When Karl Marx died in 1883, Frederick Engels, his buddy and work-sharer from their early twenties, commenced the graveside farewell thus: "On the afternoon of the fourteenth of March at a quarter to three, the greatest living thinker ceased to think."

Comparatively few people then cottoned-on to the full range of that remark which later sprang into planetary significance, and had all but the loot-laden rich rejoicing following the 1917 socialist revolution, whereby the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin triumphed, and the all-powerful economic, political and social interests of capitalists and landlords over one-sixth of the planet expired.

This world-famous turnaround for Russia's Tsar-oppressed, multinational millions — geographically described by Lenin as "a new era in the history of mankind" — magically lifted the expectations, and fuelled future struggles, of all exploited humankind for social change; and like mushies after rain, dedicated marxist parties emerged internationally, grimly determined to emulate this stimulating young socialist state, protect its independence and sovereignty, and accepts its tenets.

From its inception in 1920, with a fervour bordering on Papal infallibility (i.e. the USSR cannot err), defence of the Soviet system was inextricably woven into CPA policies, activities and organisation.

This euphoric fervour later reached grandiose proportions when, to me and others then living in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, Stalin appeared Godlike, and the world at large waited impatiently for the advent of Soviet-style socialism.

Such infantile views weighed heavily then on the ability of communists for factual evaluation of socialist progress in the USSR and in the formulation of our own independent path to socialism.

But experience, accumulated knowledge and collective wisdom eventually made nonsense of cult figures, and socialist formulas went hopping. New problems arise now because of the diversity of parties and political movements all basking themselves completely, or to some extent, on marxism; and debates abound around the validity today of the laws of social development discovered by Marx last century.

In today's topsy-turvy embryonic "Star Wars World", Lenin's analysis of 1917 that "a new era in the history of mankind" had commenced, is mirrored internationally by the conflicting political interests of two different social systems — basically a class struggle — illustrating how the ideas of Marx have changed the world; and in non-socialist countries by class struggle at the point of production, and with powerful working class and communist-influenced labour movements struggling for social change.

This is no dogmatic assertion that socialism is bound to replace capitalism in the world totally. It is merely an acknowledgement that the marxist system of ideas and methods of approaching social problems seems to me the truest yet evolved by history.

Otherwise, why would a political novice (a-panting for the revo's opening date) have left the hearth and home in 1939 to work in communist ranks, Friends of the Soviet Union branches flat out fostering cultural links with the USSR, and militantly-led trade unions enthusiastically explaining the revolution's special
significance for the Australian working class?

Who, now, boarding the three score years and ten express, could forget the drama and excitement surrounding ARU secretary Lloyd Ross, early in World War II, moving a "Hands Off Russia" resolution and splitting delegates at a NSW Labor Party Conference; the NSW executive's subsequent sacking by higher-ups; and, early in 1940, the new Labor Party (State of NSW) piloted by Wal Evans and John Hughes making its inspirational but short-lived landing?

I'll never forget, as a Glebe ALP member, attending a specially convened branch meeting expected to endorse the new party, jubilantly voicing my support and becoming less politically naive and more dismayed by the second, as about half those present (dinkey-dyed-in-the-wool official laborites) breezed indignantly out.
to depots around Sydney. But branch morale didn’t falter despite spook raids, constant harassment, and the enforced absence of top Party Hats. Glebe party branch members were into diverse political activities, and socially into the beautiful quilt of beer-on-tap then sold in pubs. We ran a paper, sold Tribs, collected finance, printed leaflets, chalked-up, pasted-up, and most of all spoke-up.

Friday night street meetings at Paddy’s Market, outside the Glebe Post Office and veteran communist Tom Paine’s boot-repair shop in the main drag, attracted the committed few, plus stray leg-cocking dogs, locals jingoistically advising us to “go back to Russia”, and bored-stiff wallopers in cars taking notes. I often wonder if stenograms of those meetings still survive? But ability to pound and stir the wax was definitely upgraded as we denounced the war, canvassed support for party legality, spoke in defence of the USSR and spied happily away on international and local topics.

With few qualms, and less knowledge about newspaper management, letalone libellaws, we collected paid adverts, wrote copy, edited and distributed Forward newspaper, once issued by a Glebe unemployed organisation. All was apples until wisdom tailed enthusiasm, following Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, Darwin and Broome, with publication of a juicy morsel dobbing in Dr. Foisy, a Glebe Council heavy, for shady deals in air-raid shelter construction. The Doc responded with a nasty missive threatening libel action against the publisher — yours truly. Happily, second thoughts about suing a doughless publisher and an illegal organisation member prevailed, and the matter grounded.

Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 reinforced our deep commitment to defend the USSR. Still officially incognito, party tall poppies were crazily out of tune with the rapidly changing tide of public opinion. Pig Iron Bob met his Waterloo in August 1941 when forced to resign by his more politically astute parliamentary cronies. In October 1941, Canberra-ites, tuned-in by radio to Parliament House, would astonishingly have heard ecstatic ALP pollies singing “The Workers’ Flag is Deepest Red” as Labor leader John Curtin became Australian Prime Minister.

Communists and “fellow travellers” celebrated, too, as public support for the Soviet Union kited, and a new era of record membership and organisation dawned for the CPA.

TO BE CONTINUED!!!