Australian LEFT Review

FIFTY YEARS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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Registered at the GPO, Sydney, for transmission through the post as a periodical.
On October 30 this year the Communist Party of Australia will have been in existence for 50 years.

So far the study of its history has merely scratched the surface, and apart from a few early pamphlets, some unpublished theses, and the pioneering work of Dr. Alastair Davidson, there is not a great deal of literature on the subject.

In this enlarged issue of *ALR* we publish a number of articles from a variety of contributors dealing with various aspects of CPA history.

There has been no attempt at systematic coverage, the opinions expressed are those of the individual authors, and, as Dr. Davidson points out in his article the problem of how to write history, especially the history of a Communist Party, is itself open to a variety of approaches.

As far as possible the articles have been arranged in the chronological order in which the events dealt with occurred. The first is the report of W. Earsman to the Party from the Communist International, here published in full for the first time.

We hope that our readers will be stimulated by the material appearing here into contributing further articles and comments on the subject for later issues.
INTRODUCTION

The document which follows is a report to the Central Executive of the Communist Party on the activities of the Third Congress of the Communist International which met in Moscow in June-July 1921. W. P. Earsman, who compiled the report, was a central figure, if not the central figure, in the formation of the originally united Communist Party. He was appointed the party secretary at the founding conference.

After the secession of the Australian Socialist Party in December 1920 and the adoption by it of the name of Communist Party, a principal preoccupation of Australian communists was the division in the Australian revolutionary movement. Both sets of communists were represented at the Third Congress with the aim of securing the recognition of the Comintern. Earsman went as the representative of the official party.

Earsman was an Edinburgh Scot who had been in Australasia for about ten years, first in New Zealand then in Australia. An engineering tradesman, he had been active for several years in the socialist and industrial movements. During the First World War he had been secretary of the Melbourne District of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Later, he started the Victorian Labor College; in this, and in his general activities, he worked with other radicals including a few left-wing intellectuals. In 1919, he shifted to Sydney with Christian Jollie-Smith and collaborated with J. S. (Jock) Garden, the radical secretary of the N.S.W. Labor Council, in forming the N.S.W. Labor College. From this activity came one strand of the three pronged movement to form a communist party; the other two were the Socialist Party and a section of the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World.)

The report is the most important document on the early history of the Communist Party. Probably the most remark-
able aspect is the light it throws on the concern Trotsky showed for the interests of the communists of far-off Australia and his role in seeing their particular problems were recognised and looked after.

The unity proposals of the Small Bureau were complied with in February 1922. Although one or two groups attended the conference and merged, the A.S.P. refused to comply with the Comintern instructions. So the United Communist Party which emerged from this conference did not have the support it was intended to have. The unity question was finally disposed of later in 1922 when a significant section of the A.S.P. joined the C.P. leaving a rump of the A.S.P. which had little further significance.

Roger Coates

REPORT OF W. P. EARSMAN TO CENTRAL EXECUTIVE ON 3rd CONGRESS OF COMINTERN

—December, 1921

Dear Comrades,

In this report I am presenting to you there is everything contained in it which is of any importance; therefore I ask all comrades to treat it as confidential at this time. In fact at no time should it be discussed outside of the Central Executive.

I arrived in Moscow on the 13th of June, 1921, after eleven weeks very difficult travelling. I am leaving out all the preliminaries which had to be gone through before I could get to work.

While in England I had got letters from friends to Comrade Bell, leader of the English Delegation. Comrade Bell I saw the day of my arrival and, after a short talk, he suggested that I should see the Executive Committee. This I readily agreed with and it was decided that I should accompany Bell the following day, the 14th. In the meantime I found out whether anybody else had been doing

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Roger Coates is a secondary school teacher. Besides the introduction he has supplied the annotations to the report.
any work, but found so far that nothing had been done. Comrade Rees\(^2\) of the ASP had been here two days before me and I had not forgotten the conduct of Comrade Freeman\(^3\) while he had been in Australia. Comrade Rees informed me that he did not intend to do anything and that he would be prepared to work with me. Just then I did not take any notice of the suggestion until I had found out the lay of the land. I had made up my mind to make a fight for full recognition. I might add here that Comrade Quinton was really the credentialed delegate of the ASP who had power to act. But he had been out of action by being arrested in England as a suspicious character found loitering around the Hull Docks. For this he had received three months in gaol.

On the 14th I accompanied Comrade Bell to the Comintern, where we learn that the E.C. were not meeting, but we met Comrade Skobetsky\(^4\), Secretary to the E.C.\(^5\). After listening to me he instructed me to write a full report of the position in Australia supported by any evidence that I might have; further that all the Commissions or Committees had been set up (about ten in all) and that I could select the ones I desired to sit on and help to draft the thesis. This I thought was good and set to work full of hope.

**Women's Congress**

The Women's Congress was in session at this time and I received an invitation to attend. This was a large order, but I put in an appearance and gave a report of the position of women in the revolutionary movement in Australia and the difficulties we were confronted with. This was acceptable to them and they already realised the failings of women's movements in any of the Anglo Saxon countries. I promised that I would try and do what I could to get the interest of women in the country. Further than this I could not undertake. I also received copies of the different theses.

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2 A representative of the Australian Socialist Party or Goulburn Street communists (after the location of the Sydney headquarters).

3 Paul Freeman, whose death is described in the document was one of the most enigmatic figures of the Australian left. His nationality is in doubt, but he belonged to the Australian IWW during the First World War. Subsequently he was arrested and deported to the US where American immigration officials refused him admission. Returned to Australia on the Sonoma, he became a *cause celebre*. Finally, he disembarked in Germany and attended the Second Congress of the Comintern, nominally as an IWW delegate. He returned to Australia in 1920 to promote Australian trade union representation in the Red International of Trade Unions and then became an ASP delegate to the Third Congress, meeting his death in the manner described here, after making things very difficult for Earsman.

4 Skobetsky (Kobetsky), a Russian member of the ECCI from the Second Congress.

5 The Executive Committee of the Comintern, commonly the ECCI.
I might say that the women's part of the organisation is a very important one in Europe and they have their own papers and carry out their own propaganda work, etc.

The Executive Committee

The E.C. met every evening or in the late afternoons and sat on as a rule to the early hours of the morning. The Commissions which had already been set up and which I decided to sit on were — The World's Economic Situation: Trotsky Chairman; Tactics: Radeck Chairman; Tactics in Russia: Lenin Chairman; Organisation: Koenin\(^6\) Chairman; Trade Unions: Zinoviev Chairman.

These I attended and did my best to place the colonial position before these Comrades and by the way to place Australia on the Revolutionary map. This was not light work because everything had to be done in writing, and being alone I had to carry it out by myself.

During those few days I had been continually on the enquiry about Comrade Freeman because I was not at all satisfied about his position. This was done so that I could better judge what kind of man I had to contend with.

During this period I was able to make a little progress in getting some recognition of Australia and the Colonies generally from the International point, and when my papers were read they were surprised at the progress made in revolutionary tactics and in particular in the trade unions. I found also that the Germans were looked upon as the most important party in the world by the Russian Revolutionaries and the 3rd International because of the important position they had in relation to the Russian situation and also in the world situation. Recognising my own position I decided if possible to attach myself to the German Delegation instead of the English. I found this easier than I expected mainly because I was looked upon with favour because of the work I had done while in Germany. My objective, the recognition of our Party, had to be obtained at all costs and I was prepared to do anything to attain it. My attachment to the Germans was of great assistance in other directions in so far that it kept me well informed of all that was going on and when all meetings would be held. This was important because rarely anyone knew when the meetings were held till the last moment.

The executive meetings at this time were fully taken up with European affairs in attempting to straighten out the many difficulties

\(^6\) Koenin (Koenen, W.), a German delegate to the Third Congress and a member of the Small Bureau (presidium).
that they were confronted with. In Germany there were two parties that had recognition and one had to go. France had three or four parties all claiming allegiance to the revolutionary movement and none of them Communist parties. Italy was in a similar position, but here the masses were good, but they were tied up by a clever band of leaders, with Turatti and Serrati at their head, while the revolutionary leaders were an ordinary lot and really not leaders in the true sense of the word. Spain was in a similar position and the English movement was in a very unsatisfactory state. Then there were a host of the new European States all clamouring to have attention. It was all good for me, but tied up our affairs awfully. These things had all to be dealt with before the Congress could open so as that the Executive report could be complete and that they would have some concrete suggestions to lay before the Congress for the uplifting of the movement throughout the world.

On June 17 a public holiday was declared to celebrate the opening of the 3rd Congress of the 3rd International, and this gave me an opportunity to obtain the sympathy of Comrade Trotsky on behalf of Australia. I had met him on several occasions before this, but this day he seemed specially interested. It was at the parade of the Red Army in the Red Square where Trotsky and his staff had an inspection of the troops and an invitation had been issued for one member of each delegation to accompany the General Staff. I got the invitation for Australia and here Trotsky spoke with me about Australia and the position as a whole. On leaving he informed that if I struck any difficulties I had to come to him and that he would assist me. I mention this because it is important later. I also had a conversation with General Brussiloff this day.

June 20 it was decided by the E.C. that the official opening of the Congress should be held on June 22 in the Imperial Court Theatre. This was a public function because of its value as a propaganda display. Also at this meeting of the E.C. it was decided that all matters of all other countries would have to stand over and be attended to by the new E.C. I was opposed to this, but I was defeated in the vote.

The morning of June 22 arrived and with it Comrade Freeman who had travelled through the East, giving me no less than 10 days start from him. Still I had not been able to find out his position.

I soon found after this that he had friends somewhere about because in the issuing of the Mandates, which were of two kinds — Blue of Decisive vote and Orange a Consultative vote. I was given a Consultative vote, which made me furious, and immediately set about to demand the reason. I saw Comrade Radeck, Chairman
of the Credentials Committee, but got little satisfaction from him. In fact we had some very hot words. I then went straight to Trotsky, who advised me to state my case in writing and supply each member of the Committee with a copy. This was done, but no results were forthcoming in the first 24 hours. Back I went to Trotsky, who then accompanied me to see Radeck, and on my behalf demanded why I was being treated in this manner. Radeck made some very weak reply, which Trotsky would not accept, but it finished by Radeck promising to have the matter rectified, which was within two hours. I got my Decisive vote, which meant full recognition of our Party.

I also learnt that Comrades Freeman and Rees had received decisive votes and I immediately lodged a protest and again asked for an enquiry. I got little satisfaction at the time, but kept worrying Radeck everyday. Several friends advised me to let the matter drop and not to push the objection too far in case that I might prejudice my own case. I accepted this advice after consulting with a few others. Freeman then learned of the trouble I was making and of some of my work, and asked me to discuss things with him. At the same time he was twitting me with being the leader of the Australian delegation. We started discussing matters there and then and he commenced by telling me of matters he had been informed of by our members in Australia. Such as that we were an IWW outfit and we were only camouflaging the real issue, that I was an anarchist, etc. I found that he had wormed himself into the confidence of members in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. All this was rather astounding to me and I finished with him by saying that he was not telling the truth. We had a few minutes hot at one another and then I fully realised what kind of man I had against me. Everything that he had picked up in Australia he was prepared to use against us. In fact it was a declaration of war. This was going to make my task very much more difficult, but that could not be helped.

The Congress

The first business of the Congress was the report of the Credentials Committee, who reported that up to date they had examined the mandates of delegates from 50 different countries and that they had issued 293 Decisive votes, 218 Consultative votes and issued 150 visitors’ tickets. They graded the countries into five sections, each section carrying with it the number of votes which each delegation would be able to record. Australia was placed in the lowest section with five votes, which meant that they were divided equally between the others and myself. There was no occasion when it was necessary to split the vote, except on one
issue when a motion was moved to close the discussion on the Russian position. I was very much opposed to this, because I was down to speak and had been requested to do so by the German delegation, and I was keen on it. Anyhow, I was defeated, both Rees and Freeman voting against me.

The Congress proceeded daily after this and I was fully occupied on an average of 16 hours a day. This because of the number of Commissions I was on and then arrangements were being made for the Trade Union Congress. In this matter I agreed that Comrade Howie⁷ should be the responsible comrade, which would guarantee that all matters were being attended to, but I had always to remember that Comrade Howie was not a member of our Party, which meant that I had to keep a close watch on all that was being done.

About this time I was at the Comintern and while there I had a bundle of letters handed to me. I should here explain that each delegation has a leader in which all business is transacted, and all correspondence coming and going passes through his hands. Though I never was appointed as leader of the Australian delegation, nevertheless, I was accepted as such at Headquarters. This meant that all official announcements were made through me and all correspondence passed through my hands. I received on the 23rd of June some letters, and amongst them one signed by Comrade T. Walsh⁸ of the Seamen's Union, transferring the credentials of Comrade Quinton to Rees. I was amazed at this, because I had been doing everything to keep Rees out of the Trade Union Congress, but this furnished him without doubt with credentials. I was simply sick to find that whatever I did it seemed that there was someone always undoing my work. I cannot find any justification for this act, especially when I realise the whole circumstances, that Comrade Howie and myself were more justified to have that credential than Rees because of the fact that both of us had been working for years in the trade union movement while Rees had never taken any part in it at all. Again the fact that Comrade Rees belonged to another party ought to have been sufficient to stop the transfer. The only reason that I can conceive why Comrade Walsh did this was that he fails to grasp that those who are not with us are against us, or that he thought it was not important.

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⁷ J. Howie, a leading NSW trade unionist, president of the NSW Labor Council in 1919, elected Australian delegate to the Red International of Trade Unions' Congress held in Moscow concurrently with the Comintern Congress. He travelled with Earsman to Moscow.

⁸ T. Walsh, president of the Australian Seamen's Union; a Communist but apparently here acting independently.
These matters all will have to be dealt with later. It is to the credit of Comrade Rees that he refused to use this credential.

After this things went smoothly for a while, but my tactics I decided had to be ones of always acting first and committing Comrades Freeman and Rees or forcing them to repudiate what I did or said. Further, that by these tactics I was always compelling them to be on the defensive, defending their own position and thus stopping them from breaking any fresh ground. I should say that neither of them were ever present at any of the Commissions or lent any assistance to draft the theses.

I took part in the debates on the theses, but was very unfortunate to be always cut out by motions of closure. On July 4th I got the floor on the question of The Relationship of the Trade Unions and the Communist International. I agreed with the thesis which I had assisted to draw up and gave a report of what had been done in Australia. The following day Comrade Rees informed me that he intended to speak on the question and repudiate the things I had said. I also learned that he was not in favour of speaking, but that Freeman was pushing him. By this time they were both at loggerheads. On July 7th Rees spoke and repudiated my statements and left a very bad impression on himself and his Party. The Congress proceeded daily and nothing particular happened. Very little alteration was made from the previous theses, except in that of The World Situation by Trotsky. Special attention should be given to this, because it is the base of all the other theses.

On July 12th the Communist Congress finished and it was voted on all sides that it was the most successful Congress which had yet been held. A number of important decisions had been arrived at, mainly dealing with the internal affairs of the European countries, but showing how our affairs would be dealt with when our turn came.

On this date an article of mine appeared in the Moscow which was simply a record of fact. Rees agreed with it, but informed me that Freeman was against it and had asked him to assist in replying to it. This Rees refused to do. On this date Comrade Lamb of the ASP turned up and he assisted Freeman to write a reply, but the editor of the Moscow informed me that he would not print it. Freeman performed over this and told me I had polluted all the channels against him.

9 The Theses on the Comintern and the RITU were introduced at the Congress on July 3, the same day the RITU Congress opened — by Zinoviev.

10 Pat Lamb, ASP delegate to Third Congress.
The Trade Union Congress

The Communist Congress being over I had now more time to attend to the T.U. Congress, which had commenced on July 3rd, 1921. I had so far as I was able attended to the business of the T.U., but it was difficult because of the other work and I considered the Communist International more important than this. But the work had been in the safe hands of Comrade Howie. I attended the meetings of the Commissions on Aims and Objects, Workshop Control, Workshop Committees, Constitution, etc. In this Congress you had no homogeneous body to deal with, but an awful collection of divergent views. There were the syndicalists of France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, etc., who stood definitely against any recognition of the political weapon and for absolute freedom of the trade unions. Then came the IWW element from the States, South America and Germany who were non-political or sat on the fence on this question. Then came the simple trade unionists who demanded no politics in the unions. Then the Italian group who believed in being affiliated to both the 2nd and the 3rd Internationals. With this conglomeration of views it was apparent the task before the Congress was a much bigger one than in the Communist International, and for those who accepted the position as laid down by the 3rd International we would have to work hard to accomplish our mission.

The first business was the election of the Presidium of five, which had to be as representative as possible. Comrade Mann\(^{11}\) was elected to represent England along with the Colonies. Then came the election of the Council, which was composed of one delegate from each country. I agreed that Comrade Howie should be our representative, but this did not debar me from attending any of the meetings which I might desire to attend. Comrade Howie did the work well and his efforts brought fruit in so far that Australia had been placed in the 4th section with eight votes, and Comrade Howie, with the assistance of Comrade Bill Haywood\(^{12}\), was successful in having Australia lifted to the 2nd section with 16 votes.

The Credential Committee reported that there were 38 countries represented with 380 delegates with decisive votes and 30 with consultative votes along with 111 guests.

Then came the report of the Provincial Council which had been working for the past year in building up the International. This

\(^{11}\) Tom Mann, veteran English working class leader.

\(^{12}\) Bill Haywood. American IWW leader.
The report was submitted by Comrade Rosmer of France. The report in itself was of little importance but the discussion developed into one on tactics and principles. In this discussion Comrade Howie spoke and put the position of the Unions in Australia and endorsed the principles as laid down by the 3rd International that the unions would have absolute freedom but by the activities of the Communists they would be kept to those principles.

Then we passed to tactics in which discussion I took part and endorsed the thesis as drawn up. I showed that as far as Australia was concerned they were correct and that we had tested them.

By this time it was apparent to all that there was a better understanding existing and that only a few irreconcilables would be on the outside, such as KAPD of Germany who were pure industrialists. It also transpired that the IWW at its last convention had endorsed the Dictatorship of the Proletariat which was recognised as very important.

In looking over the work of the International and remembering that this was the 1st Congress I feel well pleased with the work done and that this International will succeed. I believe it would have been better if more time had been given to all sections for the discussions when we might have arrived at a more unanimous decision. In my opinion the theses were rushed through which gave the small minority ample opportunity of feeling aggrieved. They have now formed what is known as the 4th International.

On July 14th Comrade Lamb ASP turned up too late for any of the congresses. That day I met him but we had nothing to say to one another but it gave the ASP three delegates while I was still on my own. Since my disagreement with Freeman I had absolutely refused to talk about my affairs. I was approached by an agent of the Small Bureau to hold a combined meeting but I refused until such time as the Executive or the Small Bureau took the matter up. I was still standing for the recognition of our party as the only party in Australia.

While attending to those matters I was continuing my enquiries about Freeman and the ASP. On July 14th I learned from Comrade

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13 A. Rosmer, French member of the ECCI from the Second Congress, a member of the Small Bureau at the Third Congress and a joint chairman of the trade union commission.

14 Drafted by the Russian delegation in consultation with the German delegation, and introduced by Radek. He argued in favour of agitation, organisation and mass activity. The crucial matter involved was the failure of the March 1921 insurrection in Germany.

15 Not the Fourth International of Trotsky but the International movement of the syndicalists and anarchists who met outside the Leninist framework of the Comintern.
Skobetsky Secretary to the Comintern that the only party which had been recognised was the CP of A and the only correspondence ever received in Russia from Australia was my own letter asking for affiliation. I also found by an examination of the records of all papers received that, the only Australian revolutionary papers received were our own and The Proletariat. In fact they knew nothing of the ASP and its organ. This is absolutely authentic and at no time have the ASP been recognised or communicated with.

July 14th saw the opening of the Youth Congress which I was requested to attend and give a report. This I did being the only Australian delegate present. At this time I was anything but well. This was my fourth congress in 5 weeks and had only averaged 4 hours sleep per night with practically no food. The inevitable collapse took place and I had to take to bed. With the doctor's care I was soon about again and from this I was able to get food which agreed with me.

The Young Communist Congress was very interesting and it showed how the movement was being developed. To watch these youths of 18 to 25 years of age conducting unaided all the functions of an International organisation and one which is the largest in the world, was an amazing sight and would do the youth of Australia a wonderful lot of good and force them to recognise how backward they are in revolutionary political thought and action. There were 31 countries with decisive votes, 7 with consultative votes making a total of 150 delegates.

The Congress lasted about 10 days. A similar program was gone through as at the other Congresses. The theses were good but few of them were applicable to Australia, because most of the immediate aims suggested with the object of training the youth for action were in being. Even on the question of education that is revolutionary education Britain and Australia are in advance having already established schools for the purpose — Labour Colleges. In the future the party must give very much more attention to this work and give assistance to persuading the unions to spend more money in the building up of Independent Working Class Educational Institutions.

While on this subject I might report that an attempt was made while I was in Moscow to build up an Educational International

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16 Australian Communist and Communist.
17 Almost certainly Proletarian Review.
18 Earsman had been a central figure in the formation of Labor Colleges, following the British model, in both Melbourne and Sydney. He is distinguished, in the Australian context, by his concern for working class political education; in this respect he acted like a proto-communist, well before the Communist Party was thought of.
or Educational International Bureau which I assisted in but it was a miserable failure owing to the misunderstanding amongst advanced European Revolutionaries who have not been able to throw off their bourgeois conceptions regarding education.

This is an error I have noticed in the movement. They have a sound knowledge of fundamentals but don't realise that they apply to every walk of life and all bourgeois institutions. The idea of independent working class education appears to them unnecessary, even Comrade Lunacharsky the Commissar for Education is weak on the point. Comrade Clunie of the Scottish Labour College agreed with me and we were forced to cross swords with Lunacharsky on the question. The attitude we took up was the means of stopping the Bureau as we decided to withdraw.

Returning to the Young Peoples movement I made all arrangements for their literature to be forwarded to us, and that we would endeavour to do something with the young people. I did not forget to point out the many difficulties in our way and asked them to remember the apathy of the anglo saxon regards political thought. Britain is in a similar position and America is making big efforts to build up a strong youth movement. They are seriously handicapped by the fact that their organisation is illegal.

The next incident I have to report is, that in the early morning of July 18th at 2.00 a.m. I was arrested while returning home in the motor car. I had just left the Kremlin where I had been in consultation with one of the Soviet Commissars on matters regarding the International position and was returning home when the car was suddenly stopped and a soldier stepped into the car, flashed a torch in my face and held a revolver at my head. I had to submit and was taken to the Vatcheka and held there for a few hours. Then I was released. Very soon afterwards an apology was forthcoming from the Government with an explanation attached. This incident I only give to show and try to convey to you how careful the Soviet Government have to be and how they have to take precautions against their enemies. I fully appreciate the position and believe they acted rightly in arresting me. The details I will give to you verbally.

July 25th I was informed of an awful train accident which had occurred on July 24th about 70 miles from Moscow in which Comrades Freeman, Lamb and Rees of the ASP were in. The three

19 Lunacharsky, Soviet Commissar of Education, and outstanding man-of-letters. Earsman had no compunction in taking him to task. In fact, the lack of the later submissiveness of foreign communists to the Russian party is noticeably evident throughout the document.

20 This is the famous crash of the experimental train which looked like a large bathing box on wheels. It was driven by an aeroplane engine, propeller
were badly injured Freeman in particular. Later I learned that Rees and Lamb were able to return to their hotel and Freeman had to be taken to the hospital. There were 30 delegates in the train all being injured, 6 being killed outright: 2 Russians, 2 Germans, 1 Englishman and 1 Rumanian. Freeman was by this time reported dead but it proved to be a rumour. He had had an operation performed to amputate his leg and was suffering awful agony. On July 28th at the funeral of the 6 victims I was officially informed that Freeman had died early that morning. Blood poisoning set in after the operation and he died in terrible agony which had lasted 3 days. Comrade Freeman died well standing up to it like a hero. His last words were a message of farewell to all Comrades in Australia. On July 30th he was buried with full military honours under the shade of the Kremlin walls. I acted as chief mourner, Comrades Rees and Lamb still being confined to bed. This accident is one of the most appalling I have ever known and draws the curtain over many things that my lips must be closed to.

On July 30th Comrades Smith, Casey and Kelly along with Comrade Marks from New Zealand arrived. They all reported fit and in good health. I decided that I would see Comrade Smith because I knew him to be a member of our party and he confirmed it. I asked him why he had not got credentials before leaving and he informed me that he had not the time or he would have done so. I asked him his opinion on several matters and finding him alright and believing that he would be of some use to me I granted his request and issued credentials to him. I reported the matter to the Secretary of the Comintern and he approved of my action. I gave Smith strict instructions that all matters were confidential and that he must treat as such.

Comrade Marks then requested me to endorse him as a member of the CP of NZ.

This I refused to do because I did not know him and he had no credentials with him. Casey, Kelly and Marks were accepted by the Red Trade Union and given permission to attend the Transport Workers International.

On August 2nd I learned the true position of Freeman. He had turned up in 1920 in time for the 2nd Congress and stated that he and all. The most important person killed was F. A. Sergeiv (Artem), a leading Bolshevik who had spent several years in exile in Australia. Although there is little direct evidence (it is striking that Earsman does not mention him), circumstantially there seems to be a strong link between Sergeiv and the ASP of which he had been a member for five years.

21 Some, if not all, trade union representatives: Casey, probably W. (Bill) Casey of the Seamen's Union.

22 It is doubtful if Smith was actually a CPA member.
had come to represent the IWW of Australia. I denounced this and stated this was an absolute falsehood because the IWW had died in 1917. After the 2nd Congress he worried several of the Russian party officials for recognition but he was refused because he belonged to no party which claimed to be Communist. His next move was to turn to the Red Trade Unions and persuaded them to give him money to return to Australia so as he might act as their agent to invite the workers of this country to send one or two delegates to the Congress at Moscow. He had no special credentials but simply had to try to get a couple of delegates for the Red Trade Union International. He had no authority whatever to invite as many delegates as possible and that all their expenses would be paid. His real reason for coming to Australia was that he might join one of the parties there and by that means he would be able to join to the Russian CP.23

On August 3rd I interviewed the Small Bureau and they agreed that they would have our affairs dealt with as soon as possible. At that meeting I was requested to remain in Russia. I then placed my position before them and the mission that I had come for and asked them to decide what I should do. If I thought I should then I would be quite prepared to do so. After hearing what I had to say they decided that I should have a free hand and I decided to return.

On August 4th the Small Bureau informed me that a sub-Commission had been appointed to deal with the preliminaries of our affair and that the meeting would take place the next day.

Comrades Lamb, Rees, Smith and myself attended and Comrade Borodean24 opened the meeting by stating that it was a preliminary meeting to find out the cause of the trouble. I put up Comrade Smith to tell our story believing that it would be better for me to sit back and watch. Comrade Smith carried out this work very well. Lamb stated that he had very little to say because he did not know all the facts but had always believed that the ASP were affiliated. Rees followed and stated that he was not concerned about any of the bickering but that he was prepared to assist in any way that would bring about unity. Comrade Borodean then asked if there were any fundamental differences. To this I replied and there were serious differences in the fact that the ASP did not carry out the principles of the 3rd and were actually opposed to the theory of the mass party. In reality they were a sect who surrounded them—

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23 Freeman's acceptability in Moscow and his mission to Australia in 1920-21 was probably underwritten by Sergeiv.
24 Borodin, a prominent Comintern official who is most famous for his work in China.
selves with a halo arising from the Marxian platitudes which they give lip service to.

Comrade Borodean then moved the following resolution: “In view of the fact that there is no difference in principles, program or tactics, except differences arising out of local troubles this meeting today proposes to the Commission of the Small Bureau to recommend an immediate unity of the two parties to take effect before the end of January 1922. This unity to take place at a general conference representing the two parties.” Smith and myself opposed this resolution and stated that we were out for the recognition of one party and that the other party should be compelled to join it. This the Commission refused to entertain. Lamb stated that he had no instructions therefore was not in a position to act. Rees stated that the resolution suited him, then Smith and myself withdrew our opposition and accepted the resolution which was carried by 3-1 Lamb voting against.

The next resolution was: “In order to facilitate the business of unity in Australia the two delegations agree to unite and to submit to the Small Bureau of the Executive Committee the following requests on: Communications, Literature, Unity with Britain, Representation and Finance.”

This was carried unanimously and it was agreed that we meet on August 5th to draft our requests.

On August 5th Comrades Lamb, Rees, Smith and myself met with the object of completing our task. We had a general talk for some time in which Lamb informed us that he would not do anything because he had always been of the opinion that the ASP were affiliated and now they were receiving no consideration. The first question was representation at the Unity Conference. In this matter I insisted on equal representation. Smith, Rees and myself agreed to this, Lamb refusing to do anything. Communications and Literature we decided to fix up later. Next it was decided to ask £500 for unity expenses. I was opposed to this but Lamb moved it so I agreed. This finished our business and it was agreed that I should draft the resolutions and submit them to the Small Bureau, along with a minority report from Lamb.

This is the draft of Lamb’s report: “That the parties in Australia draft the scheme for unity, and they failing to agree that the Comintern scheme be put into operation.” signed Lamb.

25 Although Earsman opposed Borodin’s resolution, the CPA on his return accepted the Comintern directive on unity and a conference held in February 1922 formed the United Communist Party which was noteworthy for the acceptance of the Industrial Union Propaganda League as an affiliated body. The ASP, however, refused to participate.
These discussions were very bitter between Smith and Lamb but Rees and I got on very well together.

I submitted our proposals to the Secretary of the Small Bureau the same afternoon. Late that evening I received a telephone message from the Small Bureau requesting me to attend a meeting at once. I did so and was asked to give the reasons for our proposals. After hearing me they decided that they could not accept them especially on the representation proposal. They believed that by the experience they had had in England, America and other countries that if they accepted our suggestions that only failure would be the result. The Small Bureau then drew up suggestions and requested me to place them before my other Comrades. See copy of official letter attached. The financial question was then sent along to the finance committee.

On August 6th I called a meeting of the others and informed them of what had taken place and laid before them the proposals of the Small Bureau for confirmation.

All Comrades Lamb, Rees, Smith and myself signed the proposals as drawn up and the same day I returned them to the Small Bureau for confirmation. I might mention here that it was also decided that in all future conferences the representation from Australia should be 3 delegates from the CP and 1 for the Red Trade Union.

At this time the famine26 was beginning to make itself felt and we all had to lend what aid we could by doing the necessary propaganda work. I was also requested to think about remaining in Russia for some little time but this I thought was unfair to the movement here. I therefore placed the matter before the S.M. and requested them to decide. They decided that I should have a free hand and I thought it was better to return as soon as possible.

I then turned my attention to the RTUI to see what had to be done there. The first thing was the procuring of money to carry on the propaganda work. This was difficult because all monies were being used to assist in the famine area. I agreed that Comrade Howie should be the representative of the RTUI in Australia and that I would act as advisor. The sum of £220 was made available for that purpose.

My business being completed I made the necessary arrangements for my return. Before leaving I was given a Commission to carry out in Germany which required my attendance at this party's conference. I may say that I was successful in the commission which I was given.

26 Following the end of the civil war, there was a severe famine in Russia in 1921.
I arrived in Berlin on the 22nd of August and the next day travelled to Jena to attend the Germany party congress.

On September 2nd I left Germany for London arriving there on September 3rd. On reporting to the party in London I was informed that Lamb had been arrested on his arrival and been put through the third degree for two days by about 40 detectives. He had some very suspicious documents in his possession and one in particular which was in Rees' hand writing. After he had sailed Comrade McManus brought me a bundle of letters addressed to Lamb but I refused to touch them.

The party then decided to open those letters. On this being done the reason for Lamb's arrest was not hard to find. One of the letters from Broken Hill was stating the number of rifles etc. that they had been able to procure, along with a lot more rubbish of that kind. The contents of those letters was enough to hang him let alone being arrested.

After this it was decided that I should keep out of the way for awhile until such time as this might blow over. Later I did propaganda work in most of the main industrial centres.

Then I met Rees and because of the developments we decided that we would destroy all official documents.

The rest of my time was fully taken up in doing party work. I made all arrangements for all papers and literature to be sent here from the different countries I was in. I sailed from England on the 21st of October. While in South Africa I met the leaders of the party there and arranged for all exchanges.

I have only one recommendation to make and that is that in future that no one should be allowed to leave for Russia on workers business unless they are members of the party. I worked with Comrade Howie a good deal but there was business that I could not consult him on and it was often difficult for me to get him passed through.

I am glad to be home again though the journey was rough the experience has been of great service to me. I now place myself in the hands of the party to act and work as they think fit for me to do.

27 McManus, a prominent founder of the Communist Party of Great Britain.
The Decade 1930-40 was a very significant and creative period for the Communist Party of Australia. During these years our influence among the working people grew rapidly, and the political consolidation of the Party, of its political line, tactics and organisation took place. The Communist Party had been founded, October 30, 1920, in the aftermath of the socialist revolution in Russia and the creation of the Communist International. But for the next ten years the Party was unable to consolidate its position, overcome internal differences and provide answers to the many political problems before it.

Reformism, which permeated the whole of the Labor movement, Labor Party, trade unions and Left alike, was a powerful barrier to revolutionary advance. It exercised a strong, muting influence on the radicalism that spread among the working people following the Russian revolution and the conclusion of the First World War, when it strove to divert support for socialism into safe Labor Party channels. Socialist organisation that had preceded the Communist Party — the Australian Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, Industrial Workers of the World, etc., had never succeeded in breaking through the reformist barrier and winning mass support. They remained small sectarian organisations largely removed from the main stream of political struggle and the life of the people.

For the newly founded Communist Party, therefore, clarification of the role of the revolutionary Marxist party in the struggle against capitalism, together with an elaboration of the theoretical, tactical and organisational approach of the Party to the Labor Party and...
reformist trade union movement, was of crucial importance. Some Party members could see no future for the Communist Party and proposed that it should disband and call upon its members to join the Labor Party in order to strengthen Labor's Left Wing. Others saw the Party as something of a 'ginger up' group that by its criticisms and activities impelled the Labor Party to more militant policies.

The differences within the Party on these issues became very acute in 1929, when the downturn in the economic situation began and the class struggle sharpened. The Conference of the Communist Party held at the end of 1929 declared against subordination of the Party to the Labor Party. It called for an independent Communist party and for vigorous measures to improve the work and leadership of the Party in the struggles of the people, and it elected a new Central Committee to implement these decisions. The changes that came over the Party during the 1930s can be shown in one aspect by membership figures. At the beginning of 1930 there were about 300 Party members, by 1934 just on 3,000, and in 1939, 5,000. The first big move forward came during the economic crisis 1930-33, which brought into the forefront the main contradictions and worst features of the capitalist system.

The economic crisis was a shattering experience, the number of unemployed exceeding one-third of the workforce, with great numbers working only three or four days a week. The extent and degree of poverty in Australia was without parallel. The crisis succeeded, in a way that no propaganda of ours could have done, in exposing the sham and illusions of parliamentary politics and the bankruptcy of the policies of the Conservative and Labor parties. In those pre-Keynesian days, banks, economists and conservative governments alike had only one answer to economic crises — slashing government expenditures, closing down public works and reducing wages, salaries and social services. Such measures simply compounded the chaos.

Initially the people, in landslide proportions, turned to the Labor Party. At the Federal Elections in November, 1929, the Scullin Labor Government was elected with a record majority, and in quick time Labor Governments were formed in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. Labor, however, had no answer to the crisis. Their policy was not to end capitalism, but to obtain reforms that made it more palatable. With the economic system in a state of collapse it was now not a matter of improvement of capitalism by reform, but of saving it. The Scullin Government turned its back on Labor policy, which had been to develop public works and to
finance a variety of other Government activities with the aim of relieving unemployment. Instead of this, responsibility for economic policy was virtually handed over to a group of bankers and bourgeois economists who dictated recessive policies which increased the burdens of the working people.

New South Wales Premier, J. T. Lang, took up a different stand from that of his Federal Labor colleagues. The economic crisis, in his view, was not the product of contradictions within the capitalist system, but the result of a conspiracy of international bankers, who, for some obscure reason, had brought the capitalist system to a standstill. Lang waged an incessant campaign against international finance. He attacked the Scullin Government and split the Labor Party, breaking the New South Wales branch away from the Federal organisation. In terms of actual policy he advocated negotiations for the reduction of overseas interest payments and, failing agreement, the suspension of all payments until overseas bondholders agreed to reduce. He also made vague proposals that the national currency, instead of being based on gold, should have a goods basis.

Disillusionment of the working people with Labor was rapid, as the bankruptcy of its policy and leadership became apparent. Before 1932 was out the backlash came, and each of the Labor Governments were defeated and removed from office. Except for New South Wales, where Lang's demagogic attacks against international finance continued to influence large sections of workers, Labor was heavily discredited and at its lowest ebb.

From the inception of the crisis the Communist Party set out to explain the capitalist crisis and popularise socialism. We worked for the establishment of the unemployed workers' movement, based on committees of the unemployed in all suburbs and towns, committees which became very popular. They took up the struggle for the demands of the unemployed and developed a great variety of activities, including cultural and educational work. They were democratically controlled by the unemployed themselves and many talented organisers and leaders were thrown up by them.

The Communist Party was also in the thick of many other activities. The struggles against evictions; campaigns to increase the dole and for Government relief works to provide jobs for the unemployed; demonstrations, and the hunger marches from the Northern coalfields, Newcastle, the South Coast and Lithgow, to press the claims of the unemployed; the organisation of legal defence and assistance for thousands of workers, arrested and gaoled or beaten up by police. The Party also had to defend its legality and combat constant police repression against our meetings and
members, and the organisation of workers’ defence was initiated to fight against the New Guard.

These struggles and activities provided rich experiences for the Communist Party and was the basis for its rapid numerical growth and political development. Thousands joined the Party during those years, but we lacked the organisation and the experienced political activists to properly initiate them into the Party and consolidate their membership. Nevertheless, by 1934 membership had increased ten times over and a large proportion of these were already mass leaders who had won the support and confidence of men and women they worked amongst in the movement and struggles of the unemployed. The days of the small socialist sect now were behind us. We had broken down the barriers of isolation and had won widespread support.

Our relationship to the Labor Party also had changed. There were no longer suggestions that our aims could be realised only as a Left Wing of the Labor Party, or that our role was that of a ‘ginger group’. We had decisively differentiated the Party from the Labor Party; some think too decisively, reformism having become almost a dirty word. But the political independence and revolutionary role of the Communist Party was now something more than a name — it was recognised and seen as a fact.

The Party was growing and learning, but, naturally enough, there were many mistakes. Here I will only refer, in brief, to mistakes in propaganda. The situation we were faced with called for vigorous exposure of reformism, and this was certainly forthcoming. There were common mistakes such as failure to distinguish between the rank-and-file and supporters of the Labor Party and reformist leaders; personal abuse instead of concrete examples and analysis of reformist decisions and activities directed against the working people; neglect of fundamental political and class issues and too much attention to trivialities, etc. If not entirely, these mistakes were associated with the immaturity and inexperience of Party members.

More serious was our characterisation of the reformist leaders as ‘social fascists’. This term had its origin in the Comintern at a time when the fight against fascism and war was already high on the agenda. It entered into our propaganda without proper consideration of its political implications and therefore its effect on our tactics and mass work. The term ‘social fascism’ incorrectly characterised the reformist leaders, directly linking them with fascism. It was to confuse our political estimation of the Labor Party and its possible positive role in the struggles against fascism.
and war, and therefore complicated the problem of the united front.

After the Depression

The second phase of Party development in the 1930s began about the second half of 1933, as the economic crisis began to recede and more jobs became available. The economy remained unstable and the rate of recovery was slow; at the end of 1936 there were still 112,000 unemployed in New South Wales alone. But conditions were changing and new problems and tasks were arising.

A most important indicator of these came in January, 1934, when W. Orr, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, was elected General Secretary of the Miners' Federation. Bill Orr came to Australia from Scotland soon after the First World War. He worked for a short time in the Lithgow Steel Works and then transferred to coal mining. During the 15 months (March, 1929, to June, 1930) lockout of the Northern miners, following the coal owners' demand for a 12.5 per cent wage reduction which the miners refused to accept, Orr had campaigned on Party policy and won considerable support for an 'all out' stoppage in the coal industry to compel withdrawal of the coal-owners' ultimatum. The policy of the reformist officials, to confine the dispute to the Northern fields, was to lead to defeat for the miners because sufficient coal for all national needs was produced in the other coalfields.

The election of Orr as Miners' General Secretary was not a fortuitous event. In September, 1934, another Communist, C. Nelson, was elected General President. From then on the swing to the Left was rapid. Seamen, waterside workers, iron workers, railway workers, sheet metal, building workers and various groups of unionists elected Communists and other militants to trade union positions. By the beginning of 1937 there were more than 20 Communist trade union officials and upwards of 1,000 Communists holding executive or local union positions throughout Australia.

The radicalism that was a feature of the unemployed movement was manifesting itself in the industries and a new militant spirit was evident among the industrial workers. The old reformist trade union leadership was discredited, having played a capitulatory and defeatist role in the big strikes of 1928-29-30, when the capitalist offensive on living standards that presaged the economic crisis was in full swing. They gave no leadership during the economic crisis and were incapable of responding to the tasks of the trade unions in the new conditions that arose as the economic crisis receded.
W. Orr's election as Miners' Secretary was the starting point of a new trend that was to radically influence and change the Australian trade union movement. Reformist trade union domination could no longer be maintained in face of the militancy of the workers and the challenge implicit in the revolutionary ideas, trade union tactics and activities of the Communists and their supporters. For the Communist Party the changes in the trade union movement compelled re-examination of established policies and ideas, the scrapping of some and readjusting of others; but, most importantly, the working out and elaboration of revolutionary tactics as distinct from those of reformism.

Tactical and organisational ideas of the Comintern, which were largely based upon European experiences, had proved very helpful in developing the unemployed workers' movement which had its beginnings in 1930, but it was a different matter in the trade unions. Here, while the general Marxist principles and approach were valid, and the European experiences were important, it was essential to develop tactical and organisational methods suited to the conditions in Australia, where reformist domination was firmly established and traditions of craft unionism were strong.

In 1928 the Militant Minority Movement had been established, following the example of the trade union Left in Britain. It made very little progress until 1930, when MMM organisation was established in the mining industry and groups were formed in various other industries. With those developments the MMM became the main organising centre for the Left in the trade unions. However, the question arose even in the early stages: was the objective of the Left simply a minority movement? Success in the Miners' Union elections quickly disposed of this issue, making it clear that the Left should strive to win the support of the majority.

Originally, the concept of the MMM was that it should become an alternative revolutionary trade union centre and movement as opposed to that of the reformists. (In Europe the trade union movement had divided and revolutionary trade unions existed side by side with reformist unions). While accepting the fact that there were fundamental differences between revolutionary and reformist trade union policies and tactics, the Party reached the conclusion that the perspective for the Left in this country should not be a divided, but an organisationally united trade union movement, and this meant that the revolutionary forces should direct their efforts toward maintaining and strengthening national trade union unity, while working within the reformist trade union structure to win the support of the workers and, thereby, to transform the unions. With
this idea as our starting point there was obviously little future for the MMM as an alternative trade union centre, and its phasing out began. More importantly, however, this approach opened up new perspectives for developing the united front.

We had also to consider whether the revolutionary movement could be content simply with militant trade unionism, as the name Militant Minority Movement seemed to imply. Miners, shearers and other sections of workers waged militant economic struggles, but politically they supported reformism. The workers live and work in an atmosphere polluted by the anti-socialist ideas of the capitalist class, ideas which reformism reinforces. Marx and Lenin had stressed the need for the trade unions to have a revolutionary outlook and objective. They showed that economic struggles give rise to trade union consciousness, but not to socialist consciousness, and that this latter has to be brought into the working-class movement. The question we had to find the answer to in our trade union work was: how to raise the understanding of the workers from the level of trade union consciousness up to the level of socialist consciousness. This is a recurring problem for the Party and has to be re-examined at every stage of development. It occupies a central place in the present Party debate when we are faced with a widening gap between the growth, breadth and intensity of the economic struggles and the development of socialist understanding among the workers.

The emphasis in our approach to this problem in the 1930s was to raise and discuss, from a class and socialist standpoint, the political issues that inevitably arose in the course of industrial disputes and trade union activities. The then current phrase for this approach was 'to politicalise' the struggles of the workers. The reformists tried to keep politics, or rather class politics, out of the union activities. The fact that Communists discussed the issues that concerned the workers from a class political standpoint was very advantageous for the Left. The large army of unemployed, strike breaking, the open line-up of employers, government, state forces and arbitration courts against the workers, as well as questions of fascism and war, provided facts and arguments for expounding political and socialist ideas.

In the mining industry an unrelenting series of guerrilla strikes were being waged by the miners against the coal owners, but they added little or nothing to the political development of the mine-workers. The problem of strike tactics and organisation had to be tackled immediately by the Communists in the Federation. Prior to 1934 the Party had urged the setting up of 'independent leadership' of strikes and other forms of struggle by workers in industry
or unemployed. One of our objectives was to prevent the reformist leaders from gaining control, since they had been largely responsible for the serious defeats suffered by the unions in the 1928-30 strikes. During the economic crisis they spread defeatist moods among the workers, discouraged strikes and constantly tried to divert industrial disputes into arbitration channels. However, with Communists in the leadership of a union, it was patently absurd to exclude them from participating in strike leadership, so tactical changes became necessary.

The positive feature of ‘independent leadership’ was that the control and conduct of strikes struggles resided with the workers engaged in them. The aim was to seek the democratic participation of all those involved, in mass activities and in the direction of the struggles. This form of strike organisation ran into difficulties in the industries, where the reformist trade union officials opposed it, but it proved eminently successful among the unemployed. With the election of communist trade union leaders, although the principle of ‘independent leadership’ had to be modified, it was essential to continue to press for mass participation in the conduct and control of strikes.

Very shortly after Orr’s election as General Secretary of the Miners’ Federation a strike broke out in a government-owned mine in the small mining centre of Wonthaggi, Victoria. The miners had been resisting moves to reduce their wages and worsen working conditions, when the mine management dismissed a number of workers precipitating an all-out stoppage. The strike lasted for about five months before the miners were successful in achieving their demands. The most important feature of this strike was the mass involvement of the workers in the activities and conduct of the struggle and the organisation that was thrown up. The union Board of Management was widened to include active strikers and this body was responsible to the members for organisation and leadership of the strike. Various committees were set up for picketing, propaganda, organisation and relief, etc. Speakers were developed and sent throughout Victoria and interstate; others were detailed for rabbit trapping, fishing, collecting vegetables, boot repairing, hairdressing and a variety of other activities. General publicity explaining the miners’ case issued by the Federal Officers and the Wonthaggi strike leadership was outstanding, and public sympathy for the strike grew. It was estimated that more than 450 workers were active in the strike. Women were also involved and a Miners Women’s Auxiliary was formed.

The Wonthaggi strike, although it involved only a few hundred workers, was a new experience for the trade union movement. The
strike activity built up the confidence and unity of the miners in Wonthaggi and throughout the Federation. For the Left in the trade unions the strike was an invaluable experience and set the pattern for strike organisation and tactics. Politically the results were also excellent, and socialist understanding among the workers increased. This was reflected in the growth of the Communist Party and the establishment of a strong Party branch in Wonthaggi.

From 1933 onwards the pressures for uniting the working class for the struggle against capitalism increased, influenced by both international and national processes. Internationally, in Germany which had the most advanced Labor movement in Western Europe, the working class had failed to unite to fight against Fascism and Hitler had taken power. The German Social Democratic Party had contributed to the Nazi victory by its support for the capitalist democratic regime, by its policy of compromise with the monopolies, its support for measures to stabilise capitalism during the economic crisis, and its opposition to a working-class united front against Fascism. The German Communist Party also made serious mistakes. It underestimated the Fascist danger and held the view that Germany was not Italy, and that the German working class could contain and defeat Fascism. It pursued a sectarian policy toward social democracy and was unable to draw Social Democratic workers into a common battle against Hitler.

Having taken over political power Hitler proceeded to uproot and destroy both the Communist and Social Democratic parties and the trade union movement. As the facts of the terrible disaster that had overwhelmed the German Labor movement became known the search for reasons and for measures to prevent a repetition of such a defeat was undertaken. In 1934 the French working people, faced with the imminent danger of a Fascist seizure of power, responded to the call for unity against Fascism. The Paris working class took over the streets of the city in mighty demonstrations with the Communist and Socialist Party leaders at their head and working-class unity was forged. The road to Fascism was barred and the French people's front arose.

The international experiences gave a new emphasis on the need for working-class unity. Here in Australia the Communist Party gave close attention to the experiences and discussions in Europe, and there were internal developments which strengthened the trend towards unity. Unemployed workers returning to industry carried with them their experiences of united action. In the mining industry the successes resulting from united action by the workers, and the effectiveness of the tactics and leadership given by the Communist
officials, made a big impact on district officers. Most of these swung over to support the new leadership, as did many lodge officers. The same processes developed in other unions where Communists succeeded to leadership. These developments demonstrated the possibilities of trade union unity and the importance of correct methods of work with reformist officials in the unions.

Events were also shaping in such a way as to improve the possibilities of unity in action with the Labor Party. Lang had split the Labor Party in 1931 and in NSW had carried the overwhelming majority of Labor Party members and supporters with him, Federal Labor being nearly wiped out. Politically Lang belonged to the extreme Right-wing of the Labor Party, although this was not apparent to his supporters in 1930-32. At the State Election in 1932 Lang was defeated and from then on his position began to weaken. The victory of Orr and Nelson in the Miners' Federation and the trend to the Left in other unions was a clear indication of this. But Lang needed the support of the reformist trade union leaders — the unions having provided most of the funds for the Labor Daily Newspaper, which Lang had gained control of, with the Miners' Federation holding the biggest parcel of shares.

To maintain his hold over the Labor movement and the Labor Party machine Lang set out to consolidate his position in the Labor Daily and to get control of the Labor Council's radio station 2KY. Defeat of Orr and Nelson and the election of Lang supporters to the main official positions in the Miners' Federation was crucial if these plans were to succeed, and Lang set out to encompass this. Intervening in the Miners' Federation elections at the end of 1934 he addressed a series of public meetings in the coalfields and made emotional appeals to the miners to 'treat the Communists as enemies of the Labor movement' and to reject Orr and Nelson. "If there is a likelihood of any union electing members of the Communist Party to a controlling position in that union," Lang said, "it is my bounden duty, as the Labor leader in this State, to urge the rejection of the members of the Communist Party."

Things did not turn out as Lang expected, and Orr and Nelson were re-elected with big majorities. For the General Secretary's position Orr received 7,515 votes, Logan (Lang Labor) 2,919, Teece (former General Secretary) 2,446. The figures for Nelson were about the same. The writing was on the wall for J. T. Lang. His influence and that of his Right-wing supporters had declined, while support for the Left was growing.

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The implications of the miners’ election was not lost on the reformist trade union officials, as events were to show. Following his rejection by the miners Lang moved quickly through supporters on the Labor Council to try to get control of radio station 2KY. Apart from its value as a publicity medium, 2KY was very profitable and as such a substantial source of the finances under the control of the Labor Council officers, who saw their incomes menaced if Lang succeeded. Although formerly they had been ardent Lang supporters, these officials, together with the Left, succeeded in rallying a majority of unions to defeat the take-over bid. The revolt against Lang’s leadership had now extended to reformist trade union executives, decisively weakening his position in the trade union movement.

Lang had used the Labor Daily to viciously attack the miners’ leaders and the union’s policy in the Federation Elections, and he was equally ruthless against the reformist officials in the 2KY battle. It is understandable therefore that the unions, with the Miners’ Federation playing an important role, now took measures to restore their control over Labor Daily. After a long struggle they succeeded, only to find that the paper, when returned to them, was so encumbered with debts that it was beyond the means of the unions to continue with its publication for more than a few months.

This brief outline of events illustrates the rapid process of differentiation, of rejection of the Right-wing forces around Lang, that was going on among the workers and also in trade union leaderships. Consultation and co-operation between the Communists in the trade unions and the reformist union leaders who opposed Lang was developed. These started with the Labor Daily and 2KY struggles, but as the trend of the workers was to the Left, the reformist leaders also adopted a more radical position on other issues before the trade unions, such as on the handling of strikes, defence of democratic rights which was important because of a threat to the legality of the Communist Party as well as other infringements of the liberties of the workers, and also in the struggle against the danger of war.

The co-operation that had developed in NSW extended to other States as well. The union movement as a whole benefited and more militant policies and demands were adopted. The 1937 Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions came out in favour of a shorter working week, increased wages and improved working conditions. It declared for a foreign policy of peace based upon a system of collective security and denounced Fascist aggression. The Labor Councils and State Trade Union Movement supported
these decisions. In the industries unity in action was developing, and the shop committee movement was attracting more and more support.

In 1930 the Party had launched a campaign for shop and job committees, as organs of ‘independent leadership’ of the workers’ struggles, and committees were formed in the power and some other industries. Employers strenuously opposed shop committees, regarding them as a threat to their authority in industry and to their unfettered control over production, and refused to recognise them. Likewise, the reformist trade union leaders, who saw the shop committees as a challenge to their union positions and as organising centres of work stoppages over which they would have little or no control.

When the situation in the trade union movement changed following the election of Communists to trade union positions, especially in the metal and rail industries where job organisation was developing, we re-examined our ideas on the role of the shop committees and their relationship with the unions. Because of the craft nature of the trade union movement in Australia the workers in any particular workshop, practically without exception, were divided between as many as five, ten or more unions. We advanced the view that the main task of the shop committees was to unite the workers on the job, irrespective of the craft union they belonged to. The shop committees were not the organisations of one particular union (they could be this only if there was one union in the industry), but had responsibility to the unions as a whole. It was to the advantage of the workers, therefore, for the shop committees and unions to cooperate and work together instead of acting independently of each other.

The Party also raised the need for bringing union organisation into line with changes in industry which were undermining the craft basis of unionism. We urged consideration of the need for industrial unionism, in the event of which the shop committee would become an important part of the industrial union structure. The shop committee was to be responsible to all workers in a particular plant, and this feature of the shop committee, in our view, made it an admirable form of organisation to develop activities for workers’ control over production, an issue raised by the Comintern. Unions were not in the same position to do this, because each union covered only a section of the workers on a particular job. The responsibility of the trade union was to extend the authority and the right of workers across industry as a whole, but in each workshop the shop committee had to contest the rights and authority
assumed by the employer, fight to improve the conditions of the workers, and also to extend their rights and develop their control over production.

There were some exaggerated ideas about the shop committees — that they were 'embryonic Soviets' for example — but this was jumping ahead of things. It implied the victory of the socialist revolution and the taking over of the capitalist enterprises by the working class in the name of all the people. In our conditions, under capitalism, the controls over production imposed by the workers through the shop committees were directed towards enforcing the right of the workers to be consulted about all changes in production, to protection from mass dismissals, victimisation, speed up and other methods of worsening conditions in order to swell employers' profits.

By the end of 1937 the shape of the changes taking place in the trade union movement had emerged. The three trends outlined above — the radicalisation taking place among the workers, the co-operation of the left in the trade union movement with a section of reformist leaders and the growth of the shop committee movement — were major factors in the change. The conjunction of these trends contributed significantly to the growth of unity and struggle among the workers and to strengthening the trade union movement as a whole.

In August, 1935, the 7th World Congress of the Communist International took place, at which G. Dimitrov delivered his historic report on working-class unity and the struggle against war and Fascism. On the basis of the Australian experiences we had reached conclusions on unity in action and ways of achieving it, especially in the industries and unions, that drove home the importance of Dimitrov's report. The theoretical and tactical ideas he advanced concerning the united front and the creation of a people's front in, the fight against war and fascism, and the need to search for transitional forms of approach to the socialist revolution, opened up wider perspectives and gave added meaning to our work for building working-class unity.

In 1936 the menace of Fascism increased and was given new emphasis with the Spanish Civil War; the Second World War was approaching. In the trade unions and industries anti-Communist organisation was being developed that later was to provide the basis for the industrial groups. These developments meant new problems and new tasks, which we were better able to handle at the time because of the growth, ideologically and organisationally, of the Communist Party and of the Left as a whole.
THE STATE LABOR PARTY (1940-1944) is seldom remembered these days. It gets only a passing reference in James Jupp, while Alistair Davidson in his recent history of the Communist Party of Australia seems to regard it as little more than a convenient legal party for under-cover Communists. At a time when the CPA is actively seeking closer cooperation and alliance with various Left elements it is worth examining this earlier alliance more carefully. The following pages represent a brief and somewhat personal account of this story. I write it this way because my own political biography is a part of the story and because to tell it as a participant is perhaps better than to write it as an academic exercise.

The immediate origins of the State Labor Party — or to give it its formal title of those days, the Australian Labor Party (State of NSW) — was the ‘Hands off Russia’ Resolution which was passed at the Easter Conference of the Labor Party in March,
1940. This resolution, which expressed the determination of the Australian Left to oppose the switching of the war from Germany to the Soviet Union, brought about the intervention of the Federal Executive of the ALP into the affairs of the NSW Branch. On April 11, 1940, the NSW State Executive was forced to expunge the ‘Hands off Russia’ Resolution. However, the matter did not rest there. On June 15 the Communist Party was declared illegal. On June 18 a Special Federal Conference of the ALP adopted a new war and defence policy which offered cooperation with the Menzies Government in a national War Council. Consistent with this new policy the Parliamentary Labor Party voted for the Emergency Powers Bill brought down by the Menzies Government. Only four members of the Parliamentary Labor Party (E. J. Ward, Maurice Blackburn, Reg Pollard and Dr. Maloney) voted against this measure. For this act of defiance they were congratulated by the NSW Executive. This action riled the conservative Labor forces so much that they induced a second intervention of the Federal Executive. This time the State Executive was suspended. A majority of the Executive, including J. R. Hughes, W. P. Evans, W. Booth, A. Wilson, W. E. Gollan, E. A. Ross, E. Walsham and others, refused to accept dismissal and constituted themselves as the A.L.P. (State of New South Wales).

From the outset the SLP opposed the ban on the Communist Party and sought to have it repealed. Many Communists joined the SLP, participated in its deliberations and activities, and held office at all levels from local branch to the Central Executive. But the SLP was clearly not functioning as a Communist Party in these years. It continued to occupy the traditional office in the Trades Hall in Goulburn Street. Its organisation remained that of a Labor Party. In addition to having many locality branches, it also had some trade union affiliates. It maintained the same electoral organisation as the official Labor Party and it concentrated a great deal of its activity in the effort to win seats in parliament and to influence parliamentary and local council policies. In the federal election of September, 1940, the SLP polled over 100,000 votes (in NSW) and later a sizable vote in the 1941 State election. Communists influenced the form of work, policy, party education and propaganda activities increasingly throughout 1942 and 1943, but they were not the major influence on the party at any stage.

I went to Sydney in January, 1942, to take up a school teaching post at Wahroonga. Prior to then I had not been very active politically. As a history student at Melbourne University in the

3 In early 1940 there was no fighting on the Western Front opposite the Ziegfried Line but Britain and France were preparing an expeditionary force to assist Finland against the USSR.
pre-war years I had been stimulated by my study of fascism and socialism and by the anti-fascist struggle in Europe (above all Spain) to take a progressive stand. I joined the Labor Club in 1938, during my second year at the University. Over the long vacation early in 1938 I had worked as a fruitpicker in the Shepparton district and had witnessed the demonstrations of unemployed. I read the Communist Manifesto for the first time sitting on an upturned fruitcase in an Ardmona orchard. In 1941, after completing an MA thesis and while doing an Education course, I joined the ALP and became a member of the South Carlton Branch. When I arrived in Sydney I sought to link up with the ALP, but my uncle (the late Dr. C. M. Churchward) was already an active member of the SLP and he persuaded me to go first to see Bert Chandler, then secretary of the SLP. An hour and a half discussion with Bert convinced me that the SLP was more progressive and more socialist than the Official Labor Party. Consequently I joined the SLP and became a member of the Gordon Branch, the chairman of which was W. A. Wood, then editor of the SLP newspaper Progress.

Gordon Branch of the SLP was an active branch numbering over 30 members. Its meetings were lively and it held regular classes on themes such as fascism, socialism and Labor History. The branch participated in local as well as national and state political campaigns and I quickly gained experience in a fair range of political activity. I was a delegate to the SLP Conference in April, 1943, and was elected to the Central Executive. I was elected to the Education and Political Committee at the first meeting of the new Executive on May 14, 1943, along with W. E. Gollan and W. A. Wood. Coopted members of this committee included Len Fox and George Farwell. I was thus in a key position during the crucial year of the United Front between the State Labor Party and the CPA.

The CPA was legalised on December 18, 1942. During the period of illegality (June, 1940-December, 1942) the CPA increased its membership from under 4,000 to over 15,000. It was still growing during 1943. The SLP on the other hand was clearly dwindling. Although it had over 40 branches and several industrial affiliates (mainly miners’ lodges) its membership had dropped to about 4,500, concentrated mainly in the metropolitan area with some outlying branches at places such as Cessnock, Maitland, Lithgow, Portland, Gosford and the South Coast. Many members and supporters had gone back to the Official Labor Party after the establishment of the Curtin Government in October, 1941.
The situation at the beginning of 1943 was that an Allied victory seemed in sight, but the Australian war effort was still somewhat handicapped by the fact that the Labor Government was kept in office by the grace of two independents (A. Wilson and A. W. Coles). Anti-government forces were increasing their attacks and were soon to force the Government to resign. Early in 1943 the Communist Party proposed a limited united front agreement with both the OLP and the SLP. The offer proposed joint action to:

Promote a greater war effort.

Strengthen support for the Curtin Government and ensure its return to office with a clear majority.

Promote a strong campaign for a second front in Western Europe in order to hasten the defeat of the Axis Powers.

Promote policies of peace and freedom in the post-war world.

The OLP rejected the offer, but the SLP accepted it enthusiastically. A joint Consultative Committee (four members of each party) was appointed to formulate a Joint Action Agreement along the lines suggested by the CPA. This agreement was worked out swiftly and without friction and it was adopted by the Easter Conference of the SLP late in April, 1943. The agreement provided for joint action by the two parties to:

Carry out propaganda explaining the character of fascism and the anti-fascist People's War.

Achieve a greater war effort.

Unite the Labor Movement behind the Curtin Government, to work for its return in the Federal Election and to strengthen it by the election of Communist and SL members.

Campaign for unified allied strategy, a second front in Western Europe, a solution to the Indian problem, and supplies for China.

Combat attempts to weaken Allied Unity.

Support the Social Services Plans of the Curtin Government and its proposals for a referendum on federal powers.

The agreement carefully stipulated the forms of cooperation to be developed at the executive, federal electorate and local levels and contained a number of guarantees for the continuation of the separate identities of the two parties. For example, during the
Federal Election in 1943 the parties operated an exchange of preferences agreement and did not stand candidates against each other. Joint campaign committees, joint election meetings and rallies, were held in several places. Joint central functions included the massive rally on June 22 at the Sydney Town Hall, the November Town Hall Ball and the November March and Domain meeting. The agreement facilitated the existing cooperation of members of both parties in Friendship with Russia work, in War Loan rallies, in the campaign for Joint Production Committees in industry, in election work, and in many other areas, including the struggle for improved treatment of Aboriginals. Notwithstanding the considerable effort put into the election campaign, and the extensive use of radio and leaflets, neither party secured a seat, although one SLP candidate, Sid Conway, polled over 10,000 votes in Cook. The only consolation was that both parties had played a major role in the devastating defeat of the UAP-CP coalition and in the return of the Curtin Labor Government in September, 1943.

The first public proposal to amalgamate the two Left parties was made by John Hughes, Vice-President of the SLP, at the Central Executive meeting on October 1, 1943. In a realistic report to the Executive, Hughes recorded the dwindling support for the party and explained this as due mainly to the removal of the original cause for the appearance of the party, the lack of a strong anti-fascist foreign policy on the part of the ALP. Since the Curtin Government had taken office in October, 1941, the Labor Party had changed its foreign policy and consequently the anti-fascist Left in Australia had returned to the support of the ALP. Under these circumstances only two courses remained open to the SLP — to seek re-entry into the Official Labor Party or to merge with the CPA. The latter course was preferable, since the CPA had a clear socialist objective whereas the ALP did not. Hughes therefore recommended that an approach should be made to the CPA to sound out the prospects for early amalgamation. If the CPA supported the proposal the Consultative Committee of the two parties was to be entrusted with drafting the amalgamation agreement.

This report resulted in an extended debate. Only one member of the Executive (Mr. B. Anderson) opposed the suggestion outright, on the grounds that the State Labor Party was a valuable 'transition stage' for disillusioned ALP members since it was less extreme than the Communist Party. Such people would join it in increased numbers when the OLP began to lose support, but few of these would join the CPA. Several members, including myself, suggested a more cautious approach to amalgamation with an interim period during which the executives of the two parties would work closely together, but the parties retain their separate identities.
However, the merger went through with the utmost speed. The Joint Consultative Committee produced a resolution on amalgamation before the end of October. After extensive discussion in the branches of the SLP this resolution (with some minor amendments) was adopted at a special one-day conference of the SLP on November 27. The amalgamation was then ratified by a special conference of the CPA on January 15, 1944, and finalised by a joint conference of the two parties on January 16.

The Amalgamation Agreement provided for the election of members of the SLP to various leading committees of the Communist Party — five members to the Central Committee, two members to the Metropolitan Committee and 15 members to various District Party Committees. In this way J. R. Hughes, W. E. Gollan, H. B. Chandler, A. Wilson and E. A. Ross were elected to the Central Committee and June Mills and F. Graham to the Metropolitan Committee. I was elected along with Ted Walsham to the North Sydney District Committee. Individual members of the SLP had to seek individual membership of the Communist Party — briefly re-named the Australian Communist Party (with which is amalgamated the State Labor Party, NSW). This caused no problem to most SLP members, of whom perhaps a third were already members of the Communist Party. I joined at the end of January, 1944. A minority of members of the SLP — perhaps one in ten — found it impossible to join the Communist Party. Such persons sometimes rejoined the ALP, but many dropped out of political activity entirely. The influx of new members into the Communist Party brought a sudden inflation to NSW membership figures, but this was temporary. Membership wastage after 1945 soon brought it down again.

Three questions are worth raising at the conclusion of this brief record. Why was this United Front so successful? What impact did the former SLP members have on the activities and policies of the Communist Party in following years? How relevant is this story for the present and future of the party?

The United Front of 1943 was successful for a number of reasons. It brought into alliance two parties with broadly similar policies and with identical immediate objectives. The war had radicalised the SLP (and for that matter other sections of the Labor Party) and moderated the policy of the Communist Party so that the two parties met easily at a position to the Left of the Official Labor

1 During 1942-43 most Communists who were members of the SLP retained their membership of both parties. Some however, withdrew from the SLP when they joined the CPA. This course was followed by W. A. Wood late in 1943.
Party. The care with which the original alliance agreement was negotiated and the generosity of the final amalgamation agreement produced very friendly relations between the two parties at all levels. The overlap in membership, appreciable at the beginning of 1943 and increasing steadily throughout the year, made cooperation between the two parties uncommonly easy.

Did the SLP group modify Communist Party policy, attitudes and activities? It was widely assumed in 1944-45 and in later years that it did not. But perhaps this is inaccurate. Have former SLP members any different record as members of the Communist Party? We do not really know the answer to these questions. For my part I felt I was catapulted into an intermediate leadership position in the Communist Party without the benefit of the usual apprenticeship. For many years afterwards I felt that I was not fully a member of the Communist Party, but rather someone with one foot in the Communist Party and the other still in the Labor Party. I had certain reservations about the party's underlying philosophy and I did not easily replace enthusiastic support for the USSR by uncritical adulation of it. The process of 'political recruitment' into the ranks of the Communist Party took three years at least.

I do not think that the record of the 1943 United Front between the Communist Party and the SLP has much relevance to the present. The conditions in 1943 were quite unlike those of today. The alliance was a radical reformist alliance designed to put ginger into the ALP. It was in no way a revolutionary alliance. The situation today calls for an attempt to build up an alliance of Left and Revolutionary Forces in the search for a revolutionary strategy suited to Australian conditions. On the other hand, the pre-conditions of success for a radical alliance are pretty much the same under all conditions. These include the existence of considerable overlap in policy and the determination to seek out these coincidences and to maximise them. It also illustrates the necessity for frank, open, sincere relations between the Communist Party and organised groups it is seeking to involve in common action. There are always two sides to any united action agreement.

5 On the other hand, members of the industrial affiliates were often unhappy about the amalgamation since the Communist Party organization did not provide for union affiliation. Several prominent SLP persons (including the President, W. Booth and Dr. C. M. Churchward) supported the amalgamation but were unable to join the Communist Party.
FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, the anti-war struggle has been in theory and practice one of the over-riding preoccupations of the Communist Party of Australia. Throughout the period, the line of the Australian ruling authorities has been that the "peace movement" or "anti-war movement" has always been merely a "Communist front", based on the capture of "dupes" by the wily Communists in the service of a "foreign power" or, more recently, simply for "treasonable" motives.

The threadbare character of this tactical propaganda line should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the activity of the CPA has, indeed, been important in the anti-war movement which may be said to have grown on three elements: the deep-rooted unwillingness of the majority of Australians to be dragged into what are seen to be imperialist wars or great-power struggles; the conscious political work of the CPA; and the conscious effort — for political, moral or religious reasons — of other groups and individuals. In the past 20 years, both the first and third factors have greatly increased. The weight of the CPA (in any case reduced in numbers) has therefore relatively declined in this movement, though it remains important. On the other hand, changes in the CPA's attitude to the anti-war struggle (as to many other concepts, aims and methods of action) may be advancing the quality of its influence in this movement. Certainly the inception of the post-1945 anti-war movement in an organised form nationally, in 1949-50, owed much to the work of the communists, in practical partnership with a number of prominent non-communist individual citizens who had shown concern about the drift of the international situation at the time. The communists, too, were reacting to the situation, in a quite specific way.

It is not possible here to examine the origins of the post World War 2 East-West military confrontation which burst on the world in the "Berlin crisis" of early 1948. Suffice it to say that the readjustment of Great Power relationships following the temporary elimination of Germany, Japan and Italy as powers and the upsurge of revolutionary activity in certain colonial and other areas, were quickly seen by the UK, US and French leaders as requiring emergency action in the interests of imperialist perspectives. Berlin

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heated the medium anti-Soviet tone in western official and press circles to a full-scale anti-Soviet campaign in the UK, USA, France and Australia. At that time, as the writer personally verified, US forces in West Germany were intensively preparing for war against, and talking about “occupation” of, the USSR. Behind all this was the fundamental fact of the US atomic weapons monopoly. The use of the A-Bomb against the USSR was being openly canvassed. At the same time, the USSR was in a difficult time of restoration after massive human and material sacrifices in the course of the victory over Nazism.

In this truly serious situation, the Stalin leadership in the USSR estimated that a major international political effort was required to delay the threatening new war by impeding US utilisation of its military superiority to serve the “containment” policy of the Truman-Dulles leadership. In late 1948 an international meeting of left intellectuals in Warsaw, initiated the “World Congress of the Partisans of Peace” in Paris in April-May, 1949. An Australian delegation went to Paris, consisting almost entirely of communists. Delegations were stated to represent people of 72 countries. The Congress concluded that:

There was a serious danger of war, following the betrayal by the imperialist powers of the UN Charter and other agreements, and their turn to rearmament and military blocs.

There must be a ban on atomic weapons and other mass destruction weapons, international control of the use of atomic energy, and arms limitation.

Peace and freedom required national independence and peaceful cooperation of all peoples, with self-determination.

Setting up an International Committee, the Congress launched an international movement for “defence of peace in the world,” which would set out to impose peace on those who wanted war, through “the permanent threat of popular force.”

Soon after, a USSR Conference of Peace fully endorsed the Paris decisions, rejected western charges of Soviet aggressiveness and bluntly accused Anglo-American imperialism of preparing a new atomic war “against the entire human race”. Before 1949 was out, peace councils were being set up in some Australian states with the help of the activity of delegates back from Paris. CPA general secretary L. Sharkey calling for the extension of mass peace organisations to all states said: “We Communists do not want to ‘boss’ such a movement or order it about, nor define its policy or dictate its tactics; we want to see a broad mobilisation of peace-lovers fighting on a broad programme, directed against aggression in the interest of the overwhelming majority of mankind. The Communist Party will take its full share of the work of such a movement and give its fullest support to it.” (Communist Review, Oct. 1949.)

The first half-year or so called for concentration of CPA effort literally on the convincing and mobilising of the communists them-
selves, and large numbers of ex-communists and close supporters. However, the main activists including some of the numerous Communist trade union officials threw themselves into the task with vigor and effect. There were obvious reasons for this. Firstly, the main cadre of party activists were people who despite the euphoria of the wartime alliance of forces had not forgotten the '30s. War threats against the USSR, first land of socialism, were something they understood and responded to, in an almost automatic reflex. Secondly, the Chinese revolution, with its final success, had sent a wave of confidence in the future throughout the world communist movement. And at home in Australia, the election of the Menzies Government on an anti-communist policy gave Australian communists a sense of immediate crisis that was, to many, a spur to action.

An early instrument of mobilisation of communists into new mass contact for the peace movement was a 7-point Peace Ballot based on the Paris policies, for which scores of thousands of signatures were collected in organised drives. This purely Australian initiative was soon superseded by the world launching of the “Stockholm Appeal” for the banning of nuclear weapons, a one-point demand from the new international committee of the peace movement. This led to an unprecedented world signature campaign which, before the end of 1950, had yielded some 600 million signatures. It undoubtedly alerted far more millions of people to the danger of nuclear war than did the actual use of the Bomb itself on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Australia, the extraordinary figure of 200,000 signatures was reached, very largely as a result of work by CPA members. In the same period, Australia had seen the first of its own mass, representative peace conferences. The Australian Peace Congress, held in Melbourne in April, 1950, with the attendance of that most controversial of clerics, the Dean of Canterbury, long-time publicist for Soviet socialism, was a very big and successful operation underwritten by the CPA. One of its mass rallies drew 12,000 people to the Melbourne Exhibition Hall.

Yet the movement, having mobilised those in and near the CPA, was nevertheless politically narrow, and it was under hostile pressure which rapidly increased with the introduction of the Menzies Government’s Communist Party Dissolution Bill. The peace movement, was in effect, the conscious Left and at that time this consisted almost entirely of communists and their supporters. The savagery of the anti-communist campaign let loose when, in June, 1950, the Korean war broke out, came close to isolating the CPA in Australia, though it did not prevent small groups of communists from staging defiant demonstrations against US and British imperialism on the streets of Melbourne and elsewhere, while communist-led seamen announced a ban on shipment of war materials to Korea.
It was a defensive situation for the communists, both internationally and in Australia. As the struggle around Menzies’ Red Bill developed, the CPA’s greatest need was for allies on any issue. Both the political movements for peace and for democratic rights were not unhelpful in this regard, but the ultimate defeat of the anti-communist legislation in the 1951 referendum flowed mainly from the activisation of the non-communist left and centre forces of the trade unions and Labor Party, both of which had been cruelly attacked by Menzies and the extreme anti-communist “grouper” forces in the labor movement.

A major effect of this experience was that the slogans of defensive success took deep root in communist thinking. The defence of peace became “the main task” of the communists. Unity of diverse forces around points of agreement — and the conscious setting aside of points of disagreement — became the principal method. There was intensive study and discussion by responsible communists about this. A 1952 world congress for peace in Vienna displayed notable success in the uniting of certain social-democratic and other non-communist political forces with communists by means of prolonged negotiations between “people of goodwill”. The Australian delegation which included communists, and non-party left people (also a middle-aged woman who, years later, publicly admitted she was a Security agent in the delegation) brought back this concept. Later, in 1953 the Convention on Peace and War in Sydney proved a considerable turning point in uniting people in various labor and religious circles with communists and other militants of the trade unions, in a degree of agreement that was a genuine product of negotiation and mutual respect. The slogan of that Convention was “Negotiation must displace war.”

Another requirement of the search for unity for peace at the time was the deliberate setting aside by the CPA of revolutionary and class slogans or super-militant forms of activity that might impede the search for unity at any level, for peace. Such activity as selling or circulating communist newspapers or leaflets outside or inside any kind of peace meeting was strongly discouraged in the party as the worst kind of “sectarianism” — the worst political crime of that period. When helping to formulate statements or slogans for peace organisations, communists avoided all reference to “class struggle” or other traditional militant terms, while the idea of striking for peace was simply not discussed. With one or two exceptions, the activities of the mass movement for peace in the whole decade of the 1950’s comprised conferences, meetings, propaganda through films and, above all, words. In 1954, Sydney wharfies held up the Radnor over a cargo of barbed wire for French use in Indo China, but generally in these years there was much discussion and propa-
ganda about self-determination but little talk and less action about "international solidarity". This contrasted with the confident pre-coal-strike period of 1949 when Lance Sharkey had been jailed for 2 years for saying defiantly to the press that Australian communists would give support to Soviet forces if they entered Australia in pursuit of aggressors. Demonstration-type activity was confined to the small, defiant efforts of 1950 and some activities in the 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship.

The CPA continued to discuss the problems of revolution in the context of marxist study classes of the classics, inevitably with emphasis on the lessons of the mid-thirties and the united front against fascism. In the earlier years, there continued some effort by some communist leaders to relate the struggle for peace with the revolutionary task of the party, in Communist Review articles, for example. There was even speculation on the potential of the then proliferating peace committees in localities and some jobs as future "soviets". However, these committees were generally narrow groups consisting largely of communists and close supporters. In Tribune (16/9/53), J. D. Blake, in a very clear outline of the CPA attitude to "unity for peace", wrote "Our view is that lasting peace and peaceful competition between different social systems will clearly establish the superiority of socialism over capitalism and this will aid our advance to socialism in Australia."

Cumulatively then in very few years after the high levels of challenging militancy in the railway and coal strike years of 1948-49, the CPA became pushed into a defensive orientation to "unity in action for peace" at any level required, and — to facilitate this — had in effect abandoned open discussion or projection of socialist revolutionary concepts in any but formal terms — "the ultimate socialist aim", etc. In recent years, it has become fashionable in some left circles to scorn this as the "lowest common denominator" policies of the CPA. In fact it was the highest common denominator that could be found between diverse viewpoints — but it was nevertheless often very low-level at that, from the point of view of the social revolutionary.

There was, however, an aspect of policy on which the CPA never made a concession until as late as 1961. That was the refusal to be party to any statement which explicitly or by implication criticised the policies of the Soviet Union, China or other communist country. The fact that this position could be sustained for so long deserves more detailed study. Certainly some significant non-communist individual leaders in peace committees, in Melbourne for example, resigned when, at the onset of the Korean war, the communists refused to concede that any fraction of the blame might lie elsewhere but in Washington. But for a number of years there appeared to be
no conflict between the words and actions of the communist governed countries, in contrast to those of the imperialist powers, so that the issue rarely arose. Things changed somewhat with Hungary, 1956, and the breakdown in China of the "Let 100 flowers bloom" policy, in 1958. A number of individual communists active in the peace movement of those years refused to condone these respective Soviet and Chinese policies and took independent critical actions which usually led to their departure from the party's ranks. However, the CPA itself conceded nothing on these issues, a fact which testifies to the continuance then in Australian communist minds of the monolithic concept of the world communist movement long after the CPSU 20th Congress exposures of the crimes and distortions of the Stalin era.

By the time a degree of US-Soviet nuclear balance had become apparent, another aspect of the threat of general war had developed. This was the US encirclement of China. This had, of course, been a growing element for several years from the victory of the Chinese revolution. The Korean war, the US-dictated Japanese Peace Treaty of 1951, the permanent stationing of the US 7th Fleet in the Taiwan Strait, Australian dispatch of troops for counter-revolutionary duty in Malaya — all were steps in this process, as was the Australian Government's refusal to accord diplomatic recognition to the Chinese revolutionary People's Government.

These were all, to one degree or another, real political issues in Australian life; in a certain sense, they were more real than the general threat of nuclear war between the USA and the USSR. It is then hardly surprising that some signs appeared of tactical conflict over the two aspects of the war threat, inside the Australian anti-war movement. In 1951, for example, following the success of the world Stockholm Appeal against A bombs, the World Peace Movement tried again with a signature appeal for a Five Power Peace Pact. The CPA leadership fully supported an Australian Peace Council decision to campaign for this. However, some CPA activists prominent in the peace organisations argued for priority to be given to a campaign against the Japanese Peace Treaty, which was seen as designed to consolidate Japan as a US strategic base country vis-a-vis China. But the CPA top leadership insisted on the priority of the world campaign which, in fact, was less effective than the Stockholm Appeal, because it was vague, unrealistic, and had less human appeal. Certainly it tailed off in Australia.

But meanwhile, in Melbourne, of three fulltime CPA activists who had argued briefly in favour of concentration on the Pacific war danger, one was transferred to Sydney and the second was sent into industry, thus dissipating what was seen by the then Victorian leadership of the CPA as a potentially dangerous nationalist group. In
Sydney, on the other hand, a new peace organisation was set up, the Committee for Peace in the Pacific, working parallel to the Peace Council which campaigned for the World Movement’s policies. Both these Sydney committees were actively supported by the CPA.

This was the first sign of an issue which slowly developed as a point of debate both within the CPA and in the peace organisations themselves up to, and including, the World Peace Council. It was variously expressed as world centralised leadership versus regionalism; or a world movement based on a rigid formal structure versus a movement flexible in form and structure in accordance with conditions. In retrospect it could be seen perhaps as a conflict between adherence to the Soviet viewpoint, and policies and methods arising out of national and regional conditions and needs. However, the issue did not become sharp. Behind all this, however, the movement’s struggle against the US-British anti-China military policy inexorably developed.

The Australian Labor Party split in 1954 and the subsequent shift of the ALP federally towards some of the positions of the general anti-war movement led to a marked growth of interest in China’s international rights, among Australian Laborites of both industrial and political wings. Despite the immediate confusion in the CPA and among other peace movement activists over Hungary and China’s “100 flowers”, resistance to US policy on China and Vietnam grew and was a major factor in developing official trade union participation in the anti-war movement to a peak that has not since been equalled. This process, an important and interesting one in itself, expanded from the modest NSW Trade Union Peace Week of 1954 (when the slogan “Peace is Trade Union Business” was born) to the 1959 national peace congress in Melbourne, which included a special trade union component conference sponsored and conducted by the ACTU, with the late Jim Kenny, then NSW Labor Council Secretary, presiding.

Side by side with the growth of the China Question in the sights of the anti-war movement came the influence of greater World Peace Movement stress on the “possibility of peaceful coexistence of countries with differing social systems”, and that movement’s reflection of the Soviet campaign for an agreement to prohibit atmospheric nuclear test explosions. It was a confusing period for Australian communists though the CPA officially sought to support all these policies. In fact, there were underlying conflicts between Krushchov’s “Camp David” version of peaceful coexistence and the traditional revolutionary approach to it, which both the Chinese and Australian parties tended to favor. Further, the Soviet and Chinese disagreement over deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons which climaxed in the late ’fifties and led to an urgent Chinese nuclear program was
in sharp conflict with the test-ban campaign for a ban of nuclear testing which had become a major theme for the movement. However, what made possible a certain Australian rationalisation of all this was that, from the Australian people's viewpoint, all three issues were realistic: no war on China, peaceful coexistence, and a nuclear test ban. Few Australian communists at the time would have realised (about 1958-59) that already their practice in the anti-war movement was heading towards a position independent of both the two main communist powers.

However, in this regard, the real tests of CPA integrity were still to come. The first and least known came in November 1961 when the Soviet Union violated the atmospheric test ban treaty with a series of Arctic test explosions, that were explained as a warning to the west in connection with a temporary crisis in Germany. This brought a crunch in peace organisations in Australia, as doubtless in many other countries. In the NSW body's executive, two communist members debated the matter for hours with other (non-communist) members who insisted that there must be a statement including a criticism of the Soviet act. The debate had to continue a second night, by which time the two members had convinced the CPA leadership that such a statement would have to be accepted or "unity for peace" would suffer a profound setback. The statement issued in the name of the Peace Committee scarcely caused a ripple, yet foreshadowed for the Party, too, the end of automatic defence in public of Soviet — or Chinese or any other policy formulated overseas.

Progress by the CPA towards a position of independent marxist judgment of the international situation was temporarily delayed (but fundamentally accelerated) by the open outbreak of the China-Soviet dispute and, in the same period, the US-Soviet confrontation over rockets in Cuba which imperatively demanded internationalist support of the Cuban and Soviet positions, against US imperialism, irrespective of definite reservations felt by many about some aspects of Soviet tactics and great power methods in the crisis. The CPA's early tendency to judge the Pacific war danger through the ideas of the Chinese leadership also was ended. The pre-eminent questions of the slowly increasing Australian involvement in Vietnam and the rapid expansion of the Menzies Government's war program (e.g. the 1963 order for the F111's) were becoming the starting point of CPA anti-war thinking. It needed only the US-Australian decisions for big-scale combat intervention in Vietnam in early 1965, together with Australian conscription for service abroad, to culminate that process.

That intervention, historic for all Australians, fundamentally changed the situation of the Australian anti-war movement, which
thenceforth was operating in a country with a military combat involvement in a clear-cut, imperialist, counter-revolutionary war. The "theoretical" anti-war struggles of the previous 15 years were finished. And because Vietnam also brought with it the spread of dissent, youthful scepticism and radicalisation, and the emergence of significant left groups other than the CPA itself, 1965 also meant that the long night of CPA defencism was ending.

No longer were words the main form of struggle. The first Vietnam demonstrations began, at the US Consulate, the first draft cards were burned — in both cases the initiators included the young communists of the then Eureka Youth League. Other groups joined in and soon bigger and bigger street demonstrations and sitdowns were occurring. The CPA found that new, young groups (e.g. Vietnam Action Campaign, precursor of Resistance) mainly student based — were raising revolutionary slogans in the anti-war movement, and were criticising the limited "pacifist" slogans still common in demonstrations. To some extent prodded by these groups, the CPA's re-examination of its own basic revolutionary task began, both because this was required by the struggle against the Australian counter-revolutionary war and because the proliferating left and anti-war movements made more offensive action a realistic perspective. The other, even more basic element of the same situation was that for the first time the movement began to expand in a spontaneous way. It began to become genuinely a mass movement.

Its leadership and impetus continued to depend largely on the political left but now this was a plurality rather than a CPA monopoly. The experience of the most recent phase, the Moratorium Movement of 1970, suggests that the interaction of these left forces — despite the difficulties and antagonistic relations that have sometimes existed — is helping to carry the movement forward.

Recent experience has shown conflict of views on the left and sometimes vigorous debate in anti-war committees on how to advance the mass anti-war movement towards a conscious anti-imperialist and revolutionary position. Leninist concepts elaborated in 1915 of struggle against any government waging imperialist war by the revolutionaries in that country — including the concept of transforming military defeats into defeat of the government and revolutionary defeat of the capitalist system — have particular force today in countries, such as Australia, committed to extended counter-revolutionary, imperialist war of intervention in Vietnam and other parts of S.E. Asia. Furthermore, the kind of proletarian internationalist solidarity in words and deeds, legal and illegal, that helped the struggling Bolsheviks to maintain power against the interventionists of 1918-21 is called for today in support of the Indo-China revolutionaries.
While these issues have already been raised as a political line and in material action by the communists and some others, it cannot be said that any of the Left forces have squarely faced up to their responsibility in this respect. Debate has tended to centre on whether, at a given point of the anti-war movement's development (e.g. in this year's Moratoriums), this or that explicitly anti-imperialist policy formulation or slogan can be imposed on the whole movement. Some left individuals or groups are concerned with accusing others of being inconsistent anti-imperialists if they oppose such imposition.

Of course, any anti-war movement in a country waging an imperialist war is objectively anti-imperialist. The Moratorium movement, particularly as seen in September, is a genuine mass movement of a quality not seen before in the Australian anti-war movement. It is uniting in militant action around common aims a really large number of people with diverse views on many political and other questions. This is raising sharply new problems of leadership of such a movement in effective, advanced forms of action. The left forces, including the communists, may already be restricting the development of this movement because of tendencies to cling to political attitudes, tactics and forms of action that were appropriate to the narrower, pre-Moratorium movement which consisted of more like-minded people. If so, this needs urgent correction since it is the Left, in the first place, that must ensure that the movement is well-led and that it develops rapidly.

Although there is a significant radicalisation of large new forces, particularly of young people as a result of the more clumsy steps by the Establishment towards use of coercive arms of the State against the movement, the rapid physical growth of the mass movement means that the CPA and other conscious, organised Left groups are becoming a relatively smaller part of the anti-war forces. The fact that they may have a clear, or clearer, anti-imperialist and revolutionary view unfortunately does not mean that the mass Moratorium movement will yet accept the view for its slogans, which are at present: withdrawal of all foreign troops, withdrawal of all support of the Saigon regime, abolition of conscription. (To these must now be added as a major element the assertion of the democratic right of the movement to use the streets to demonstrate for the achievement of the aims.) These slogans have succeeded in uniting large and diverse forces in militant, demonstrative and — to a degree — strike action in some industries, universities and schools. However, only the blind would say that the possibilities of mass mobilisation in support of these slogans, and the slogan "Stop Work to Stop the War" have yet been even adequately tackled, let alone exhausted.
The Left vanguard forces are, and should be, at the same time explaining the imperialist and counter-revolutionary character of the war, the nature of the imperialist system giving rise to it, and the need and possibility of overthrowing that system in our own country in order, finally, to end Australian involvement in any such predatory wars and to build a socialist society. Further, it has been shown that various forms of demonstrative action around explicitly anti-imperialist slogans can usefully be mounted by the advanced forces, even by quite small groups or individuals, provided that these are designed so as to serve a useful ideological purpose (e.g. various Vietnam demonstrations, July 4 actions, Stock Exchange raids, some occupations of National Service departments, some courtroom denunciations etc.). Despite the cries of "adventurism" from more conservative parts of the Left, and "anarchy" from the Establishment and the reformist Right, most of these efforts are useful and need to be extended, while ensuring that they do not degenerate into violent provocation or pointless confrontation that damages the mass movement or is rejected by the entire mass movement because it is incomprehensible.

But such advanced activity and propaganda is not able to be adopted by a mass movement that is still in the process of rapid growth outward among quite new and inexperienced forces — still learning, for example, that Australian policemen are really capable of planning to unleash violence and to be excessively brutal in the process. The Left's concepts, slogans and advanced actions should influence and involve greater and greater sections of the mass movement, and should be freely discussed and canvassed in the mass movement's gatherings, but should not be allowed to impede mass discussion of widening effective action around more limited, but objectively anti-imperialist slogans. For it is only such effective mass action that will actually end the imperialist war and imperialist system, when experience and political conviction lead the movement to the necessity of going beyond present slogans. The vanguard forces have got to be able to judge the political needs and capacity of the whole mass movement at a given time, and not just its leading or sponsoring committees which are invariably composed of the relatively advanced. The recent (September) experiences, encouraging as they are, point not to a judgment that the present scale of movement could adopt explicitly revolutionary slogans and race to victory, but rather to the great need to bring a much larger mass of people, particularly of the workers, into united, more varied and more effective activity around approximately the present slogans, while greatly improving the quality of the ideological influence and the mutual collaboration of the various elements of the revolutionary vanguard.
WHAT, MANY PEOPLE ASK, has politics to do with art? What right has the Communist Party to meddle in the realm of imaginative literature? Surely the function of books is to provide entertainment. Surely the reader ought to derive from literature some solace in this unhappy world, some means of temporary escape from the vicissitudes of real life.

It is true that the best works of literature give satisfaction to the educated reader. In a sense, all great art is produced for enjoyment. But it is the kind of positive sensation aroused by the discovery of new insight into human life, the development of a deeper appreciation of the feelings of one’s neighbours and a fuller understanding of the unity of the human race. And since man does not live in a void, serious literature has, necessarily, a social character. It may not always deal with recognised social problems, it may be concerned entirely with matters of an intimate, personal nature, but any literature that tends to make people think and to question the underlying assumptions on which the habits of social life depend, has political consequences regardless of its outward appearance. Anything that challenges established prejudice, that exposes hypocrisy, that tears away the veneer of culture from a fundamentally barbaric social order and replaces its false values with new ideals may give a satisfaction to the reader that transcends mere pleasure. Here let it be said that humanist art may not necessarily be realistic. The most improbable fantasy may carry a great spiritual force just as abstract painting may be profoundly moving. It all depends on the aim of the artist. Realism, as such, has no special virtue. The artist must express himself in his own way. Non-realist art cannot be identified with counter-revolution, any more than realist art can be said to be always revolutionary.
The genuine artist, however, is always motivated by a concern for the fate of man, regardless of the means he finds to express this concern. Most artists have felt, in some way or other, a sense of involvement in the social movements of their time. Many have been led, by this feeling of being involved, to identify themselves with radical social forces, and to take political action on their own account. In the years immediately following the second world war a number of the most talented writers and artists joined the Communist Party. The war had shattered many illusions about bourgeois society, and the victories of the Soviet Union aroused a new interest in socialism, especially among the young. A new generation of writers emerged, with a strong sense of political commitment. Socialist ideas had a major influence on the course of Australian writing over the next two decades, and some of these writers produced their best work while members of the Communist Party. And yet, with certain notable exceptions, almost every one of these writers later left the Party. Some stopped writing altogether.

This process of change was complex, and to understand its causes requires an appreciation of the work of these writers, the activities of the Communist Party and its relations with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the influence of the cold war, the cultural isolation of Australia, and the changes in Australian society itself. What was characteristic of the period before 1956 was the enthusiasm and the diversity of talent among the socialist writers and artists. They all had a belief in the value of their own particular contributions. There was, at that time, no sense of coercion in any way by the Communist Party.

Overland

In this atmosphere of intellectual ferment and artistic activity the emergence of the literary journal Overland was an event of far-reaching significance. Originally appearing as The Realist Writer in 1952 the journal began as the organ of the Melbourne Realist Writers' Society, edited by Stephen Murray-Smith. Taking Joseph Furphy's words "Temper Democratic, bias Australian", Stephen Murray-Smith and his associates produced a journal of a new type that quickly aroused wide interest among the reading public. Overland was the most tangible expression of the new, progressive literary movement that arose from the efforts of the considerable body of writers centred in Melbourne. The enthusiasm it engendered derived from its high quality, from the variety and talent of its contributors, and from the imagination, the cultural background and the political commitment of its editor. Adopting a policy of encouraging new writers, Stephen Murray-Smith was responsible for publishing the work of a number of writers of undoubted ability who later achieved considerable distinction. Literary soirees, social activities, fund raising parties, informal meetings with authors
created a sense of elan among writers, a belief in themselves, a conviction that their work was important. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of *Overland* in developing Australian literature between 1950 and 1960. Anyone associated with the journal in those years will have experienced the encouragement given by Stephen Murray-Smith to writers who showed any promise, and the ideological influence of the journal was considerable.

**The work of the socialist writers**

Frank Hardy's spectacular rise to fame through the publication of *Power Without Glory* opened a new chapter in Australian writing, and has been told in detail in his book *The Hard Way*. Eric Lambert, in his novel *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* showed a keen perception of the strength of anti-militarist sentiment among Australian troops during the war, and contrasted this democratic mood with the ideology of many of the officer class. Walter Kaufmann, in *Voices in the Storm* created a vivid picture of life in Nazi Germany. Ralph de Boissiere brought to Australia the rich talents he demonstrated in his West Indian novels *Crown Jewel* and *Rum and Coca Cola*, Judah Waten established his reputation with a collection of stories about migrants in *Alien Son*. John Manifold made an outstanding contribution to Australian cultural life as poet, musician, inventor of musical instruments, collector of bush songs, and literary critic. Aileen Palmer and Laurence Collinson both, in different ways, produced poetry of high quality in a more private and reflective style, writing on the universal themes of love, death, war, and loneliness. John Morrison became widely known for his waterfront stories. Vance Palmer, James Aldridge, Dymphna Cusack, Jean Campbell and Alan Marshall, while not members of any political party, were close to the socialist movement, and formed a literary school that was essentially realist, politically progressive, socially oriented and conscious of its democratic heritage.

Not all of these writers chose to express their political ideas directly in their art. Some, like Judah Waten, achieved their finest moments in works that had ostensibly no political theme whatever. The enlightenment of the isolated Australian community about the culture of immigrants and the struggle to break down racist prejudice must be at least as important as depicting the militancy of Melbourne waterside workers.

There were some, however, who did set out to use their creative ability in a highly partisan manner. One of the most successful in this respect was David Martin. David Martin, the Hungarian born Jewish journalist who served in the International Brigade in Spain, came to Australia and achieved renown as a poet, novelist and short story writer. He was not a better artist than writers
like Katharine Prichard, but he succeeded in expressing the aims of the Communist movement in his writing in a way that few others have done.

**Katharine Susannah Prichard**

Katharine Susannah Prichard was thirty-four at the time of the Russian revolution in 1917. In 1920 she joined others in forming the Communist Party, and remained a member of it for over fifty years until her death at the age of eighty-six. She wrote twelve novels, several books of short stories, poetry, drama, and many political articles. In her time she won a number of literary prizes. She devoted herself wholeheartedly to the cause of communism, and sought to develop her art in the service of what she firmly believed to be a great cause. More than any other Australian writer she set out to use her art to win support for communism through her stories and novels.

“All my life,” she declared, at the Communist Writers’ Conference in 1959, “I have been guided by Marxism-Leninism, and I have tried to express this in my work.” To Katharine, this was not cause for apology. She said this with pride, and was as frank as she was when she boldly proclaimed her party membership in her pamphlet *Why I am a Communist*. It was this unashamed declaration of loyalty that was one of her finest qualities. Yet in 1956 she was more understanding of the writers who became disillusioned and left the party, and she was more genuinely distressed than almost anyone else. She was particularly grieved by the loss of David Martin, whom she regarded as one of the most gifted of the party writers.

Despite her efforts, however, it was not in her more tendentious novels that she achieved her highest artistic level. Her finest work derived from her insight into the lives of women, and in 1930, with *Haxby’s Circus* she reached the summit of her creative endeavours. “I wrote this novel,” she said once, in reply to criticism, “because I wanted to show how hard life uses women.” In this novel, as in her aboriginal stories such as *The Cooboo* and the novel *Coonardoo*, she writes with tremendous conviction, yet none of these works is political in character. She appeared to realise that great art is profoundly revolutionary, and that its influence transcends the limits of polemical writing. She seemed, at this time, to be completely free of the restrictions that later plagued the socialist movement and in time affected even her own work. It was only later that her work became to a considerable extent stultified and artificial. Though still a writer of importance, and unquestionably sincere, her work became influenced by the ideas of Zhdanov without her knowing it. She tried very hard to be worthy of inclusion in the school of new socialist writers, but she
never again succeeded in creating the profound and moving stories of her earlier years.

**Socialist Literary Theory**

At this point, socialist literary theory requires some consideration. For many years, the contentious matter of partisanship in art aroused much heated debate. There were those, on the one hand, who claimed that literature was of value only to the extent that it propagated revolutionary ideas, while others denied the validity of writing that expressed any political aim at all. These two divergent trends became very marked in the late sixties, and in their most extreme forms were regarded by most Communists, and indeed by the great majority of other people, as the true expression of “socialist” and “bourgeois” ideas in literature. The traditional values by which the art of many centuries had been judged, and by which it had established its worth were obscured, and this whole process was accentuated by the cold war. Realist art became identified with socialism, and abstract art with bourgeois ideology. And in this period of sharp controversy Soviet views on art dominated the Australian scene, at least in left circles.

After the founding of the Union of Soviet Writers under the influence of Maxim Gorki in 1934 the philosophy of Socialist Realism was adopted as the only legitimate basis for writers in the Soviet Union. This had a profound influence in the Communist movement throughout the world, especially in Australia. As the ideas of Socialist Realism became interpreted in an increasingly narrow sense, following the pronouncements of the Soviet theorist Zhdanov, the work of almost every Communist writer in the world became affected in one way or another.

The elements of the theory of Socialist Realism were simple. The literature of any society was considered to be determined by its class character. With every revolutionary upheaval in history and the birth of a new social order, literature changed accordingly. Human conflict resulted from the contradictions of class society. Hence with the elimination of classes there could be no conflict. Human conflict was a survival from the past, and the duty of the writer was to point the way to the future. Every story must have as the central character a positive hero, every novel had to end on an optimistic note. Tragic love affairs no longer occurred in socialist society. In the capitalist countries, of course, the mission of the writer was to portray society in decay, and to show the inevitability of its replacement by socialism. The highest form of society, socialism, released the creative power of the people and established the basis for the greatest literature of all. The task of the Soviet writer was to give expression to the noblest aspirations of man under the conditions of the new society.
Whilst there was some validity in this analysis, and whilst it is undoubtedly true that much fine literature has been produced by Soviet writers, the narrow, rigid application of Socialist Realist theory by people in positions of authority with little knowledge of literature did great harm, and the claim that nineteenth century realists like Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were less important than modern Soviet writers was patently absurd. These officials were suspicious of every new idea, they feared dissent in any form, and they did much to stifle creative initiative. Conformity became the order of the day, and the Soviet Union acquired a literary establishment with a similar mentality to the literary establishment of the West. Those who conformed were rewarded with prizes and mass publication, those who could not conform found their work suppressed, many were imprisoned, and some were punished by death. It was the ideas of these myopic bureaucrats which became the model for literary criticism in the socialist movement in Australia, with quite tragic results.

**The Party Crisis of 1956**

The Hungarian uprising of 1956 created a profound crisis in the Communist movement, even though most parties emerged without serious organisational divisions. The causes of the uprising were complex, and reactionary forces certainly took advantage of the opportunities presented by the chaotic situation. The Khrushchov party had not long been in power, and had only a marginal control of the leadership of the CPSU. There were major divisions in the CPSU leadership on the question of military intervention, and it was only when, after ten days of heavy fighting, it appeared that the Hungarian government would be overthrown, the Soviet government decided finally to intervene. In retrospect the Soviet government of 1956 appears as a model of prudence and restraint when compared with the Brezhnev-Kosygin government of 1968!

In the storm that followed, the CPSU leaders were able to convince most Communists that they had no alternative, at that critical moment in the fighting, if socialist power was to be preserved in Hungary. On the more fundamental causes of the crisis, and the responsibility of the Hungarian Communists under the Rakosi leadership, however, they had little to say. Many Communists held reservations about the causes of the rebellion, but in the face of the onslaught of international reaction they closed ranks and made no criticism of the CPSU. On the whole, the CPA suffered relatively small losses, but the casualties were particularly heavy among the intellectuals. In the bitter polemics that followed, most of the writers and artists were driven out of the party. The official view was that their vacillation reflected their petit bourgeois class origins, and
that the party had done well to purge itself of opportunists elements. For many, the problem of whether it was possible for a person to be both an artist and a Communist was posed in very harsh terms by the march of events, and a number of the most gifted writers resolved this question in the negative. It was a time of conflicting loyalties, and there were no simple answers to any question.

That the relationship between communism and art is complex, however, is shown by the fact that among the artists who remained with the party some produced their most mature work in the years that followed. Noel Counihan moved away from the more formal realism of his earlier years, and continued to develop his art, expressing his most profound ideas in the mural in the Healy Memorial Hall. Judah Waten produced his best novel *Distant Land* and won the Volkswagen prize in 1965 while an active member of the party. The claim that artistic integrity and fidelity to the Communist movement are incompatible has been clearly disproved, but it cannot be denied that many artists of outstanding merit found it impossible to reconcile their party membership with freedom to develop their art in their own way.

Those who left the party because they would not accept the majority view about Hungary were all grouped together in the eyes of the party under the banner of revisionism, though there were important differences among the "revisionists" themselves. This term having been applied by others to Lenin, Khrushchov, Dubcek and the present Soviet leaders, it is a hat that might well have been worn with pride, but in 1956 it was freely bestowed on those regarded as having crossed into the enemy camp. The final test of political integrity that was ultimately applied was the ability of the individual concerned to express agreement with the views of the leaders of the CPSU.

In 1959 the Australian and New Zealand Disarmament Congress was held in Melbourne, with a section devoted to the arts. It was attended by the English dramatist J. B. Priestley and his wife Jacquetta Hawkes, who on the final night received a standing ovation from an audience of 800 for resisting intimidation and pressure from the Federal Government and the daily press. In this rousing atmosphere the Arts conference could very well have been the rallying centre of the Congress, with considerable influence in widening its appeal. Yet very soon it became a battleground over the action of the Soviet government in Hungary, with the debate centring on the case of the writer Tibor Dery, at that time imprisoned by the Hungarian government. Dery's associate Tibor Meray was visiting Australia, and his presence in Melbourne provided the poet Vincent Buckley with the opportunity to use the Hungarian events to attack the Congress.
The Communist writers at the conference refused to allow any criticism of the Soviet government to be incorporated in the resolutions of the meeting, they formed a solid phalanx, and rejected the appeal for Dery's release. The majority group at the conference used their numbers to defeat all resolutions dealing with artistic freedom and the final statement merely acknowledged that "in some countries" writers did not enjoy the freedom to write as they chose. At the conclusion of the conference Stephen Murray-Smith described the resolution as "chicken-hearted" because it said nothing important about this question. The Indian novelist Dr. Mulk Raj Anand expressed the opinion that the Communist writers were too rigid. Although the Congress was, in the main, a success, it was marred by the generally negative effect of the Arts conference, which resulted from a fear of real discussion of the great issues of the day.

Cultural Exchange Visits With The Soviet Union

In 1959 the Soviet Writers' Union invited the Fellowship of Australian Writers to send a delegation to the Soviet Union. James Devanney, Judah Waten and Professor Manning Clarke were elected, and the following year a return visit by Oksana Krugerskaya and Alexi Surkov opened up the possibility of a general improvement in cultural relations between Australia and the Soviet Union. A number of exchange visits followed, with considerable success. Peaceful coexistence appeared to be strengthened. But, like the albatross that followed the ancient mariner, the Soviet visitors were dogged wherever they went by the Pasternak affair.

Boris Pasternak had been generally acclaimed in the Soviet Union as a great poet and translator of Shakespeare. His novel Dr. Zhivago was in the process of being published in the Soviet Union when Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize. The Soviet Writers' Union saw this as an act of the Cold War, and the novel was suppressed. The Italian Communist publisher Feltrinelli, however, had already agreed to publish the novel, and insisted on doing so, as a matter of principle, when the Soviet Writers' Union urged him to reverse his decision. Surkov travelled to Italy in a vain attempt to persuade Feltrinelli to change his mind, and when he visited Australia he was credited with being the instigator of the whole affair. He was followed everywhere by an army of press men and photographers, all asking the same question. Why? "If I were paid for every question I answered about the Pasternak case," said Surkov, "I would be a millionaire." But no answer he could give would satisfy any of his interviewers. He described Pasternak as a great poet, a gigantic figure, a man with a vast imagination, one of the really good writers of our time. Why, then, was the novel banned? Surkov's task was unenviable, and he performed it with dignity, but he had
no success in accomplishing his chief mission in Australia. The fate of Pasternak was by no means as grim as that of other writers like Solzhenitzin or Daniel and Sinyavsky, but it was more significant as it came at a time when it seemed that artistic freedom in the Soviet Union was rapidly extending.

Australian Communists did their best, in the following years, to explain what Surkov had been unable to explain. They stoutly defended the action of the Soviet Writers' Union in expelling Pasternak, and campaigned vigorously against those who criticised the official Soviet viewpoint. Issue No. 14 of Overland, containing two views on the Pasternak affair, one by Katharine Prichard supporting the Soviet action, and an opposing view by Maurice Shadbolt, aroused the most intense and bitter accusations against Overland. By publishing the opinions of both sides Stephen Murray-Smith had proved, finally, that he had defected to the camp of the class enemy. In a full page article in Tribune headed "Overland — Where the Hell's it being Taken?" Rex Chiplin expressed the official view of the CPA at the time, with the clear implication that Overland was party property. A new journal, The Realist Writer, described as "militant, partisan, and aggressive," was launched to counter the defection of Overland.

Whilst early issues of this new journal were by no means discreditable, it did reveal, at that time, a marked tendency to judge literature on political rather than literary considerations. The thinking of Zhdanov dominated the outlook of very many of the publishers of left journals and books of fiction, the most notable being the Australasian Book Society. The ABS, having earlier published a number of fine novels, now turned out a long line of Socialist Realist books, the chief result of which was a steady loss of subscribers and a decline in interest in literature altogether. Later, the wheel turned full circle, and in a reaction against this earlier trend the ABS became more influenced by the values of commercial publishers, with the tendency to judge books largely on their conformity to prevailing literary trends.

The socialist writers were not the only ones influenced by the polemics of the sixties. Just as left literary criticism became intemperate, so did the judgments of the more officially recognised critics. Despite the recent awards of literary fellowships to Judah Waten and Frank Hardy, Communist writers are still not readily accepted in official literary circles. McCarthyism still casts its long shadow over the scene. There are, however, other reasons as well for the rejection of the work of these writers.

Firstly, there has been a catastrophic decline in the publishing of novels and short stories, due to the economics of mass culture,
take-overs of publishing houses, and the changing cultural values of society. Secondly, humanist-realist literature has become unfashionable. Thirdly, the legacy of the conflicts of the last decade has rendered all forms of social commitment suspect in the eyes of publishers, who seek more and more the writers with something shocking or sensational to say. This craving for spectacular literature blinds many to the fact that the most profound truths often find expression in the simplest writing. The sharp polarisation of literary criticism that developed in the late sixties had done much harm to Australian culture, as is well illustrated by the case of Patrick White. For a long time condemned by the left as the exponent of reactionary ideas in literature, his work was just as blindly hailed by the literary establishment with lavish, uncritical praise. His work was denied the balanced, objective criticism it deserved. In view of White's consistent stand against the Vietnam war, a further study of his work would be appropriate for socialist literary scholars.

What conclusions can be drawn from these experiences? Through an understandable reluctance to make the mistake of interfering in cultural matters the Communist Party could neglect to engage in the debates and conflicts occurring in this important field. Indeed, there are some communists who feel that literary polemics are too complicated and better left alone. Others no doubt believe that it may not matter at all what happens in this neck of the woods. But the struggle for the acceptance of humanist ideas by the Australian people does matter. It is as vital as the struggle for one's daily bread. This struggle will continue, and the progressive forces will draw sustenance from the growing strength of the new generation of young writers and artists who have rejected the values of bourgeois society and who have been inspired by the heroism of the people of Vietnam.

Australian literature has proved very hard to kill, and there are great reserves of artistic talent and idealism among Australian youth. The Communist Party would do well to give them its full encouragement. The mistakes in the past arose from the unqualified acceptance of the views of the CPSU in all matters of art, from the view that literature was of value only as polemic, and from the rejection of art that did not conform to the narrow concept of Socialist Realism. The fact that Australian Communists gave their unflagging loyalty to the people of the world's first socialist state is no cause for shame. The shame lies with those in positions of power who used this loyalty cynically, brutally, and stupidly for unworthy ends, and who answered this self-sacrifice and devotion with secret trials, suppression of honest criticism, and the gaoling and even murder of some of the most talented and sensitive writers of this century.
As I saw the Sixties

IT IS DIFFICULT to describe events and struggles with which one has been intimately associated. The memory can be very selective even with 'neutral' incidents. Nevertheless it seems worth trying to outline how my own thinking developed in the CPA in the '60's, even if only to provide a point of reference (or a chopping block) for others who may be able to set the record straighter.

The question arises: since we have now been examining many questions that should have been followed through in 1956, why was this not done at the time? Without attempting a complete analysis, two things particularly weighed with me at the time. The exposure of many of the crimes of stalinism was undoubtedly a very bold step. It both opened up great possibilities for advance and appeared as evidence of good intentions on the part of the CPSU leaders, given time and sympathetic understanding, to make a break with all that had been wrong and restore the ideals and norms we believed in, at the same time arming us against the pitfalls.

1 That the 'secret report' was more or less authentic I had little doubt, and that we had shared an outlook which would have led to similar harsh treatment of dissidents had we been in power seemed evident to me, and I said so at a Central Committee meeting in 1956. However, since we had not been in power, no one in Australia had suffered in such a way, and that the dangers we had to avoid were revealed seemed more or less sufficient.

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Reinforcing this readiness to ‘get on with the job’ was the influence of the Chinese views at the time. Their analyses were against an emotional and simplistic negation of Stalin and of all that had transpired, and were posed in very reasoned terms. The three years, 1951-54, I and others spent in China made a deep emotional and intellectual impact. To experience, even if only by proximity, the creative energy, spirit of self-sacrifice and mass involvement of a great revolution, and hear at first hand analyses by people who had taken part, is to add a new dimension for people from a country like Australia where nothing like that has ever happened. The Chinese lecturers we had, and the cadres we met, evidenced considerable flexibility of thought and non-dogmatism (or anti-dogmatism), especially when compared with the Soviet lecturers (we had both). One incident in particular springs to mind. Our Soviet lecturer on political economy was very lucid in explaining the main ideas traditionally held of Marxist political economy. But on actual economic issues thinking was very narrow. For example, we came into conflict over the question of living standards in post-war Australia. Readily responding to Chinese exhortation to ‘study the concrete situation’ and ‘seek truth from the facts’, we had set about combing through the materials (year books, some history books and party publications) we had brought with us. These materials drove us, against dogma and inclination be it said, to the conclusion that some increase in material living standards had been won in the post-war period.

Anyway, our Soviet lecturer insisted that the bourgeoisie and the reformists were very cunning and that we had fallen for their propaganda. We stuck to our guns, and he finally asked for the evidence, so we spent a large part of one vacation documenting it all, allowing for price rises, hours of work, etc., and coming to the same conclusion. We handed in the report, but nothing was said, and only after continual prompting and pressure did we get a reply some months later: “I’m glad that you have studied the circum-

2 The Historical Experiences of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and More on the Historical Experiences of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, published in April and December of 1956.

3 Whether these statements represented the full views of the Chinese, or contained some element of tactics and calculation as now seems possible, of course one cannot know for sure. But the view that vast historical changes involve mistakes and suffering as a more or less inevitable by-product, and other arguments advanced were powerful considerations with me.

4 This was even more evident upon our return to Australia. It took me a long time indeed to get used to the outlook and scale of spending that I now found prevailing even after only 3½ years.
stances in your own country and hope you will continue to do so when you return.” No discussion of the issues involved or the 'principles' that had been rammed down our throats before. On the other hand, while rather cautious about openly disagreeing with the Russians at that stage, our Chinese lecturer on political economy had readily agreed that such a thing could occur, and that it did not contradict what Marx himself had said (of course the Russians knew this too, but said it couldn’t happen in the period of imperialism).

Particularly noticeable, though hard to specify precisely, was the 'culture' and its differences from ours. Not so much the outward differences, which are of course very striking, but, for example, the emphasis on things of the mind and emotions. This is hard to define also, but it stood out in marked contrast to our Australian brashness, lack of consideration for dignity and feelings, and overriding emphasis on 'objective causes' with much playing down of 'subjective' ones, which we had thought to be one of the main hallmarks of 'Marxism-Leninism'.

From such Chinese sources came a deepening of knowledge and an expansion in the range of thought which was entirely necessary and beneficial. But at the same time this took place (or appeared to take place)\(^5\) within the already accepted framework of what was recognised as 'Marxism-Leninism', and thus, by another door, reinforced the more or less closed system of ideas then accepted as constituting it. Errors — or creative additions — were thought of as occurring within an essentially known, correct and basically complete system of ideas into which everything could be either fitted (good; proletarian) or excluded (bad; bourgeois). Thus the Chinese experience, while tremendous in impact and on the whole positive and liberating of thought, in another way served to reinforce the concept of Marxism-Leninism as a set of established and final truths and thus acted as a delaying force for the re-thinking that had eventually to get under way. This ambivalence is, I believe, a key to some apparent inconsistencies in developments in the 60’s.

\(^5\) To what extent the Chinese then accepted the prevailing (Stalinist) conception of 'Marxism-Leninism', and to what extent they just went along with it in the circumstances of the time while having their own ideas (subsequently developed) is problematical, and to say this is neither to condone nor condemn. For a useful examination see *Marxism & Asia* by d'Encausse and Schram.

The Chinese position was, in many cases, really creative, even if not sufficiently rationalised in traditional marxist or other theoretical terms. But it is not good enough to force things into a mould because that is what people expect, or because to do otherwise would initially place one at a disadvantage in polemics. This is one of the factors which has been at work to transform marxism into dogma and religious-type mystification.
This also coloured greatly consideration of the real relations between the CPSU and the CPC. ‘Marxism-Leninism’ made a fundamental division between socialist countries and such communist parties impossible. Thus many of us were still naive enough to see in the final document of the 81 parties conference in 1960 a proof that, despite differences, there could be no final split. The fact that almost immediately this wishful thinking was exposed forced a deeper consideration. When things came to something of a head at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in 1962 (when the Chinese walked out, and paid ostentatious tribute to Stalin) it seemed to me that, although errors of both could be pointed out, the CPSU was acting more reasonably, still attempting to do the right thing about ‘de-stalinisation’ and giving proper emphasis to avoidance of nuclear war which the Chinese seemed to treat in cavalier fashion.

But much more important were the issues mainly affecting our perspectives, policies and practices in Australia. These having been brought from China, through Hill and his supporters, to the stage of “you must choose one or the other”, did the great service of posing fundamental questions as to what it was that we, as communists, really stood for.

For example there was a great deal of argument about two peace organisations existing in Melbourne, and as to whether we should work for their amalgamation. From this apparently trivial argument it gradually became clear that the central issue was whether our prime consideration was to have a peace organisation of such a nature that ultimately we could be confident of the decisions it would make (a particular case being whether or not the peace movement should criticise the Soviet H-bomb tests in 1961). Thus the issue was were such mass movements (however wide in themselves from time to time) to be regarded as essentially ‘front’ organisations in the manner described by some of our critics; or were we, while participating in and doing all we could to influence policy in the direction we thought best, to do this in recognition that there were other views that had to be respected, and that ours had no special claim to recognition beyond their cogency and the respect, earned on the basis of performance, in which our members were held.

Similar issues emerged in regard to our own organisation. For example, was it right that a (or the) leader of an organisation should exercise the right of selection of people for positions, irrespect-

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6 The same issues came up increasingly also in regard to international organisations (trade union, youth, women, peace).
ive of the views of others, on the grounds of ‘loyalty’? This in turn raised further questions as to the existing form of organisation of the Party. Whether actively sought or not, there was an inbuilt disposition to give rise to an entrenched group whose position could not really be challenged short of an upheaval of the whole organisation, with the actual tendency being for all to regard direction from the top and conformity as ‘correct’. Underpinning this were various theoretical and political propositions which had to be (or were) accepted as irrefutable axioms and/or starting points and as not open to questioning. This in turn led to the fundamental question of the approach to marxism itself, put still more clearly at a later date by Hill: “Marxism is a set of propositions (concerning the Party, the state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, violence, philosophy, etc.), you either accept them or you don’t.” No room for science here, no room for a marxist approach in the spirit of Marx himself or of Lenin, no room for a genuine theory indispensable to a revolutionary movement.

There was the problem of ‘peaceful transition to socialism’ and how it might be conceived of in Australian conditions. Orientations on this can be varied, including a Labor Party type parliamentary road such as is taken up, I believe by the present ‘opposition’. This is nonsense, but to open up one’s mind to the question of transition to socialism without civil war is not. The problem was repeatedly discussed from many angles, including the structure of the modern capitalist state, questions of ‘hegemony’ and ‘counter-hegemony’, and the tactics of mass struggle and so on, resulting in the analysis in the Statement of Aims adopted at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party (see pages 21-24 of this statement).

There was the attitude to the Labor Party, admittedly a very complex question which it is impossible to examine to any great extent here. But perhaps this complexity is part of the basic point. The Hill opposition at that time wanted to confine the whole of it within the narrow framework of the discredited ‘main-blow’ theory developed by Stalin at a certain stage. The present oppo-

7 One such issue was Hill’s “appointment” of Vida Little as Metropolitan Secretary in Victoria, despite almost unanimous opposition from others, including from Hill supporters.

8 From an early publication of the CPA (Marxist-Leninist).

9 "... the decision to withdraw the troops must be made, in the final washup, by a government and not by some queer form of workers' control." — from Australian Socialist No. 2, in an article condemning the leftism of the anti-war movement.

10 See for example Foundations of Leninism Chapter 7, and The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists.
sition tends to confine it in the limits of tailing behind the Labor Party in the name of the 'united front', foregoing any really independent revolutionary initiative and acting as though a Labor Government elected on this basis in present circumstances is the main content of socialist activity (see footnote 9).

At this period it appeared to most observers and probably a considerable proportion of Party members, that the struggle was in essence one of choosing whom to follow, whom to regard as the fountain head of Marxist-Leninist wisdom and the main architect of world socialist strategy and main force for ending imperialism— the Soviet Union or China. Though I know of no-one who can claim to have known what was to come, what we were really doing was facing up to the need to think out our position for ourselves. This was a slow process because, as I have pointed out, the previous framework was still accepted; but there was now an inner preparedness to go beyond it should experience or rational thought so indicate.

It was in this spirit that publication of the Communist Review ended in May 1966 and the Australian Left Review was initiated. Improvement had to be fought for step by step, but there was now no issue put beyond the pale of discussion as too 'difficult' or 'inconvenient' either before or after a number of non-communists joined the editorial board.

The fact that the struggle did represent at bottom a turn to independent thought and an independent position on socialist strategy in Australia and internationally, also became clear in relatively small ways at this time in our relations with the CPSU. The Jewish question arose once again, and although there was more in it than I for one was conscious of at the time, there was readiness to consider the facts, so far as they could be ascertained, though there was also the readiness and disposition to give a generous benefit of the doubt on the basis that the CPSU was working, against difficulties, to overcome the legacy of problems it had inherited from Tsarism and Stalinism. There was the criticism of the way in which Khrushchov was removed and 'unpersoned'. There was criticism on the basis of the evidence of reversal of a previous trend and strengthening of an undemocratic and unsocialist attitude on the question of freedom in the artistic and intellectual spheres, and on democracy in general.

Nevertheless, speaking for myself, I then still believed that the CPSU was basically on a course which was going in the right direction. It was in this frame of mind that I visited the Soviet
Union in 1965 on my way to Cuba and Chile together with Pete Thomas to attend the 13th Congress of the CP of Chile. This was the period in which the long discussion on the economic reforms was coming to a climax, and we aimed to get further clarity about it, and if possible to interview Professor Liberman, one of the main proponents of the reforms.

Experiences were mixed, but not altogether unfavorable. It proved possible to visit Kharkov to see Professor Liberman, with whom we had a long interview, in the presence of a battery of ‘watchdog’ party officials, which restricted the range of the discussion though it was valuable nonetheless. There were useful discussions with factory managements, but an exasperating inability to get answered key questions, particularly on the ‘whys’ of the past position and the implications of the reforms beyond the purely economic. There was apparently quite free discussion among and with the interpreters and officials we met on freedom of the arts, with quite different opinions being given (how meaningful these differences were is hard to say). I expressed the view on return that although problems of democracy had in no way been resolved, nor was the orientation in the direction we felt necessary, the economic foundation required political democratisation. For the economic reforms involved decentralisation of authority, and the drawing into meaningful consultation and control of the rank and file on the job as Lenin had strongly emphasised, and the discussion of real issues instead of sloganising and rhetoric. (I think the main reason why the reforms have run into something of a bog is because these consequences are unacceptable to the leadership.) Such changes at grassroots level, while not automatically bringing any changes at political level, would nevertheless, I believed, build up such pressures that these would come in time. Later events have shown that these hopes have not materialised, and that the course is a different one. (The pressures still exist, and are slowly building up, but there is no evidence I know of to support hopes for any substantial change in the immediately foreseeable future.)

There was one important incident prior to leaving. We returned to the Soviet Union after a month spent in Cuba and Chile, and were almost immediately read the long statement of the Chinese issued in November 1965.¹¹ There followed a special discussion with a leading figure of the International Department, who suggested that our Party might consider making an extensive reply to and criticism of this attack on the CPSU. We replied that our party

policy on the question was that renewal of polemics on an interna-
tional plane at that time would serve no good purpose; that the thing
to do was to continue to press for concerted action against imper-
ialism in Vietnam and elsewhere, and that we did not think our
Central Committee would agree to depart from this standpoint.

After much argument back and forth we finally expressed the view
that although our policy on this question was unlikely to be altered,
there was room within it for some discussion on the situation — the
events in Indonesia for example — which would permit some refer-
ence to some of the issues raised in the Chinese blast. This, was
brusquely dismissed, and it became clear that what was proposed
was that the CPSU would supply us with the article they wanted—
a ‘big’ article, which would ‘earn us a big reputation in the inter-
national movement’. The way in which the proposition was ap-
proached left the clear implication that this was not an unusual way
of doing things, and that other ‘big’ international articles had often
been arranged in the same way.12 (The Duclos article on Browder
in 1946 springs to mind.)

So it was becoming increasingly clear that we were ‘on our own’
in grappling with the actual problems we were encountering, and
that no succour was to be expected from bold new deeds or theoreti-
cal generalisations from the Soviet Union, or the ‘International
Movement’.13 At the same time social and political developments
proceeded apace throughout the world, including in Australia where

12 Being hard-headed about it, one supposes that it is only to be expected that
the CPSU (not it alone of course) would regard such a proposition as being
‘worth a try’, particularly since they felt that we ‘supported them against China’.
However there was more to it than that. Besides the fact of having other parties
fire the bullets the CPSU had made, it was unacceptable to them to have the
party concerned make its own statements. We were treated to lengthy discourses
on the long friendship between our two parties, in an unavailing attempt to
get us to be more compliant. And, although it was 18 degrees centigrade below
freezing when we left Moscow a day or two later, the social atmosphere was
even more frigid. This was perhaps not the beginning of the dissatisfaction of
the CPSU with the new leadership of the Australian party, but I believe it was
a long step on the road. And there was increasing evidence subsequently of
pressures and sallies against the leadership, which increased further as issues
became clearer to us, and we became more outspoken and as we began to tackle
somewhat more deeply the theoretical and strategical issues facing us. The
above incident was of course fully reported on to the Political Committee, which
unanimously endorsed the stand we had taken.

13 We were encountering (and were to continue to do so) the problems of
inertia, bureaucracy and of ‘vested interests’ by individuals and groups of
people in their own ‘jobs’, ‘empires’, etc., in trying to reorganise on a more
limited and more realistic basis, and get our financial and property affairs on
an even and efficient keel. Such experiences on our tiny scale gave some apprecia-
tion of how enormous such problems may become when multiplied by a million
or ten million . . .!
a new wave of political dissent and activism was beginning, affecting particularly students and intellectuals. If the scale of this was small compared with the United States and other countries, it was nonetheless very noticeable, not to say welcome in the Australian context, after quiescence which, with a few interruptions, had lasted so frustratingly long.

Escalation of the Vietnam war by US imperialism in 1965 made a worldwide impact on the revolutionary movement, and in Australia too. That this was a central issue was recognised right from the outset (and even before this), and at times in those early days the communists were almost alone in their campaigning, which deserves a recognition it seldom gets. But as other forces, especially the students, increasingly entered the struggle, the limitations of what the party was able to do in its existing ideological and organisational state became increasingly apparent.

The industrial field, main focus of activity of the communists over the years, was also now arousing dissatisfaction on account of narrowness, conservatism and timidity, and those problems were highlighted as the mass movement over living standards, democratic rights and the Vietnam war developed. Probably the penal clauses issue illustrates this best. Already in the metal trades struggle of 1967-8 it was being urged that the penal clauses be defied. In February 1969 the National Committee estimated that the situation was ripe for a challenge. This fell largely on deaf ears among communist union officials, yet in May one of the greatest mass movements Australia has seen erupted. Most of these officials showed great resistance to any new ideas or even the revival of interest in traditional Leninist ideas of ‘workers’ control’. Obsolete union structures, authoritarian outlooks and bureaucratic procedures were grimly held on to. This situation — a product of the party’s outlook and practices, not a specific of union officials — thus also began to be subjected to prolonged scrutiny, debate and struggle, which both benefited from and contributed to the general re-assessment (see the 22nd Congress document Modern Unionism and the Workers’ Movement).

Internationally, also, a new complicated upheaval was affecting China — the cultural revolution — while in May 1968 the great upheaval in France showed that revolutionary potential in modern capitalist society could not be written off as some were suggesting, while also exposing still more fundamentally the unsolved problems

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14 Many factors contributed to this, a key one being emphasis on the importance of official positions, often irrespective of the quality of the work done and rank and file development.
of theory, strategy and organisation of the communist parties. Such new social and political currents in the capitalist and socialist world posed additional knotty problems of theory and orientation. The relatively quite few active minded critics in and outside the party did considerable service in pressing those questions. And even if their strictures were often argued against in a way that probably appeared as rejection, this was mainly because answers alternative to the traditional ones were not readily forthcoming at the time, while our own thinking still revolved mainly in the same framework; nevertheless they were listened to more seriously than they themselves perhaps thought.

In this period, in party discussions, such critics or those who took their cue from them, would often say: we should make a study of class changes, the quality of life, or what have you. Because the need for this was already accepted, this became rather off-putting after a while. I used to think to myself, and sometimes say, "Well, why don’t you bloody well do it; who’s stopping you?", for the number of serious studies of the issues (as distinct from opinions, correct or not, taken ‘off the top of the head’) was small indeed. Of course this basically constituted a severe criticism of what the party had come to be. We were inwardly quite prepared to grapple with issues without setting uncrossable lines in advance as we had previously. But precisely because of this past tradition we were neither well-equipped ourselves to actually do so, nor more than marginally in touch with those who were, even if only within particular fields.

A number of us therefore, quite independently forced to the same conclusion, determined that we must bend ourselves to the task, however daunting. It was in fact discussed at meetings and a decision made, though no doubt many would have regarded it as merely another of innumerable pious resolutions to ‘study more deeply’. For myself, I set out to make some study of philosophy, which was of great interest to me in general, besides inevitably sticking its tousled head at some stage or other into all the other subjects.

During 1966 I had discussions with a number of academic philosophers about trends and (if any) their relation to marxist philosophy. Naturally these discussions did not go very deep but, besides reinforcing my views on the narrow, inward-looking nature and consequent barrenness of much of philosophy treated purely as

15 We were by no means satisfied with the stand of the French CP, and also took issue with those who, often in an anti-communist spirit, sloganised about revolutionary situations instead of analysing. In between these stools we sometimes lapsed into the previous stand of blind solidarity between communist parties.
an academic discipline (whereas for me ‘philosophising’ should be a human activity bound up with all other — especially revolutionary, activity) were most beneficial.

They (a) made me confront the question of defining (or re-defining) for myself what marxist philosophy actually was, (b) showed that marxist philosophy as understood from its Soviet development was not taken very seriously — and not just mainly because proletarian pearls were rejected by bourgeois swine; (c) led me to read many more books (a number of them recommended by my philosopher acquaintances) than for many years past, and to do so both more critically and more open-mindedly than is the wont of those who feel they already know, basically at least, the answers to the problems they are reading about; (d) along with rejection of a good deal, aroused great interest in a number of lines of thought, and gave rise to the reflection that, although one could rationalise to oneself that non-marxists were often ‘forced to think in a marxist way’, this did not settle what ‘a marxist way’ actually was. And, most importantly, led me to the conclusion that there was no likelihood that the burgeoning knowledge in this and other fields could be squeezed without damaging surgery into any glass slipper, however elegant, and that the easy mental divisions into ‘bourgeois’ and ‘proletarian’ ideology we were in the habit of making was a major aspect of confining thought within old pre-determined bounds and could no longer be accepted in that form.

This re-examination could not of course be confined to philosophy, but had to be extended to marxism as a whole. A sprinkling of people in various countries had realised this long before and produced valuable works of which most of us were blissfully ignorant at the time. There is now an increasing number engaged in the task, and this holds out the prospect that a new stage in the endeavour may be reached in the not too distant future.

These views (which were not necessarily only mine) were raised at CC meetings and incorporated in the documents of the 21st Congress. They may not seem much, and in themselves are not, but are crucial in the context of the traditions of communist parties. To a degree at least the CPSU and those now clearly identified as conservatives in the party felt some unease about these sorts of things. By their own lights they were thus more discerning about the ‘winds of change’ than some other critics who, from right and left were insisting that ‘nothing was changed’.

I also undertook some re-study of Marx’s political ideas for the centenary celebrations of the publication of the first volume of “Capital” (1967), study for the dialogue with Christians which took place about this time, of class structure for a projected book of essays (1968), a re-study of Chinese developments following the end of the Cultural Revolution (1969), and of Lenin’s works for the centenary of his birth (1970), and work on the ‘Aims’ document for the 22nd Congress (1970)).

All these studies confirmed in general terms the conclusion outlined above, and hightened appreciation of the fact that the problems had to be tackled more deeply yet. This was the main reason I have taken ‘sabbatical leave’ to do whatever I can to contribute to this further study.

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All these studies confirmed in general terms the conclusion outlined above, and heightened appreciation of the fact that the problems had to be tackled more deeply yet. This was the main reason I have taken ‘sabbatical leave’ to do whatever I can to contribute to this further study.
At the same time other key issues related to the party came under scrutiny. For example, one party rule and ‘the leading role of the party’ connected with it. Secrecy; it was brought home to us that we had spent an enormous amount of time guarding non-existent or unprotectable ‘secrets’. This was connected with our view of the 1917 revolution and bolshevik experience as the basic model, and our onesided approach to the state and the way capitalist rule is maintained (later linking up with the discussion of Gramsci and counter-hegemony). Party organisation related to the above. The significance and nature of changes in the economy and the progress of the scientific and technological revolution, changes in class structure, etc.

The 1967 (21st) Congress dealt with all these and other questions, although our treatment was only beginning to penetrate the surface, since understanding was still superficial. But, perhaps for this reason, the lack of understanding displayed throughout the party of what was really involved — no particular surprise this — and the difficulty of reorientating thinking and action, brought home once again the sterility of many previous practices and approaches and realisation of how great the problems of renovation and renewal were.

Perhaps the key question over-all was that of democracy. This was raised from everything we touched. Questions of bourgeois and proletarian ideology in the sense described above; free discussion of theoretical, scientific and artistic ideas; questions of the one party state, and one ‘official’ state ideology; of secrecy and the necessary limitation on democracy that accompanies it; free discussion of political issues, etc. The pre-congress discussion was completely free, and this upset the CPSU particularly, because things previously unsaid in communist publications could be said about them as well as us. Even with all this emphasis on democracy there was still room for a rank and file delegate at Congress to propose that we set out to define our attitude to democracy in a charter of democratic rights, and for such a proposal to raise all sorts of controversy from that Congress through to the next.

There were some who were misled by the emphasis on democracy into concluding that concentration on these issues meant a turn in the direction of ‘rightism’ and even ‘liberalism’. It may be that there were elements of this, but the essential point was that a changed attitude on intellectual freedom and democracy in the party and in the future socialist society was a basic precondition for breaking out of the old conceptions and practices, which in their
totality were actually 'stalinism'. And following through the issue of democracy has led increasingly to more radical and revolutionary conceptions concerning participatory democracy, workers' control, etc., and prompted re-examination of attitudes to 'leadership' and bureaucracy both within the party and the mass movement. These and other issues were taken still further at the 22nd Congress.

From the above it will be evident that the issue of Czechoslovakia, while indeed a fundamental turning point, in no way caused the developments in Australia, but only put the seal on what had already been basically accomplished internally. That is why there was no hesitation and why few members of the executive had any doubts about the outcome of the repeated discussions that took place. Nevertheless the Czechoslovak issue certainly forced the pace, deepened the appreciation of problems and make inevitable the de facto split now existing. It also drove home the barren circularity of the argumentation and thought within which we had allowed ourselves to be confined for so long. This is difficult to describe, as there are many points on the wheel, and wheels within wheels, but essentially it goes something like this:

* The CPSU wouldn't do it unless it was right; they must have had a good reason, they are closer, they know more (including from intelligence reports they can't discuss); they have the most experience and they are best versed in marxism-leninism.

* Marxism-leninism teaches that the central question in the period of imperialism is the dictatorship of the proletariat; enemies must be crushed; democracy is a class question; it is all a matter of class stand; class stand entails that the Soviet Union be supported at all costs.

* Internationalism is a fundamental aspect of class stand; we must unite to fight the class enemy; they (five Warsaw pact powers) have united so they are fighting the class enemy; fifty parties can't be wrong; it is nationalism to oppose the views of the majority of communist parties.

* The CIA is always active; they would like to see Czechoslovakia separated from the Soviet Union; Dubcek and Co. are criticising the Soviet Union and won't accept their 'advice' and leadership, therefore they are doing objectively what the CIA wants.

* The past proves that the Soviet Union was right; they defeated fascism; fascism was raising its head again in Hungary in 1956; If you supported them then, you should now; if you don't now, you are putting the integrity of your own past in question; you
have always adopted marxism-leninism and a class stand before; don't take a step back now.

And so on, and so forth, without getting to the substance of issues. It will be apparent that any one of the points or sub-points on the circle can serve as starting points to get on the same old exercise in circularity. And while put baldly as above it may seem singularly unconvincing, there is no doubt that this argumentation has a very compelling quality for those who have spent half or more of a lifetime fighting self-sacrificingly and passionately, if often mistakenly, along these lines for what they believed. One of the main points about it is that it is circular — that is, it can only be escaped from by refusing to stand within that circle. And this of course is difficult; firstly because things are never completely black and white and individual facts can be found to support one or other of the points. Secondly and mainly because it requires a qualitative step in outlook as a whole — both a return to and bold development of the revolutionary content and spirit of marxism.

The Communist Party of Australia has decisively, if by no means completely, broken out of its old circle and habits of thought, and set out on a course which is clear enough in its main outlines, though incomplete, lacking in theoretical depth, and suffering from the opacities of the present complex stage of capitalist and world developments.

Which are the most basic and lasting currents in world processes and politics is not something to dogmatise about, but I have the feeling that the next few years, and fairly certainly the 70's are likely to crystallise things again after the present period of 'solution' or 'fluidity'. All sorts of new movements, political formations and theoretical developments are possible, probably very different from the past.

Some see in this present stage the dissolution of 'a way of life' and the overturning of 'all that we hold dear', with catastrophe as the inevitable outcome of such a course. There are even not a few others on the left who from a pro-Chinese, 'new left' or nihilist position also want to confine thought in (somewhat different) closed circles. But we feel that what we hold dear are our ideals for the future development of society into a fundamentally more human state than exists anywhere at present. That this requires revolution in capitalist society and far-reaching change in most existing socialist societies we have no doubt. And we believe that this cannot be accomplished without considerable theoretical development and powerful practical action — to which we will contribute all we are capable of.
NO HISTORY CAN BE WRITTEN without a conscious or unconscious philosophy or world-view underlying it, because it is the philosophy of the author which will determine what he understands by a historical fact; how he will order these historical facts in a pattern; and, finally, how he will give more importance to some facts than to others to establish a pattern or hierarchy which enables him to discover what is significant and deserves the most emphasis in his work. This generalisation applies to the writing of the history of communism as much as to any other sphere of history.

The adequacy of a historical work is determined first by the validity of its philosophical base and then by its “facts”, for what are “facts” and what is “correct” is something which can only be established in philosophical terms. It may be that in time there will be general agreement that there is only one valid philosophical criterion to decide the adequacy of “facts”, but at present there are at least three philosophical positions of major importance in historical scholarship whose theories of knowledge differ so much that there can never be agreement between them as to what constitutes a “correct fact”. The truthfulness of this proposition is more evident in disputes over macrocosmic facts like a revolution than microcosmic facts like what is understood by the notion of a date, but it holds for all “facts”.

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The three major philosophical schools which rule in historical scholarship today (not that the historical practitioners are always conscious of it) are the idealist school, the empirical or positivist school, and the historicist school. The first have a theory of knowledge which maintains that facts are the product of men's minds; that knowledge or understanding is antecedent to the facts; that consciousness precedes material and sometimes, that God made the world. The second group maintains the contrary: that material precedes consciousness; that the concept of the fact lies in the fact itself, and that facts produce men's minds. The third school maintains that material and consciousness are two faces of the one coin, neither being precedent to the other, both being inconceivable without the other, and that the development of knowledge is not by production but by a dialectical process.

The first two are fundamentalist schools who merely reverse each other's propositions, and the third a historicist school. The first two have ideological origins and not historical origins. The idealist school maintains that the validity of ideas (and ideas are the most tricky of "facts") can be determined according to a criterion outside history, outside the ideas themselves, a revealed or transcendent criterion (e.g. God, the Bible, intuition). The second do exactly the same by returning to First Causes, though in their case they claim the ultima ratio for material rather than God. For them dispute is solved by returning to the "facts", understanding facts in a crude raw sense, and failing to distinguish between facts and the concept of facts, assuming the unknowable, the existence of the facts independent of men's consciousness of them. Only the third school starts from the existing historically structured environment instead of looking for first causes, and accepts the presence of the individual consciousness and the environment of facts as the conditions precedent for establishing the theory of knowledge, and that ideas can be tested for their validity by the application of human rationality which can compare them against the real.

The three philosophies emerged in a succession and developed from each other; they constitute a progress in understanding. The first we can find already present in the writings of the Church fathers; the second was the vogue from the eighteenth century onwards and had its heyday late in the nineteenth century and the third was a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All have exponents among contemporary historians. We can place Butterfield and Manning Clark among the first school, Lewis Namier and Ian Turner in the second, and Benedetto Croce and Antonio Gramsci in the third. Not a single notable Anglo-Saxon historian, much less an Australian, comes to mind as an exponent of the third philosophical method — the only one which is not obsolete.
In the Anglo-Saxon world we are faced with an atrophy of historical research, in its ideological stage. We are faced with pre-historicist history.

This lag of historical practice is not inevitable, as it is not present in European historical research, where, as I have pointed out, major historians have a historicist philosophical base, either in theory, as with Croce, or in theory and practice, as with Gramsci, but it is explicable in terms of Anglo-Saxon failure to keep up with philosophical developments made "in foreign parts".

Within the insularity of Anglo-Saxon historical scholarship (Australian scholarship belongs within this too), the idealists are regarded as old-hat, if not as nuts. The ruling vogue is the pragmatic empiricism of the positivist group, who periodically savage the idealists (usually mistaking historicists for idealists because they know nothing of non Anglo-Saxon developments). Recently we were treated to an example of this in the attack on Manning Clark's history in Australia, but a running battle has been conducted for many years in England against Toynbee and Butterfield by the pupils of Namier. The Namier school of history epitomises the style of Anglo-Saxon historical scholarship. Carrying one side of Ranke's teaching to a ridiculous conclusion, they claim to have eliminated great theories and philosophy from history by going back to the facts. Massive detail is used to demolish attempts to understand. What none of this school seems to understand is that they too belong to a philosophical tradition; they are not writing objective history but positivist history. They cannot attack the idealists without attacking themselves as their position is merely idealism stood on its head.

I can almost hear a sigh of relief from marxist historians at the mention of Namier, who was nothing if not an enemy of marxism. I reply, most Anglo-Saxon and Australian marxist historians also belong with him through their positivist understanding of marxism. An economic determinist who believes in writing history in which institutional developments are always explicable in terms of economic and social developments has more in common with Namier than with marxism because he shares the same philosophy which is not only passe but ideological in its origins.

We can get no guidance for writing a communist history from Anglo-Saxon historical scholarship and the criteria it uses, as it is almost without exception, marxist or non-marxist, positivist in its orientation and therefore both out-of-date and ideological. Its theory of knowledge and world-view is inadequate to its own object. To understand how to write any history we should look at European historical scholarship in the historicist tradition, as here we have a methodology adequate to its object.
The practical differences in approach of the Anglo-Saxon school and the Continental school, which is so much in advance of it philosophically, can be gauged by the recent criticism of Paolo Spriano's massive three volume *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, recognised generally as the best history of a communist party ever written. Spriano is a communist, an activist and a scholar, and one of Italy's leading historians. Essentially, his history is a history of the leading groups of the party, their relationship with the Comintern and the policies thrashed out on the dialectic of that relationship.

International critics were asked three questions:

1. This history of the PCI is essentially the history of a national section of the Communist International. As such, how far is it indicative of a general process?

2. As Gramsci asked himself, is it possible to write the history of a political party? To what extent must it also be the history of a country? The problem is particularly difficult, because it is a question of a Party which is part of a centralised international movement and because it lived almost from its inception in conditions of illegality.

3. Spriano seems to share the thesis that the history of a party is in the first place the history of its directive groups. Is this method correct and what novelty does it introduce?

Giuseppe Berti (leading historian of PCI, non-communist) pointed out that anti-communists were critical of Spriano's history because it emphasised too much the positive aspects of the leadership but "in this world it is really difficult to make everyone happy". Berti went on to say that the harshest criticism had come from communist leaders. He replied to the first question in the affirmative:

Without committing the sin of patriotism, we could even say that from this point of view the PCI's history offers an optimum positive quality and can therefore be told with least difficulty by a militant. What there is in it which is negative is owed (not completely, but prevailingly) to the coefficient of sub-ordination of the policies of the PCI to those of Moscow . . .

In reply to the second question Berti said:

To me there seems no foundation to the objection (that it is insufficiently inserted into the history of the country) and that this seems a false problem from a historiographical point of view. The history of a country can be written from various perspectives, as economic history, as diplomatic history, as the history of political parties and religious communities (think of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation) and so on, and, in modern history, the horizon has a tendency to extend to problems of European and world history. Moreover, this characteristic is particularly evident in the history of a movement like the communist movement which is internationalist. Thus there arises the suspicion that he who insists a great deal that greater stress should be laid on general developments of Italian history, has
no great desire to go deeper into and discuss the burning questions (national and international) of the communist movement in its totality, and would prefer to drown everything in a wave of historical happenings. Today the writer of the history of communism in reality faces a more difficult task than that presented to historians of the nineteenth century, when they tried to write the history of Jacobinism which was the history of France from the Enlightenment to the Revolution, but which was also the history of something else . . . as the historians who tackled this question from different points of view from Barruel to Albert Sorel, from Mathiez to more recent historians: realised the history of a country and of the movement of European ideas.

In response to the third reproach, Berti said that it was banal:

Let us take for example a subject which is a little less heatedly contested: the history of the Action Party in the Risorgimento. I belong in fact to the group of historians which sought patiently (and above all) to bring to light the class links of that leading group with the substratum of young intellectuals and workers which foretold the working class, of the peasants whom in certain cases the Action Party tried to lean on certain movements. What came from it? Enriched, certainly by new facts (or rather facts which were known in more detail and position) what came from it was precisely the history of the directive group. And it should be noted that the enrichment itself was possible not in one of the first reconstructions of historical scholarship, but in the latest in order of time, a century after the first attempts to write a history of the Action Party.

Milos Hajek (Czech historian of the Comintern) said that linking a party's history with that of the country was much less important in the case of a propagandist party than a strong ruling party. In the case of parties related to the Comintern, the Comintern was probably much more important than anything that went on in the country of origin. He pointed out furthermore that the study of communist parties was in its initial stage and that in the case of official histories tracing connection of party and the masses, they started from a falsified and a priori view of history of the country. He agreed entirely that the CPI and he added the Soviet, French, Polish, Czech and German parties should be studied above all at the directive level. “A history of a Communist Party would be vulgarly deformed if it did not single out the real development of its policies, and how far they were determined by its leaders (as well as by the Comintern).”

Robert Paris (French militant intellectual):

Certainly the choice of Spriano . . . without doubt will seem embarrassing to those who would like to find, in the evolution of an organism like that of the PCI, the equivalent of that ‘history of the subaltern classes’ which Gramsci hoped for; or, to cite Jaures, ‘a fresco of a whole immense multitude of men who are finally coming into the light’: to those, in sum, who would like a substitution of the history of the class struggle for that of ruling groups or classes. But it is certain that the history of a communist party of the classical type like the PCI, cannot be wedded, or at best in an extremely indirect and mediated way, into what we call social history.
Paris went on to say that the history of communist parties belongs in the history of sociology of organisations. Paris agreed too that if the scenario was Italian the direction was elsewhere, in the Comintern and the international movement.

**Eric Hobsbawm** (guess what, we know him!), the only Anglo-Saxon marxist and economic determinist to boot, was the only dis-senter. He said:

In general, no peculiar aspect and no institution of any country can be separated from their context without some deformation or lack. Life cannot be divided up without losing life.

We can criticise Spriano for not having emphasised the (national) context adequately.

He went on:

As to the history of a party seen in terms of its directive groups, it is evidently insufficient, because it neglects the activity, the attitudes etc. of the masses which — often for reasons different from those admitted by the leadership — support it . . . It is to be hoped that in the third of Spriano's volumes, the history of the communist party will be written from below as well as from on top.

The clear opposition between the Anglo-Saxon and Continental critics, the first claiming that history is a totality whose parts cannot be considered separately and the second asserting the contrary and indeed claiming that more is lost than gained by the global approach is explicable only in terms of their philosophical positions. Although all are marxists, and I stress here that being a marxist is not all-important in understanding history, (what is crucial is what sort of a marxist you are), Hobsbawm still subscribes to the pre-humanist economic determinist variety of marxism in both his theory and his practice, where two of the others, Berti and Paris are "humanist" marxists. (I am not able to comment on Hajek beyond noting that in his practice he is the "humanist" variety of marxist too).

The positivist version of marxism espoused and maintained by Hobsbawm accepts the notion of production and therefore the notion that superstructural phenomena like political parties are caused by conditions in certain social classes whose existence is owed to a certain division of labour stemming from the prevailing mode of production within the society. Thus one is not explicable without the other. A communist party and its history cannot be studied independent of the conditions within which it arises, these conditions being stated a priori according to a positivist view of marxism, to be matters like the economic and social history of the society. In turn, because Hobsbawm understands the progress of history in the positivist way, Theory (marxism) itself becomes an expression of the working class; the study of revolution and how to make it becomes the study of the progression of common sense
among the masses to a refined level, something viewed as an automatic process in which no mediation of an extraneous sort is present. The practical preoccupations of Hobsbawm testify to this assertion. He is interested in the history of Gramscian "common sense", not as a part of history, but as History. In doing so he, of course, ignores what is implicit in Leninism, that is the notion of the party as something extraneous to the masses which brings Theory from the outside and whose history is not history of the masses though it may be related to it.

The humanist marxist, because he does not subscribe to the notion of the establishment of any institution according to a theory of production, is prepared at least to accept the Gramscian proposition that:

We do not consider sufficiently that many political acts are owed to internal organisational needs, tied to the need to give coherence to a party, a group, a society. This, for example, is clear from the history of the Catholic Church. We would not succeed if we attempted to find the immediate explanation for every ideological struggle inside the Church in the developments in the base: many economic and political novels have been written on these lines. Indeed, it is clear that the greater part of these struggles are for organisational and sectarian needs. In the discussion between Rome and Byzantium on the nature of the Holy Ghost it would be ridiculous to seek the cause of the claim that the Holy Ghost derives from the Father only, in the economic base of Eastern Europe, and in the economic base of the West the cause of the claim that the Holy Ghost derives from the Father and the Son. The two churches, whose existence and influence depend on the economic base and on history, have adopted positions which provide distinct principles and internal organisational cohesion for each, but each could have chosen the position adopted by the other; the distinct principles and conflict would have been maintained just the same, and it is this problem of distinct principles and conflict which constitutes the real historical problem, not the arbitrarily chosen flag of each of the parties.

Instead, accepting the historicist philosophy according to which the will of men and rationality, understood as a dialectical result of application of the consciousness to the material, are responsible for the creation of the "superstructure" in all its manifestations, he admits that there is not an a priori relationship between political parties and base. This is not the same as denying that there may be a relationship if the evidence shows that there is. This brings me to some issues facing an author of a history of the Communist Party of Australia.

III

When I completed the substance of my History of the Communist Party of Australia in 1966 (the bulk was written in 1965) I certainly did not know much about the developments in historical methodology in the European countries and I had a noli me tangere respect for the practitioners of history in this country and the Anglo-Saxon world.
generally. The intellectual hegemony exerted by the Canberra school of labour historians over me was great and difficult to escape. However, even before embarking on the doctoral research which was the base of the part of the book from the CPA's beginnings to the end of the Second World War, I had rejected in my practice, even if not on a formed theoretical level, the notion that marxism was economic determinism. I will not single out by name the men who insisted from the ivory towers that labour history was marxist history (a populist distortion) and that the explanation for practically all political developments were to be found in the base. I do remember rejecting out of hand the value of this notion as it did not conform to my experience of reality, which unlike theirs consisted of a considerable period working in the working class in a highly class-conscious society. Not surprisingly in an environment like that of "marxist" scholars in Australia, this led to their believing that I was not a marxist. Unlike them I believe that there is some relation between theory and practice and that it is real experience which determines the validity of a theory.

In the Short History of the CPA I continued what was then a heretical viewpoint for marxists in Australia, a belief that the raw material would dictate what was significant. I note here that this is not the same as the positivist method and that an unconscious philosophy is not necessarily less coherent than a conscious one. Indeed, the true philosophy can most often be found in the practice. The net result was, that after reading everything which I had listed in my bibliography and more (it is not necessary to throw Namier out the window as his methodological canons are as relevant to marxist historians as elsewhere) I came to the conclusion that the central theme in CPA history was the dialogue between local exigencies and central orders. I did not assume a rigid theoretical schema according to which there must be some connection with the developments in the working class and the economic base and torture my facts to suit my theory. To borrow from Freud, on occasion the economic situation provided the same environment as illness or tiredness does for slips of the tongue, but it did not explain the slip of the tongue. Even in the great depression men's rationality and their wills decided what would be done; the economic base decided nothing, it never does; it produced nothing, it never does.

Naturally, because I am as intellectually lonely as anyone who makes his way against the mainstream (it is no consolation that I believe the mainstream to be ideological in its origins and to have dubious populist overtones whose nature could be best discovered by comparative studies of the national-socialist roots of fascism) I have been overjoyed to discover: 1) that the most advanced schools of marxism are anti economic determinist and refuse to admit the
arrant totalitarian nonsense that an institution must be examined in a social and economic context before it can be explained and, 2) that the most acclaimed history of a communist party, while infinitely superior to my stop-gap effort, also took the same partial approach (history is a totality only in the non-imperative sense) which has been applauded as the only way to study a communist party.

I have this to say to those who wish to write a definitive history to follow my "stopgap" history. First; the history should not automatically be a history of the "rank and file" or the working class masses as Doug White demanded for this would be to lapse into the old populist error which confused the history of revolution with the history of common-sense. Critics of his ilk have learnt nothing from the Leninist distinction between spontaneity and consciousness. I believe the Arena group has accepted bastard theories to shore up its own petty-bourgeois romanticism (neither White nor any of the supposed supporters of Mao Tse-tung's theories or those of Althusser are either Maoists or Althusserians). Second; the history should not automatically be set against the socio-economic background, as this is the practice of a economic determinist (pace Rex Mortimer who made several other valid criticisms of my book). Third; the author should prepare himself by boning up on the latest marxist philosophy and its historical practitioners and this means leaving Anglo-Saxon shores and going to Europe. I have only this to say in conclusion to those horrified by their lack of tools enabling them to do this. If Louis Althusser decided that he had to learn German before he could study Marx, surely a few years learning Western European languages is a condition precedent for keeping up with contemporary marxist philosophy? And if Althusser considered his ignorance of what went on over the mountains a disgraceful chauvinism, surely Australian marxists are just as offending and had best look at their own theoretical paraphernalia before they embark on either writing or criticism. Finally, one warning about short-cuts: Those who popularise a contemporary marxist sociology like that of Althusser on the basis of the Allen Lane translation of less than half his preliminary work do a disservice to Althusser, to themselves, and to the working-class movement. The same moral applies to those who wish to write a history of the CPA.
G. Tighe

Entrism and Revolution

FOLLOWING THE LENGTHY PERIOD during which their past perspectives and tradition have been examined, the CPA has emerged with a detailed analysis of Australian society as it sees it. It is not my intention to analyse these documents, rather I wish to comment on the issues raised by Eric Aarons in his statement “The Congress and After” (Australian Left Review No. 25). The question concerns the CPA attitude to the ALP. Eric Aarons goes to considerable effort to establish that the Trotskyist concept of entrism “remains unexplained, while its failure to produce significant results over a period of over thirty years is not analysed.” As one who has upheld the validity in the past of “entrism sui generis*”, it seems necessary that I should spell out in clear terms what is entailed by the above term.

Entrism sui generis is a totality of several modes of work and stems primarily from a realisation of the overall low level of political consciousness in this country at present. Inherent in this realisation is an acknowledgment of the hold exercised over the proletariat by the ALP and the consequent limitation of the likely success of an independent revolutionary movement. The ALP is a party that was created by the proletariat in a period of relative

G. Tighe is the pen-name of a member of a 4th International group in Sydney. Although it is a discussion piece on an earlier contribution to ALR, this article is connected with issues raised by a consideration of Communist Party history.
struggle (the 1890-1 strikes); it achieved their support in the succeeding years so that by 1910 it was able to form majority governments federally and in N.S.W. In this early period, when the ALP promised limited reforms and was largely in a position to deliver these goods (pensions, basic wage, Commonwealth Bank, etc.), not only did these reforms reinforce the hold of this mass Party over the working class, but it also had considerable influence over the thinking (and direction) of the working class. I do not wish to labour this point unnecessarily, but later developments only further demonstrate the centrifugal pull of the ALP (e.g. National Labour—1916, Lang Labour—1931 and the DLP—1955); not one breakaway group has managed to survive or develop a party capable of taking the place of the ALP.

Viewed in this sense, it can be seen that the ALP is a mass reformist party that has the loyalty of a majority of the proletariat and in turn the working class expects something of their party. I will return to the reasons for the failure of breakaway groups later. Stemming from the very ease with which the ALP is capable of canalising working-class support, even if a militant stand is required (refer Victorian ALP on the non-compliance issue), it is inadequate for revolutionaries just to remain outside the ALP and expose it (or scream abuse at it). The validity of entrism is contained in the entry of conscious Marxists into this mass milieu to develop a significant revolutionary wing in the ALP, to ensure that a more socialist direction is taken.

However, despite the value of a more leftward-leaning ALP, entrism sui generis involves much more than just entrist work into the ALP. Concurrent to work in the ALP there is involved independent outside work, e.g. the anti-imperialist struggle, union activities. The activities normally undertaken (or talked about) by the CPA would generally fit into this context of independent work, as would the publication of revolutionary material, the establishment of centres such as Resistance and Liberation. Unless revolutionaries approach independent sector work with the realisation of the ALP hegemony, then they run the risk of falling into two major traps. These are (a) the development of a ghetto mentality and subsequent over-estimation of the possibilities, leading on to adventurist actions; and (b) disillusionment of the revolutionary cadres who are unable to give effect to even the most mild of their propositions.

On the other side, independent work is essential and can be of aid to those carrying out entrist work. Independent work is essential to ensure that revolutionary work is carried out in the basic pro-
duction units of capitalism; it is also necessary because it is a simple fact that many revolutionaries could not stomach work in the ALP at any price. The value of struggles against the bourgeois mode of society within factories, schools and universities cannot be stressed enough, but it is also a fact that after contributing to some such struggle the workers will turn around at the appointed time and vote ALP. Independent work has its value because it raises the level of demands that the ALP has to comply with (it also of course produces additional cadres), it does not have great value in exposing the ALP.

Few revolutionaries would dispute that the ALP has been integrated into the system of bourgeois domination in this country; even fewer would deny that the ALP as a mass reformist party is a positive hindrance to the development of a mass revolutionary party. An understanding of the two arguments is essential to comprehend the pattern of work in the ALP, by any person adhering to entrism sui generis. It is a primary task of revolutionaries to develop a significant revolutionary sector in the ALP; the independent work assists this by providing an outside pressure and preventing revolutionaries succumbing to the opportunist dangers. At the present level of the Australian proletariat and their industrial organisations this is obviously a major task. A hard slogging job needs to be done in the branches in opening up revolutionary perspectives for rank-and-file members of the ALP. Progress will be minimal for years, although there are openings that present themselves.

It is necessary to elaborate on the method of entrism into the ALP. Any one individual working in a branch, unless he can build up a local force working with him, will almost invariably succumb to opportunism of one sort or another. Past experience suggests that revolutionaries should colonise a branch, i.e. plan and concentrate their activities in particular areas. The colonisation is carried out by the independent sector and should be subject to constant review to determine its direction and immediate perspectives. Entrism sui generis then is not a sloppy process involving the isolation of scattered revolutionaries in various remote ALP branches.

Inside those branches that are heavily influenced by revolutionaries every effort should be made to link up with and aid any local actions. The experience of direct action, in political affairs, needs to be passed on to the ALP rank-and-file and its working-class base. Direct action here means literally anything from public meetings, collecting petitions through to street blockades. These are activities that revolutionaries have the ability to suggest and

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organise effectively, but it is an ability that would be much more valuable in the hands of the working class than in an isolated revolutionary clique.

In addition to what I have already stated there is another essential component of entrism sui generis. Because of the inadequacies that are inherent in a mass reformist party such as the ALP it is the eventual aim of revolutionaries to take any significant revolutionary wing with them together with as large a working-class base as possible. Careful attention to detail would be required in any such differentiation inside the mass party. In the eyes of those workers who had faith in the ALP (at present a very large number) it would only be justifiable after the ALP had failed to fulfil those hopes, i.e. some period after an electoral victory. The result of such a differentiation is not necessarily (and is most unlikely to be) the revolution: it is designed to break the present isolation of the revolutionary Left from the masses in this country, to provide a milieu that will go past the ALP when considering its political options.

Even after such a differentiation, which would be accompanied by extensive political work, it is almost certain that the workers would continue to have some illusions about the "parliamentary path to socialism" and electoral work would need to be continued and its limited possibilities exploited to the full. However, revolutionary Marxists should be with the class — not sharing their illusions but identified with a struggle that the masses understand, so that every opportunity to utilise frustration can be seized and mass political consciousness brought to a higher level.

Before going on to an analysis of the past period I will make a brief summary of the postulates of entrism sui generis as I see them.

(a) Acknowledgment of the political primacy of the ALP.
(b) The emphasis on independent work designed to assist entrist work into the ALP.
(c) Realisation of the basic reformist nature of the ALP and low political consciousness of the Australian proletariat.
(d) Realisation that in its present form the ALP is part of the capitalist system of domination and a hindrance to the development of a mass revolutionary party.
(e) That the ALP is seen by workers as adequate for their needs.

Why has entrism sui generis failed as a tactic over the past thirty years? This is the second part of the question posed by Eric Aarons.
A number of alternate answers pose themselves. It would, however, take a much larger work to fully examine them. I will attempt to do justice to the major answers however. First there is the small number of revolutionary cadres devoted to this style of operation. This answer is obviously inadequate; Aarons would argue that if the tactic was valid it would have gained a large number of adherents. The additional cause of seeming lack of success lies with the independent sector itself.

For many years the CPA acted as a brake on the development of a revolutionary movement in Australia. Leaving aside its alliance with Stalinist states, work was carried out that had little real relevance in the development of socialist consciousness in the working class. Bernie Taft in his article “The Working Class and Revolution” (ALR No. 25) states: “Today, economic demands can generally be absorbed and integrated. In fact today, unlike the past, economic militancy often goes hand in hand with support for the existing system, as the one which makes such a struggle for a greater share possible. Militancy has become quite respectable.” Until the last several years there has not been so much as a glimmering of a realisation of this in Tribune (and still it is not predominant). All the past strategies have tended to reinforce bourgeois ideology in the Australian proletariat. Proceeding from this basis it is logical to state that very little real pressure has been applied on the ALP from a revolutionary proletariat, i.e. the ALP leaders have not had to respond to a militancy going beyond “fair shares”.

The two arguments so far are (1) the scarcity of revolutionaries working in the ALP and (2) the incorrect policies and attitudes of both the CPA and union leadership generally. Also to be added to these is the fact that during the 1950s and early 1960s capitalism had a virtually unchallengeable hegemony. In the late 1940s a strong force was carrying out entrist work of a classic nature from the Right — the National Civic Council. The effects of their white-anting are still obvious both inside and outside the ALP. The development of the cold war externally, and the 1954-55 ALP split internally, have kept even the reformists from power. Several developments have now started to operate to counteract that long period of bourgeois triumph; the approaching victory of the social revolution in Vietnam and the growth of educational institutions are but two. That the situation is now changing does not alter the fact that during the previous twenty years objective conditions were not favourable.

Any analysis of actual results achieved by entrism sui generis must take into account the fact that the ALP has been out
of government federally since 1949, that no senior personnel in NSW (e.g. parliamentarians) had a revolutionary perspective and were prepared to pressure the State Government from the Left. All through this period it was not possible to cause a differentiation in the ALP that would have opened up mass support for a new socialist party. There is, however, one example that does demonstrate the type of thing I mean, that is the example of Leichhardt Municipality. Aldermen Origlass and Wyner in the Balmain ward, by breaking Caucus on an important issue, were able to gain considerable local support and were in fact seen to be more Labor than the Labor Party. What in fact they did was to pick an issue or issues that directly concerned people and to mobilise people on those issues. The whole range of issues (chemical tank farms, container wharves, etc.) demonstrated to people who automatically voted Labor in the past that something was wrong with the system. Important forms of direct action were used, e.g. a street blockade against trucks, and recently a strike by container workers whose cars had been damaged by local residents. This is not to claim that Balmain was an earth-shattering victory; put in its perspective it shows how traditional Labor voters can be won over from passive acceptance of bourgeois democracy to support for militant action, and it demonstrates no more.

However, the situation in Balmain further highlights an earlier problem that I mentioned — how to overcome the continued centrifugal pull of the ALP. Given that a substantial (majority if possible) number of Labor supporters can be won away from the ALP by entrist tactics it is not just sufficient to carry on the traditional style of Left-wing politics. It would be necessary to mobilize this mass political base in the same way that revolutionaries are able to work in certain trade unions and on certain university campuses, i.e. to “raise such questions and demands as will bring the workers up against the system, that can’t be absorbed or fully absorbed, that involve them, develop their initiative and awaken their revolutionary potential.”

In other words, unlike National, Lang and Democratic Labor, it would be our aim to organise a mass party so as to involve people, not just to get them to vote away their involvement every three years. Because of its short length this article is necessarily sketchy in places. However it does, I feel, describe what is meant by entrisn sui generis and also gives a justification of that concept at this period in Australia.

G. TIGHE
Issues in the Middle East

THE ANTI-FEUDAL and anti-colonial revolutions of Egypt and Syria of the early 1950's which came in the wake of the defeat of the feudal Arab armies, were the starting point of the still developing socio-political revolution in the Arab world. Today this revolution has reached in some Arab countries the stage of expropriation of big landlords and nationalization of foreign and big Arab-owned enterprises. The changes of the progressive Arab states, notwithstanding their weaknesses and harmful crosscurrents, are an important factor in the developing countries' struggle for liberation and in mankind's struggle against neo-capitalism. The Western powers, to safeguard their huge oil profits, strove to strangle the Arab revolution by the use of coups, direct military intervention and military actions by the Middle East pro-Western countries. These policies have time and time again failed because of the opposition of the Arab, neutral and socialist countries, and the Soviet assistance to the progressive Arab states.

It is a well known fact that, prior to the Balfour declaration of 1917, the Jews lived for centuries peacefully alongside the Arabs in Palestine. The Zionists' endeavour to create a state in Palestine and the British use of Zionism for their own purposes ended these amicable Arab-Jewish relations. Zionism was born in the last quarter of 19th century. It remained a minority tendency in Jewish communities until the second world war. This reactionary bourgeois movement claimed that the only solution for anti-Semitism was to create a Jewish state and for the Jews to emigrate to this state. This Zionist proposition was in contradiction to the attitude of the progressive Jews who were advocating, as an answer to anti-Semitism, a close cooperation of Jews with the working class and the progressive elements of each country in their common struggle against discrimination against Jews and other national minorities.

At the inception of the Zionist movement its top leaders were seeking the support of the Turkish sultan and the European monarchs

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for Zionism, and promising them in return a support for their colonial policies in the Middle East. After 1920 the Zionists supported the British in their denial of independence to the Palestinian Arabs. After the 1948/49 war the Israeli Zionist leadership denied the Palestinian Arabs their right to return to their homes, although the Palestinian Arabs “kept in 1948 in their overwhelming majority aloof from the struggle” (Ben Gurion’s statement in 1948). Since 1950 the Israeli Zionist leadership has tied itself to the West, and in UNO has supported the Western Powers against the aspirations of the developing countries. This was accompanied by the statements of the top Israeli leaders, that “Israel is part of the West”, and that “a neutral policy is not for Israel”. In 1956 Israel, France and England invaded Egypt. And in 1967 Israel occupied large tracts of Arab lands, which she has held for over three years, without declaring her willingness to return them as the price of a genuine peace.

It can be seen from the above that the basic Zionist conception of an ingathering to Palestine and Israel of Jews living all over the world was the force which was driving the Israeli leaders to expansion and cooperation with the Western powers, and this brought the Jews of Palestine and Israel, time and time again, into collision with the Arabs. This state of affairs suited the Western Powers, who endeavoured to exploit it by encouraging Israel to take actions which would lead to overthrowing the progressive Arab governments. This doesn’t mean that the Arabs behaved correctly all the time in the past. Thus for instance since 1956 up to 1967 the Palestinian Arab leaders and almost all Arab states propagated the idea of the liquidation of the state of Israel and the deportation of all Jews who came to the country after 1917 as claimed by some, or after 1948 as claimed by others. This Arab attitude caused much harm. It strengthened the support of the Israelis for their reactionary Zionist leadership, and this strangled the socio-political development of Israel itself.

It would also be wrong to claim that all Israelis are Zionists. There are communists, anti-Zionist students and people like Uri Avenery, the non-socialist, who sees the root of the trouble in the domination of Israel by Zionism. There are also Israeli masses who have shown on many occasions their support for progressive causes and ideas and their longing for peace. Neither is it true that all Zionists are of the same mould. Thus today in Israel Mr. Riftin, the leader of the left wing in Mapam, many Zionist professors, students and intellectuals and even some leading Zionist personalities are criticizing the chauvinist policies of the Israeli government. In general it can be said that so far as the Zionists are upholding the Zionist conceptions, to this extent they are chauvinist and reactionary, and so far as they are under the pressure of the class struggle or
the reality and are acting against these conceptions, they may behave in a progressive way.

The leadership of all Israeli Zionist organizations and all Ministers of the Israeli government however, are taking a strong chauvinist line. Thus some of them, as the right wing Heirut, are advocating the incorporation of all occupied in 1967 lands into Israel, while others, including the Labor Alignment, are claiming that for security reasons a major portion of the occupied territories should not be returned. In conjunction with this I would like to quote the former Israeli Defence Minister Mr. Pinchas Lavon, who says: "The question of topography, which in conditions of modern warfare is of relative value, is not the fundamental question" (Information Bulletin of the Communist Party of Israel 3/4/69). What Israel should claim is not the occupied lands, inhabited by Arabs hostile to Israel, but a permanent and a genuine peace, which is the main pre-requisite for the security and socio-economic development of Israel. What Israel is entitled to claim in exchange for the recognition of Arabs' legitimate rights, is the Arab recognition of Israel, its borders of May 1967 and of her navigation rights, also the incorporation of these rights into peace agreements. However, Israel's demands go much further than these legitimate rights.

The refusal by Israel to state its willingness to return the territories occupied in 1967 and settle the refugee question as the price of a genuine peace was causing an increasing opposition of the population of the occupied Arab lands and the condemnation of Israel by world public opinion. In these circumstances many justly regarded the struggle of the Arabs to regain their lands as justified, although they were critical of the Arab guerrilla groups which were committing acts of terror against the civilian population. On the other hand, not only in the reactionary Arab states and circles but also among the progressive Arabs, policies are advocated which are harmful for the solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Thus not only Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but also Syria, Irak, Algeria and some other Arab states are demanding the liquidation of the state of Israel. The various Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine take a similar stand. Some of them are calling for the establishment in the place of Israel of "a democratic Arab Palestinian state, in which all citizens, Moslems, Jews and Christians will enjoy the same rights and duties" (platform of Al Fateh), while the others advocate a Palestinian state "on the basis of the coexistence of two peoples, the Arab and the Jewish" (platform of the Democratic Front, from Al Hurriyeh of Sept. 1, 1969).

The propositions of these Arab groups are unreal and harmful. Whatever were the wrongs in the past, Israel and the two and a half million Jews who live in this state have become irreversible historical facts. These Jews became an Israeli nation with a common language,
culture, economy and territory. The differences which still exist among the Jews, who came to Israel from many countries, are fast disappearing, especially among the second generation Jews. As a nation the Israelis are thus entitled to a state of their own. Moreover, they will never give up their national state. One should also recall Lenin's remark that the national peculiarity and the striving of a nation for a state of their own, either as a separate, independent entity, or as a member of a federation, will continue to exist for a long time. This doesn't exclude the existence of a substantial Arab minority, living alongside the Jews in Israel.

What about the Palestinian Arabs? To avoid many decades of armed clashes in the Middle East, one should solve the conflict by taking into account the irreversible facts. Return of a proportion of the Palestinian refugees to Israel, compensation for the others who prefer to stay in Arab lands, and the recognition by Israel of the right of the Palestinian Arabs to form a state of their own, consisting of the Gaza strip and the West bank, and which possibly would include the Transjordan where the Palestinian Arabs form a substantial section of the population, will solve the tragic situation of the refugees and preserve the identity of the Palestinian Arabs. This seems to be the only realistic solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the present historical conditions.

Sections of the communists and left socialists give all-out support to the Arabs who preach the liquidation of the state of Israel. They claim that Israel is a settlers' state, that its elimination is needed to restore Arabs rights and to prevent the imperialist intervention in the region. The liberation of Palestine — they say — would stimulate the masses and assist the development of the Arab revolution.

The Communist Party of China pursues a similar policy. It calls for the application of Vietnam's and Algeria's solution to the situation in the Middle East, notwithstanding the vastly different conditions. Its attitude to the Middle East is also prompted by its general criticism of Soviet foreign policy and the desire to gain influence among the Arabs. Basically, the CPC's policy is the result of its undialectical method of advocating the same solution to problems occurring at different places and times, and in conditions which greatly differ.

But Israel is not a typical settlers' state. The Jewish people of Israel became a nation. They are not directly attached to any metropolitan country. Unlike other settlers they are engaged in all fields of country's life and rely exclusively on their own military forces, although they get most of their finance and military equipment from abroad. The Israelis, if faced with the prospect of liquidation of their state, would fight to the last man, which would mean the extermination of the Israeli nation, while the Western Powers are
certain to assist pro-Western Israel with finance and military equipment, if Israel is faced with such a disaster.

The liquidation of Israel is thus an unrealistic task which would involve many decades of bitter struggles and could lead to a military clash between the great Powers. If the course of liquidation of Israel is adopted by the Arab world, this would play into the hands of the imperialists. It would cause new wars, much destruction and suffering and the strengthening of militarism and bureaucratism in the progressive Arab states. It could cause new Arab defeats and serious setbacks for the Arab revolution.

Fortunately a substantial section of the Arab world is opposed to such a harmful and adventurous course. The assumption that a long lasting Israeli-Arab confrontation is needed to promote the Arab social revolution is false. The need for a socio-economic advancement, the realization that the imperialist interference bars the advancement and that the developing countries can achieve it only by the adoption of the non-capitalist road are sufficient for the development of the social revolution, as the events in other developing countries have shown. The progressive forces should be opposed both to the chauvinist attitudes of the Israeli government and to the wrong conceptions of the extreme section of the Arab world. This is the platform on which the progressive forces of both nations should unite, because this is the only basis for peace and a healthy socio-economic development for the Middle East.

On the other hand, one should welcome Egypt's and Jordan's acceptance since May 1968 of the Security Council's resolution of 22nd November 1967 "in full" and as a "package deal", and their willingness to discuss its provisions point by point, but in indirect negotiations (Jerusalem Post Weekly 4/6/68, New York Times Weekly 14/7/68). Nasser has subsequently specified in clearer terms that he will "accept the reality of Israel in recognised and secure borders", "make a declaration of non-belligerency", and "provide freedom of navigation through the Gulf of Akaba and the Suez Canal", in exchange for the "evacuation of all territories occupied by Israel in June 1967" and "a settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem" on the basis of "the right of return or compensation" (Newsweek 10/2/69, Time 16/5/69). And in May 1970 in his interview in Die Welt Nasser said that he supports a peace agreement with Israel in the spirit of the Security Council resolution of November 1967 (CPI's Bulletin, July 1970). In these circumstances the insistence of the Israeli governments on direct negotiations was justly regarded by world opinion as an excuse for the occupation of Arab lands. Israel was also considered to be largely responsible for the dragging out and failure of Dr. Jarring's mediation efforts.
The escalation since last December of the undeclared war activities in the Middle East and the extreme gravity of the present situation makes it imperative for both sides to seek a genuine settlement of the conflict, and to use any opportunity to achieve it. The only solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict is the acceptance of UNO's resolution on the Middle East by both sides. This means that Israel should return all territories occupied in June 1967, recognize the right of the Palestinian Arabs to form a state of their own, settle the question of the refugees on the basis of a generous compensation or right to return, and ensure a complete equality of rights, duties and languages for all their citizens, Jews and Arabs alike, and on the other hand the Arabs should recognize Israel, its borders of May 1967 and Israel's navigation rights.

The settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict on this basis represents the maximum length to which both sides will go in the present historical conditions, and therefore it is a realistic basis for peace. We should welcome the acceptance by Egypt, Jordan and Israel of the American plan for peace, as a basis for indirect negotiations under the auspices of Dr. Jarring.

We should however, warn against both an inadequate settlement, which would not fully recognize the legitimate rights of both nations, and an intentional prolongation of the negotiations for many months and even years caused by the desire to leave things, in the main, as they are at present.

The progressive forces should energetically work for the success of the negotiations, because there are great obstacles barring the road to a genuine peace. The Palestinian Fronts For Liberation and some of the Arab states are opposed to the very existence of the state of Israel and are still thinking in terms of conducting guerilla activities for the purpose of liberating the whole of Palestine. In their activities they can count on the support of the People's Republic of China. This support, however, would be only of a very limited character.

The Israeli government is still determined to keep some of the Arab lands occupied in 1967 for "security reasons", and it still rejects a solution of the refugee problem, based on compensation or return. And does the U.S.A. intend to implement fully the UNO resolution on the Middle East? In my opinion this is not the case. In his letter of June 19 to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Rogers spoke about carrying out "the resolution in all parts" and the "Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967" (leaving open whether this means all territories). And by leaving many contentious issues including the refugee problem open, he tried to create an impression that he came "close to the legitimate aspirations of Arab countries".
And while Mr. Rogers was waiting for the reply, President Nixon on July 1st issued a statement which is described by Newsweek as “most pro-Israeli”. In his statement the president said that “the Middle East is now terribly dangerous”, that “once the balance of power shifts to where Israel is weaker than its neighbours, there will be a war,” and that “Israel must withdraw to borders that are defensible”. Simultaneously the US was pressing Israel to scale down her territorial claims. What was the purpose of all these manoeuvres? Mr. Nixon speaks with many tongues while pursuing, in the main, his imperialist line. Mr. Rogers’ peace proposals of 28/10/69 (in which he claims some spoils for Israel) and of 19/6/70, were made to strengthen the position of the pro-American Arab regimes and to raise faith in American intentions in quarters which were critical of US policies. Mr. Nixon’s speeches however aimed to impress upon the Soviet Union and the Arabs that there is a danger of “confrontation between the two super-Powers”, and that a compromise solution which would leave some spoils to Israel is a necessity.

The US tried in the past on several occasions to reverse the Arab revolution by giving aid to Egypt and by supporting her claims against Israel. Thus for instance the US supported Nasser and his claim to Negev in 1952-1955, and requested the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from Sinai and the Gaza strip at the end of 1956. These attempts repeatedly failed. Instead the Arab revolution spread to Sudan, Libya and the Yemens, and this already endangers the American oil profits. Today the Egyptian revolution has gone too far for the US to rely primarily on these tactics which proved to be of little value in the past. The US intends therefore to impose a settlement which would encroach on some of the legitimate Arab rights, and to use Israel in the future also as a cat’s paw. The purpose of this policy is to prevent further development of the Arab revolution in the Arab countries near Israel and their closer ties with the Soviet Union.

President Nasser, in line with his policy since 1968 of acceptance of the UN resolution in toto and his statement in Die Welt of support for a peace agreement with Israel, was the first to accept the American plan for peace, and by doing so he started the ball rolling. By this act Egypt aims to expose the true character of Israel’s intentions and create divisions in the Israeli government, force Washington to state clearly where it stands on the question of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and give a chance of reaching a peaceful settlement which would recognize the legitimate rights of the Arabs. By the acceptance of the US plan Nasser was running risks, because by doing so he antagonized many sections of the Arab world, while the chances of reaching a genuine settlement are as yet quite slim.
Nasser was prompted to the acceptance of the American plan by the Soviet Union which, supporting Israel’s claims for sovereignty and territorial integrity, was requesting all the time and also lately, that “Israel should unequivocally recognize the need to withdraw its troops from all Arab areas it occupied in June 1967”, and that “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arabs” should be met. (New Times of 12/8/70 and 19/8/70). An Israeli-Arab peace agreement, meeting fully the just rights of the Palestinian Arabs, would soon deprive the Palestinian Liberation Fronts of their mass support. The question is, can the steadfastness of Egypt and other Arab states, with the help of the Soviet Union, cause the US to force upon Israel the recognition of full legitimate Arab rights? The chances are not too bright, because the US still intends to use Israel as a cat’s paw.

Notwithstanding all this, there is still another possibility — namely that the Soviet Union, prompted by her desire to conclude with West “just agreements, relaxing tensions and promoting peaceful co-existence” in as many fields and areas as possible, and confronted with American blackmail, may come closer to the American compromise solution. Can Israel’s neighbours be pressed into accepting a solution which would not settle adequately the refugee problem, and would leave some of the occupied territories with Israel? I doubt it. The Arab masses are likely to revolt, especially the Palestinian Arabs of Jordan, if the rulers dare to accept such solution.

But even if the Arab rulers should succumb to the pressures and manage to survive, the inadequate solution would still leave the Israeli-Arab conflict unresolved. Sabotage, guerrilla activities, reprisal acts, an Israeli policy acting from strength and tied to West, and a danger of new wars both hot and cold, would inevitably re-emerge in these circumstances.

Progressives should therefore insist that legitimate rights of both nations should be fully recognized and incorporated in the peace agreements. The failure of the negotiations to produce an adequate solution of the conflict could bring in time many calamities for the people of the region. In such a case the main hope for a genuine peace would be that the Israelis, under the impact of class contradictions, world public opinion and grim reality, will reject the reactionary Zionist leadership and accept the need for the recognition of legitimate rights of the Arabs and the integration of Israel in to the Arab Middle East. The process in this direction, involving intellectuals, students and some other sections of the Israeli community has already begun, but it is hindered in its development by the insistence of some Arab quarters on the liquidation of the state of Israel.
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