feature article entitled "Arms- Why The Speed-Up" Rose Smith focused on Britain's developing arms industry, the Government's policy of expanding this industry and the Amalgamated Engineering Union's (AEU) reaction towards this policy. She stressed that the Government presented its armament drive usually as a two-main-line-argument. Britain had to rearm as a countermeasure to Hitler's central European offensive threatening world peace, and because of Britain's obligations to the French government under the Locarno Pact. Rose Smith, however, argued that the AEU, as a progressive force of the British labour movement, should be extremely critical of the Government's war preparation because it favoured further dilution of skilled labour in the industry and thereby would undermine trade union rights, wages and workshop conditions. Furthermore, out of working-class solidarity the Executive of the AEU wanted a change in Chamberlain's policy of neutrality. The central aim of this policy was to avoid all direct or indirect help to the Republican Government and any hindrance to Franco's side. The leaders of the AEU, on the other hand, demanded arms for the Spanish workers of the Republican side in order to prevent a

Hitler-Mussolini victory in Spain. It was said that this was to "do more than anything to save us British workers." (54)

Her article reflected the anti-Fascist viewpoint of the members of the engineering union within the CPGB in the 1930s. These AEU activists projected themselves as class-conscious and internationally-minded workers identifying with the Spanish people's plight and trying to effect British government policy towards the Spanish Civil War. But how representative were they really at that time? Did Rose Smith's piece reflect a majority viewpoint in the AEU? Tom Buchanan (55) has shown that these trade union activities had only a marginal effect on the mobilisation of British rank-and-file workers, on the size of British unions' aid for the Spanish Republican Government, and on British Government policy. Nina Fishman's research (56) has further scrutinized this argument. She concludes that the mass of British workers neither approved nor disapproved the anti-Fascist activities of the militant Communists, Socialists and the more radical Liberals. For the partisan AEU supporters, however, British rearmament and the possibility of sending arms to the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War meant changing their outlook. Many of them had experienced the horrors of the First World War and had thereafter made the vow to participate never again in a capitalist war. The Spanish civil war made them reconsider this pacifist position. This was certainly the message conveyed by a reported interview on armament production which

Rose Smith conducted with Dave Ramsay, an eighty-six-year old trade union member and pioneer of the 1914-1918 shop stewards' movement in early April 1938. (57)

Smith's articles on the AEU's opposition to the National Government's rearmament drive appeared around the time when the military fortunes of the more diverse and complex Republican side in the ongoing Spanish Civil War began to deteriorate under the military onslaught of the ideologically more coherent National Front. The CPGB therefore intensified its 'Aid Spain' campaign in the country and Smith lent her propagandist hand to it in the Daily Worker. While William Rust, the paper's 'special correspondent' and one of the strictest Moscow-liners, submitted his dispatches from Barcelona, Smith eagerly attended annual conferences of various British trade unions in order to check out and report on the degree of sympathy they had for supporting the Spanish Republican warfront.

In Spain, by 1938, Nationalist morale had been very much boosted by the sudden inflow of military equipment from Germany and Italy. In contrast, the assistance given to the Popular Front government by the Soviet Union and by the thousands of volunteers who had joined the International Brigades, was more limited and vulnerable. Soviet supply lines were longer, and Stalin was anxious not to overcommit himself in case Russia was left vulnerable to invasion by Germany. Furthermore, in its relations with the Western powers the

Spanish Republican government encountered its greatest obstacles. The governments of France, the United States, and Britain strictly adhered to a non-intervention policy of not supplying arms to either side. In Britain it was also illegal for any adult man and woman to serve in the International Brigade. It is generally acknowledged that this attitude of the National Government had a decisively negative impact on the war effort of the Republican government in Spain. (58)

With regard to Britain's organised labour movement, as recent studies have shown (59), the Spanish Civil War was a crucial episode that reflected the complexity of working-class politics. The political divisions within the organised working class substantially retarded the process of organizing a mass campaign of solidarity with Republican Spain. Initially the Labour Party and TUC acquiesced totally in the policy of non-intervention. And even after the setting up of the Labour Spain Committee in March 1937, Labour's nationwide campaign to compel the National Government to sell arms to Republican Spain and to co-ordinate all anti-Fascist groups into a single movement was a half-hearted affair. Rejecting a form of wider working-class internationalism, the Labour Party and TUC only permitted their aid to flow slowly into an 'International Solidarity Fund'. This fund was meant for affiliates of the trade-union and socialist internationals in Spain. The CPGB, on the other hand, viewed the Spanish war as more than a civil war in the southwestern part of Europe: it was a revolutionary

"world war in miniature" (60) engulfing both men and women.

From the first day of the Spanish Civil War the CPGB contravened the National Government's policy by helping to recruit British volunteers to fight against Franco and by forming the British Battalion of the International Brigade in late 1936 and early 1937. Around 2,200 British volunteers went to fight in Spain in this way. They came from all walks of life; between a third and a half were CP members. 526 of these volunteers were killed. (61) The Party also espoused a spirit of humanitarian internationalism by lending its assistance to 'Aid Spain'. It consisted of some 180 humanitarian bodies at national and local level. From November 1936 the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief served as their umbrella. It was here that rank-and-file male and female unionists and Labourites, who were dissatisfied with their organisations' Spanish policy, and other ordinary men and women of all classes and creeds made up the committees. They arranged meetings and campaigns, collected money, bought ambulances and medical supplies, food and milk to be sent in twenty-nine foodships to the Spanish Republic, and looked after refugees. Four thousand Basque children were cared for. (62)

Naturally as a female CP member, Smith was to identify with this 'Aid Spain'. In autumn 1938, she went to Spain. Her assignment was to report from the Republican side for the Daily Worker. For her it was a sobering stay in many ways. There were few foreign women correspondents reporting from

war-torn Spain. Nearly all of them were young American reporters from middle-class backgrounds, such as Martha Gellhorn, Josephine Herbst, and Virginia Cowles. They had arrived in Spain for different reasons. The prolific Martha Gellhorn, by then the close friend of Ernest Hemingway, championed the cause of justice and decency in Spain; Josephine Herbst, a passionate radical, had been advised by a handful of American magazines to get the women's angle on Spain, but succumbed to fears and paralysed willpower during her stay. Virginia Cowles remained daring. She visited both sides in the conflict and wrote a series of articles contrasting the two. All of these women were totally inexperienced in war, freelanced and by late 1938 had left Spain. (63) Rose Smith, however, was forty-seven years old, a seasoned Communist cadre, and the only woman reporter from a working-class background. She had been sent by a socialist working-class paper from Britain to get "fresh, vital news of a new kind from Spain." (64) As expected by the paper's editorial board, she would work within the discipline of a weekly deadline getting her articles to London on time despite the chaotic conditions in Spain.

The meaning of this "news of a new kind" needs further explanation. On her arrival in Barcelona the Communist apparatus of national and Comintern representatives was being dismantled at the behest of Prime Minister Negrin. On 21 September 1938, he had agreed to this request by Chamberlain

in the hope that Chamberlain would then strike a deal with Hitler to withdraw his German troops from Spain. Chamberlain never did and from 18 September 1938 Franco's onslaught on Barcelona and other urban centres in Republican hands, helped by Italian and German bombers, proceeded more or less unopposed. On 15 November 1938, Negrin and "La Pasionaria" (65) expressed thanks at a parade of farewell to the International Brigades in Barcelona. She reminded the women of Barcelona,

Mothers! Women!....these men reached our country as crusaders for freedom. They gave up everything, their loves, their country, home and fortunes- fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, sisters, and children- and they came and told us 'We are here, your cause, Spain's cause is ours. It is the cause of all advanced and progressive mankind.' Today they are going away. Many of them, thousands of them, are staying here with the Spanish earth for their shroud, and all Spaniards remember them with the deepest feeling. (66)

On 7 December 1938, the British Battalion of 305 members was greeted at Victoria Station, London by C.R. Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps, William Gallacher, Tom Mann, and the president of the Mine Workers' Federation, Will Lawther. On 7 March 1939, the Republican side surrendered to the Franco forces in Spain.

Peter Kerrigan (67), the war correspondent for the Daily Worker, had been instructed by CP leaders in London to "travel back with the boys," (68) the wounded and healthy personnel of the British Battalion to London. He was replaced by Smith. On 17 October 1938, the Daily Worker announced on its front page that Smith was going to Spain for the paper, because "her

quick perception, ready sympathy and simple direct style have made Rose Smith outstanding among women reporters."

A day later she revealed her personal reason for going to Spain in the paper. Her motivation was a blend of Communist anti-Fascist politics and womanly feelings of solidarity for her Spanish revolutionary sisters in a class war:

I am going to Republican Spain to try to discharge a debt which I feel I persistently owe to its people. Nearly half a million refugee children and thousands of others in that country are in urgent need of food...Franco and his Fascist allies hope to starve out the defenders of world peace and democracy.... I have realised more and more intensely the debt we owe to the women of Spain who are holding the front line trenches [in the battle against Fascism]. (69)

She remembered, too, how in her time of need, during the General Strike of 1926 and the Lancashire textile strikes in the early 1930s, help had always been freely given by workers of other countries. She hoped to pay off some of that debt by undertaking this assignment to do a series of articles particularly on the question of food, women and children in Spain. She wanted to boost the campaign of 'Aid Spain' in Britain, particularly because the objects of this Fascist war in Spain were not any longer "the armed men and fortifications of the battle front, but the women and children, the houses, the shopping centres and food depots." (70) She also hoped to arouse the British people's opposition to the National Government's policy of not granting protection to British shipping engaged in trade with Spain.

Smith's selection was discussed in letters exchanged

between Peter Kerrigan in Barcelona and Harry Pollitt in London. Although Peter Kerrigan initially thought that Smith was by far better for the job of reporting on food than Sam Russell (71), whom he had suggested as his successor to the paper, he had finally some reservations about her coming to Spain. He thought that as a result of the departure of the international volunteer-soldiers from the Spanish warfront the serious lack of money from official Party sources as well as her inability to speak Spanish were serious handicaps for her. But the most crucial disadvantage in his opinion was her being a woman:

She is a woman and will find it exceptionally difficult to get up to the front, and because the British have gone will have the added difficulty which Bill [Rust] and I didn't have, of having very few friends at court in the military forces. This means all war news written from Barcelona. (72)

A week later this problem had largely disappeared. Peter Kerrigan duly arranged for her assistance by the Spanish Communist Party before his departure. But problems arose. Two days after her arrival Sam Russell looked her up in the Gran Via Hotel in Barcelona where she had been put up. He discovered that she had not eaten for two days. The Spanish comrades had forgotten to give her rationing food coupons allowing her to eat in the Party restaurant and to tell her how and where to get them. Sam Russell soon helped her to rectify this situation. As she herself had already some contacts with the Spanish Communist Party through her connections with the International Red Aid and with the Relief

Committee for the Victims of Fascism, formerly the Workers' International Relief, she was soon on her way to Valencia, the seat of the Republican government, and then by the soldiers' car to Madrid. (73)

War-torn Spain was Rose Smith's first assignment as a foreign correspondent. It was also her baptism into modern warfare; she was constantly exposed to bombing raids and intermittent shelling and spent nights either in underground bomb shelters or aboard foreign skippers dodging enemy blockades. She developed a direct and unadorned style, as can be seen from the following description of an attack by Franco's side on a working-class area in Barcelona:

A few days ago, like hundreds of my own country women, I would say when reading of this barbarity: "It's terrible. Can't anything be done about it?" Today I feel like a criminal that we in England have done so little.... After a night of repeated raids the Italian bombers made a concentrated attack at 6.30 a.m.... More than 100 people lie injured and twenty dead. Some who are reported missing will never be found again for Fascist bombs have wiped out all traces of them. Scores of homes have been destroyed.

Families are engaged in a desperate endeavour to retrieve their scattered and buried belongings. Aged women with sons at the war front push trucks piled high with bed linen, seeking some new shelter... Young women scarcely started housekeeping collect their household treasures, and with huge bundles balanced on their head[s] and hip[s], begin a weary pilgrimage away from the wreckage.

As I walk through these streets of tragedy, I pass a child's wooden horse, broken by the force of explosion from a Fascist bomb, the wreck of a sewing machine, once a woman's treasured possession, mute emblems of a once happy home. High up on an exposed corner, I see a plate-rack complete with dishes, just as a careful housewife had left it. (74)

Smith paid most attention to the human consequences of

this war. For her it was clear that Spain had been maimed for generations. Her articles (75) focused on acute homelessness, shortages of food, particularly of bread and milk, and serious malnutrition of the children everywhere. Babies were presented by her showing signs of stunned physical growth, and the older children suffering from all kinds of sores, eye diseases, and nervous disorders.

Smith never allowed herself to be totally devoured by the heart-rending side of these war-scenes. She held on to "her conviction that life was a struggle with the best yet to come." (76) So she looked for the signs of human resilience in Spain's sea of destruction. Her reports stressed human relations that expressed neighbourly sympathy, courage, resistance, and the selflessness of the foreign volunteers. She mentioned the Spanish men and women - many of them were themselves dislocated victims of this civil war- who cared for 400 orphans from all over Spain in Barcelona's Herzborg Children's Colony and told of travelling to the front with soldiers who shared their slim bread rations with her. She wrote about Spanish working-class women as active defenders of their communities. By night these mothers stole into enemy territory in order to bring back piece by piece the furniture from a former middle-class children's home for their own children's crèche in Madrid. And there were the cases of the foreign nurse donating her blood and the foreign crew bringing cases of groceries as personal donations and offering their

own quarters to Spanish refugees.

On 26 January 1939, Franco's insurgents and their Italian allies entered Barcelona. Five weeks earlier Smith had herself returned to London lousy, hungry and suffering from abscesses. On 28 March 1939, with the surrender of Madrid and Valencia, the long struggle of the Spanish Republic was over. And so was Rose Smith's campaigning for 'Aid Spain'. As the Spanish 'front line trenches' were no more, it was time to construct and strengthen them nearer home.

In March 1939 the destruction of Czechoslovakia ended the British policy of appeasement towards Hitler. Chamberlain made this announcement in his Birmingham speech of 17 March 1939 and began to prepare Britain for war. At almost the same time, the final crisis began over Polish territorial integrity which was guaranteed both by Britain and France. As Chamberlain distrusted the Soviet Union, and the Poles categorically refused to engage in an alliance with the Russians, negotiations to bring the Soviet Union into a Western combination against Germany proceeded at leisurely pace through the summer months. They finally broke down when Germany and the Soviet Union announced on 23 August 1939 that they had signed a non-aggression pact.

For the Daily Worker editorial board, including Smith, this news must have come as a shock. From May to mid-August 1939, the paper had stepped up its anti-war propaganda and

lobbied for the signing of an Anglo-Soviet pact. Rose Smith, therefore, was instructed to attend the National Council meeting of the Women's Liberal Federation at Scarborough in early May and to find out the liberal women's stand on the government's foreign policy. She duly reported the delegates' opposition to military conscription, and on a resolution in which Chamberlain was blamed for destroying democracy abroad and endangering the people's liberties at home. (77) No doubt, the aim of her articles was to awaken the Daily Worker's female readers to the imminent threat of another world war and the destruction that it would bring to the working-class families. She hoped that women would join the anti-war movement in larger numbers and act as a pressure group vis-à-vis the government.

It was with these intentions that already from mid-July 1937 to April 1938, Smith had served as editor of a woman's page entitled Our Forum For Women in the Daily Worker. Two years later, from February to mid-April 1940, she was invited by the Editorial Board to preside over a 'Note-Book' dealing with news and facts mainly affecting women. It ran under the headline Rose Smith Calling, a take-off the radio programme 'BBC Calling'.

The decision to start an extra woman's feature came at a critical stage of adopting a new party line. Smith's reaction to these political changes was to take refuge in the niche of propaganda work among women. It was not because she thought it

was time to push forward the women's cause per se. Nor did it ever occur to her that there exists an innate contradiction between the 'woman question' and the 'labour question'. For her, like for many of the female political activists of her generation, the 'woman's question' and 'the labour question' could not be solved with any finalty unless socio-economic conditions had been drastically changed.

Essentially she was a pragmatist rather than an original thinker. Although she liked to adhere to party discipline as a 'loyal comrade', she must have been aware of her relatively powerless position within the party structure as well as of the double-edged nature of political work among women. Depending on the CPGB's ideological volte-face, such 'mass work' could either improve her standing in the Party or shield her from too much exposure to inner-party ideological wrangling.

In 1937 Smith sought to improve her own position. In May of that year, at the Fourteenth Party Congress, she introduced the Resolution stressing that work among women had been completely neglected and demanded a complete change in the party's attitude to this vital question. The 1937 Resolution had then stipulated that in addition to traditional issues of peace, prices, unemployment and women working in industry, other social welfare matters, such as housing, hospitals, education, and measures against malnutrition should be discussed regularly. It was also hoped that this new approach

to women was to help the construction of the broad People's Front because it would appeal to the new women clientele of the paper, the women of the middle-class professional households and the more left-wing inclined labour women. (78)

Our Forum For Women appeared on every alternate Thursday in the Daily Worker. Smith introduced the launching of this new venture as being "in response to numerous requests from our women, and some men readers, too, for space in which to discuss problems, more particularly affecting women." (79) The page's aim was to be a reader's page, printing contributions from them, assisting in clearing up some of many misunderstandings in regard to so-called " 'women's problems', and giving guidance to women in their special contribution to the working-class struggle." (80) The page was attractively set out with big headlines as well as a cartoon by Gabriel. Smith's approach was to introduce the topic of domestic service, the unemployed, food and health, or the rising cost of living and then ask for readers' views and commentaries. All these topics were hotly debated by the labour movement, particularly the Labour Party, in 1937. Smith announced that "the Labour Party's campaign is one that should be supported by every working woman, and we shall be pleased to publish reports of what our women readers are doing in this matter." (81) However, in early 1938 Smith's venture of a women's page fell victim to her involvement as one of the main propagandists in the aforesaid 'The Great Crusade' of the

CPGB.

Her second venture entitled Rose Smith Calling ... was also a short-lived affair. It lasted from 22 February to 11 April 1940 in the Daily Worker. In a somewhat ironic style Rose Smith provided gossipy 'tidbits' concerning class differences in British society. The evacuation of women and children from towns by the British Government in the early months of the Second World War was presented by her as follows:

The Duchess of Kent, happy woman, is to send her children to a milder seaside resort in Devon. The east coast resort where they have been staying is thought to be a little too breezy for their constitution. From what my friends living in that area say, it is both too breezy and too dangerous- but they have no alternative; they must allow their families to remain there. (82)

Once again Smith encouraged female readers to send in their comments and complaints. Consequently insufficient army allowances for married women, poor quality of food due to inefficient inspections by the Government's food controllers were raised in Smith's column.

The purpose of Rose Smith Calling... was to record working-class opposition to Chamberlain's war effort. This was to be Moscow's new line that had been forced on all communist parties after the signing of the Soviet-Nazi Pact of 23 August 1939. Accordingly, the Soviet Union would stay neutral if Germany went to war, and eastern Europe would be partitioned between them. But a week after the pact was signed, German troops crossed the Polish frontier and Chamberlain in

fulfilment of the Anglo-Polish Treaty declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939.

On the same day the Daily Worker declared this "a war that CAN and MUST be won." In the evening a meeting of sixty CP officials was held under the chairmanship of Jack Gaster at Marx House in London. Ted Bramley, the main speaker, announced that

every section of the CP organisation was to be disbanded forthwith. All premises occupied by the Party and its subsidiaries (apart from those of the Daily Worker) were to be closed down. Agreements were to be terminated where possible; where this could not be done, the premises should be handed over to the Authorities for use as First Aid posts. (83)

With regard to the Daily Worker, the meeting resolved that

Steps are being taken to ensure that no articles provocative to the Government shall appear in it; that did not, however, imply a slavish obedience to all the Government's policy- the Daily Worker would criticise any steps taken by the Government which deemed it to be a violation or restriction of the workers' rights or of condonation of fascism. Communists must never relax their efforts to press for a stronger Government, which can be trusted to stamp out fascism once and for all. (84)

Two weeks later, the publication of Harry Pollitt's pamphlet How to Win the War also encouraged socialists to support the war against Hitler while trying to remove the 'Men of Munich' and transform it into a 'people's war'. However, on the very same day Stalin turned the CPGB's policy on its head. In a telegram he demanded that this war was to be opposed as an 'unjust and imperialist' adventure. For the first time Harry Pollitt had the courage to oppose a Soviet line by

suppressing these instructions for another fortnight. On 24 September 1939, the CPGB's CC met and after a lengthy discussion decided to toe the Comintern line once again. Harry Pollitt was replaced by a troika of hardliners, Dutt, Rust and Springhall. (85)

Many CP members as well as the British Labour Movement felt traumatized by the Soviet Union's inconstancy. The writer of a report addressed to Sir E. Holderness in the Home Office analysed the CP members' reaction and advised the British government to handle the situation with care:

The majority of the membership strongly advocates the prosecution of the war against Hitler, but there is a minority which will not admit that the USSR can do anything against the interests of the workers. If the British government turns down the Soviet peace proposals this minority would represent that the war had become an imperialist war and that it was their duty to do everything in their power to sabotage it. Such a line would completely alienate the bulk of the Party, but would leave a small but dangerous core of real revolutionaries who would have to be closely watched. (86)

On 7 December, the National Council of Labour condemned Russian action maintaining that "Soviet Imperialism has just revealed itself as using the same methods as the Nazi power against which the British Working-Class is united in the War now raging." (87)

For Rose Smith the twists and turns of the CPGB party line created some difficulties. Like Harry Pollitt, she was staunchly anti-Fascist. In the Daily Worker, on 22 September 1939, she reported her visit to a Labour Exchange under the heading "Right to Help Win War claimed by the Workless." (88)

By that time she was no longer a member of the Party's Executive. But fearing that this new Moscow line would once again sap the CPGB's energies, as indeed it did, she decided to accept the invitation to edit Rose Smith Calling... and to call on female readers, and after the passing of the Emergency Powers Act of May 1940 she wrote critical articles on food rationing (89) and refugees (90). Simultaneously she made sure that the war opposition expressed in her column manifested itself only in working-class complaints of a general nature. The handling of war preparations by the Government at home were raised but no reference to the war as unjust or imperialistic was made.

Reporter, 1942-1955

Hitler's 'Operation Barbarossa', the conquest of the Soviet Union, began on 22 June 1941. The Soviets rallied to Stalin's call for a Great Patriotic War against the invaders and the German advance was halted on the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad in the winter of 1941. Winston Churchill declared Britain's unconditional support for the Soviet Union. The CPGB announced at once full support for the British Government's war effort. Harry Pollitt resumed his post of General Secretary and the CPGB reached its peak of 56,000 members in 1942. As a result of irresistible pressures by the British labour movement the ban on the Daily Worker was lifted by the Home Secretary on 26 August 1942. Meanwhile the paper's press in Cayton Street had been destroyed in the Blitz.

Without having an editorial office, the first issues of the Daily Worker were produced with the help of sympathetic journalists from other newspapers. At once Rose Smith returned to work as a reporter of home news under Douglas Hyde as news editor. With many of her male colleagues serving in the Armed Forces the pressure of work increased for her. In England this meant the bombs were falling on the streets and going to work implied not knowing which part of the country she would be sent to by the end of the day or whether she would find her own home intact on her return. She had to cope with transport difficulties in getting from place to place and also in getting accommodation. Smith described her working life as follows:

I've slept on the filthy floors of corridors of troop trains and written up my stories in lavatories. For the reporter neither has nor seeks any respite. Neither does he watch the clock except to ensure that his story was in time for the edition. It was a good discipline. I was never bored, but always tired with enthusiasm for the job. (91)

For the Daily Worker, the CPGB's support for the Government during the war paid handsome dividends. It was transformed from a propaganda organ of the CPGB into a real newspaper. The wholesalers lifted the ban which they had imposed in 1930. The widening opportunity of distribution made it worthwhile for the paper to subscribe for the first time in its existence to Reuter for overseas news, the Press Association for home news and the Exchange Telegraph for parliamentary reports. The Daily Worker entered Parliament

with a reporter in the Press Gallery and its political correspondent in the Lobby. Certain discrimination, however, was maintained. The Churchill Government refused to accredit any of the paper's war correspondents until August 1945. Further, after 1942 the Daily Worker's paper rations remained tied to its pre-war consumption. By 1945 the paper had a circulation of 104,000 but as a result of the shortage of paper it was limited to only four pages in a very small format with a very small type. It was also in September of that year that on the initiative of William Rust the People's Press Printing Society Ltd. was established as owner of the Daily Worker. Three years later the paper moved into a new purpose-built London home at 75 Farringdon Road and appeared from then onward as a broadsheet paper. (92)

The small-sized paper had forced Smith and other reporters to submit condensed and succinct pieces that fitted the space allotted to them in the issues. This explains partly her rather terse style, which many years later was described by a much younger colleague as "rather pedestrian." (93) The other reason for her style was that as the first female propagandist of the Daily Worker she still believed in the unsophistication of the working-class readers. In particular, with regard to working-class women specially, it was assumed that information had to be spelt out in order to "force them [women] gradually within the reach of the extensive proletarian reading public." (94) Nevertheless, all her

articles' headlines were punchy. The first short paragraph of the article had to convey the gist of the story and the first sentence to catch the reader's interest. It was Allen Hutt, the chief sub-editor of the Daily Worker, who instructed her and other colleagues in the basics of this type of reporting.

To create a successful popular newspaper meant daily morning conferences of editorial and non-editorial staff, such as secretaries, at which the good and bad points of the previous day's issues were scrutinized. There were also regular meetings of the editorial committee chaired by the editor William Rust, who in turn was still responsible to the CPGB's Political Committee. Quarrels began between the leadership of the Party and those in charge of the paper. In 1943 the Comintern was dissolved and the paper no longer received financial aid from Moscow. Some members of the Daily Worker's editorial staff, proud of being journalists, wanted to demand less ideological supervision by and accountability of the paper to the CPGB. Gradually a new general policy of toning down on the stories of 'class war' or 'class value' dominated the newsrooms. Douglas Hyde was one of its spokesmen. Smith seems not to have totally shared his views. He wanted interesting and bright stories from his reporting staff. But he was also inclined to adhere to deep-rooted male prejudices towards female comrades whom he described as "steely, hard-faced, betrousered women who have made their way to the top and who are, in Party parlance, so utterly

unbedworthy." (95) Smith remembered that tensions between them arose and led to her being discriminated at the workplace:

I was his first experience of a woman in the field of journalism and had to pick up the job as best I could, getting few assignments from his desk diary of events, but invariably on duty at the weekends when news agency stories were in short supply. This meant covering numerous meetings, rallies, and a wide variety of conferences during normal rest days. (96)

Smith, however, thought it wise and politically more productive in the long run to confront these unequal gender relations as much as possible in a non-antagonistic way. Her past political experiences had taught her a sense of personal freedom through self-sufficiency and adaptability. In the 1940s she was also no longer tied down by family responsibilities. Her sons had grown up and were serving in the armed forces. So she just fixed up her own assignments with the help of party members and 'sympathisers' and ventured into every field of activity, sometimes supplying three or four stories for one edition.

It was in her stories that she stated her views on women's liberation and equal rights. In the period 1942-44 all her articles focused on social issues and married women. Women were shown "blazing their trails" (97) in the fire fighting services, as 'land girls' in the Women's Land Army (98), as shell-producers before hot furnaces in the steel-forging industry (99) and as members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) (100). As can be seen from the following excerpt from an article on Mrs.

Jobson, a 56-year-old miner's wife who had become a metal checker in Coventry's aircraft industry, Rose Smith projected British female model workers in the standard optimistic socialist fashion. Her working-class heroines were determined to work and study hard, to improve production for the war effort, and thereby transformed gender relations in the family as well as at their workplace:

The family was amused when she started an intensive home study of arithmetic and weights in order to correctly enter up her accounts in the eight special books allocated to her care....Of course, she didn't know the difference between the various metal alloys when she started. Some of her man colleagues were not too helpful, resenting her taking over a man's job....But she took the job seriously and made others realise her earnestness. The family no longer joke about mother and her decimals. She has won general respect. (101)

From autumn 1944 to 1948, her articles discussed fears and problems of postwar reconstruction. Particularly during 1947 she specialised in stories of food and agriculture. Her journalism, therefore, was once again the first draft of postwar British history.

The election in July 1945 resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Labour Party (393 seats to the Tories' 213). Clement Attlee succeeded Churchill as Prime Minister. The CPGB, like the Labour Party, had wanted to remove the Conservatives from the seat of power for a long time. Thus, during the election the party gave support to candidates of the Labour Party in every constituency except for the twenty-one seats where the CPGB had put forward its own candidates.

Only two of these were elected to the House of Commons. A year later the CPGB and the Daily Worker also welcomed Labour's radical programme of nationalisation of the Bank of England, the mines, of various transport and communication services. But these immediate postwar years were also austere ones. In early 1947 a freeze-up closed down Britain's industries, bread and other foodstuff had to be rationed and a black market soon developed. Those who had the money could buy the extras that most other people had to learn to do without.

It was this side of life which Smith tried to capture in her articles. Her idealization of working-class war efforts was soon replaced by more analytical investigation of people's problems. The majority of her reports in 1947 centred around the dire food situation in Britain. She reported on government's allotment policy encouraging people to grow their own vegetables. (102) She also wrote factual accounts about the expansion of the black market of eggs, meat and grains. (103) In order for the Ministeries of Food and Agriculture to keep a check on the situation she called for a planned system of increased production, controlled distribution and prices of food. She argued that only price controls on food, home-grown and imported, could guarantee a greater variety in diet for everybody in the country, curb the exploitation of the housewives by vested interests. To increase food production Rose Smith proposed that the agricultural workers be paid a minimum wage. (104)

But it was in the ranks of women that Rose Smith felt a renewed sense of purpose for herself as working-class fighter and agitating journalist. With the end of another war in sight she was keen to consolidate the gains women had made during the war and not to lose them as they had done after the First World War. To achieve this, Smith participated in several conferences. In March 1945 an international congress of socialist women was held in London. In late 1945 she travelled to Paris as member of the British Consultative Delegation to the international women's assembly that was to found the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). According to Jeannette Vermeersch, the wife of Maurice Thorez, Harry Pollitt was the first person to have suggested the creation of such an organisation:

Le secrétaire du PC anglais nous avait proposé de faire quelque chose pour les femmes, au niveau international. J'ai repris cette idée et demandé au Parti qu'on prenne contact avec le PCUS pour savoir si les femmes soviétique seraient partie prenante d'un tel projet. On croit toujours que c'est la main de Moscou alors que c'est nous qui avons fait la proposition aux Soviétiques. (105)

Women of forty different nations assembled in Paris. They were a curious mix of woman army generals, pilots, Ministers of State, Members of Parliament, judges, architects, factory workers and housewife-heroines of the underground resistance movements during the Second World War. Madame Eugénie Cotton, a physicist, was elected President of the WIDF. The aim of the newly founded WIDF was to defend the economic, political, civic and social rights of women, such as the right to a job,

to equal pay for equal work and promotion, schooling and training. It fought for the establishment of true democracy throughout the world and to assure a world of lasting peace as the only guarantee of the happiness of homes and children.

The safeguarding of world peace took new dimensions around 1948. The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, more commonly known as the 'Cold War', was consolidated in the formation of two defensive pacts (106), armed with nuclear weapons and guarding spheres of influence. In such a tense political climate Smith supported, in front page articles in the Daily Worker, the appeals launched by the World Peace Council for the banning of the atom bomb and for a Peace Pact between the five Great Powers in the late 1940s and early 1950s. (107)

The WIDF arranged the First Conference of Asian Women in Beijing only two months after Mao Zedong had announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China from Tiananmen Gate in October 1949. It was attended by 198 delegates. After decades of foreign aggression and civil strife China's reconstruction was beginning and there were the first signs that Chinese women were to participate in China's reconstruction. Mrs. Marian Ramelson of Leeds represented the British Committee of the WIDF at the conference. Smith interviewed her on her return to London. After having met Madame Jiang, the woman engineer, in charge of planning the control of the Yellow River, and Deng Yingchao, the wife of

Zhou Enlai, at the conference, Mrs. Ramelson's description of the moods and undercurrents of social change in China and their effects on China's immediate neighbours was reported by Smith as follows,

There is no such thing as a 'backward race'. Russia and now China...show that, given the same social and economic basis, all people can and will play a vital part in ensuring peace and plenty throughout the world. China has already had a tremendous effect on the peoples of the South-Eastern Asian countries. It has to be seen to be believed. No power on earth can shake their confidence in the future. No Colombo Conference can shake their confidence, no atom bomb can frighten them from the course they have set themselves. (108)

It was twelve years later that Smith went to Beijing to see for herself. By that time she had retired from the Daily Worker in total disagreement over its new editorial policy of adopting the American popular journalism of "lighter and brighter stories" because "English newspaper readers had had enough of the sadder side of life. Americans set the pace with respect to 'cheese-cake'----sex pictures and stories..." (109) In February 1951, the Party had published a new manifesto entitled The British Road to Socialism in which it vowed to go along the parliamentary road to socialism. (110) As can be seen from the following statement, for Rose Smith this was a political betrayal,

The Party leadership was bewildered and unclear which way to proceed. US ascendancy and the shakiness of British Imperialism turned the Party more and more to the parliamentary road to try to make jobs secure. I ... thought it time to quit when directed to write a story about society ladies and horse jumping events. This was not what I came in for and I was confused in my thinking. (111)

As she was not willing to admit that the ideological premise and the conduct of her life had been at fault, she decided to turn away from, what she called, "the corruption of Fleet Street." (112) She moved to her home town, Chesterfield, to live once again among miners. She bought a small terrace house in Albert Street North, with the hope that

May be [*] I could find my feet again if I got back among the masses in the minefield. After thirty years of absence from my home village I was back again living in a miner's row---two up and two down---among working-class neighbours who knocked on the dividing wall when they made an afternoon pot of tea and where the miners ensured that I was never without a bucket of coal. (113)

Work in the newsroom of the Daily Worker and changes in the CPGB's programme had also brought about a deep sense of alienation. In her study of the first generation of socialist revolutionary women, Marie Marmo Mullaney argues that these female revolutionaries had not joined the socialist and communist movement out of a desire for attaining personal power and for making a 'successful' career within the political organisation. All of these women were fierce believers, somewhat in the sense of Rousseau, in the innate goodness of ordinary working-class people. They sought regular contact with the 'masses', particularly working-class women, mostly for two reasons. Firstly, these female revolutionaries wanted to understand poor people's personal sufferings caused by material and spiritual deprivation; secondly, they wanted to learn from the poor people's inner strength, cooperative spirit, and human resourcefulness how best to revolutionize

human relations. (114)

Rose Smith, the CPGB organiser and propagandist, seems to confirm Marie Marmo Mullaney's findings. Although Rose Smith was in favour of an efficient party organization, party discipline and respected Marxist-Leninist theory, she was not happy amid piled-up abstractions and theoretical terms. She always wanted to keep her feet on the ground, to get at, and try to apply, what she took to be the essence of socialism. Her usage of simple English in her articles reveals this, too. She wanted the working-class readers to be able to understand the innate contradictions of the capitalist world. (115) In this respect her reference to the spontaneous sharing of tea and coal with neighbouring miners reflects her deep longing for more unstructured human relations; for selflessness and reciprocal caring as forms of human decency.

Smith's life in retirement, however, was not easy from a financial point of view. The pension which she received from the Daily Worker was a pittance and she was forced to do odd jobs to supplement her income. So she worked as a nursery auxiliary in a home for mentally retarded women, on Market Day as a saleswoman in an open market place, and as a mother's help in cases of sickness in a working-class family. She continued to support the local CP branch; she served as the Party's District Auditor and also organised a discussion group on women's issues for the twenty female members of the branch. On 4 March 1960, the branch held a farewell dinner in her

honour and presented her with a new suitcase. She had decided to emigrate to Australia and live with her son Percy and his family. (116) But in early summer of 1962 she was on her way again, this time to China. This move will be examined in the following and last chapter of this thesis.

Conclusions

In this chapter it has been shown that Rose Smith's journalistic work was closely tied to the development of the Daily Worker as a working-class daily. The paper was founded as the CPGB's organ in 1930. It was the time of Britain's most serious political and economic crisis that gave the impression that revolutionary changes could be inspired with the help of a fiercely oppositional working-class newspaper. It promoted class warfare and red trade unionism as features of a revolutionary working-class identity. By the mid-1930s this situation had been stabilized and the British labour movement had taken up a defensive position towards the Conservative National Government. In order to harness the defense of the labour movement the Daily Worker directed itself to the mainstream of the labour leaders, rank-and-file, and leftwing professionals in Britain. The 'revolutionary' tone of its articles was tuned down and replaced by giving written support to the CPGB's broad campaigns for working-class unity. The Second World War against Fascism heightened national consciousness in Britain and created the 'we're all in the

same boat' sentiment of the 'People's War'. For the team of Daily Worker journalists it meant that its propaganda writing had to go along collaborating with Churchill's government. On the one hand, this provided opportunities for the Daily Worker to transform itself into a working-class newspaper freed somewhat from the Party tutelage; on the other hand, it encouraged tensions between various groups of the editorial board over the paper's aims and contents. As was shown, these strains also made the working conditions of Smith as a veteran female reporter less congenial at the paper.

Smith expressed these socio-political changes in the topics she took up in her writing for the Daily Worker at each period. Initially she reported as an agitational worker-cadre correspondent mainly on strikes and strikers favouring red trade unionism as a more radical approach to solving labour relations problems. Thereby, she tried to further the revolutionary transformation of British society. When she joined the Daily Worker as a 'Special Correspondent' in 1934, she perceived the role of her articles not so much as spreading revolutionary propaganda to the people but as stimulating reflection on the manifestation and meaning of 'class' and 'class struggle' for the united British labour movement in non-revolutionary times and how it affected in particular working-class women. Her accounts often discussed how to safeguard or improve conditions for working-class men and women nationally and internationally. Her reports from

Spain make this clear. Finally, during the Second World War and the immediate postwar years of reconstruction, her articles stressed working-class contributions made to the upholding of the national spirit of mass-co-operation and to the creation of a fairer society in Britain. With the end of the Second World War and as a reaction to the onset of the Cold War and nuclear rearmament in the Western world, Smith then directed her efforts beyond her national boundaries through her participation as an activist and reporter of the international women's peace movement.

Endnotes

- (1) Lou Cannon, Reporting: An Insider View (Sacramento: California Journal Press, 1977), 3-5.
- (2) Florence Keyworth, London, letter to the author, 2 December 1993. Florence Keyworth joined the staff of the Daily Worker in 1945 and worked together with Rose Smith for a while in the same department.
- (3) For a similar case study based on the structuralist approach see Jonathan Sperber, "The Persecutor of Evil" in the German Revolution of 1848-1849." In Media and Revolution. Comparative Perspectives, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 98-114.
- (4) Socialist papers of this period were the Justice, Commonweal, The Labour Leader, Clarion, Call, Industrial Syndicalist, the New Statesman, etc. For further information on socialist papers see Royden Harrison, The Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals 1790-1970: a Check-List (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).
- (5) S. Macintyre, The Proletarian Science. Marxism in Britain. 1917- 1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 58.
- (6) Deian Hopkin, "The Socialist press in Britain, 1890-1910." In Newspaper History, ed. George Boyce et al (London: Constable, 1978), 246.
- (7) Beckett, Enemy Within: The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party, 44-45.
- (8) Alun Howkins, "Class Against Class: The Political Culture of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1930-35." In Culture and Social Change. A New View of the 1930s, ed. Frank Gloversmith (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980), 246.
- (9) Raphael Samuel, "Staying power: The Lost World of British Communism, Part Two," New Left Review, no. 156 (1986): 63-113.
- (10) David Childs, "The British Communist Party and the War, 1939-41: Old Slogans Revived," Journal of Contemporary History 12 (1977): 237-253.
- (11) R.P. Dutt (1896-1974); for further information see the political biography by John Callaghan, Rajani Palme Dutt. A Study in British Stalinism (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993).
- (12) D. Rubinstein, Before the Suffragettes. Women's Emancipation in the 1890s (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), 85-88.
- (13) E. Arnold Bennett, Journalism for Women. A Practical Guide (London: John Lane, 1898); G. Jackson Boughner, Women in Journalism (London: D. Appleton, 1926); Elizabeth Banks, Autobiography of a Newspaper Girl. (London: Methuen, 1902).
- (14) Margaret Bateson, ed. Professional Women upon Their

- Professions (London: H. Cox, 1895).
- (15) The articles in The Communist, 1921-1924 are symptomatic of this trend.
- (16) Noreen Branson, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 57.
- (17) William Rust, It's Your Paper (London: CPGB, 1940), 13; Daily Worker, 28 December 1940, 2.
- (18) Rose Smith, How I Became A Journalist. A speech delivered at the Institute of Journalism. Beijing, 25 October 1978, 9-10.
- (19) Jack Chen (Chen I-fan), originally a woodcut artist in Shanghai, was a member of the Artists International in London, one of the earliest organizations to aid China in the 1930s. His father, Eugene Chen, had been Foreign Minister of the Revolutionary Government in Hankow in 1927 and also Foreign Minister in the short-lived Fukien Government of the Nineteenth Route Army in 1934. Jack Chen died in San Francisco in the early 1990s. The China Campaign Committee (CCC) was founded in London in late August or early September 1937. On the CCC's activities see Arthur Clegg, Aid China 1937-1949. A Memoir of a Forgotten Campaign (Beijing: New World Press, 1989).
- (20) James Friell as cartoonist 'Gabriel' joined the staff of the Daily Worker in February 1936. On 'Gabriel's' contribution see William Rust, The Story of the Daily Worker (London: People's Press Printing Society, 1949), 43-44.
- (21) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 14.
- (22) As Britain and USSR had become allies in the war fighting the central European Fascist front in 1941, it followed that the 'class conflict' taken up by the Daily Worker against the British government was discontinued. Furthermore, on 22 May 1943, the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International announced its decision recommending its immediate dissolution. The idea of a centralised world communist movement had become an embarrassment to Stalin when he wanted to forge a post-war settlement with Churchill and Roosevelt. In 1947 the beginning of the Cold War created renewed pressures for the Daily Worker's editorial board to cover only news which supported the Soviet Union's view of the world. This reestablishment of Soviet financial aid to the Daily Worker/Morning Star from 1957 resulted from the Sino-Soviet split and its effect on the CPGB. CPGB membership declined and in its tow the paper's readership dropped to 63,000. In order to maintain the paper, financial help was sought from Moscow again. See Beckett, The Enemy Within. The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party, 119-121, 145-148. For a paper's insider view on this period see Malcolm McEwen, The

- Greening of A Red (London: Pluto, 1992), 101-155.
- (23) I am grateful for much of this information about work conditions at the Daily Worker to Florence Keyworth, her correspondence ibid.; interview with Joan Smith, Rose Smith's daughter-in-law. Shipley. 14 November 1993.
- (24) For a general background on the struggles for a democratic press in Britain see Stanley Harrison, Poor Men's Guardians. A Record of the Struggles for a Democratic Newspaper Press, 1763-1973 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974).
- (25) For an insider description of the paper's distribution see Douglas Hyde, I Believed. The Autobiography of a former British Communist (London: Heinemann, 1950).
- (26) Smith, How I Became A Journalist, 18.
- (27) Correspondence by Florence Keyworth, ibid.
- (28) ibid.
- (29) William Paul (1885-1958) was editor of the Sunday Worker from 1925-1927. He had been editor of the The Socialist, the monthly party organ of the Socialist Labour Party, during the First World War. See "William Paul: A Life For Socialism," Marx Memorial Library Quarterly Bulletin, no. 6 (April/June 1958): 2-3.
- (30) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 12.
- (31) ibid., 13-14.
- (32) V.I. Lenin, "Where to Begin." In Collected Works, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna (Moscow, 1964), 21-24.
- (33) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 11.
- (34) Report of the 13th Congress of the CPGB. Manchester, February, 2-4, 1935, 60; on the general background of the CPGB and the trade unions for this period see Nina Fishman, The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-1945 (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995).
- (35) Rose Smith's articles on the mining strikes see Daily Worker, 21 January 1937, 5; 19 January 1937, 2; 20 January 1937; 5 January 1937, 1 and 8; 25 January 1937, 2; 26 January 1937, 2 and 4; 29 January 1937, 2; 4 February 1937, 4; 15 February 1937, 2; 2 March 1937, 5.
- (36) "Women In Industry," Daily Worker, 31 January 1936, 4.
- (37) "There's Profit in Speed-Up," Daily Worker, 30 November 1937, 4.
- (38) Daily Worker, 19 May 1937, 4.
- (39) "Unity Drive Opens in the Potteries," Daily Worker, 8 March 1937, 1 and 8.
- (40) The Labour Research Department was founded by Beatrice Webb in 1912. It was a fact-finding organisation which provided an information service about wages, working conditions, prices, company ownership, profits and employment law, etc. for its affiliated organisations - most of which were trade unions.
- (41) This important new addition to the range of "socialist planning" later formed a significant section of Labour's Immediate Programme. See Stephen Brooke, Labour's War.

- The Labour Party during the Second World War (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 31.
- (42) Daily Worker, 4. February 1937, 4.
- (43) ibid.
- (44) ibid.
- (45) ibid.
- (46) ibid.
- (47) ibid.
- (48) "The Crusade Manifesto," Daily Worker, 8 January 1938, 6-7.
- (49) On cancer treatment for workers: Daily Worker, 16 February 1938, 5; 17 February 1938, 5; 18 February 1938, 5.
- (50) Agricultural workers' wages: Daily Worker, 9 May 1938, 5; postal workers' wages: 25 May 1938, 8 ; 1 June 1938, 8; 16 July 1938, 1.
- (51) Daily Worker, 16 March 1938, 5; 17 March 1938, 3; 7 May 1938, 3.
- (52) Daily Worker, 2 August 1938, 1; 3 August 1938, 5; 6 August 1938, 6; 8 August 1938, 1; 9 August 1938, 5.
- (53) Daily Worker, 24 August 1938, 5.
- (54) Daily Worker, 12 April 1938, 2.
- (55) Tom Buchanan, "The politics of internationalism: the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Spanish Civil War," Journal of the British Society for the Study of Labour History 53 (Winter 1988): 50-54.
- (56) Nina Fishman, The British Communist Party and Trade Unions 1933-1945, 239.
- (57) "This is What Deal on Arms Will Mean," Daily Worker, 8 April 1938, 5.
- (58) Enrique Moradiellos, "The Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Anglo-Spanish Relations in Early 1936," European History Quarterly 21 (1991): 339-364.
- (59) Tom Buchanan, The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Jim Fyrth, The Signal Was Spain: The Aid Spain Movement in Britain, 1936-1939 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986); Tom Buchanan, " Britain's Popular Front?: Aid Spain and the British Labour Movement," History Workshop Journal, issue 31 (1991): 60-72; Jim Fyrth. "The Aid Spain Movement in Britain, 1936-39," History Workshop Journal, issue 35 (1993): 151-164; C. Fleay and M. L. Sanders. "The Labour Spain Committee: Labour Party Policy and the Spanish Civil War," The Historical Journal 28 (1985): 187-197.
- (60) Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 5th and rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 463.
- (61) Thomas, ibid., 968-969; E. Dan Richardson, Comintern Army. The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 73-75, 91-101; William Rust, Britons in Spain. The

- History of the British Battalion of the XVth International Brigade (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1939), somewhat uncritical.
- (62) Jim Fyrth, "The Aid Spain Movement in Britain, 1936-39," History Workshop Journal, issue 35 (1993), 155-156.
- (63) Martha Gellhorn, The Face of War (London: (reprint) Virago Press, 1986); Virginia Cowles, Looking For Trouble (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941). On these American women reporters see Anne Sebba, Battling For News. The Rise of the Woman Reporter (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), 86-104; Elinor Langer, Josephine Herbst: The Story She could Never Tell (Atlantic- Little Brown, 1983)
- (64) Daily Worker, 17 October 1938, 1.
- (65) On Dolores Ibaruri Gomez (1895-1989), leader of the Partido Comunista Obrero de Espana, see Appendix II.
- (66) From a pamphlet printed in Barcelona 1938 and quoted in Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 852. Concerning the Declaration of La Pasionaria and the farewell celebrations of the British Battalion, see also the reports by Peter Kerrigan, Marx Memorial Library, London: Archives of International Brigade, Box 34/A/63-65.
- (67) Peter Kerrigan joined the CPGB in 1921. In December 1936 he went as a volunteer to Spain where he served as political commissar until April 1937. In May 1938 he returned to Spain and relieved William Rust as the Daily Worker war correspondent and as the CPGB representative in Barcelona from June 1938 to October 1938. For further information about his experiences in Spain see "Peter Kerrigan." In The Road to Fascism, ed. D. Corkill and S. Rawnsley (Fife: Dunfermline, 1981) 55-62; Marx Memorial Library, London: Archives of International Brigade, Box 34/A/9.
- (68) Marx Memorial Library, London: Archives of International Brigade, Box C 26/3.
- (69) Rose Smith, "We Owe A Debt To Spain," Daily Worker, 18. 10. 1938: 4.
- (70) Rose Smith, "Rose Smith Sees Bombers Smash Homes," Daily Worker, 29 October 1938, 5.
- (71) My interview with Sam Russell, London 13 October 1993. Sam Russell worked for the English radio broadcast in Barcelona, spoke fluent Spanish and French and had helped Peter Kerrigan, who knew no Spanish, with checking daily through the Spanish newspapers and with getting Kerrigan's reports back through the censorship etc. On occasions he had also interpreted for William Rust and for Harry Pollitt on his visit. In the 1970s he served as the Daily Worker's foreign correspondent in Moscow and served on the Foreign Affairs' Committee of the CPGB. On Peter Kerrigan's reference to Sam Russell alias Lesser see Letter by Peter Kerrigan to Harry Pollitt. Barcelona. 7 October 1938. See Marx Memorial Library, London: Archives of International Brigade, Box C: 26/1.

- (72) Letter by Peter Kerrigan to Harry Pollitt. Barcelona. 18. October 1938. See Marx Memorial Library, London: Archives of International Brigade, Box C: 26/3.
- (73) Letter of Peter Kerrigan to Harry Pollitt. Barcelona. 26. October 1938 in Archives of International Brigade, Box C: 26/4; my interview with Sam Russell. ibid.
- (74) "Rose Smith Sees Bombers Smash Homes," Daily Worker, 29. October 1938, 5.
- (75) Other articles in the Daily Worker: "Milk Makes that Cheer in Barcelona," 24 October 1938, 4; "Madrid Calls to Britain After Two Years' War," 5 November 1938, 5; "British Skipper Runs Into Valencia in Gale under Hale of Bombs," 15. November 1938, 4; "Children Find Peace But Need Food," 16 November 1938, 2; "Nursery Smuggled From Enemy Lines," 22 November 1938, 4; "Nurse Gave Her Blood To Save Men of Madrid," 26 November 1938, 3; "Help Spain's Children," 1 December 1938, 4; "Everyone Can Fight Fascism With Food," 3 December 1938, 7; "Sea Voyage," Woman Today 2, no. 2 (December 1938): 7-8.
- (76) Eleanor Bidien, "So Much Love For So Many," Beijing Review, 12 August 1985, 23.
- (77) Daily Worker: "Delegates Against Conscription," 10 May 1939; "Liberals Are Ready For Joint Action," 12 May 1939; "Liberals For Pact With U.S.S.R.," 13 May 1939.
- (78) Report of the 14th Congress of the CPGB. Battersea, May 29-31, 1937, 302-306; Sue Bruley, Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement, 1920-1939, 263-269.
- (79) Daily Worker, 15 July 1937, 7.
- (80) ibid.
- (81) ibid. 2 December 1937, 7.
- (82) ibid. 22 February 1940, 3.
- (83) Report by the Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police Office to the Under-Secretary of State, 3 September 1939. Public Record Office, Kew, HO 45/25521/ 808084.
- (84) ibid.
- (85) The transcript of this important CC meeting of the CPGB on 24 September 1939 has been published by George Matthews and Francis King, eds. About Turn (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990).
- (86) Report to Sir E. Holderness, Home Office, 26 September 1939. Public Record Office, Kew, HO 45/25521/808084.
- (87) Labour Party Annual Conference Report. 1940, 13; for a Communist reaction see Malcom MacEwen, The Greening of a Red (London: Pluto Press, 1991), 61- 70.
- (88) Daily Worker, 22 September 1940, 4.
- (89) ibid. 14 May 1940, 3; "Blockading the People's Pantry," The Labour Monthly 22, no. 9 (Sept. 1940): 505-510.
- (90) Daily Worker, 15 October 1940, 6; 21 October 1940, 5.
- (91) Smith, How I Became A Journalist, 18.
- (92) William Rust, The Story of the Daily Worker, 97-127. George Matthews, "Morning Star that twinkled with hope",

- The Guardian Weekly, 9 October 1994, 23.
- (93) Letter of Florence Keyworth, ibid.
- (94) R. Kovnator. "The Press as a Means of Organising the Proletarian Women." In CPGB, Work Among Women (London: Centropress, 1924), 37.
- (95) Douglas Hyde, I Believed. The Autobiography of a Former British Communist, 165.
- (96) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 18-20; Smith's articles in the Daily Worker: "Final Assault on Europe Soon Is Labour Women's Hope," 13 May 1943, 3; "Co-op. Party Will Open Discussions on Unity With Labour," 10 April 1944, 3; "Wipe Out Strike Order, Say NUDAW Delegates," 5 May 1944, 3; "Landworkers, Farmers Will Act Together," 6 May 1944, 3.
- (97) ibid. "Women Can Fight Fires," 9 October 1942, 2; "Women Turn Down Fire-Watch Exemption," 19 April 1943, 3.
- (98) ibid. "Land Girl Joan Wants To Be A Farmer," 2 February 1943, 3; "Eileen and Her Herd of Cows," 11 February 1943, 2.
- (99) ibid. "She was a Secretary, now Stars at Shells," 9 December 1942, 3; "No Medal But Victory For Mrs. Mason, Pioneer," 12 December 1942, 3.
- (100) ibid. "WAAFS Rose to the Occasion," 12 June 1944, 3; "ATS Are Impatient to Join Army Over There," 14 June 1944, 3.
- (101) ibid. "The Family No Longer Joke About Mum's Decimal," 2 December 1942, 3.
- (102) ibid. 19 April 1947, 5.
- (103) ibid. 29 April 1947, 3; 6 November 1947, 3; 15 November 1947, 3.; " Election Stunt Is Threatening Meat Ration," 28 January 1950, 1.
- (104) ibid. 15 April 1947, 2.
- (105) Renée Rousseau, Les Femmes Rouges (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983), 47.
- (106) The Western nations formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949; the Soviet Union and its allies established the Warsaw Treaty Organization (Warsaw Pact) in 1955.
- (107) On the WIDF see Marx Memorial Library, London: WIDF pamphlets 1946-1953 ;
Daily Worker: Report on Paris Congress by Rose Smith. "These Women Pledge to Fight Fascism," 27 December 1945, 2; Rose Smith's articles on British Peace Movement: Britain's People Lay Basis For Peace," 24 October 1949, 3; "Peace Petition To Be Launched," 30 March 1950, 1; "Co-ops Call For A-Bomb Ban- 'End Cold War and Reduce Arms'," 10 April 1950, 1 ; "Now We Shall Get Somewhere," 10 March 1952, 3.
- (108) ibid. "Woman Will Conquer China Floods. To save millions of lives," 19 January 1950, 3.
- (109) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 20.
- (110) Recently George Matthews has revealed that the CPGB's

constitutionalist aspirations had been encouraged by Stalin who even formulated some of the manifesto's key points. See George Matthews, "Stalin's British Road?" , Changes, 14-27 September 1991.

(111) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 21.

(112) ibid.

(113) ibid. [*] 'May be' is a spelling mistake in the document.

(114) Marie Marmo Mullaney, Revolutionary Women. Gender and Socialist Revolutionary Role (New York: Praeger, 1983) examines the lives of Eleanor Marx, Alexandria Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Angelica Balabanoff, and Dolores Ibarruri.

(115) Dr. Robin Porter, Keele, letter to the author, 16 September 1993; Israel Epstein, Beijing, letter to the author, 6 August 1991.

(116) Fred Westacott, interview by the author, Chesterfield, 14 November 1993.

Chapter 6

THE WORKING-CLASS INTERNATIONALIST, 1962-1985

In the late May 1962 Rose Smith arrived in Beijing. Gao Luduan, a former interpreter at the National Chinese Bureau for Foreign Experts in Beijing, was one of the Chinese who remembered his first meeting with her at the Beijing airport. He recalled that she had set out from Australia, had crossed the Chinese border in Hong Kong and then taken a plane from Guangdong to Beijing. For her age she was a striking woman. She was seventy-one years old, walked with a steady and determined gait, and her snow-white hair was tied back into a bun. Despite her long journey she gave no inkling of being physically exhausted. To the Chinese she came across as an energetic, mentally alert, friendly and self-assured personality. (1)

To Smith who had fought the capitalist class in Britain so as to establish a communist society, coming to the People's Republic of China was a dream come true. By 1949 China's peasants and workers had successfully staged a revolution and its leaders had declared the establishment of 'the people's democratic dictatorship'. The country was ruled by the largest communist party in the world, one which had abolished private ownership in industry and agriculture in 1956-1958, and

adopted an economic development strategy of 'self-reliance' in 1960. During this process the status of China's urban and rural women as 'carriers of half the sky' had been visibly enhanced. To her the Chinese people had won the battle for socialism.

Smith lived in Beijing for the next twenty years, except from December 1968 to July 1971. She died there in 1985. By then, however, she had realised that it was easier to seize power than to construct a socialist society and to rule according to communist values. At her 90th birthday celebration, organised by Deng Yingchao and Kang Keqing (2) and held at the Great Hall of the People, Rose Smith acknowledged this in her speech of thanks,

They [the last twenty years in China] have been a period of mixed experiences, happy and sad, during which I discovered that the seizure of power by the workers is only the first step in a 10,000-mile march. China has now begun a new long march. I have deep faith in the great cause the Chinese people have embarked on. (3)

The aims of this chapter are as follows: to examine the changing nature of socialist internationalism in a Chinese context during the period 1956-1985, to consider the reasons for Rose Smith's decision to go to and stay in China, and to ask what kind of work and assistance she gave to the Chinese; to evaluate her "mixed experiences" as a 'proletarian internationalist', and finally, to examine the reasons for the Chinese leaders' respect for Rose Smith.

I shall use the approach put forward by Raymond Dawson (4). He maintains that past cross-cultural contacts with China

were always of a symbiotic nature. Not only were images of China developed by foreign visitors travelling or residing in China, but they were also consciously fostered by the Chinese Confucian elite at that time. I am adapting this approach to Smith in liberated China during the period under discussion. This period was marked by China's almost global isolation.

The Political Setting, 1956-1985

Rose Smith recalled that she had come to China "just after the Russian experts were withdrawn from the People's Republic of China and when China was suffering from food shortages as a result of a series of natural catastrophies." (5) She arrived in Beijing towards the end of the first phase of the Sino-Soviet dispute (6) when it had become clear that the seemingly symbiotic relations between these two socialist states might not survive. A split within the international socialist community had occurred once before. In 1948 Joseph Tito, the Communist leader of Yugoslavia, had resisted the export of the Stalinist system to his country and openly broken with Stalin.

The beginning of the Sino-Soviet dispute was Nikita Krushchev's speech delivered to the 20th CPSU Congress on 25 February 1956 in a closed session to which foreign Communist delegations had not been admitted. At this Congress Krushchev exposed the tyranny and terror of his predecessor Joseph Stalin. He also introduced three ideological changes that were to serve as parameters for the dispute for the next twenty

years. They prescribed the destruction of the international communist community rather than marking a shift from continental to global strategy. (7) Firstly, Krushchev proposed 'peaceful coexistence' with the capitalist world. Secondly, Krushchev emphasized 'revolution from above' by support for the 'national bourgeois' leaders of 'Third World' countries as well as through technical assistance to newly emerging nations. Thirdly, Krushchev advocated the idea of 'many roads to socialism' within the Communist bloc. He thus not only challenged the established rules of 'democratic centralism' between member parties of the bloc and between Communist party elite and members, but also encouraged non-ruling Communist parties to compete more in earnest in parliamentary elections.

For China the news about the de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union came at an inopportune time and compounded the country's economic and political problems. China was in the midst of her 'socialist construction' under her First Five Year Plan, adopted in 1953 and modelled on those of the Soviet Union. By 1956 numerous imbalances in the Chinese economy had appeared and the political situation was tense. Within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sharp disagreement over policies had begun to surface between economic pragmatists and the more politically orientated followers of Mao Zedong. Between 1957 and 1959 these inner-party struggles were played out in the following mass campaigns: the 'Hundred Flowers Blooming'

campaign and the 'Anti-Rightist' campaign of 1957, (8) and the 'Great Leap Forward' of 1958-1959.

Of all these campaigns, it was Mao's 'Great Leap Forward' that was to become the turning point in Sino-Soviet relations. It was meant to be a bold act of independence from the tutelage and imitation of Soviet economic planning and management. It led however to calamitous consequences, which included a drastic reduction in industrial and agricultural output as well as widespread starvation. It has been calculated that the mortality rate more than doubled during the period 1957-1960 and that about 22 million extra people died during the Great Leap Forward. (9) The cause was that the Chinese leaders had decided to establish the people's communes and push collectivization to the extreme; to bring industrialization to China's rural area and thereby severely dislocate the rural labour force; and to restructure gender relations by attacking the patrilineal and patriarchal family as a social unit. As mentioned above, these reforms produced some negative side effects and the government was slow at providing modifications to counter these side effects. To make matters worse, China was hit by natural disasters from 1959-62. To the leaders of the Soviet Union and of other European communist parties this Great Leap Forward appeared like madness and China was considered the dissenter in the international communist community. This disagreement was made public in April 1960 and led to the withdrawal of all Soviet

aid personnel -nearly 10,000 people taking with them all blueprints and plans- from China in July-August 1960.

Cut off from Western countries in 1949 and receiving no aid from the socialist countries, China's subsequent path of 'self-reliance' was fraught with difficulties. By the early 1960s China was still a very underdeveloped country marked by her huge and untrained labour pool, with only the tender beginnings of industrialization. Being completely isolated, China's economic development and politics succumbed to the swings of the pendulum.

Acknowledging the disasters of the Great Leap Forward, a programme of socio-economic adjustment was introduced. The size of communes was reduced and a free market was once again allowed to exist as stimulant of the economy. Chinese family life was restored, but Chinese women continued to be called upon as an important part of China's workforce outside the home. Trained personnel were allowed to have an input in the decision-making and agricultural development was emphasized. This change of direction was accompanied by the disappearance of Mao Zedong from the ruling team. (10) By 1963 China had overcome famine, and the rural population, on whose shoulders China's industrialization had so far rested, found its living standard slightly improved.

Although Mao Zedong and his followers were no longer the main political actors, they still wielded influence behind the scenes. In September 1962, at the Tenth Plenary Session of the

Eighth Central Committee their comeback was staged by instigating 'the Socialist Education Movement' as a test of the revolutionary character of other party leaders. (11) In the army, Lin Biao, one of Mao Zedong's 'comrades-in-arms', set out to spread the study of the 'Thoughts of Mao Zedong' from the end of 1962. Both campaigns were met by passive resistance in the CCP and state administration. So, at the end of 1965, Mao Zedong widened the arena of attack against those outside the CCP, mostly intellectuals, who had criticised him during the Great Leap Forward. He sought the support of China's students and encouraged them to scan his opponents' writings and teaching for ideological 'class' deviation. Thus the 'Great Cultural Proletarian Revolution', better known as the Cultural Revolution, was born. (12)

The Cultural Revolution really got off the ground at the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Central Committee in August 1966 when Liu Shaoqi as head of state and Deng Xiaoping as the CCP's secretary general were demoted, and Lin Biao rose to prominence as Mao's right hand. Simultaneously, at Mao's behest, the Red Guards came into being. Seeing themselves as the rightful protectors of the Chinese Revolution, in a frenzy of self-righteousness they hunted down the five categories of 'class enemy' (13), searched people's homes and destroyed indiscriminately books and cultural relics. By January 1967 the mass movement of tens of millions of young men and women had created its own momentum. Encouraged by Maoist directives

evoking the French Revolution and demanding to 'seize power', China's young revolutionaries set out to smash the whole party apparatus. Then the Red Guards split into opposing factions and fought each other. The country became paralysed by general chaos, loss of life abounded, and anti-foreignism reared its ugly head.

In summer 1968 Mao Zedong is reported to have realized that once again his political movement had gone frightfully wrong. The army was called upon to quell the anarchy and attempts were made to reconstruct a Maoist CCP. In April 1969 the Ninth Party Congress was convened where Liu Shaoqi and his followers were dismissed, Lin Biao became Mao Zedong's apparent successor, and the Cultural Revolution was declared a victory.

The turbulent period of the Cultural Revolution was politically beneficial to Chinese women. On the Eighth Central Committee (1956-69) there were eight women (4 per cent) who had been elected as a result of their own revolutionary record. In 1969, 10 per cent of all CCP members were women. Twenty-three women (8 per cent) were elected to the Ninth Central Committee (1969-1973). Well over half of them were peasants and workers. Only five of them were married to China's leaders- Mao, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng and Li Fuqun. (14)

However, in the corridors of power, political intrigues continued from 1969-1976. On 13 September 1971 Lin Biao and

eight other persons were killed in a plane crash in the People's Republic of Mongolia. Ten months later an official Chinese statement declared that they had "attempted [a] coup d'état, in which Lin Biao had tried to assassinate Mao Zedong" (15) and were on their way to the Soviet Union. The Lin Biao affair helped Mao and Zhou to purge a large number of military commanders and party members who had been Lin's supporters and opponents of Zhou's chartered new course in economic and foreign policy. In face of the Soviet threat (16), Zhou worked for the normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States and other western governments. At the same time he tried to restore the Chinese economic life to normality by reintroducing, as Liu Shaoqi had done after the Great Leap Forward, material incentives, private plots and labour discipline. He also began to rehabilitate experienced administrators and cadres, such as Deng Xiaoping.

Not all these measures had the complete blessing of Mao Zedong and his new allies, later called the 'Gang of Four'. (17) In 1973 Zhou Enlai himself came under attack during the 'Anti-Confucius' campaign but managed to take the sting out of it by fusing the 'Anti-Confucius' campaign with that against Lin Biao. Soon afterwards Zhou fell ill and his duties were more or more taken over by Deng Xiaoping. In January 1976 Zhou Enlai died of cancer. On 4 April, the Chinese All Souls Day, the 'Tiananmen Incident' took place in Beijing. It was an outburst of spontaneous people's protest against Mao and the

'Gang of Four' who did not allow the people to grieve publicly over the late Zhou Enlai. Deng Xiaoping was accused to have formented it and was ousted a second time. Mao died on 9 September 1976. On 7 October members of the 'Gang of Four' were arrested.

In July 1977 Deng Xiaoping was rehabilitated and restored to all his former positions. The Eleventh Party Congress elected a new Central Committee, Politburo and Standing Committee. On 25 January 1981, after a lengthy trial, members of the 'Gang of Four' were sentenced. Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao were sentenced to death, with two years' reprieve; Wang Hongwen and Yao Wenyuan were given a sentence of life and twenty years respectively. Simultaneously, the rehabilitation of cadres and military personnel began in earnest, with Mao's followers being replaced everywhere. The late Liu Shaoqi was posthumously rehabilitated in May 1980. On the economic front, the Fifth National People's Congress in 1978 approved a major liberal reconstruction of the economy, referred to as 'The Four Modernizations'. (18) These new economic policies, however, began to erode the gains which urban and rural women had made since the late 1950s. With regard to the ideological underpinnings of these Chinese developments, from 1981 onwards Chinese discussions on the definition of 'class' and 'class struggle' mutated into those defining the 'rise of bureaucracy under socialism' and 'how to combat bureaucracy and corruption'. (19) Finally, in the mid-1980s it was announced

that the Chinese nation was pursuing the path of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'.

As Rose Smith was a foreign witness to most of these political struggles, we shall examine her reactions to some of them as a Communist and woman in the remainder of this chapter.

The Impact of the Sino-Soviet Rift on Rose Smith and the British Communist Community

As discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, socialists wanted to create a new society based on equal opportunities for all irrespective of class and gender. They also wanted to create a new world order that was to overcome national and racial differences through mutual respect, trust, and help. However, in reality these goals were not easily achieved. The Chinese reactions to changing Soviet policies, described above, show how difficult it was to implement socialism in an international setting. I shall take the part of Rose Smith to discuss how the communist communities in Britain and Beijing coped with the Sino-Soviet split. It is worth keeping in mind that essentially this dispute challenged the distribution of power between nations within the world communist movement along Eurocentric lines, established since the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. (20)

Smith had just retired to Chesterfield when the Twentieth CPSU Congress took place. Krushchev's secret speech and then the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 played

havoc with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). An inter-generational conflict was set in motion that was to challenge the older precepts of 'comradeship' and 'loyalty'. The younger generation of members clamoured for a less Moscow-obedient CPGB, more democracy in decision-making and freer discussion within the Party. The older generation of comrades reacted doubtfully and defensively, reluctantly admitting their own old party habits and Stalin's 'mistakes'. In May 1956 Harry Pollitt resigned as general secretary on grounds of ill-health, but also because he did not want to repudiate his life's work by denigrating the late Stalin. John Gollan became the leader of the CPGB. In April 1957, at the Party Congress the old party elite bounced back and tightened its grip on dissenters. But the political climate and attitudes had changed. In the same year seven thousand members left the party. (21)

In Chesterfield Smith seems to have coped with this crisis with less destructive soul-searching. Holding on to a good dose of optimism, she devoted much of her time to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Together with her friend Mrs. Clegg, a Councillor, and the CP member William Clark she organised a CND branch that held regular meetings, undertook local marches and petitions. By late 1950s, however, the novelty of this type of political activism had worn off and she longed for a change. It was in March 1960 that she decided to leave for Australia and live with her son's

family.(22)

There, some months later, Smith received a letter from her friend Dora Cox in London. In it Smith was informed that the Chinese wanted to recruit an experienced journalist in Beijing and she was thought to be "eminently suited" for such a post. (23) Dora Cox knew that Smith felt unhappy in Australia. She had found it difficult to adjust to her new role as mother-in-law and grandmother in her son's large family and overcrowded house. As she did not want to be a financial burden to her son, she had moved out. She worked as a receptionist in a doctor's surgery in order to make ends meet. She was still a political person and was in contact with Ted Hill, Harry Pollitt's close friend in the Australian Communist Party (ACP). Within the ACP a bitter controversy was also raging over the Sino-Soviet dispute. Hill showed sympathy for the Chinese point of view in this conflict. (24) Smith most probably discussed this job offer and the political circumstances with Hill and he must have encouraged her to go to Beijing. (25)

During these years of the Cold War the Chinese authorities could only recruit foreign staff for their work units within the international communist community. It was done in two ways. Foreigners were recommended to the Chinese in a letter written by the highest level of their Communist Party. Michael Shapiro came to China as a result of Harry Pollitt's letter to the CCP in 1951. All the other British

'foreign experts' (26) were introduced by friends of China and had been active Party members at home for at least ten years. As fellow-travellers on the road to communism these recruits were seen as offering skills that underdeveloped China lacked. As socialist aid workers they were also expected to have greater sensitivity to and sympathy for China's socialist efforts. Smith was the last person who came "officially and unofficially" through the Liaison Department of the CCP's Central Committee in this way.

It is interesting to see that during the Sino-Soviet split the recruitment of foreign experts could have several motives. Smith was recommended to the Chinese by Michael Shapiro not as journalist but as a 'revolutionary activist' and former CC member of the CPGB. China's top leaders knew about her coming. (27) At this moment Shapiro's real intention was to show to the CCP that the British Party took a stand that was far less anti-Chinese than assumed during the ongoing Sino-Soviet dispute. Otherwise CPGB leaders would not have approved of such a veteran CPGB activist going to work in China. (28)

In Britain Smith's plan to go to China was also discussed by the inner-party circle. Although, according to the membership rules of the CPGB, she was no longer under Party jurisdiction having left Britain, she still felt 'loyal' to the Party and thought it prudent to write to the CPGB and asked for its support. At that time the CPGB leaders were

already actively mediating between the CPSU and CCP in the Sino-Soviet conflict. Therefore, weighing its own delicate position it was decided by the CPGB leadership not to send her "officially," but "unofficially" the CPGB "informed the Chinese Party that she was in good standing and that we were in agreement if they wished to employ her." (29) It is reported that Smith travelled as part of an Australian CP women's delegation to Beijing in late spring of 1962. (30)

At that time Michael Shapiro was the leader of a small band of former members of the CPGB in Beijing. After Liberation in 1949 they had arrived either as aid workers in the spirit of 'proletarian internationalism' or were political refugees. They tended to stick to 'lines' and 'democratic centralism' as propounded by Moscow; they reconstructed their CPGB branch in the form of a discussion group on Chinese soil where they studied the politics of their native land and entertained their political leaders when they came to Beijing. These British expatriates worked for Beijing radio and newspapers.

A few members of the group were doctors, teachers and translators. They had come to China long before the Chinese Liberation in 1949. They knew Chinese history and customs, spoke some Chinese and had witnessed the military campaigns and hard struggles for survival of the ordinary Chinese and the Chinese communists. To them the Chinese Liberation, particularly in its final and decisive stage, was the Chinese

people's finest hour.

Due to their different experiences of building socialism these two British factions were constantly quarrelling. The pro-China faction demanded that the whole group should conduct its discussions more democratically and adopt the Chinese approach to learning through self-criticism and criticism. This method facilitated the open airing of differences among group members and thereby encouraged the examination of alternative policies. (31) These suggestions were rejected by the pro-Soviet faction and the pro-China group was accused of being "the 300 per centers." (32) The squabbles and the departure of Alan Winnington (33) who had sharply disagreed with the Chinese over their policies since the Great Leap Forward, must not have enhanced the British group's political standing in the eyes of the Chinese.

Most likely without her knowing, it was hoped by Shapiro that the presence of Smith, a former experienced CPGB cadre, might bring some order and peace to this community of communist expatriates. It was in this sense that Shapiro announced the imminent arrival of Smith as follows, "Rose is coming from Australia to straighten out this Party Group!" (34)

Smith, like all immigrants in search of familiarity in the new country, joined her compatriots to learn about life and politics in China and to find mutual support. She spoke no Chinese. Her general knowledge of the country's past history consisted mostly of the revolutionary struggle of 20th century

China, acquired in SDF circles and in the capacity of a CPGB cadre and reporter for the Daily Worker. She could however look back on two incidents of her direct involvement in pre-Liberation Chinese history. They had taught her something about international cooperation between trade unionists and socialists of China and Britain.

The mid-1920s had witnessed labour upheavals not only in Britain, but also in China. Between 1925 and 1927 Chinese labour conflicts were mainly directed against Britain as the predominant imperialist power in the area. Strikes and boycotts of British goods played havoc with Britain's commerce in central and southern China. (35)

It was then that some British miners, despite their own poor pay, decided to send aid to Chinese miners striking against low wages and killing working conditions in the mining area of Binxiang (Pinsiang) on the border between the provinces of Hunan and Jiangxi in August 1927. This is not surprising because Tom Mann, the Honorary Chairman of the National Minority Movement, had visited China as a member of an International Workers' Delegation from January to July 1927. The delegation attended the Pan-Pacific Conference of trade unionists in Hangzhou in June 1927. Tom Mann had long given his support to the activities of the "Hands Off China" committee in Britain and so established these direct links during his visit. (36) As was shown in chapter two of this thesis, Smith was closely linked with the Miners' Minority

Movement. Therefore, as speaker addressing the miners' wives she backed these fund-raising efforts of the men in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire in summer 1927. (37)

Twelve years later, Smith supported the China Aid Campaign Committee. On 29 June 1939 she reported about Mrs. Brown who was given responsibility by the Women's Committee for Peace and Democracy to find foster parents for Chinese 'warphans'. They were refugee children who had lost their parents in Japanese bombing raids and were looked after in an orphanage in Sichuan. The purpose of Rose Smith's article was to encourage the British public to 'adopt' a Chinese child by donating a sum of money. The China Aid Committee must have entrusted this money to Charlotte Haldane, wife of the famous British scientist J.B.S. Haldane (38), when she set off for China to represent both British Aid organisations in autumn of that year. (39)

Soon after her arrival in Beijing Smith sought out those 'foreign experts' who linked her up with this pre-liberated China gripped by poverty and oppression. She was also informed about recent Chinese efforts towards laying the foundation for a prosperous nation. She met and became friends with Dr. George Hatem (40) (in Chinese Dr. Ma Haide), the Lebanese-American doctor who had been with the Eighth Route Army since 1936 and was a longstanding CCP member. She became a quasi-member of the family of Dr. Joshua Horn (41). He was the surgeon who treated burns and regrafted limbs in a Peking

hospital and as part of a mobile medical team brought medical services to the peasants far away from the much more developed Chinese cities. Finally, there was Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley (42) who taught her much about how to handle Chinese social relations. All of them, in one way or another, must have enlightened her about the workings of socialist solidarity in an international setting. These foreign friends of China worked hard at transmitting their skills for the common good of underdeveloped China. They did not necessarily expect a material return for their work. Although all of them believed that only a socialist system with a planned economy was able to create a fairer Chinese society, they did not want to be nor could they have been, directly involved in Chinese politics. This meant, inevitably, that their collective position was as spectators, sometimes cheering, sometimes silent, always on the sidelines.

Rose Smith is reported to have initially been a self-assured supporter of the Soviet point of view during the debates of the British Party Group. She is said to have stressed that "comrades ought to adopt the working-class point of view" and thereby "performed a function to promote the cause of the British working class in China." (43) In 1977, in an article in China Reconstructs, she described her state of mind at that time as follows:

For like many others of my generation, I still thought in terms of the magnificent achievements of the 1917 Russian Revolution and blindly assumed that any opposition or criticism of anything said or done in Moscow was a

betrayal of Marxism-Leninism. (44)

Unlike the 'old CP guard' (45) in England which refused to backtrack on its devotion to the Soviet workers' state, Smith was willing to be open about the failures of socialism in the USSR. As the discussion of her activities as CPGB organizer has shown, she always thought it was better to admit mistakes and not to repeat them on the second time round. For her, political misjudgements and human failings of whatever magnitude which had led to untold human sufferings did not imply the limitations of socialism. They were seen by her as serious setbacks along the winding path towards a socialist society and should serve as lessons. It is therefore not surprising that during the period 1962-1963 she was won over to the position held by the Chinese leaders in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Discussions with her compatriots, her meeting with Chinese workers in factories, children in schools and peasant in the countryside during her trips in China might have contributed to her conversion. However, the catalyst that transformed her from pro-Soviet to pro-China was her first meeting with Premier Zhou Enlai during "a 1963 family tea-party in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the publication of Peking Review." She was impressed by his "shy and respectful" manner and his "remarkable ability to break down racial and other barriers." In retrospect, she realized that on that day she had behaved like an overconfident and

"conceited" Western Communist "blasting away her sharp and bitter comments on recent Chinese criticism of Krushchev and the Russian leaders' departure from principles of Leninism and class struggle" at "overpatient Zhou Enlai." His polite and friendly manner, however, taught her "how a good Communist should behave." She also realized that she was ignorant of events and needed to "appraise the class forces involved and accordingly determine tactics and methods" in this political situation. She recalled that in 1963

The premier, sensing something of my class background, preferred to regard my behavior as a contradiction among the people. This attitude of correctly differentiating and handling two different types of contradictions was a salutary lesson to me, one which led me to investigate the strong revisionist trend then shaking the foundations of [the] international communist movement and to see the Krushchev doctrine as a negation of Marxism-Leninism. (46)

Because of her ignorance of Chinese history and politics Smith asked Israel Epstein at China Reconstructs and Michael Shapiro to fill her in on the Chinese 'line'. They explained the Chinese leaders' assertion that the communist movement needs no "center of leadership" or "leading party" because

[the] proletariat and its political party of this or that country will, at different historical [moments] temporarily stand at the 'forefront' of the international movement and find itself in a 'pioneer position'. (47)

This probably led her to study carefully Mao Zedong's speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradiction Among the People." (48) This is apparent in her remark made in 1977 and quoted above. (49)

Smith devoted much time to understand the Chinese

allegation that Russian 'revisionism' was equated with attempting to achieve socialism through a peaceful transition from capitalism. As was shown in the previous chapter, Rose Smith, the hard-honed daughter of the British working-class struggles of the 1920s and 1930s, had not fully approved of the CPGB's manifesto, entitled "The British Road to Socialism," when it was published in February 1950. It had spelt out a similar peaceful road to socialism, denying any intention to establish Soviet power in Britain and thereby making the CPGB appear as just another democratic party of all the people. Consequently, she welcomed the Chinese leaders' continued adherence to a kind of Leninist-Populist concept of the CP as 'the vanguard' in the Chinese people's struggle for socialism and had rejected Krushchev's doctrine which she regarded as "a negation of Marxism-Leninism." In this way, as she confessed in 1977, she had closely examined the Chinese position and arrived at "a better understanding of Mao Tse-tung Thought and to recognize its application of Marxism-Leninism to the particular circumstances of China as a development of Marxism-Leninism." (50)

At this point she adopted China as her "socialist home." (51) It meant that ideologically Smith identified with the Chinese leaders' national aspirations in the Sino-Soviet conflict. At a personal level, she accepted her position as a 'foreign expert' with its in-built restrictions in liberated China. She would remain culturally an outsider and have no

direct power to alter Chinese politics. But she could give practical assistance to the Chinese people and their social revolution and thereby continue to work for her socialist ideals. Her commitment to China as a socialist state was principled and was consistent with her past activities in the British working-class struggle. She summarized this point of view coherently in 1978,

....incidents that occurred over that period [i.e. of her life] which I regarded as isolated incidents, were not isolated;...they are links in a very long chain;...I started out with the idea to belong to the working class and I have to be true to the working class, and I have to take part in the struggles. I was affected very much by what was happening in society, that determined my own reactions [at each stage of my life]. (52)

As a direct consequence of her position to take the side of the CCP against the CPSU she had to cope with her estrangement from many of her old friends in the CPGB. Her relationship with the CPGB worsened after the publication of the CCP's "Proposals for the General Line of the International Communist Movement." These proposals consisted of twenty-five points that defined the ideologically correct way of handling the relationship between socialist states and served as a call for party members to challenge their leaders on revisionism. (53) By November 1963 the CPGB recorded its first expulsion of eight pro-China members because of disagreements concerning the international Communist movement. (54)

In Beijing the British Party Group also fell apart. As Maoism developed, one faction of its members became pro-Soviet and felt that they had to be either cynical or to become

'holier than Mao'. Not being willing to be either, they decided not to work any longer on Chinese materials. (55) In order to leave China, they eventually got themselves 'sent for' by the CPGB. Those belonging to the other faction decided to turn down teaching appointments at British universities and stayed on in China because they did not want to give the impression of siding with Krushchev against China. (56) This rump of pro-Chinese Britishers was finally disowned for their political heresy by John Gollan, Bill Alexander and John Mahon during a confrontation in the Friendship Hotel one night in June 1965. (57) The Daily Worker withdrew its correspondent from Beijing and used Reuter as the source of information on China. Smith's relations with her former colleagues at the paper became almost non-existent and she was unable to publish any article on Chinese developments.

However, Smith still felt friendly towards her former colleagues and political friends in Britain. She believed that they could disagree on political matters without being antagonistic. Therefore, until the arrest of the 'Gang of Four' in 1976 her response to questions on Sino-Soviet relations always was "it's tearing me apart." (58) After 1976 she was eager to reestablish the contact with the CPGB and the links between the Morning Star (59) and Xinhua.

In December 1977 her "semi-official" feeler reached Sam Russell (60), her longstanding friend from the days of the Spanish civil war, at the Morning Star. This took the form of

a Christmas card with an invitation to attend her next birthday party. Russell was the foreign editor and a member of the CPGB's International Affairs Committee. He had kept in contact with Smith, because he also felt that disagreement over party 'lines' should not lead to a total breakdown of communication between parties and comrades. As Russell was unable to go to China in 1978, Smith sent him another, by then clearly "unofficial-official," invitation to her 88th birthday party to be held in the Great Hall of the People in 1979. This invitation was accepted and he visited China for a month under the auspices of Xinhua.

On his return, Sam Russell published in the Morning Star from 2 July to 26 July 1979 a series of articles on the Chinese developments. (61) After a blackout of serious discussion on China in the Morning Star, the publication of these articles stirred up interest among the readership. From early July to mid-September 1979 readers' letters to the editor clearly reflected an interest in China. For such veteran communists as Idris Cox, the articles and the photo of Smith and Sam Russell side by side in Beijing, made him confess that "we have held different views about the situation in China in the past two decades, but nothing can dim the memory of the pleasure of working together on our paper over forty years ago." (62)

Other readers' letters were less sentimental in tone. On the one hand, there were those that thanked Sam Russell for

having "done a service in exposing the nonsensical arguments used by the Chinese leadership to justify the China's maniacal anti-Sovietism." They maintained that "China has prepared her people psychologically for war" and "is being armed by the West and integrated into the Western military system." (63) On the other hand, there were readers' reactions that were more sympathetic to China. They suggested that the split between the Soviet Union and China was "tragic" and "not entirely of China's making" and demanded

a careful analysis and not hysterical arm waving or pontification from pulpits on high declaring excommunication and anathema on any Socialist country or Communist Party which does not accord with one's hallowed dogmas. (64)

This last remark must have pleased Smith because it reflected her views. The articles by Russell marked the end of the hostility between the Morning Star and Xinhua, as well as between Smith and her former British colleagues. The Morning Star reported at some length about her birthday celebration of 1981. (65) Four years later, full recognition of her contributions to the working-class cause in Britain and China was granted after her death in the paper's obituary. It praised her as "a foundation member of the Communist Party," "an outstanding activist in Lancashire in the 1930s," and "a Daily Worker veteran" and "outstanding reporter on industrial struggles and living conditions" who "in 1960,...was invited to join the staff of the English Bulletin of the New China News Agency in Peking." (66)

What Smith had not however realized was that this liberalization within the international communist community also carried the seeds of its break-up. After another decade of negotiations and four years after Smith's death, Sino-Soviet relations were based on a more equal footing when Mikhail Gorbachev visited Beijing as the last leader of the Soviet Union in May 1989. A few months later Gorbachev was ousted, the Soviet Union was dissolved, and its satellite states became independent. This marked the end of the international communist community.

Rose Smith At Work

As shown throughout this thesis, Rose Smith regarded work, under whatever circumstances, as giving self-respect and meaning to her existence. So, in Beijing, she led a working life similar to that of any other 'foreign expert' right from her first day. She was attached to 'a work unit', where she daily worked at a desk among foreign or Chinese colleagues on assignments for a monthly pay-packet. From 1962-1966 she worked as the sixth English-speaking 'polisher' or sub-editor, in the Foreign Languages Press. She improved book manuscripts, translations of Chinese plays, and articles for both China Reconstructs and Women of China. In early 1967 Rose Smith transferred to the Domestic News For Overseas Service at the Xinhua News Agency. Her compatriot Michael Shapiro, who worked at Xinhua, assisted her with getting this inter-organisational move approved by the Foreign Expert Bureau. From 1971 she

worked as a foreign English-speaker with six other Chinese polishers in an office of the Duiwaibu or International News Department. She felt that the work at Xinhua was compatible with her past experiences. At the Daily Worker her work, as the previous chapter has shown, had focused on promoting the policy objectives of the CPGB in the same way as Xinhua propagated those of the CCP. (67)

Rose Smith perceived her stay and work in China as primarily giving practical assistance to her Chinese colleagues so that they could improve their journalistic skills. She was a very experienced journalist who regarded 'polishing' as mediating between two cultures. For her the 'polishing' of a text involved not only the correction of grammatical mistakes and spelling but much rewriting. Her duty was above all to instruct her Chinese colleagues in presenting ideas, Chinese events, achievements and setbacks in a manner that would be acceptable to the Western readers. In this sense, she played a similar role to someone who popularises science.

In return, she learned much about the Chinese language and thinking pattern. Smith became aware that Chinese writers never came directly to the subject, used similes and proverbs to a much greater degree than people in the West, used adjectives excessively, were not precise with numbers and liked ambiguity in style and content. She also learned that Chinese writers and people both liked allegories. Through the

telling of allegories certain moral messages or lessons were conveyed. She herself adopted Chinese figurative speech in her own conversations and articles. She spoke of having "eaten too much bitterness of working-class life" (68) in her past and thereby equated her personal experiences with those of the Chinese peasants, the labouring people of pre-liberated China. At the death of Zhou Enlai she wrote that her grief was 'weightier than Mount Tai' (69). The overthrow of the 'Gang of Four' was compared by her with

millions of class fighters of the proletariat in the People's Republic of China [having] crossed the Luting Bridge despite the treacherous reactionary forces (the "Gang of Four") which ...threatened to engulf them in the raging, troublesome waters below. (70)

Rose Smith also provided a translation of Chinese women's names, such as "The Beautiful One", "The Beautiful Cloud", and "The Virtuous One". (71) In this way she tried to introduce to Western readers an old Chinese custom. It is doubtful, however, whether she was aware that these given names clearly expressed the restrictive nature of gender aspirations of pre-liberated Chinese society.

When revising a text, Smith had the habit of copying the text and then making the correction on this copy. Whenever possible, she would call upon the Chinese writer or translator to explain why she made this or that change. (72) One of her persistent complaints in the 1960s and 1970s was that in the Chinese media contacts between writers, translators and polishers could not easily be made because each group worked

as a specialist team in a separate room. She always suggested that these self-contained units should be replaced by mixed groups so that easy access to each other for consultative purposes was possible, everyone's general knowledge could increase, and "a spirit of emulation" could develop. Chinese staff remember her as having taught them to be "thoroughly conversant with the use of English," know "the technical terms and definitions used in the West." (73) She believed that the duty of the English-speaking Chinese in the media was to popularize these technical terms quickly in China. She stressed this point particularly after China had embarked on the 'Four Modernizations'.

Throughout her long stay in China, Smith always felt that the Chinese writers, reporters, translators and polishers lacked systematic training. In order to remedy this situation, she contacted Allan Hutt, her former colleague and mentor at the Daily Worker in London as follows,

You are correct I do want something! Will you please send me a list of publications, including your own, of books suitable for the training of writers, subs., editors and printers. As you doubtless know, I am working in the English Section of the Foreign Languages Press, here. After seven years I have returned to my old job, and appear to be giving satisfaction. I am carrying out a mysterious process known as 'polishing'. I can hear you screaming if you had to deal with some of the results. However, it is difficult to get people who are experts at the job and I would like to assist in improving the work,...Why don't you come & see us sometime. You would be very welcome. As for myself, please tell interested comrades that I am well and happy. Life, here, is very satisfying, and working conditions pleasant... (74)

Allan Hutt duly sent her a list of textbooks on

reporting, subbing, and typography published by Oxford University Press and Heinemann. He also conveyed to her that "your old chums on the DW are all very pleased to hear of you and send their love." (75) Rose Smith imported these books and various English dictionaries to China and started to teach the skills of 'the trade' to young Chinese colleagues in small groups. She took young people seriously, treated them as equals and tried to exert some influence among them. She was well versed in all aspects of journalism and in her late years she still read books to keep up with new developments of the craft. By then she had practised it for more than sixty years.(76)

Smith also believed that China had urgently to change its methods of teaching English as a foreign language. She wanted it to be understood as a vehicle of a people's culture and traditions. She always encouraged her Chinese colleagues to increase their general knowledge about foreign countries by lending them her own books. After the Cultural Revolution she frequently lectured on British Labour History and her own involvement in the labour movement at Xinhua and educational institutions in Beijing. (77) She confined her understanding of culture and traditions to 'the common people', which to her meant the working class. Her class background and her allegiance to strict Marxist-Leninist principles were accepted by her Chinese audiences in the 1960s and first half of the 1970s, but did not always appeal to the young Chinese

colleagues and students of post-Mao China. Many of these young Chinese no longer shared her convictions after so many years of political turmoil.

Until her 90th year Rose Smith went to the Xinhua office every morning. Even in retirement she continued working on feature articles or advising on a whole stack of manuscripts for books in her home. During the particularly busy period of the Twelfth Party Congress of September 1982 she was called upon by Xinhua to work in a separate room from the other foreign experts in the International Department. There, she could work in greater comfort and at her own pace, and could consult directly with senior editors and they with her. They respected her. She herself liked to be respected but could take flattery in only small doses; beyond that she shook it off. (78)

After 1982 rapidly failing eyesight and hearing however curbed Smith's determination to remain useful to the Chinese. By the early 1980s, too, a large number of foreign-trained journalists had found employment in China through the recruitment channels of the Foreign Expert Bureau. Some were sent directly by their own papers to teach at Xinhua's International Journalism Training Centre, which had been set up in Beijing in 1978. A year later the Ministry of Propaganda of the People's Republic of China signed a collaboration contract with the Thomson Foundation in London to start the publication of China Daily in 1980. It was the first English-

language daily in China since 1949 and signalled the end of China's media isolation. (79)

Rose Smith- the Observer of 'Class Struggle' in China

Smith found that to understand Chinese political struggles and the power distribution in the worker-peasant state was a herculean task. She admitted, "China is a very hard country to understand." (80)

In essence, as Stuart Schram has shown, in the period 1962 to 1976 the Chinese leadership searched for a political system that neither suffered from an excess of leadership because this discouraged participation at the grass roots, nor one which was paralysed by an undue reliance on initiative from below. (81) To avoid an excess of leadership, Mao propounded his perception of 'class' in a socialist society. During the early days of the Socialist Education Movement he advanced the idea that in spite of China's socialist economic base, old class enemies resisted and class conflict persisted. By 1965 it had become clear that he could not easily break down the opposition to his ideas within the CCP and government. So he went one step further asserting that China's socialist institutions after liberation were giving rise to a new kind of class enemy, the fat and contended party and state bureaucrats. They were labelled the 'capitalist roaders', 'new bourgeois elements', and 'revisionists'. Belonging to a class was no longer dependent on the ownership of the means of production but on quality of political behaviour:

The most important way of judging a representative of a particular class is to see the line and policies he/she pushes and the interests of the class he/she represents. (82)

Adherence to the socialist road and the Party leadership were seen as the most important standards for judging the quality of political behaviour.

Smith, who all her life had fought for workers' rights to determine their conditions of living, approved of Mao's views. In her article of 1977 she described how during this era of political intrigue Mao and Zhou collaborated

in the safeguarding of the fruits of the 1949 liberation, consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, overcoming and outmaneuvering the confusion sown by those betrayers of the masses, Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and the "gang of four." (83)

She regarded Mao and Zhou as the united and true guardians of the people and did not elaborate on any ideological differences between the three "betrayers of the masses." This showed that she did not really want to emphasize the subtle but important nuances of Chinese politics at that time.

In the same way Smith could neither envisage nor wanted to scrutinize the multi-faceted nature of the Socialist Education Movement of the first half of the 1960s. She just thought that this political campaign was necessary to awake underrepresented social groups, such as China's youth and women, to "a consolidation of the Party among the people." (84) She believed that in this way revolutionary enthusiasm could be kept alive within the CP and the socialist system. In this spirit she encouraged her colleague Betty Chandler who

had become a Chinese citizen in 1963, to apply for CCP membership. (85) Together with W. Jenner, Smith also sub-edited a communist morality play, entitled "The Younger Generation." It discussed the ideological thought reform among China's urban youth as the successors to the revolution. (86)

By 1962 Chinese women had become an important part of the urban labour force. They comprised over eight million in industry and were beginning to make substantial inroads in the educational sector. The Socialist Education Movement continued, with some alteration, educational policies of the Great Leap Forward that were to the advantage of the mass of women. Especially urban women with little formal education were encouraged to upgrade their skills with help from work-study programmes and in-plant technical training courses and to join China's class struggle at the point of socialist production.

Smith was keen to meet Chinese women and to find out how they were affected by the 'mass line'. In early 1963 she related some of her findings in an article written for the Daily Worker's Women Page. In Nanking she had visited a memorial site for fighters of liberty and learned that love for one's country had meant in pre-liberated times that women had often sacrificed their lives. Guo Gangli, a twenty-five year old local heroine, had been executed by Chiang Kaishek's firing squad in 1949 for having "helped to mobilise the people against the Japanese invaders." (87)

In 'new' China, on the other hand, women could afford to be "forward-looking" in their personal lives. Her meeting with Jiang Yanfang, a twenty-eight-year old turner [machinist] in the Nanjing Motor Works, taught her that China's young women could now marry the men of their choice rather than comply with the old Chinese custom of an arranged marriage; that women could have educational plans for themselves as well as for their children and work with confidence to achieve them. But Smith did point out that even in socialist China "making the grade" as a woman engineer still implied that "she enters the factory at 6.45 every morning and studies until the machines start at 7.30" and "finds it difficult to study at night when the children are home." (88)

Smith was also informed by Zao Xinyun from Daizhou that she and her two children had to live separately from her husband, a construction worker on a job assignment near the Siberian border. For those who lived thousands of miles apart, one visit per year was arranged and paid for by the state. These separated couples were not uncommon among urban dwellers in China because of inavailability of suitable jobs to both partners at the same place. (89)

However, Smith did not support the uncontrolled 'mass terror' of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. She is reported to have opposed intimidation and revolutionary violence on several occasions. For example, at the Foreign Languages Press (FLP), where Smith worked as a language

'polisher' until early 1967, foreign colleagues did not take part in struggle meetings between the two opposing Chinese camps of Hongqi and Honglian in the early phase of the Cultural Revolution. Smith, however, is remembered to have decisively intervened when the physical harrying of older Chinese colleagues by the younger 'rebels' became vicious. (90) In later mass meetings, held by foreign experts at the Science Hall of the Friendship Hotel, she refrained from making rousing speeches. She preferred to remain a reserved observer. But when the situation seemed on the brink of getting out of hand, she exerted a calming influence. She insisted firmly and publicly on comradely debates, not the shouting and shoving as was becoming the fashion. Temperamentally, she preferred unity, provided it was principled, to splits. (91) This attitude of hers was not new. As shown in chapter two and four of this thesis, her most effective work was when she worked with other labour activists in a united front.

The foreign experts were divided over the issue of being on the sideline of the ongoing political struggles. Some wanted to take part as comrades. They felt that if they did not function in China politically, they would exclude themselves from the struggles for socialism to which they were committed. They also believed in Mao Zedong's assessment that the CCP was in danger of becoming bureaucratically ossified and needed to be transformed. As one friend remarked, "we

thought Chairman Mao knew more about it than we did." (92) Thus, they felt gratified that Mao Zedong reacted positively to a Dazi bao [a big character poster], which they had pinned up demanding equal status as revolutionary comrades in this Great Proletarian Revolution. By summer 1967 the foreigners working in various institutes in Beijing formed the Bethune-Yanan Brigade. (93)

Smith, however, did not join this Brigade because in "a country hard to understand" she was out of her depth in the wars between factions. From her past experience as a strike leader of women she had learned that when involved in political agitation, organisers had to be aware of the balance of forces they confront and of the consequences of their actions. During the General Strike she had once, in Mansfield, led a group of women demonstrators into a situation in which they were badly beaten up by the police. But the women's action had achieved nothing politically. All her life she had felt guilty about this incident. (94) She feared that Mao's 'mass' activities could easily get out of control and then become nasty mistakes, as proven later.

Further, she was conscious that she had come from a Britain which was an imperialist power, and felt uneasy about poking her nose into China's internal politics like an old colonial who played the game of divide and rule. She had come to China to give practical assistance. Unless asked for advice by the Chinese government, she thought it better to stand on

the sideline as the 'guest'. (95)

In early 1968 factionalism had increased to such an extent in China that Mao Zedong closed down the CCP's Politburo and Renmin Ribao published urgent appeals for 'proletarian discipline'. On 28 February 1968 Sidney Rittenberg was arrested. He was the American foreign expert at Beijing Radio who had been the most involved of all the foreigners in the factional disputes of that time. (96) Arrests of other foreign activists and family members took place until July 1968. By mid-October 1968 Michael Stewart, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, provided an up-to-date list of names of arrested Britons. This included several of Smith's British friends such as David and Isabel Crook, Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley, Michael Shapiro, and Gladys Young. They were described as being "all employed by the Chinese authorities" (97) and "held for allegedly violations of Chinese law" without trial. (98) As consular access was refused in all cases, Smith's arrested comrades were just registered by the British government as the detained "British citizens who went to work in China out of ideological sympathy with the regime." (99) Mr. Cranley Onslow, a Conservative M.P., inquired if the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had considered withdrawing support for the admission of the Peking government to the UN in retaliation. The reply was,

I have considered a great many courses of action, including this one. I do not believe that this would help, because I think that the continued exclusion of the Peking Government from the UN is one factor in the whole

situation. (100)

Meanwhile, the Chinese colleagues with whom Rose Smith shared an office no longer conversed with each other nor did they want to talk to her. She felt isolated and "ruthlessly pushed aside by elements which were concerned to stir up strife and discredit foreigners." (101) There was no news about her imprisoned friends. She felt deeply troubled about their arrests, particularly as they did not square with Mao's earlier demand that cadres, other leaders and people should be judged not by just single mistakes but by their entire career in the class struggle. She knew that her English friends had been 'loyal' and sincere friends of China. What had gone wrong in this socialist system that it could bring about such hostile factionalism, gross injustice and anti-foreignism?

China's deteriorating political situation, the violence and the imprisonment of her foreign friends did not square with her perception of the need for human dignity, mutual care and international solidarity in a socialist society. The most effective way of protesting was to adopt tactics which she had used before. (102) These included turning her back on China and to announce her disagreement to the Chinese leaders in no uncertain terms. She hoped that eventually they would see reason. On 6 September 1968 Smith called on Gao Luduan in the Foreign Expert Bureau. She told him that she was wasting her time in China, that her British friends had been "unjustly treated" and "there must be something wrong with your

movement." (103) She handed in her letter of resignation. In it she referred to family reasons as cause for her departure from China. She left for England on 12 December 1968, being seen off mainly by the few free foreign friends, Bertha Hinton and the Horn family. (104) The Horns left China in April 1969.

Yet, two and a half years later, Rose Smith returned to Beijing for good and resumed her position as a language 'polisher' in the International Department of Xinhua. Why did she return? The reasons are complex. In Britain she found that during her eight years of absence life had undergone great changes. The standard of living of the ordinary working people had rapidly improved during this decade; British people had much more purchasing power despite the substantial increase in the cost of living. By the late 1960s, however, all economic indicators revealed that further expectations of the British people would be hard to sustain unless the British government was to bring about an end to Britain's relatively slow economic growth and uncompetitiveness. (105)

Smith welcomed this improvement in people's lives in spite of her own small state pension and generally precarious financial situation. Being truthful to her late father's advice of bearing the consequences of one's decisions and beliefs, Smith did not ask her immediate family to take her in. She also did not accept her friends' offers to live as a member of their families with them. In Chesterfield she lived

in a dilapidated terrace-house and worked, out of sheer financial necessity, as a nursing aid in a home for the elderly. (106)

Britain's economic problems had repercussions on the country's politics. Britain's electorate became volatile, detaching itself from traditional party alignments and taking up rapidly emotive issues of welfare benefits and race. In such a socio-political context the CPGB had greater difficulties than ever before to present itself as a viable political alternative. The Party's weakness was further compounded by the Czechoslovakian Spring of 1968.

It is thus not surprising that Smith found it hard to reestablish contacts with the CPGB and Morning Star. Most of the younger CP members were unaware that she was a foundation member. Her close political friends were either dead or refused to welcome her back into the 'fold'. They were still reeling from the shocks of the Russian military intervention in Prague and unsure what to make of the so-called Brezhnev doctrine (107). Had the Chinese not accused the Russians of 'great-Russian chauvinism', a 'big-power complex' and 'socialist imperialism'? Had Smith not been justified to support the Chinese standpoint? When she had done so, had British comrades not accused her to have abandoned the working-class struggle in her own country? How could Smith make the first move towards a political reconciliation? Such a complex situation made it hard for Smith to settle in her

own country and finally she succumbed to illness and depression. (108)

The leaders of the CCP and the Chinese government had their own reason, as explained later, to inquire about Smith's well-being in England. Since the Ninth Congress of the CCP in April 1969, the message of which had been to work for unity, stability and reconciliation in the country, the Chinese leaders had patiently recovered the control over the Party apparatus. Party building was also accompanied by the rehabilitation of former cadres. The State Planning Commission began to function again with many of its old staff. Mao favoured dismantling his personality cult. The Red Guards were sent to the countryside and lost much of their political power. In foreign relations, Beijing sent feelers to the American administration in Washington with regard to a Sino-US détente through China's old friend Edgar Snow. He was invited and attended the celebrations of October 1970.

It was at this point that two Americans, one of whom was Joan Hinton (109), addressed a six-page letter, written in Chinese, directly to Mao Zedong on 7 September 1970. (110) In it Smith was depicted as a good and honest friend of China who had been unfairly treated and was now suffering for that in England. Shortly before her departure to England, Smith had joined a delegation of foreign experts to visit Yanan and Dazhai, the production brigade in Xiyang County, Shansi province, and a pacesetter on China's agricultural front at

that time. Smith had been struck by the Chinese peasants' open and warm welcome granted to the foreign visitors as compared with the hostile atmosphere in Beijing's Xinhua office where colleagues did no longer converse with each other. On her return to Britain she then decided not to overreact with regard to her own situation. She must have recognized that to exaggerate her own personal frustrations and negative experiences was not justified in the light of the gravity of the overall political situation in China. So she regarded what happened to her as "possible diversions and distractions" (111) in the revolutionary process of China. Her cautious response as an individual resembled that of Michael Stewart, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, speaking for the British nation, as we have seen above. What was the purpose in driving China further into the corner in her tumultuous struggles?

Soon after the receipt of Hinton's letter Zhou Enlai instructed the Xinhua Office in London to send a representative to Chesterfield and investigate her living conditions. (112) Rose Smith then expressed her wish to return to China and the Chinese responded by issuing an invitation. After her resettlement in Beijing on 21 July 1971 she was singled out twice to meet Zhou Enlai in person and to be mentioned in his speech at official government functions. She was ushered forward to speak to him at the October First reception of 1971, held in Peking Hotel. The second time she

was the special guest at the International Women's Day of 8 March 1973 in the Great Hall of the People. It was a gathering of about 600 foreign friends, overseas Chinese and their families sitting around sixty-five tables. Among them were Rose Smith's British friends who had been released from Chinese prison and house arrest not long before. (113)

On both occasions Zhou Enlai expressed publicly the party's, the government's and his own apology for the "unfriendly behaviour" and maltreatment inflicted on Smith and other foreign experts during the Cultural Revolution. "We have done mistaken things," he said. (114) In the name of the CCP he took full responsibility for it and said,

When she left she should have been given a warm sendoff, but this was not the case. In London she found the bourgeois society even colder. Her former comrades, the revisionists, did not have any contact with her and became her enemies. She was even more isolated and lonely. When we learned this, we invited her to come back. That was in 1970. When we met again, we gave her a warm welcome. Tonight it is the second time I have met her since her return. Class warmth exists. (115)

Zhou's remarks could be interpreted as a vindication of caring for the disadvantaged, of mutual help and friendship as fundamental principles of China's proletarian internationalism. Zhou also wanted to reclaim the Chinese leaders' moral authority within the socialist camp after a period of intense anti-foreignism in China. Zhou also attributed this anti-foreignism to Lin Biao. It was a balancing act in which Chinese pretensions to all-embracing humane people-to-people relations and socialist comradeship

were revived. (116) The Chinese invitation to Rose Smith, an aged comrade who had worked hard for the socialist movement, to settle in China could be seen as an act of shaming her British comrades who had deserted her in her hours of needs.(117)

At the time Smith gracefully accepted Zhou's apology as an act of clearing her name as a working-class activist. Six months after the arrest of the 'Gang of Four', she made clear that Zhou's act had been in sharp "contrast to the treatment meted out to Chinese veteran proletarian fighters by the 'gang of four'." (118) Many of these Chinese veteran comrades were still waiting for their rehabilitation at that time. It was her subtle way to raise criticism of Chinese politics after her return to Beijing.

Rose Smith's Life in Beijing

As this chapter has shown so far, in Beijing Smith was one of the few working-class communists from overseas who had to her name a long revolutionary record. These requisites entitled her to the best treatment which China could provide and was equivalent to that of Chinese highranking comrades. It was offered according to old Chinese customs of hospitality granted to someone who had come a long way as well as out of respect for the sacrifices Smith had made as a comrade in the working-class struggle.

During her first ten years Smith was accommodated in comfortable but not luxurious hotel apartments at either the

Friendship Hotel in the western suburbs or the Peace Hotel situated in the centre of Beijing. She did not particularly like these 'foreigners' ghettos', but adjusted to them without complaining too much. It was the Tangshan earthquake in 1976 and China's new open-door policy after 1978 that finally permitted her request to move from this hotel setting into a 'typical' Chinese house with a courtyard. Xinhua had been granted half of this house which was allotted to Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme (119) and had been modernised.

Being old and unable to cook, Rose Smith employed an 'Aiyi' for the daily running of the home, and a cook. (120) Despite her inability to speak Chinese- it would have been hard for her to learn Chinese at her age- and her househelpers' inability to speak English fluently, she communicated apparently well in sign language with them. Further, whenever Smith needed help for interpreting and travelling in China, she could call on a colleague as her 'liaison person'. (121) This was not her privilege, but was and still is a useful arrangement for all foreign employees. Every work unit in China had a Foreign Affairs Section that provided help for foreigners. This service grew out of an old Chinese custom of providing assistance to the 'foreign travellers' in China's different cultural setting. Finally, like all foreigners working in China at that time, Smith also had access to a free taxi service whenever she needed it. Her work unit paid for this service. She was conscious of this

privilege and tried not to abuse it. (122)

Smith's Chinese colleagues respected her ideas and her advice was always transmitted to the higher level of government. Her former Chinese colleagues remember her as someone who was not afraid to raise her concerns and criticism, whenever it seemed necessary, and to push for improvements arduously. She always did so in a friendly and diplomatic manner. (123) She knew very well her limits and the restrictions in China. This is shown by the way she dealt with the replacement of Maoists by followers of Deng Xiaoping in the political institutions in China in the early 1980s. As discussed earlier in this chapter, in the 1960s Smith had approved of Mao Zedong's drive to encourage the rise of rank-and-file peasants and workers in the CCP. In the early 1980s, therefore, she could not quite understand why Chen Yonggui, the peasant leader of Dazhai whom she had personally met and talked to, was suddenly removed from his position in the Central Committee of the CCP. Possibly fearing that another score was being settled with one's political opponents, Smith sought a Chinese explanation for these political changes. Presumably, she was reasonably satisfied with the Chinese answer because unlike during the Cultural Revolution she did not leave the country. So far as is known, Chen was not accused of any crime. (124)

Rose Smith showed great sensitivity to the problems of Chinese working women. However, in the early 1980s, she did

not realize that the extensive deradicalisation of social and economic policies under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping and his more conservative officials might diminish the status of Chinese women. As she had done in her own country in the past, Rose Smith welcomed the Chinese government's efforts to lighten urban women's heavy domestic burden by better housing and labour-saving devices, such as fridges and washing-machines. On the other hand, she was quite troubled by newspaper reports about the negative impact of the Chinese policy of economic decentralisation on Chinese women. (125)

In the early 1980s, rural China witnessed everywhere the end to collectivization that had opened leading positions at least to some female cadres. The introduction of the new 'responsibility system' gave individual households user rights to strips of land. But it also restrengthened patrilineal thinking in the villages, as it was usually the oldest working male in the family who signed these new contracts for land on behalf of all family members. (126) In the urban areas, industrial enterprises were encouraged to become more efficient and market-responsive by allowing them to control their own finances, manpower allocations, and plans of production. These changes were soon accompanied by rising unemployment of Chinese urban women and an increase in maltreatment of women and girls in the countryside. (127) So Smith realized that she had to raise her deep concerns about the well-being of Chinese women privately with the National

Women's Federation. Publicly she showed her support as the 'Guest of Honour' at the celebration of International Women's Day in March 1984, where these problems were publicly admitted to be serious. (128)

Socially, the last years of Rose Smith's life in Beijing appear to have been agreeable. There were the banquets which the Chinese government arranged for the foreign experts and high-ranking officials of their work units on China's National Days. Since 1971 she was always seated at the head table with Chinese leaders and foreign dignitaries. She was aware that such seating arrangements spelled out how important the Chinese judged the guest to be. It must have given her much satisfaction. She knew Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen and Honorary President of the People's Republic of China, was introduced to Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, and Wan Li in the early 1980s. Her brief encounter with Zhou Enlai in 1971 was particularly treasured with pride by her. On one of the walls of her living-room a huge framed photograph of Zhou Enlai drinking a toast to her was prominently displayed. She regarded this meeting as one of the "highlights" of her long life because in her words

Picture my feelings when this daughter of an obscure English potter and kitchen maid received the apologies of the premier of mighty China. I was unable to utter a word... (129)

On western holidays the work unit occasionally arranged outings to Beijing's sights. As the following excerpt from a letter to her grandson in England shows, these occasions could

evoke feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and homesickness simultaneously, as old age increasingly tied her to this East Asian country:

Yesterday January 1 I went to watch the skaters on the [Beihai] Park Lake. It was a beautiful sunshining day-but after a while I began to wonder whether my nose & toes had turned into blocks of ice. However, we then went indoors to eat the same kind of delicacies as the Dowager Empress enjoyed 70 years ago..... The atmosphere was more relaxed than I had known it for a long time, and altho I would have liked to have been in England I quite enjoyed myself. I had a few quiet reflexions on 'how lucky this aged woman really is.' (130)

In her old age she seldom returned to England. Her last trip to see her son Ted in Scotland occurred in summer 1982. Still, she remained deeply interested in the affairs of Britain. During the Miners' Strike of 1984 she sent a substantial donation to the miners' strike fund from Beijing. When the Nottinghamshire miners set up their separate trade union in opposition to the NUM, she saw labour history repeating itself. (131)

Naturally, there were moments when she felt homesick and lonely. This usually happened when she received news about another death of her close political friends in England. But in her comfortable Beijing home she felt secure. Having worked for sixteen years in China she was granted a state pension from the Chinese government. Her son Ted sent out her old-age pension from Britain in the form of books. (132) Further, she reasoned that she could be "a very trying person to live with," having lived apart from her children for so long, and concluded that she had done "by and large the best thing by

returning here [to Beijing]." (133)

She kept in touch with her family members in fairly regular correspondence, occasional telephone conversations, and by sending as "Nanna" small gifts to the great grandchildren. When her grandson Rod told her about his family's plan to buy a new house, she advised,

think again about moving into an industrial area - of course one has to have money but there is much to be said in favour of life in the country, especially as far as the children are concerned. (134)

She hung up drawings and photos of her great grandchildren near her bed. As she confessed in a reply,

I can see your smiling faces when I feel a bit lonely. I do miss you all very much and please don't forget to give the dog a nice pat from me. (135)

Her sons and wives visited her alternately. Rose Smith contributed financially to their travel expenses. She also arranged for her granddaughters Laura from Australia and Sheila from Britain to stay with her in 1965 and from late 1981 to early 1982 respectively. By giving her family members the opportunity to experience China culturally, she tried to repay a debt for her long absences as a mother and grandmother. The last time she met her two sons together was at Christmas 1984, when she visited her son Percy and fell seriously ill in Australia. She deeply felt this interpersonal strain with her sons, but in their presence always took it with a typical British stiff upper lip. (136)

In the presence of her two sons, Percy from Australia and Ted from Britain, Rose Smith died of pneumonia and heart

failure in Beijing on 23 July 1985. When she was seriously ill, Wan Li, Vice-Premier and member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the CCP, visited her in hospital on behalf of the CCP's Central Committee and the State Council. (137) The Chinese memorial speech paid tribute to her as a working-class internationalist as follows,

Comrade Smith loved the Chinese people and regarded China as her second home. She had established a great friendship with the Chinese people who in turn love and respect her. During her stay in China, the Chinese party and government leaders, Premier Zhou Enlai, Song Qingling, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian and Deng Yingchao met her. They spoke highly of her hardwork [*] for the Chinese people and her devotion to the revolutionary cause of the Chinese people and other peoples of the world. (138)

Her ashes were buried with full honours in the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery in Beijing.

Conclusions

The period 1956-85 witnessed China's liberation from the Euro-centric international communist movement which had Moscow as its centre. For China this liberation implied a simultaneous break with both the Soviet economic model and the acceptance of 'democratic centralism', that is, Soviet hegemony, and adoption of its own alternative developmental 'road'. The Chinese leaders of the CCP and government, however, became disunited about the nature and intentions of China's new policies and the ways of their implementation.

The Sino-Soviet split also had a serious impact on the British communists in London and Beijing. After an initial

period of playing the mediator between the CPSU and CCP, the CPGB's leaders became Moscow's solid supporters. In Beijing many of the British communists who had been sent to assist China in her development in the 1950s, showed their disagreement with the CCP and returned to Britain, leaving behind a rump of pro-China 'experts'.

In the early summer of 1962, with the CPGB's approval, Rose Smith arrived in Beijing, where she took a post as a 'polisher' in the media. At that time she was a 'loyal' supporter of the Moscow 'line'. Her exposure to Chinese conditions, the discussion with old socialist 'China hands', and above all her meeting with Zhou Enlai made her change over to the side of the Chinese during 1962-1963. As she never had been a very dogmatic socialist, she regarded the disagreements between the communist parties as non-antagonistic and temporary. Meanwhile she was determined to continue to consolidate socialism in China through teaching her journalistic skills to her Chinese colleagues.

She soon, however, realized that the consolidation of a socialist revolution was 'not a dinner party' in China. She had been in favour of Mao Zedong's 'mass line' as it promised greater involvement in party work by hitherto politically underrepresented groups, such as China's rank-and-file cadres in factories and communes, youth, and women. However, during the Cultural Revolution she learned that the 'mass line' could easily turn into factionalism, mass terror, and gross

injustices towards both the Chinese of all ranks as well as well-intentioned foreign comrades. On a personal level, from 1965-1978, she had to cope with the ostracism towards her exercised by both the CPGB's leaders and close comrades with whom she had struggled for the overthrow of the British capitalist government for many decades.

As Smith disapproved of this antagonistic 'class struggle' in socialist China, she departed for Britain in December 1968. Finding out that she could not feel at home any longer in the political culture of her own nation and the change for the better in China, she decided to return to Beijing in summer 1971. There she worked hard to improve her Chinese colleagues' general knowledge, language and writing skills. Further, whenever she saw it necessary, she tried to improve conditions by giving advice and raising criticism in a non-antagonistic manner with leaders of her own work unit and at national level in the CCP and the Women's Federation. It is for her continual commitment to assist China's socialist development that the Chinese leaders in the CCP considered her as a 'sincere' comrade and 'proletarian internationalist' who deserved to be buried with full honours in Beijing.

Endnotes

- (1) Gao Luduan, interview by author, Tape recording, Beijing, 7 May 1995.
- (2) Deng Yingchao (1904-1992) and Kang Keqing (1912-1991) were two outstanding feminist revolutionaries. Since the May Fourth Movement of 1919 they had fought for the liberation of China and Chinese women. Deng helped to draft the Marriage Law, the charter for women's equality in the People's Republic of China. On this legislation see M. J. Meijer, Marriage Law and Policy in the Chinese People's Republic (Hong Kong: Hong University Press, 1972). For further information on both women see Appendix II.
- (3) Renmin Ribao, 10 May 1981; 11 May 1981, 3 and 5; in Britain The Morning Star, 13 May 1981, 5. Rose Smith's reference to a '10,000-mile march' recalls the hazards experienced by the Chinese communists during their 12,000 km 'Long March'. It set out towards the west from the Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi in October 1934 and reached northern Shanxi across the chains of mountains of western Sichuan a year later. Pursued by the Nationalist armies only 20 000 men and women out of 130,000 survived and made Yanan the centre of a new soviet base. There the Chinese communists staged their comeback by organizing the struggle against the Japanese and continually recruiting new supporters from the Chinese peasantry, patriotic intellectuals and businessmen. In history, this Chinese 'Long March' is sometimes compared with that of the Greek campaign against the Persian Xerxes in 480-479 BC.
- (4) Raymond Dawson, The Chinese Chamelon. An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 90.
- (5) Rose Smith, How I Became A Journalist. (A speech delivered to postgraduates of the Institute of Journalism in Beijing on October 25, 1978), 21.
- (6) The historiography on Sino-Soviet relations of this period is of two kinds. First, there are the early studies by W. E. Griffith, The Sino-Soviet Riff and Sino-Soviet Relations, 1964-65; J. Gittings, The World and China, 1922-1972; H. Salisbury, The Coming War Between Russia and China; J. Lévesque, Le Conflit Sino-Soviétique, and D. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-61 that explain ideological and national interests as causes of this dispute. Second, there are such studies of the 1970s and 1980s, as L. Dittmer, Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945-1990; G. Rosman, The Chinese Debate About Soviet Socialism, 1978-1985 and R. Wich, Sino-Soviet Crisis Politics: A Study of Political Change and Communication. These studies accept the explanations of the Sino-Soviet

- split's origins offered by earlier studies and set them within an international structure as a third variable. It is assumed that the foreign policy makers in China and USSR were influenced more by the overall pattern of international relations than by domestic political exigencies. For particulars, see bibliography of the thesis.
- (7) Donald S. Zagoria has argued that Krushchev's speech was such a shift in strategy in The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).
- (8) The 'Hundred Flowers Movement' urged the Chinese people outside the CCP to voice their views on every aspect of the Communist regime freely without fear of consequence. When Chinese critics attacked the CCP's 'dictatorship', the privileges and incompetence of party cadres, and demanded civil liberties, Mao started the 'Anti-Rightist' campaign against these critics from late June 1957 to 1959. See R. MacFarquhar, The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals (New York: Praeger, 1960).
- (9) Roderick MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, vol. 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 330. Recently, for the period 1958-61, 30 million deaths have been calculated by the American demographer Judith Banister, China's Changing Population (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 1987) and accepted by Jasper Becker in Hungry Ghosts. China's Secret Famine (London: John Murray, 1996). But due to the lack of any reliable data, all these figures remain estimates and deserve to be treated with caution. On the complex nature of the Great Leap Forward and how this campaign was handled by China's leaders see Han Suyin, Eldest Son. Zhou Enlai and the Making of Modern China, 1898-1976 (London/New York/Tokyo, 1994), 265-281; 287-289.
- (10) There has been considerable debate regarding Mao's stepping down from the chairmanship of the People's Republic in April 1959. Some scholars feel that he was forced to withdraw by his critics. Others assert that this was not so. Attacks on Mao began not before the summer of 1959 when droughts and famines hit the country and exacerbated the mismanagement of food supplies by the newly formed communes for the next three years. Further, Mao is said to have resigned voluntarily from his position because he wanted to be free of the ceremonial duties imposed on him as head of state. With regard to the CCP opposition to Mao, it is known that at the meeting of the CCP's Central Committee in December 1958, the 'pragmatists' discussed the major problems faced by the communes but did not yet attack Mao. Even Peng Dehuai, the defense minister, did not oppose Mao before the meetings of the CCP's Politburo and Central Committee held at Lushan in July-August 1959. See the CCP's

- resolution on "Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes" in Harold C. Hinton, ed., The People's Republic of China, 1949-1979: A Documentary Survey. Vol. 2 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1980), 720-730.
- (11) On the Socialist Education Movement see Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, Ssu-Ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966 (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, 1968).
- (12) A useful discussion of Chinese literature about the turbulent decade 1966-1976 is provided by Barbara Barnouin and Changgen Yu, Ten Years of Turbulence. The Chinese Cultural Revolution (London: Kegan Paul, 1993), 336-349. For an overview of American and Taiwanese research on the Cultural Revolution (until 1978) see Kuo Tai-chün and Ramon H. Myers, Understanding Communist China (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 89-108. For a contemporary overview of events in the period 1966-1969 see Jean Daubier, A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, 1974); Roderick MacFarquhar, Origins of the Cultural Revolution. Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974) and Vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). For a firsthand account of a participant at Peking University see Yue Daiyun with Carolyn Wakeman, To the Storm (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
- (13) The five categories of 'class enemy' were remnants of landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, 'bad elements' and rightists.
- (14) Donald W. Klein and L. B. Hager, "The Ninth Central Committee," China Quarterly, no. 45 (1972): 45-46.
- (15) Zhou Enlai, "Talk to Foreign Comrades Working in China," Beijing, 8 March 1973. As no more acceptable official account of the disappearance of Lin Biao has since then been published, the whole affair will continue to be shrouded in much mystery. Since the exhibition on the History of the CCP held at the Museum of History, Beijing in autumn 1979 the official image of Lin Biao as "an outright plotter" has given way to one that acknowledges his contribution to the Chinese Revolution up to the Cultural Revolution. For a detailed Western contemporary account, see Jaap van Ginneken, The Rise and Fall of Lin Biao (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); for a recent American reassessment of the Chinese events and explanation see Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, The Tragedy of Lin Biao. Riding the Tiger during the Cultural Revolution 1966-1971 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).
- (16) The Soviet threat to China consisted of forty fully equipped divisions which Moscow had stationed along the Chinese border in Manchuria and the Mongol People's Republic in 1968. In March 1969 a Sino-Soviet military confrontation took place on the Ussuri. Mao and Zhou

- became then convinced of an imminent Soviet attack on China. It was decided to evacuate most leaders of the CCP and the state from Beijing to other localities as well as to build underground air raid shelters in Chinese cities.
- (17) 'The Gang of Four' refers to Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, two party propagandists from Shanghai, and Wang Hongwen, the leader of a workers' rebel association in Shanghai. Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan had been recruited by Mao's wife already in late 1962 to help her promoting a new 'proletarian culture' in China. Wang Hongwen was the youngest member of the 'Gang of Four'. He also came from Shanghai and rose to national prominence in 1967. At the CCP's Tenth Congress in 1973, he was 'elected' to be a vice-chairman of the CCP and all members of the 'Gang of Four' were made members of the Politburo.
- (18) On the instruction from Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai convened the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975. Making use of Mao's demands for unity, stability, and economic growth, Zhou declared in the People's Congress that agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology would all be modernized. The Chinese refer to this plan as 'The Four Modernizations'. It was first discussed in 1970 and its systematic implementation began in the early 1980s under Deng Xiaoping's directives.
- (19) On this ideological change from 'class' to 'bureaucracy' see the Beijing Review of 1980. On the discussion of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristic" see the articles by Su Shaozhi et al in Selected Studies on Marxism (Beijing: Institute of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1983 and 1984).
- (20) For a theoretical discussion of the hegemony of the Marxist world-view and its reception in 20th century China see Arif Dirlik, "Marxism and Chinese History: The Globalization of Marxist Historical Discourse and the Problem of Hegemony in Marxism," Journal of Third World Studies 4, no. 1 (1987): 151-164.
- (21) Francis Beckett, Enemy Within. The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party (London: Murray, 1995), 124-140; Kevin Morgan, Harry Pollitt (Manchester: Manchester University, 1993), 155-184; John Callaghan, Rajani Palme Dutt. A Study in British Stalinism (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), 265-273.
- (22) Fred Westacott, interview by author, Chesterfield, 14 November 1993.
- (23) Dora Cox, letter to author, Talywann, Gwent, 1 April 1996; interview by author, Talywann, Gwent, 21 October 1993: Dora Cox worked as a CPGB translator in Moscow in 1960-1961. During a home visit to London she met someone who looked for a person who could edit materials in Beijing.

- (24) As a consequence of the Sino-Soviet split, in August 1963, E. F. Hill and eight members of the Central Committee set up the Australian Communist Party Marxist-Leninist with its paper Vanguard. See Peking Review, 28 August 1963.
- (25) Jack Shapiro, telephone conversation with the author, London, 24 November 1993.
- (26) 'Foreign expert' is the literal translation of the Chinese term 'Zhuanjia'. It shows clearly that the Chinese see the foreign aid worker as the man/woman with skills which can be applied to develop China.
- (27) Xu Zhenyuan, head of the Cultural Foreign Expert Division, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995.
- (28) Isabel Crook, interview by author, Beijing, 8 May 1995.
- (29) Betty Lewis letter to author, London, 3 July 1995. Xu Zhenyuan, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995; Bertha Hinton, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995.
- (30) Jack Shapiro, telephone conversation with author, London, 24 November 1993. In spite of the assistance of Professor Stuart Macintyre of the University of Melbourne, who is momentarily engaged in writing a history of Australian Communism, I have not been able to obtain more information about this delegation.
- (31) The idea of 'criticism and self-criticism' originated from Mao Zedong's "On the Correct Handling of Contradiction Among the People." For discussions on the origin, procedures and weaknesses of the Chinese 'criticism and self-criticism' approach, particularly evident during the Cultural Revolution, see L. Dittmer, "The Structural Evaluation of 'Criticism and Self-Criticism'," The China Quarterly, no. 56 (1973): 708-729; Richard H. Solomon, "Mao's effort to reintegrate the Chinese polity: problems of authority and conflict in the Chinese social process." In The Chinese Communist Politics in Action, ed. D. Barnett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 271-365.
- (32) Alan Winnington, Breakfast With Mao. Memoirs Of A Foreign Correspondent (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), 192
- (33) Alan Winnington was the Daily Worker correspondent in Beijing from 1948-1960.
- (34) David Crook, interview by author, Beijing, 6 May 1995.
- (35) For an overview on Chinese labour questions at that time, see Jean Chesneaux, The Chinese Labor Movement 1919-1927 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968). For British reactions to these strikes in the mid-1920s, see Chi Wang, Endphase des britischen Kolonialismus in China. Eine Untersuchung zur Rolle der öffentlichen Meinung in Großbritannien als Reaktion und Einflußgröße britischer Außenpolitik gegenüber China während der Nationalen Revolution 1922-1928. Europäische Hochschulschriften Vol. 178 (Frankfurt am Main/Bern: Peter Lang, 1982), 160-247. On Chinese boycotts see C.F. Remer, A Study of Chinese

- Boycott (Baltimore, 1933, repr. Taipei, 1966).
- (36) On these Chinese miners' strikes see "Aktivität der illegalen Gewerkschaften Chinas im Jahre 1927," Rotes Gewerkschafts-Bulletin, 18 February 1928, 50. Tom Mann had visited China as member of an International Workers' Delegation from January to July 1927. In June 1927 it attended the Pan-Pacific Conference of trade unionists in Hangzhou. At that time he established links with the Chinese miners. See Tom Mann, "What I saw in China." Report submitted to the National Minority Movement Conference, Battersea Town Hall. 27 - 28 August 1927. For more biographical details on Tom Mann see Appendix II. Obituary of Rose Smith, China Reconstructs (November 1985): 57-58.
- (37) Obituary of Smith, China Reconstructs, *ibid.*
- (38) J.B.S. Haldane was Joseph Needham's predecessor in the Sir William Dunn Readership at Cambridge. He was a brilliant writer of popular science and was the Scientific Editor of the Daily Worker.
- (39) Smith, "She Has So Many Babies She Has To Know What To Do," Daily Worker, 29 June 1939, 4. The China Aid Committee financially supported the International Peace Hospital where the two Canadian doctors Dr. Norman Bethune and Dr. Richard Brown worked. On the China Aid Committee see Arthur Clegg, Aid China 1937-1949. A Memoir Of A Forgotten Campaign (Beijing: New World Press, 1989), 66-67; 101-102.
- (40) For further biographical information on George Hatem see Appendix II. On his medical work in the People's Republic of China see Edgar Snow, Red China Today. The Other Side Of The River (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 261-269.
- (41) On Dr. Joshua Horn's life and work in China see his memoirs 'Away With All Pests...'. An English Surgeon In People's China (London: Hamlyn, 1969).
- (42) Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley (1904-1984), born into an English gentry family and holder of a B.Sc. in agriculture from Reading University, U.K., came to China in the 1930s. In the early 1960 she and her husband Israel Epstein worked at the Foreign Languages Press and were good friends of Song Qingling, the wife of the late Sun Yat-sen. Rose Smith and Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley saw each other regularly up to 1983 when Elsie fell seriously ill.
- (43) David Crook, interview by author, Beijing, 6 May 1995.
- (44) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," China Reconstructs (April 1977): 35.
- (45) For a general discussion of the CPGB founding elite's devotion to the Soviet order see Francis Beckett, Enemy Within, 137-143; Kevin Morgan, Harry Pollitt, 176-179.
- (46) This quotation and all the others in the preceding paragraph come from Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 35.
- (47) Li Ji and Guo Qingshi, "Principles Governing Relations

- With Foreign Communist Parties," Peking Review 25 April 1963, 17.
- (48) Mao's speech was given on 27 February 1957 and finally published as a very much reworked version in Renmin Ribao, 19 June 1957. The speech was Mao's response to Krushchev's condemnation of Stalinism. He redefined in terms of Marxist contradictions the class relations between the bourgeoisie and the working class, and relations between the people and government of a socialist state. He argued that although in socialist China there still existed remnants of the exploiting classes, contradictions among the people were non-antagonistic. He advised the CCP to act upon the new unity of the Chinese people by encouraging a healthy dose of political criticism and thereby making the bureaucracy become accountable to people's wishes. For a brief and good discussion of this document see Stuart R. Schram, Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), 43-56.
- (49) See reference (45).
- (50) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 35. Mao tried to foster the populist strain within the CCP by making party cadres more responsive and accountable to the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people whom Mao thought to be basically revolutionary. See Maurice Meisner, "Leninism and Maoism: Some Populist Perspectives on Marxism-Leninism in China," China Quarterly, no. 45 (1972): 2-36.
- (51) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 36.
- (52) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 7. The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (53) L. Dittmer, Sino-Soviet Normalization, 110-111; Barbara Barnouin, "Dissonant Voices in International Communism." In The End of Isolation: China After Mao, ed. H. Kapur (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 213.
- (54) This expulsion was first made public by the BBC programme "Ten O'Clock," where Michael McCreery, one of the expelled members, was interviewed. For the CPGB's reaction, see Daily Worker, 13 November 1963, 3; 20 November 1963, 3.
- (55) Nan Green, "Only Yesterday" (interview with Brenda Kirsch), Link, no. 38 (1982): 10. Nan Green and her husband were members of the pro-Soviet faction of the British Party Group. She was sent by the CPGB to Beijing in 1952 as a Spanish translator at the Peace Conference for Asian and Pacific Regions. At the request of the Chinese the Greens stayed on in China. Nan Green worked for China Reconstructs and her husband for an English language trade union journal. In 1960 they asked the CPGB to recall them. I am grateful to Dr. Sue Bruley for sending me a copy of the interview.
- (56) Israel Epstein, interview by author, Beijing, 27 April

- 1995; David Crook, interview by author, Beijing, 6 May 1995.
- (57) John Gollan, Bill Alexander and John Mahon made up a CPGB delegation that visited North Vietnam from 12 - 27 June 1965. Alan Winnington accompanied them as the Daily Worker journalist. The delegation made a brief stopover in Beijing, but no highranking Chinese official welcomed it. The British residents seem to have got wind of the CPGB leaders' stopover and challenged them to a discussion on 'revisionism'. Recently, Bill Alexander still remembered it more as an 'inquisition'. There is also a difference in interpretation of Rose Smith's behaviour at this meeting. In Beijing, she is remembered as having led Beijing's British residents. In London, Bill Alexander confirmed her presence but regarded Michael Shapiro as their leader. Isabel Crook, interview by the author, Beijing, 11 May 1995; Bill Alexander, letter to the author, London, 11 June 1995.
- (58) Pat Adler, interview by author, tape recording Beijing, 9 May 1995.
- (59) In 1966 the Daily Worker changed its name to Morning Star and increased its size from four to six pages.
- (60) "Semi-official" and "unofficial-official" were used by Sam Russell in the interview with the author, London, 13 October 1993. As the Daily Worker's foreign correspondent, Sam Russell had visited China for the first time in 1954 when he accompanied the Labour Party Delegation to China. It was led by Clement Attlee and included Nye Bevan, Morgan Phillipps, Sam Watson, Wilfred Burke and Dr. Edith Summerskill.
- (61) Sam Russell's articles discussed China's economy, education system, women, intellectuals, trade unions, defence, and foreign policy.
- (62) Idris Cox became a full-time CPGB party organiser in 1927, served as member of the CPGB executive from 1929 to 1952 and retired from party work in 1978. Idris Cox and his wife Dora were close friends of Rose Smith from the 1920s to about 1965, when Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated fast. Idris Cox's letter to Morning Star, 7 July 1979, 5.
- (63) Letter by D. Friedman, Morning Star, 3 August 1979, 2.
- (64) Letter by Terry Haynes, ibid., 27 August 1979, 2; in similar light but on Chinese education and the Sino-Indian question, see letters by John Spencer and Raymond O'Byrne respectively, ibid., 22 August 1979, 2; 18 September 1979, 2.
- (65) See endnote (3).
- (66) Morning Star, 6 August 1985.
- (67) On Xinhua as a propagandist agency see Robin Porter, "Shaping China's news: Xinhua Duiwaibu on the threshold of change." In Reporting the news from CHINA, ed. Robin Porter (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs,

- 1992), 1-17.
- (68) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording, no. 9, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K. "Eating bitterness" is a literal translation of the Chinese expression of 'chi ku'. It refers to the material deprivation, insecurity, and lack of educational opportunities experienced by the great mass of Chinese people in pre-liberated China. "Eating bitterness" and "speaking bitterness" were closely connected with the official Communist practice by which peasants, especially peasant women, were encouraged by cadres of the liberation forces to voice their sufferings at mass meetings during the land reform campaigns of the late 1940s-early 1950s. See William Hinton, Fanshen. A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 42-52.
- (69) Mount Tai refers to Mount Taishan in the province of Shandong. This mountain is a symbol of great weight or import. See Rose Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal."
- (70) The capture of Luting Bridge was an important military victory of the Red Army during the Long March in May 1935. Being a strategic link between Sichuan and the then Sikang provinces, this bridge over the Tatu River was held by Guomindang (GMD) forces. The soldiers of the Red Army crossed this bridge with great bravery and much loss of life in order to conquer the Nationalist outpost and save themselves from being annihilated by the GMD. See Smith, "This Man's Contribution was Universal."
- (71) Smith, "These Chinese Mothers Are Full Of A Fine Confidence," Daily Worker, 5 January 1963.
- (72) Israel Epstein, interview by author, Beijing, 27 April 1995.
- (73) Smith, How I Became a Journalist, 22-26 and handwritten postscript.
- (74) Smith's letter to Allan Hutt, Beijing, 3 June 1962, Allan Hutt Papers, Archives of the CPGB. The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (75) Allan Hutt's letter to Rose Smith, London, 18 June 1962, Allen Hutt Papers, Archives of the CPGB. The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K..
- (76) Chen Yaohua, interview by author, Beijing, 28 April 1995; Israel Epstein, interview by author, Beijing, 27 April 1995.
- (77) Isabel Crook, interview by author, Beijing, 8 May 1995; Bertha Hinton, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995; Chen Yaohua, interview by author, Beijing, 28 April 1995; Rose Smith gave a seminar on her involvement in the General Strike, Mansfield to the author's students and members of staff, European History Section, History Department, Peking University in May 1984.
- (78) Chen Yaohua, interview by author, Beijing, 28 April 1985;

- Dr. Robin Porter, letter to the author, Keele, U.K., 16 September 1993; Israel Epstein, letter to the author, Beijing, 6 August 1991.
- (79) On the western journalists' experiences and perceptions of the Chinese media, see articles in Porter, Reporting The News From China; on the relationship between Western and Chinese journalists before the coming of the Cold War to Asia in the late 1940s, see S. R. MacKinnon, "Press Freedom and the Chinese Revolution in the 1930s." In Media and Revolution, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin, 174-188.
- (80) Smith, interview by Roland Berger, 1978, Tape recording no. 7, The Museum of Labour History, Manchester, U.K.
- (81) S. R. Schram, "The Cultural Revolution in Historical Perspective." In S.R. Schram, ibid., 27-85; "The Party in Chinese Communist Ideology." In Party Leadership and Revolutionary Power in China, ed. J. Wilson Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 174-177.
- (82) Writing Group of the Shantung Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, "Adhere to the Method of Class Analysis, Correctly Understand the Struggle Between the Two Lines," Hongqi, no. 13 (4 December 1971) and quoted by Richard C. Kraus, Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 102.
- (83) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 36.
- (84) Gao Luduan, interview by the author, Beijing, 7 May 1995.
- (85) Betty Chandler, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995.
- (86) I am grateful to Gao Luduan to have shown me the original translation of Chen Yun's play entitled "The Younger Generation" with Rose Smith's corrections and comments in red ink on the margins. The plot focused on the reclamation of virgin land and resources by young college graduates from Shanghai in China's underdeveloped Northwest. The play was performed by the Cultural Group of the People's Liberation Army in front of the foreign community in Beijing.
- (87) Smith, "These Chinese Mothers Are Full Of A Fine Confidence," 4.
- (88) ibid.
- (89) Chinese couples put up with their separations stoically. In the past these separations occurred often among overseas Chinese. This separation is the main theme of the Chinese legend "The Cowherd and the Girl Weaver." Since the early 1980s the Chinese authorities tried to reunite these couples.
- (90) Isabel Crook, letter to author, Beijing, 22 September 1993.
- (91) Fu Liqun, interview by author, Beijing, 7 May 1995; Israel Epstein, letter to author, Beijing, 6 August 1991.
- (92) Letter by Ione Kramer to author, Fremont, 25 September 1995.
- (93) Foreigners were geographically organised and represented

- on a leading committee. They held their own rebel meetings. On the Bethune-Yanan Brigade, see "Ruth Lake." In Tom Newnham, New Zealand Women in China (Auckland: Graphic Publications, 1995); Sidney Rittenberg et al, The Man Who Stayed Behind, 373-374; David Milton and Nancy Dall Milton, The Wind Will Not Subside (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 214-218; 229-233; 303-305.
- (94) "Terrorism At Mansfield. Women Bullied and Beaten by Police," The Woman Worker, no. 6 (September 1926), 3. Bertha Hinton recalled that Rose Smith related and analysed her experiences as agitator in her lectures given to students at the Foreign Language Institute in the post-Cultural Revolution period. Bertha Hinton, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995.
- (95) Other veteran foreigners who did not participate in the Bethune-Yanan Brigade were Rewi Alley from New Zealand, Dr. George Hatem, Dorise Nielsen from Canada. Xu Zhenyuan, interview by the author, Beijing, 3 May 1995.
- (96) Sidney Rittenberg and Amanda Bennett, The Man Who Stayed Behind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993). John Fraser, The Chinese. Portrait of a People (Toronto: Totem Book, 1980), 183-195.
- (97) Hansard Parliamentary Debates (Commons). 5th ser., vol. 773. (1968), cols. 16-17.
- (98) ibid. (1968), cols. 206-207.
- (99) ibid. vol. 799. (1970), cols. 28-29.
- (100) ibid. vol. 773 (1968), col. 865
- (101) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 36.
- (102) Smith behaved similarly during the First World War, when the socialist national parties supported the war efforts; the second incident was her departure from the Daily Worker over its editorial policy.
- (103) Gao Luduan, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995.
- (104) I am grateful to Gao Luduan for a copy of Rose Smith's short letter of resignation.
- (105) Both Conservative and Labour governments tried to solve Britain's economic problem with the help of a 'Stop-Go' policy. During the period under discussion British prosperity at home always meant increased imports and an unfavourable trade balance. To counter this the governments were forced to take steps to suppress demand in Britain by imposing price and wage controls, punitive interest rates and heavier taxes. When domestic consumption was sufficiently reduced and a payments surplus restored, controls relaxed in the hopes of stimulating economic growth in the country. But as growth came it always resulted once again in increased imports and disastrous trade deficits.
- (106) On Smith's life in England, Joan Smith, interview by author, Shipley, 13 November 1993; Pat Adler, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995: Pat Adler visited her in Chesterfield in September-October 1970. Jessica Darling,

- telephone conversation with author, 10 September 1995:
Dr. Horn had a room reserved for Rose Smith in his house.
- (107) In August 1968, at the time of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Leonid Brezhnev proclaimed that the Soviet Union had the right, indeed the duty, to interfere in any fraternal communist country where socialism was threatened from within or from the outside.
- (108) On the general attitude of local CPGB comrades, Mr. Fred Westacott, interview by author, Chesterfield, 14 November 1993; Mrs. Hackett, interview by author, Mansfield, 12 November 1993.
- (109) Joan Hinton and her husband are cattle breeders on a farm outside Beijing. She is the sister of William Hinton, the author of Fanshen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966) and Shenfan (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983).
- (110) I am grateful to Joan Hinton for having given me a copy of this letter, written in Chinese. Reference to Rose Smith's conditions is made on page 4-5 of this letter. The Chinese referred to this story in Guoji Rencai Jiaoliu, no. 1 (1993), 6.
- (111) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 36.
- (112) Xu Zhenyuan, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995. Chen Yaohua, Rose Smith's liaison colleague at Xinhua Newsagency from 1971-1985, stressed that Smith was given credit by the Chinese leaders for her non-publicising of her own experiences. Chen Yaohua, interview by author, Beijing, 29 April 1995.
- (113) The dates of Smith's return to Beijing and of the two official invitations were confirmed by the Foreign Expert Bureau of Xinhua. Reference to the invitations is also made in Guangmin Ribao, 1 June 1993, 5. Other participants of this International Women's Day invitation of 1973 were: David Crook, interview by author, Beijing, 6 May 1995; Bertha Hinton, interview by author, Beijing, 3 May 1995; Israel Epstein, interview by author, Beijing, 27 April 1993.
- (114) Smith, "This Man's Contribution is Universal," 36. Two political leaders who had the courage to apologise publicly for their nations' wrongdoings were Zhou Enlai in China and Otto Brandt in Poland. Both of them were socialists.
- (115) I am grateful to Joan Hinton who attended this function in 1973, for providing me with extensive handwritten notes in Chinese and typed notes, translated into English, taken by her and other foreigners during Zhou Enlai's talk. A summary of this speech was reported in the press but as a "one-family affair" the speech itself was never treated to a literal translation.
- (116) Recently Chi-yu Shih, China's Just World. The Morality of Chinese Foreign Policy (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), chapters 3 and 4 has analysed the Sino-Soviet dispute as an intercultural conflict in which

- the concept of Confucian moral authority must be analysed as an additional criterion to the Western criteria of economic and military strength for a powerful nation. This is further supported by Zhou Enlai's welcome of Norodom Sihanouk as a political refugee in Beijing on 19 March 1970. It is reported in L'Indochine vue de Pékin. Entretiens avec Jean Lacouture (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 7-8. On the relevance of Confucian traditions as an inspiring source for a modern Asian 'civil society' see Edward Shil, "Reflection on Civil Society and Civility in the Chinese Intellectual Tradition." In Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity, ed. Tu Wei-ming (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 38-71.
- (117) It is interesting to note that the Chinese communists offered shelter in the same way to Anna Louise Strong (1885-1970), the American communist and writer-journalist from 1958 to her death in 1970, and Agnes Smedley (1892-1950), the American working-class radical and victim of McCarthyism. Agnes Smedley was on her way to settle in China, when she died in London. Her remains were later transferred to a memorial site overlooking the "Lake Without Name" in Peking University. On the lives of these two American women see J. and S. MacKinnon, Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of An American Radical (London: Virago Press, 1988); Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, Right In Her Soul. The Life of Anna Louise Strong (New York: Random House, 1983).
- (118) Smith, "This Man's Contribution Was Universal," 36. Since late 1972 Zhou Enlai had tried to get high-ranking cadres rehabilitated, but due to the strong opposition of the Cultural Revolution faction in the CC was not very successful. See Renmin Ribao 14. October 1972 and 17. March 1988.
- (119) For biographical details on Ngapoi Ngawang Jigmi see Appendix II.
- (120) In the People's Republic of China, old people who have no children or whose children live far away are usually provided with a housekeeper, regardless whether they are government personnel or ordinary working people. A Chinese housekeeper is not classified as a lowly paid 'servant' of Western countries. It is a job paid according to wage-rates for a worker fixed by the Chinese authorities. At Rose Smith's time 'housekeeping' was an important way of making middleaged but poorly trained Chinese women from the Chinese countryside to enter the employment market in the towns. They thereby achieved their economic independence. The provision of a cook for Rose Smith was done out of consideration that she might not be used to Chinese food. Her cook was trained to prepare Western cuisine.
- (121) As a result of China's almost global exclusion during the period of the Cold War, Chinese colleagues were more

- willing to accept this job, because the chance to look after a foreigner was regarded as an acceptable substitute for going abroad and helping foreigners was a way of improving foreign languages. With the onset of the Cultural Revolution and its revolutionary anti-foreignism, however, this assignment was often not welcome by Chinese people. As Chinese colleagues already had to cope with harsh living conditions and unpredictable politics at their workplace, they tried not to make things worse for themselves by having to be at the beck and call of their foreign colleagues.
- (122) The provision for a 'taxi service' for foreigners was made because, as a result of the huge population and underdevelopment, Chinese public transport in Beijing, was very overcrowded. Most Westerners were unable to cope with it, having being used to their private cars at home.
- (123) Chen Yaohua, interview by author, Beijing, 28 April 1995.
- (124) Gao Ludan, interview by author, Beijing, 7 May 1995. For an official Chinese explanation for the demotion of the 'Dazhai model' for Chinese agriculture after 1980 see Beijing Review, no. 8 (23 February 1980) and Beijing Review, no. 16 (20 April 1981).
- (125) Rose Smith, conversations with the author, Beijing, 1982-84. Eleanor Bidien, "So Much Love For So Many," Beijing Review 28 (12 August 1985), 23. On the economic reforms of the early 1980s and their impact on Chinese women see articles in the Chinese newspaper China Daily of that period. Western literature on this topic are Delia Davin, "Of Dogma, Dicta, and Washing Machines: Women in the People's Republic of China." In Promissory Notes. Women in the Transition to Socialism, eds. Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp and Marilyn B. Young (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), 354-358; Emily Honig & Gail Hershatler, Personal Voices. Chinese Women in the 1980s (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 244-272; Elisabeth Croll, Chinese Women Since Mao (London: Zed Books, 1983).
- (126) For a critical assessment of these Chinese changes see Govind Kelkar, "...Two Steps Back? New Agricultural Policies in China and the Woman Question." In Structures of Patriarchy. State, Community and Household in Modernising Asia, ed. Bina Agarwal (London: Zed Books, 1988), 121-150.
- (127) Honig & Hershatler, Personal Voices, 273-307.
- (128) Claude Esterson, "Unforgettable Rose of Beijing," Morning Star, 19 August 1985, 2.
- (129) Smith, "This Man's Contribution," 36.
- (130) Smith's letter to Rod Smith and his family, Beijing, 2 January 1983.
- (131) Paul White, interview by author, Beijing, 11 May 1995.
- (132) Esterson, "Unforgettable Rose of Beijing," Morning Star, 19 August 1985, 2.

- (133) Smith's letter to Rod Smith, Beijing, 2 January 1983.
- (134) Smith's correspondence card to Rod and Margaret Smith, no date but probably late 1970s.
- (135) Smith's letter to her great grand-daughter Anne Smith, Beijing, 6 May 1980.
- (136) Betty Chandler, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995; Pat Adler, interview by author, Beijing, 9 May 1995; Sheila Taylor, interview by author, Morpeth, 16 November 1993; Joan Smith, interview by author, Shipley, 14 November 1993.
- (137) Chinese Obituary, China Daily, 26 July 1985, 3.
- (138) I am grateful to the Smith family for having provided me with a copy of this Memorial Speech during my stay in Shipley, November 1993. [*] This is a spelling mistake which was made by the Chinese in this memorial text. Other obituaries in the Chinese press: China Daily, 26 July 1985, 3; 31 July 1985, 3; Beijing Review 28, no 32 (12 August 1985), 23; China Reconstructs (November 1985), 57-58. English obituaries: Morning Star 6 August 1985; China Now, no. 117 (1986), 36-37. More recent Chinese articles on Rose Smith: Guangmin Ribao, 1 June 1993, 5; Guoji Rencai Jiaoliu 32 (January 1993), 6.

CONCLUSION

Life is a system of relations rather than
a positive and independent existence.
G. A. Sala.

This thesis has reconstructed and examined Rose Smith's life. She grew up as the eldest daughter of an English potter and a kitchen maid in a family of seven children. Her upbringing in a working-class home made her conscious of her class and its oppression. It made her also aware of the unequal status of women in working-class families. To eliminate these two types of oppression, she joined the revolutionary community because modern revolutions always raise the hopes of the underdogs in society. It led her to become a revolutionary trade union supporter, Communist politician and journalist at the Daily Worker. After her retirement she decided not to rest on her laurels but to seek a new challenge by going to China as a 'proletarian' aid worker. In other words, the causes Smith espoused were class fairness, gender equality and sister-brother-hood among all women and men.

All her life Smith engaged with the material and social world in a continual dialogue. Both the social segregation and the Dickensian conditions under which her family and neighbours existed and laboured at the turn of last century

conditioned her attitudes towards work, education, social justice, inter-class and gender relations.

Smith was a 'work-alcoholic' in the morally positive sense of the word. For her, life meant work in and outside the home. It did not matter what public position she held- whether as an unpaid strike leader or the CPGB's National Women's Organizer, whether as a journalist at the Daily Worker or as a 'polisher' at Xinhua - she equated the essence of her existence with getting to the heart of her tasks and duties. This implied working hard and efficiently with a sense of commitment and pride in order to reach the satisfactory solution for her and members of her class.

Like many of her contemporaries coming from an artisan working-class background, Smith valued education. She believed educational opportunity was a basic human right which enabled an individual to cope better with the hazards of life. On the other hand, she also revealed, what might be called, a streak of British working-class defensiveness towards intellectuals and their analytical work. As stressed several times in this thesis, she was not a very contemplative person but liked to be in the middle of action. With regard to education, therefore, her view was that the content and purpose of education had primarily to bring about visible improvements of living and working conditions.

Most likely, this attitude of hers was partly the outcome of her relatively limited formal schooling and a curriculum

that had clearly circumscribed societal expectations of working-class females as a skilled labour force. Partly, Smith's educational outlook was moulded by her participation in the WEA's broadly liberal-pluralist type of adult education and the Marxist education of the Labour College movement. The political turmoil and the labour unrest of the interwar years led Rose Smith to believe that this Marxist education explained the causes of societal problems better than that provided by the WEA's dons from Oxford. The Marxist education seems also to have suited her temperament, acquired skills and ideals.

It seems that Rose Smith was attracted to the syndicalist movement precisely because this brand of socialists incorporated more than any other existing socialist and labour organisations all categories of working-class women into their strike activities. These syndicalists helped Rose Smith, who, as a married woman and mother, was barred from her teaching profession and union membership, to enter working-class local politics via their trade union.

The CPGB as the emerging revolutionary party of the working class, which Rose Smith joined in 1923, retained and refined much of the Labour Colleges' instructional education. The CPGB continued the 'question and answer' method in its training manuals. It also maintained the text-analytical but uncritical methodology when studying political reports and the

various Soviet 'lines'. Smith's handling of the 'Woman's Question' in CPGB meetings is a case in point. She would criticize the CP leaders' indifference and patriarchal way of conducting work among working-class women. However, she would never question the socialist dictum that the inequities between women and men were to be eradicated by a successful class revolution. She never perceived any contradiction between her position as a socialist fighting for class justice and a woman fighting for female rights. Essentially, she believed in team work in which working-class women and men were united, cooperated, strove and raised their consciousness together as equal partners in the class struggle.

In this thesis it has been shown that at the time of Rose Smith's decision to become a full-time party organizer, the CPGB was in the process of developing its own centralized organization. This was in response not only to Comintern pressures but also to the ongoing bureaucratization and restructuring of the British labour movement. It was these organizational changes that gave Smith ample opportunities for building up, leading and supporting various teams in their political work. As a CP candidate in general and municipal elections she campaigned with teams of local women and men at her side. In Lancashire she set up a CPGB branch and tried her hands at creating a Red Trade Union of local female operatives during the textile strikes. She also acted as one of the organizers of unemployed women's contingents during local and

national Hunger Marches in the 1930s. She also served as organizer and agitating speaker of anti-Fascist international and national women's organizations. And finally, she gave her direct and indirect support to groups fighting for birth control among working class women, better working-class housing, higher wages, and higher standard of living.

Smith's life was one of seeking challenge and action rather than one of reflection and philosophizing. Her work as the Daily Worker's roving propagandist and correspondent in war zones illustrated this. She attended congresses of trade unions and political parties, met and interviewed, with an intuitively human skill, leaders and ordinary working people. She went to Republican Spain and experienced Franco's final onslaught on its civilian population. Her reportage were good descriptions of events, social and economic problems, people's feelings, particularly those of women, and adequate summaries of the main points of political discussions. But she wrote few editorial articles and critical commentaries that raised ingenious ideas and made profound new suggestions. It seems that the main aim of her journalism was to give factual instruction so that her readers could increase their knowledge but did not necessarily sharpen their critical ability.

Smith's arrival in China, as this thesis has shown, was partly motivated by China's need for well-trained English journalistic staff in its propagandist media at a critical moment during the Sino-Soviet rift. Partly, her move to China

gave her the opportunity to return to the journalistic 'trade' after her retirement in the West. Partly, she went to China because she wanted to learn at first-hand about Mao Zedong's 'mass line' and how 'class' was to be understood in a socialist society.

During her stay in China Smith implemented consciously or unconsciously Mao's distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic relations. Disagreements among socialists and socialist states were seen to be non-antagonistic and solvable without invoking 'class struggle'. In capitalist countries, on the other hand, relations between classes were antagonistic and demanded the fight at the barricades. Therefore, in Britain Smith raised vociferous criticism of the British capitalist government. In liberated China her criticism was subdued and raised only through the channels of the ruling CCP and the National Women's Federation. Its aim was to assist the consolidation of China's social revolution. With regard to the Sino-Soviet dispute, she acted in a similar fashion. As soon as China's relations had become more relaxed, Smith helped to reestablish friendly relations between Xinhua and the Morning Star.

It was after her resettlement in Beijing in 1971 that Smith really managed to overcome the constraining forces of her 'class'. In China she was at last able to fulfil her desire of playing a wider role than what the CPGB had assigned to her as National Women's Organizer, and the Daily Worker as

a reporter on women's issues or social topics related to women. By accepting Zhou Enlai's invitation to return to China at the end of the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, she gave the Chinese not only the opportunity to admit and correct their mistakes but also to vindicate their moral rectitude as members of the international communist community after a period of intense anti-foreignism during the Cultural Revolution.

She was able to meet China's top leaders. They respected her views and honoured her as 'a veteran revolutionary comrade' and a 'true proletarian internationalist' in her own right. Whether or not they were influenced by her advice, is impossible to tell. She was not an official adviser and her conversations with the Chinese leaders were not attributable. Despite her advanced age they allowed her to earn a living. She was given a job for which she was well trained and which she enjoyed doing. In her capacity as 'polisher' she helped her Chinese colleagues to present the positive and negative sides of Chinese developments to the outside world at the time of the country's almost global exclusion. The Chinese made sure that in her old age Smith had financial security and material comfort which in class-conscious Britain would not have been available to her in the same way.

Smith had the opportunity to learn and contemplate, at first-hand and in the company of like-minded British friends, about successes and difficulties of constructing a socialist

society. At the same time, as a foreign witness of these developments, she was not subject to the orders to obey the 'line'. In other words, in liberated China Smith continued to live her convictions and remained primarily rooted in the socialist political culture rather than in Britain's nationalist-inclined labourism. Thus, she managed to transcend the given in the People's Republic of China.

Judging from the choices Smith made in her life, she seems to have assumed that the overall direction of the historical process was broadly given and more than one option were available to her as an individual. She could affect the concrete forms of the historical process by making the appropriate choice guided by her conscious and revolutionary action. The following decisive moments in her life stand out as markers of direction imposing purpose and coherence upon her life and work: Her rejection of the WEA education and commitment to a political programme of 'direct action'; the making up of her mind to become a communist cadre of a hierarchically structured and tightly 'line'-controlled party; and her choice to go to China and assist the Chinese. However, these personal decisions of hers also clearly show that Rose Smith was both the bearer and the agent of various patterns of discourse.

Essentially, as this research has revealed, Smith was a capable, honest and principled woman. She firmly believed that

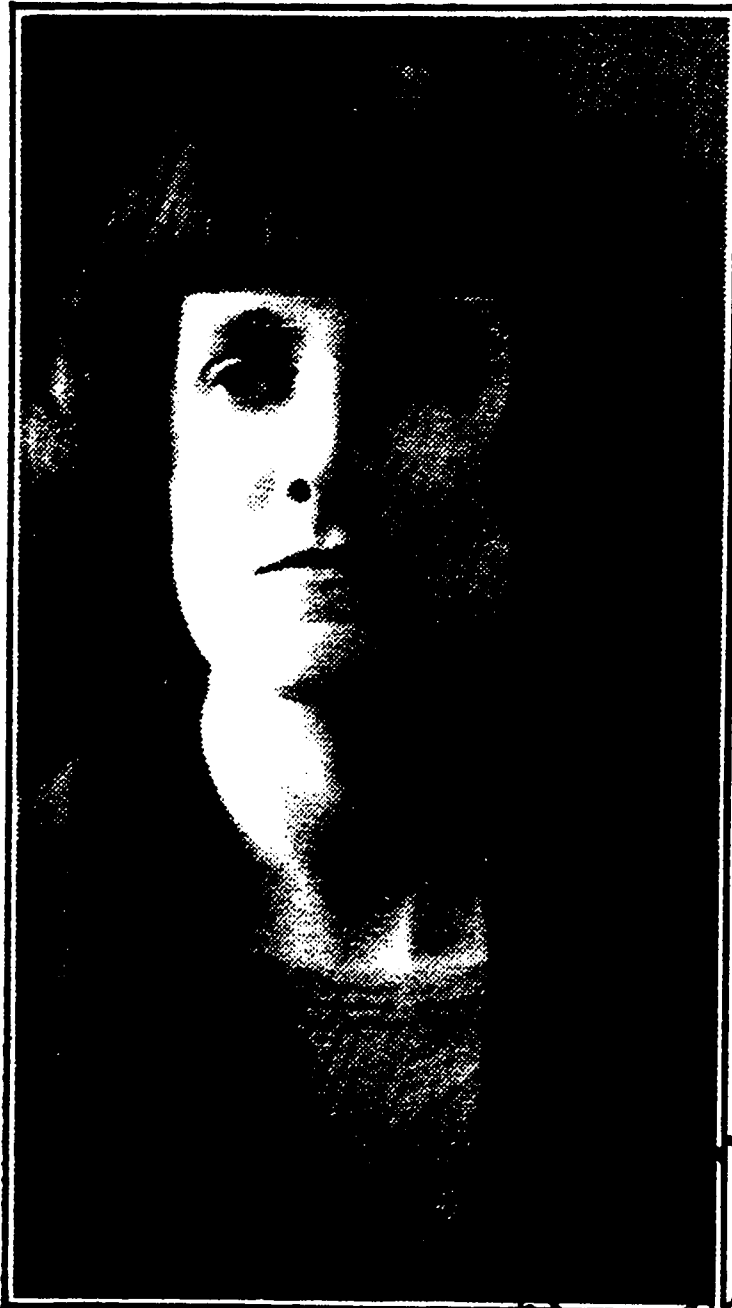
working-class men and women could only achieve social justice and a better standard of living when they are united in their socio-political and economic struggles. She represented the culture of trade union activism of her times which was very much predicated on being committed to socialism, making sacrifices, and all standing together.

APPENDIX

LIST OF PHOTOS - PHOTOS

1. Rose Smith, Communist Candidate for Mansfield, General Election of 1929.
Courtesy of the Working Class Library, Salford.
2. Photo given to Rose Smith by Lenin's widow in 1927
Courtesy of Mr. Westacott, Chesterfield.
3. Women's Delegation to Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, Moscow, 1928. Rose Smith is the fourth delegate crouching in the front row on the left.
Courtesy of the CPGB Picture Library.
4. Burnley Strike Relief Committee, 1932
Rose Smith is standing fourth on the left.
Courtesy of the Working Class Library, Salford.
5. Rose Smith and Soong Quiling, 1978
Courtesy of Pat Adler, Beijing.
6. Rose Smith and Zhou Enlai, 1971
Courtesy of Pat Adler, Beijing.
7. Rose Smith, her Son Ted, Daughter-in-law Joan and Granddaughter Sheila in the Summer Palace, Beijing, 1978.
Courtesy of the Smith family.
8. Rose Smith's Beijing Home
Courtesy of Pat Adler, Beijing.
9. Rose Smith in her Study
Courtesy of Pat Adler, Beijing.

PHOTOS



ROSE SMITH.
Communist Candidate for Mansfield

7 years
Rose Smith



Oliver Gettin

2
Kemp's daughter
(wife of Kenzie)

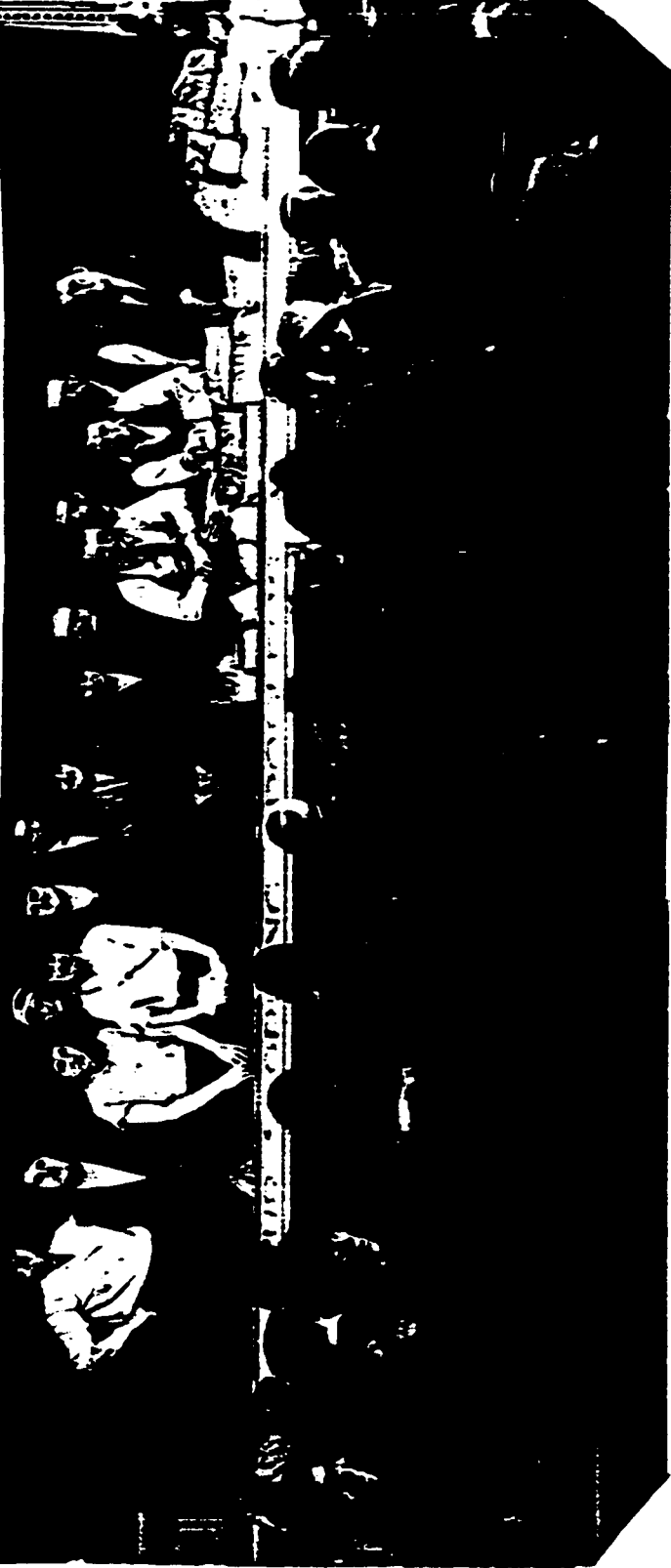
Presented to me
Smith in the

Alpenstein ~~Alpenstein~~.
1927 on the occasion
of the British mission
to the U.S.S.R. - (R.S.)
U.S.S.R. - (R.S.)



3.

BURNLEY STRIKE RELIEF COMMITTEE.
SUPPORTED BY
WORKERS INTERNATIONAL RELIEF







6.



7.





APPENDIX II

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

CHURCHILL, WINSTON (Sir) (1874-1965): born in Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire; he entered Parliament in 1900. From 1940-1945 he was the prime minister of the National Government. As leader of the Conservative Party he was defeated in the British general election of 1945 but returned to power from 1951-1955.

DENG XIAOPING (1904-1997): born in Sichuan, studied in France and Moscow. He joined the CCP in 1924, was the CCP's General Secretary during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and Great Leap Forward; after 1978 in charge of the 'Four Modernizations'.

DENG YINGCHAO (1904-1992): her revolutionary career dated back to the Fourth May Movement of 1919 when she participated in the students' protest opposing the Japanese expansionism in China. In 1924 she joined the CCP and married Zhou Enlai in 1925. 1927-1932 she worked underground for the CCP in Shanghai; she took part in the Long March 1934-36; 1945 she was one of the only three women elected to the CCP's Central Committee. After Zhou Enlai's death in 1976 she became a senior member of the Chinese government and served as a member of the CCP's Central Committee from 1978-1985. She visited foreign countries such as Burma, Iran, Kampuchea, Japan, and France.

FRANCO BAHAMONDE (1892-1975): born in El Ferrol, northwestern Spain. Franco became major general in 1934 and chief of the Spanish Army's general staff in 1935. During the Spanish civil war he organized, with the help of Hitler and Mussolini, a military rebellion against the republican forces, reorganized the Falange (Spanish Fascist Party) in spring 1937 and won a complete and unconditional victory in the Spanish Civil War on April 1, 1939. Thereafter until his death he was the head of the government of Spain.

HATEM, GEORGE (1910-1988): born of Lebanese parents in Buffalo, N.Y., studied medicine in USA, Beirut and Geneva. In 1933 he went to Shanghai and started research in venereal diseases and dermatology. From 1936-1949 he became the medical adviser to the Red Army and after 1949 helped to organize the Ministry of Public Health. He took a leading part in the

nationwide campaigns against VD and leprosy. He became a Chinese citizen and adopted the Chinese name Ma Haide. He was a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

HU YAOBANG (1915-1989) son of a Hunanese rich peasant, joined the communist armed forces as a child soldier and later became the leader of the Party's Youth League. As a protégé of Deng Xiaoping he rose to General Secretary of the CCP in 1981, was toppled in January 1987.

IBARRURI GOMEZ, DOLORES ISIDORA (1895-1989): born in Gallarta, Spain and daughter of a Basque miner. She joined the Partido Socialista in 1917 and wrote for a workers' newspaper under the pseudonym 'La Pasionaria'. In 1920 she was a foundation member of the Communist Party of Spain (CPS), led a local branch and became a member of the CPS's Political Committee in 1932. During the Spanish Civil War she was one of the most inspiring of the Loyalist leaders. From 1939 to 1977 she lived in exile in the USSR. From 1942-1960 she was the CPS's secretary-general and from 1960-1989 its president.

KANG KEQING (1910-1991): born in Jiangsu province, joined the CCP in her teens. In 1928 she began organising Red Army guerrilla units and married General Zhu De in 1929. She was in charge of the CCP's Women's Department and was one of the 35 women who participated in the Long March 1934-36. In the 1940s she worked in the women's movement and had important responsibilities in the Red Army's headquarter. After China's Liberation she was closely connected with the Democratic Women's Federation, serving as an elected Standing Committee member from 1949-57, its vice-president in 1957 and its president in 1978 and honorary president in 1988. From 1982-1991 she was the chairperson of the Song Qingling Foundation. She also chaired the National Committee for the Defence of Children and was a member of the Sixth National People's Congress in 1986.

KOLLENTAI, ALEKSANDRA (1872-1952): born into an Russian aristocratic family. Since the 1905 revolution she participated in the Russian women's movement, attended the First All-Russian Congress of Women in 1908, and helped to draft the new marriage laws and protective legislation for women workers after the Bolshevik Revolution. From 1920 to 1922 she served as head of the CPSU's Women's Department and concurrently as secretary of the International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern. During the 1930s she was the first woman Soviet diplomat to Norway, then Mexico and Sweden. After World War II she briefly acted as an adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow.

KRUPSKAYA, NADEZHDA KONSTANTINOVA (1869-1939): born in St. Petersburg. She considered herself a Marxist at the age of 21. In 1898 she married Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin). Although she was from then onwards closely associated with his activities, she did pursue her own interests in adult and women's education. She also spent a good deal of her time as an assistant on the Marxist publications of Iskra and Vpered. After the Bolshevik Revolution she worked for the Commissariat of Education and the CPSU's Women's Department. In 1927 she was elected to the CPSU's Central Committee.

KRUSHCHEV, NIKITA SERGEYEVICH (1894-1971): born as a son of a miner in the Ukraine. In 1925 he went into full-time CPSU work. By 1933 he had become second secretary of the Moscow Regional Committee, a member of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Supreme Soviet in 1937 and of the Politburo in 1939. During the Second World War he worked in various military and party positions in the Ukraine. After his return to Moscow in 1949 he served as head of the Moscow City Party and concurrently secretary of the All-Union Central Committee. After Stalin's death in 1953, Krushchev rose to the CPSU's first secretary (1953-1964) and was premier of the Soviet Union (1958-1964).

LIN BIAO (1907-1971): born in Huanggang county, Hubei, became a cadet at the Whampoa Military Academy and CCP member in 1925; the head of the Red Army Academy in Shanxi in 1932, commander of the Fourth Field Army in 1949, Vice Chairman of the People's Revolutionary Military Committee in 1951, a member of the CCP's Politburo in 1955, and Defence Minister in 1959. He was designated as Mao's successor in 1969 but died in a plane crash supposedly after a failed coup attempt.

LIU SHAOQI (1898-1969): born in Ningxiang, Hunan. He joined the CCP in 1921 and studied in Moscow from 1921-22. After the Shanghai massacres in 1927, he shifted his underground labour work to North China. In 1932 he became the chairman of the All-China Federation of Labour and wrote key documents in the conduct of the CCP in 1941-1945. From 1942 he was second in rank to Mao in the Party. In the late 1950s he held divergent views on the economy, was demoted and labelled as a 'capitalist roader' and 'China's Krushchev' during the Cultural Revolution. He died in prison in 1969.

LLOYD GEORGE, DAVID (1863-1945): born in Manchester, Lancashire. From 1890-1945 he was the Liberal M.P. for Caernarvon Boroughs. Before World War I he served as president of the Board of Trade (1905-1908), as the chancellor of the exchequer, framing the famous 'People's Budget' in 1909 and the National Insurance Act of 1911, and as the minister of munitions and secretary of state for war from 1911-1915. He was the prime minister from 1916-1922.

MANN, TOM (THOMAS) (1856-1941): born in Foleshill, Warwickshire. He was a member of the Amalgamated Society for Engineers, the SDF and co-leader with John Burns of the Great London dock strike in 1889. In the 1890s he served as secretary to James Keir Hardie's newly formed Independent Labour Party. From 1901 to 1910 he was an activist in the trade union movement of Australia and New Zealand. On his return to Britain in 1910, he gave support to the syndicalist movement and was the co-founder of the National Transport Workers' Federation. He also was a foundation member of the CPGB.

MAO ZEDONG (1893-1976): born in Shaoshan, Hunan to peasant parents; he came under the influence of Marxism in Beijing in 1918 and was active in the communist group of Changsha in the early 1920s. By the mid-1920s he organized peasant associations and uprisings. In 1931 he established the first Soviet in the mountain range of Jinggangshan on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi. He became the chairman of the CCP at the Tsunyi Conference in 1935. From 1954 to 1959 he served as president of the People's Republic of China. He was the CCP's chairman from 1959 to 1976.

NGAPOI NGAWANG JIGME (1909-): born in present-day Qinghai province as son of an Tibetan aristocrat. He studied in Britain and upon return in 1932 joined the Tibetan Army. In 1951 he headed the Tibetan delegation to Beijing peace negotiations. From 1954 to 1988 he served as deputy to all seven National People's Congresses, was an elected Standing Committee member in 1965. He was a key figure in the Preparatory Committee for establishment of Tibetan autonomous region 1956-65 and chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region People's Congress from 1979-81.

PANKHURST, SYLVIA (1882-1960): born in Manchester, Lancashire as the second daughter of Richard Marsden and Emmeline Pankhurst. With the help of scholarships she studied art. Before World War I she worked in London's East End for the Women's Social and Political Union, a suffrage organization founded jointly by her mother and her elder sister Christabel. From 1914 to 1924 she edited the pacifist socialist journal Worker's Dreadnought; in 1920 she met Lenin in the USSR and subsequently helped to found the CPGB. During the 1930s she protested against Italian fascism and edited Ethiopian News. In 1956 she settled in Ethiopia. She was the editor of the Ethiopian Observer when she died.

POLLITT, HARRY (1890-1960): was the son of textile workers in Lancashire. He left school at the age of 13 and trained as a boilermaker. He was the leader of the boilermakers' union and helped to found the CPGB in 1920. In 1921 he met Lenin at the Congress of the Third International. He was the CPGB's

general-secretary from 1929 to 1939 and from 1941 to 1956. He was the Party's chairman from 1956 to 1960.

SNOW, EDGAR (1905-1972): born in Kansas City, Missouri. He worked as a reporter while attending classes at Columbia University in New York. In 1928 he took a job in Shanghai on the China Weekly Review, travelled throughout China, writing for American papers. In 1936 he interviewed Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders and published Red Star Over China a year later. He returned to China several times in the late 1950s and in 1970.

SONG QINGLING (1893-1981): born in Shanghai and educated at the Wesleyan College for Women in Macon, Georgia; in 1915 she married Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Nationalist Party and President of the Chinese Republic in 1921. During World War II she organized the China Defence League to raise funds for medical relief and child welfare. In 1949 she served as a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, which, at its inaugural session in September 1949, established the People's Republic of China. In 1957 she became Honorary President of the Women's Federation in China and finally she joined the CCP and was given the title of Honorary President of the People's Republic of China in 1981.

STALIN, JOSEPH VISSARIONOVICH (1879-1953): born in Georgia. He joined an underground Georgian revolutionary organization in 1900 and the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democrats in 1903. After the Bolshevik Revolution he served as commissar for nationalities (1917-1923) and for state control (1919-23) in the Soviet government. From 1922 to 1953 he also became secretary-general of the CPSU. After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin successfully overcame his rivals in the party power struggles and became the dominant figure in Soviet politics. Although he and Adolf Hitler concluded a nonaggression pact in 1939, he was unable to prevent the German invasion of the Soviet Union and to be drawn into the Second World War. He then became an ally of Britain and the USA during the war. He served as premier of the Soviet state from 1941 to 1953.

TITO, JOSEPH (JOSIP BROZ) (1892-1980): son of a poor peasant family in a village near Zagreb, Croatia. He joined the Communist Party in 1920 and by 1928 had risen to a member of the Party's Politburo. During World War II he organized the Yugoslavian resistance of partisans against the German invaders. From 1943 he was the effective head of Yugoslavia and its elected president from 1953 to 1980 pursuing a policy of non-alignment.

WAN LI (1916-): studied in France and was involved in the

communist liberation of Nanjing and Chongjing in 1949-1950; from 1952-56 he served as vice-minister of the Ministry of Building. In 1958 he became the secretary of the Beijing CP and was elected the city's vice-major. He was the Minister of Railways in 1975-76. From 1977 to 1991 he was an elected member of the CCP's Central Committee and a member of the Politburo from 1982- 91. From 1980-88 he served as Vice-premier; from 1988 to 1991 he was the Presidium Standing Committee chairman of the Seventh National People's Congress.

WILKINSON, ELLEN CICELY (1891-1947): born in Manchester, Lancashire and daughter of a cotton worker. In 1913 she worked for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies; in 1915 she was appointed national women's organizer for the Amalgamated Union of Cooperative Employees. In 1920 she joined the CPGB but left it in 1924 when she became Labour MP for Middlesborough; in 1935 she entered parliament as member for Jarrow and led the Jarrow Hunger March to London in 1936. From 1940-45 she served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Pensions, then to the Ministry of Home Affairs. She was the Labour Minister of Education from 1945-47, the first woman to hold such an appointment in Britain.

ZHOU ENLAI (1898-1976): born in Jiangsu to a gentry family; Zhou studied in Japan and France. From 1921 to 1924 he acted the CCP's organizer in Europe. On his return to China he was appointed deputy director of the political department of the Whampoa Military Academy. From 1932 Zhou together with Mao Zedong and Zhu De served as the political commissar of the Red Army. In 1937 he skilfully negotiated with the Chinese Nationalists to form of the Second United Front against the Japanese invaders. He was China's premier and foreign minister (1949-1958) and premier (1949-1976).

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