

The Comintern,
The Communist Party of Australia
and Illegality



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Disclaimer

This thesis is the product of my own original research and has not been previously submitted for academic accreditation.

To the best of my knowledge and belief,
The above statements are true.

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Table of Contents

Synopsis	i
Introduction and Literature Review	1
Chapter One: “Unity is the Supreme Demand of the Moment!”: The Pre-War Era	10
Chapter Two: “The Present War is an Imperialist and Unjust War”: The Phony Imperialist War	29
Chapter Three: “Demand A People’s Government”: Illegality During the Imperialist War	44
Chapter Four: “Every Nerve Must Be Strained, All Else Must Be Subordinated”: Illegality During The People’s War	57
Conclusion	78
Bibliography	82

Synopsis

This thesis examines the Communist Party of Australia's (CPA) period of illegality between 1940 and 1942. This thesis also examines the CPA's relationship to the Comintern during, and before, World War II. A grasp of that relationship is essential for understanding the causes of the CPA's proscription.

The hypothesis this work argues is that the CPA's subservience to the Comintern, and the various transformations in policy caused by that subservience, was directly responsible for the CPA's proscription. The CPA's changing policies were a potential source of division in the Australian community and had to be muted. Supplementary to that argument, the thesis also argues that the CPA posed a national security risk, as it obediently followed Moscow's lead and seemed to be willing to engage in subversive and defeatist activities in the event of Australia going to war with the USSR, which was, at that time, a strong possibility.

The methodology adopted in this thesis is composed of primary and secondary sources, and can be divided between materials relating to the CPA, the Comintern and other Western Communist Parties. The primary sources, drawn mainly from the CPA, are newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, booklets as well as speeches and congress resolutions. Autobiographical works are also used. Archival materials gathered by government security organisations are also utilized in this thesis. Comintern publications and correspondence between the Comintern and Soviet leadership to the various Western Communist Parties are also drawn upon via edited works and secondary sources where the authors have personally consulted the originals of these restricted materials in Moscow. Among the secondary sources used in this thesis that relate to the CPA, the Comintern or other Communist Parties are books and journal articles. Some of these sources draw upon restricted materials from Moscow, while others rely on commonly available materials such as newspapers and Communist Party publications.

The outcomes of the research indicate that the CPA's obedient adoption of the Comintern's policies played a direct part in its proscription. The CPA accepted the Comintern's negative appraisal of the war and adjusted its policy to fit the Comintern line. This impacted on the CPA's other policies, as it did its utmost to influence public opinion against the war, thus presenting a source of division in the community. The precarious position occupied by the USSR towards the war was also a cause of concern, as the CPA had demonstrated its readiness to blindly obey Moscow's instructions. Thus if war broke out between the USSR and the Allies, the CPA could have become a dangerous fifth column, obeying Moscow's instructions to disrupt the war effort. Proscription was the government's response to these dangers.

Introduction And Literature Review

On 1 September, 1939, Nazi Germany commenced its invasion of Poland. On 3 September, after Hitler snubbed Britain's ultimatum to cease hostilities and withdraw, Great Britain, the British Dominions and France declared war on Germany, starting the Second World War. The Soviet Union, having concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany eight days earlier, remained neutral.

A defining characteristic of the Second World War was the clash of ideologies between Fascism, Communism and Western Democracy. Between the wars, geo-political necessity often overrode the rivalry between the proponents of these ideologies, resulting in different alliances, non-aggression pacts and various other agreements. Nevertheless, the proponents of these ideologies remained deeply suspicious of each other. Indeed, Fascist ideology originated partially in response to the 'Communist Threat'. Eventually, the popularity of Fascist and Communist ideology would spread to numerous countries around the world and gain widespread adherence.

With the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, the presence of domestic nationals in the West who were adherents to a 'foreign' ideology, was a cause of considerable consternation to national leaders. It was a threat distinct from that posed by enemy nationals, whom it was possible to intern, and hence prevent their engagement in potentially subversive activities. The danger of domestic nationals being adherents to a foreign ideology stems from the difficulties of identification, particularly when 'secret membership' of an organisation was available. Once the identification of individuals that threatened national security had been established, methods to suppress them needed to be devised, without causing harm to innocent individuals.¹ This is a dilemma many governments have faced.

¹ See for example Frank Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson Publishers, 1983 for a detailed discussion into the emergence of the State's surveillance of political enemies for the purpose of preserving national security.

The perceived threat posed by such individuals was immense. By becoming a fifth column, they could engage in sabotage, espionage, enemy propaganda and other disruptions to a war effort that could undermine national security. It was these fears, provoked by the Soviet Union's uncertain position towards the war and the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) completely obeying Soviet instructions transmitted by the Communist International (Comintern), that prompted the Menzies Government to ban the CPA, on 15 June 1940.

.....

Historians have inadequately addressed the history of the CPA during World War II. There is yet to appear a scholarly work devoted exclusively to the CPA during this period, let alone a work relating to the processes that led to the CPA's proscription and its entire period of illegality. Most of the historical accounts of this topic are restricted to a few chapters or journal articles. Although these accounts are useful and draw on a range of sources and approaches, they all suffer from being either too limited in scope or discussion, are autobiographical, or are historically partisan.

Thus the purpose of this thesis is to redress this oversight. Its hypothesis is that the proscription of the CPA was directly related to its willing subservience to the Comintern. A discussion of the CPA's period of illegality is also necessary to illustrate the extent of the CPA's willing submission to the Comintern, which it continued even against its better interests. This also assists in providing a greater understanding for the Menzies and, to a lesser extent, the Curtin government's distrust of the CPA, believing it to be an agent of a foreign power. It is also worth noting that the CPA did manage to gain some autonomy during illegality, when communications between the USSR and Australia were poor.² But due to the CPA's enthusiastic embrace of the Comintern, significant autonomy was not achieved. Such patronage was of national security concern, especially in light of the USSR's position towards the war before 22 June 1941.

The thesis also seeks to use sources that have been previously neglected. CPA pamphlets and newspapers from the period fall into this category. Such valuable sources have not been sufficiently incorporated previously, or have been misused. These shall be used in addition to more conventional primary and secondary resources.

The historiography of the CPA during World War II is inadequate compared to the attention received by other Communist Parties. Specifically, and related to the objectives of this thesis, the Comintern-CPA relationship is poorly addressed. This is again contrasted by studies of other Communist Parties, where the Comintern-Communist Party link is recognised and comprehensively discussed.

Works about the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in the Second World War are plentiful. Most of these books provide due attention to the Comintern's crucial role during this period. Kevin Morgan's *Against Fascism and War*,³ is an exemplary book. Drawing on diverse sources, Morgan traces the CPGB's position towards fascism, the Second World War and various domestic issues from the period following the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935, to the German invasion of the USSR in 1941. Morgan's discussion links the various gyrations in CPGB policy to the Comintern, particularly its 'correction' by the Comintern on the character of the war.⁴ Another study is by Noreen Branson.⁵ The two volumes of her important work tracing the history of the CPGB between 1927 and 1951, are indispensable accounts of the CPGB's history. Branson cites the role of the Comintern in changing the CPGB's attitude towards the war. Branson also argues that the UK government's suppression of the CPGB's ability to spread propaganda, and the lingering danger of Defence Regulation 18B that threatened further suppression, was prompted by the CPGB's association with the Comintern.⁶

² Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1969, p.79.

³ Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-41*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1989.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.90.

⁵ Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927-1941*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985 and Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party in Britain, 1941-1951*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1997.

Other books provide an insight into the early wartime conflicts within the CPGB. *About Turn: The Communist Party and the Outbreak of the Second World War*,⁷ and *1939: The Communist Party and the War*,⁸ are two primary sources about the CPGB's change of attitude towards the war, and the subsequent internal conflicts prompted by this change. They provide insights from later reflections at CPGB historical conferences on the processes that culminated in the CPGB's eventual opposition to the war. One of the questions the debates seek to resolve is whether the change of attitude towards the war in October 1939 was influenced by sentiment within the party, or was essentially promoted by the Comintern.⁹ As the books are recordings of speeches at conferences, no clear conclusion is reached. Nor is any attention given to the motives behind the state's attempts to suppress the CPGB. However the various speeches provide valuable insights about the rationales behind the CPGB's policies during the early war period.

Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) history during this period is also bountiful. Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes are important historians for this period, and have written numerous books about the CPUSA during the Second World War.¹⁰ Most relevant for the aims of this thesis is *The Soviet World of American Communism*.¹¹ This book is entirely devoted to the Comintern's patronage of the CPUSA. It argues that the Comintern played a significant role in changing the CPUSA's attitude towards the war. It also argues that the Comintern pressured the CPUSA to attack the Roosevelt administration, which then prompted the administration to suppress the CPUSA. Another book by Klehr and Haynes is *The American Communist Movement:*

⁶ Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927-1941*, pp.298-301.

⁷ Francis King and George Matthews (eds.), *About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Second World War*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

⁸ John Attfield and Stephen Wilhams (eds.), *1939: The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1984.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁰ A book beyond the scope of this thesis, but still with reference to the CPUSA in World War II is, Klehr and Haynes, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999. Klehr has also written more pertinent books individually. For instance see Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism : The Depression Decade*, New York, Basic Books, 1984 for CPUSA activities leading into the war.

¹¹ Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998.

Storming Heaven Itself,¹² a substantial portion of which is devoted to the CPUSA and World War II. Here too, Klehr and Haynes acknowledge the role of the Comintern in formulating CPUSA policy during the outbreak of war,¹³ although this is mentioned in passing and not developed in any detail.

Fraser Ottanelli's *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II*,¹⁴ also documents the Comintern's role in forming CPUSA policy.¹⁵ Ottanelli reasons that the Comintern's insistence that the CPUSA attack the Roosevelt administration, something the CPUSA had until late 1939 resisted, caused Roosevelt to distrust and suppress the CPUSA. Maurice Isserman's *Which Side Were You On?*,¹⁶ is comprehensive in its account of the CPUSA and the war. In this book, Isserman acknowledges the role of the Comintern in shaping CPUSA policies, not only with relation to the character of the war, but also what attitude the CPUSA should adopt towards the Roosevelt administration. Like Ottanelli, Isserman suggests that these attitudes were a contributing factor in the government's decision to suppress the CPUSA.

Histories about the Comintern are also plentiful. The most useful book is *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin*,¹⁷ by Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew. This book provides a detailed history of the Comintern, though not specifically related to the CPA. It discusses the powers that controlled the Comintern and the policies it espoused. Especially relevant to this thesis are the chapters concerning the pre-war and wartime periods, which shed light on the rationales behind the various policies of the era. These chapters also illuminate the rigid Comintern-Communist Party relationship, which provides a background to understanding the apprehension governments had about that relationship.

¹² Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1992.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.94.

¹⁴ Fraser Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1991.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.186.

¹⁶ Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? : The American Communist Party During the Second World War*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1982.

¹⁷ Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996.

Unlike the CPGB and the CPUSA, the literature concerning the CPA is inadequate. A useful starting point is Alastair Davidson's *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History*.¹⁸ Using a diverse range of CPA primary sources, Davidson identifies the CPA's loyal adherence to the Comintern's dictates as a reason for the CPA's proscription. Yet Davidson devotes only three pages to the CPA's entire period of illegality,¹⁹ neglecting to discuss in detail the activities of the CPA during this period, or its relationship with the Comintern during illegality.

A significant work tracing the history of the CPA is Stuart Macintyre's *The Reds*.²⁰ His approach appears slightly sympathetic to the CPA, though cannot be criticized as being partisan. Macintyre also implies the Comintern's role in the CPA's proscription. However, Macintyre is not comprehensive in his discussion of this link. Furthermore, his discussion of the CPA's period of illegality is more concerned with the experiences of individual Communists than with the CPA's obedience to the Comintern, or the Comintern's impact on the CPA's domestic policies. *The Reds* is also an incomplete account of the CPA's period of illegality, abruptly ending at Germany's invasion of the USSR, leaving the remainder of the CPA's history to be examined in a future volume.

Robin Gollan's *Revolutionaries and Reformists*,²¹ is another key book in the history of the CPA. Gollan incorporates a wide range of sources in his book, and appears ambivalent when interpreting events.²² Gollan devotes a sizeable portion of his book to the CPA and World War II, yet overlooks the Comintern's role during this period. Paul Hasluck's epic *Australia in the War of 1939-45: Civil, The Government and the People, 1939-1941*,²³ provides a short discussion in its appendix about the CPA and its loyalty to

¹⁸ Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.80-82.

²⁰ Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1998.

²¹ Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920-1955*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975.

²² Gollan was a member of the CPA from 1936 to 1957.

²³ Paul Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Civil, The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1952.

the Soviet Union as a major factor for its proscription.²⁴ However this is a very general discussion, bitter towards the CPA. Frank Cain's *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia*,²⁵ implies that the CPA was banned for its disruptive role in the war industries, and is more concerned with the security service investigations of individual Communists. The role of the Comintern is overlooked.

Journal articles about the CPA in World War II are more useful, but similarly constrained. Beverly Symons' 'All-Out For The People's War: Communist Soldiers In The Australian Army In The Second World War',²⁶ confines its scope to communists within the army. David Carment's 'Australian Communism and National Security September 1939-June 1941',²⁷ is also insufficient as it ends in 1941, neglecting to discuss the CPA's relationship with the Comintern before 1939 and after 1941 in detail. Craig Johnston's 'The "Leading War Party": Communists and World War Two',²⁸ is a useful article that tentatively acknowledges the role of the Comintern-CPA relationship in the CPA's proscription. However, Johnston overlooks much of the pre-war era, and the period between 15 June 1940 and 22 June 1941, thereby inadequately comprehending the significance of the Comintern-CPA relationship.

Other works can be described as historically partisan or autobiographical. These are mainly by Communists or former Communists. W. J. Brown's *The Communist Movement and Australia: An Historical Outline*,²⁹ is an example of over-partisanship in history. Brown discusses the Second World War and the CPA in some detail. Brown's sympathies are clearly pronounced in his work as he draws on mainly Communist sources and Communist dogma to defend the CPA's policies during the Second World

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.583-592.

²⁵ Frank Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance*.

²⁶ Beverly Symons, 'All-Out For The People's War: Communist Soldiers In The Australian Army In The Second World War'. *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 26, Issue 105, October 1995, pp.596-614.

²⁷ David Carment, 'Australian Communism and National Security September 1939-June 1941', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 65, part 4, March 1980, pp. 246-56.

²⁸ Craig Johnston, 'The "Leading War Party": Communists and World War Two', *Labour History*, no. 39, November 1980, pp. 62-77.

²⁹ W. J. Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia: An Historical Outline-1890s to 1980s*, Haymarket, Australian Labour Movement History Publications, 1986.

War, thereby absolving the CPA-Comintern link of any responsibility for the CPA's proscription.

Other Communists adopt similar approaches in interpreting the CPA's actions during the period. E. W. Campbell's *History of the Australian Labour Movement*,³⁰ is brimming with classic Marxist explanations for CPA policies during the war. Campbell's book appears more of an amateurish account of Australian Labor history than a genuine attempt at scholarly enterprise, demonstrated by the lack of both citations and objectivity. Campbell identifies the interests of the ruling class as being the reason for the CPA's proscription,³¹ and does not consider the Comintern-CPA relationship culpable. Ralph Gibson's autobiographical *My Years in the Communist Party*,³² is similarly sympathetic. In Gibson's nostalgic recollection of his years in the CPA, he disregards any reasons for the CPA's proscription, but hints the interests of the 'wealthy class' as a motivating factor.³³ L. L. Sharkey's *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*,³⁴ is an important, primary work, yet it too embraces a Marxist rationale in its discussion about illegality, ignoring the Comintern's role. Ted Hill's semi-autobiographical *Communism and Australia: Reflections and Reminiscences*,³⁵ also overlooks the Comintern's role during the war period. Hill conforms to Marxist interpretations by asserting that 'illegality of a Communist Party follows from the logic of capitalism, with its state machine used as it is for suppression of opponents of capitahsm'.³⁶

Communist historians must be treated with circumspection. The bias in their work makes it difficult to accept most of their interpretations. A common theme with these histories is their restrictive use of mainly Communist sources (that is, if any are cited at all), their dogged defence of past actions and their lack of objectivity. When discussing illegality,

³⁰ E. W. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement: A Marxist Interpretation*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1945.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 155.

³² Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, Melbourne, International Bookshop, 1966.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁴ L. L. Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, Sydney, Australian Communist Party, 1944.

³⁵ E. F. (Ted) Hill, *Communism and Australia: Reflections and Reminiscences*, Fitzroy, Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), 1989.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 105.

none of these Communist historians consider the Comintern-CPA relationship, as even partially responsible for the CPA's proscription. According to Communists, the class enemy was the cause of proscription. As this thesis will demonstrate, this was not the case.

Chapter One

“Unity is the Supreme Demand of the Moment!”: The Pre-War Era

The First World War left a lasting legacy on the world. Perhaps the war's strongest legacy was the sense of disillusionment many felt towards it. The war resulted in millions dead and displaced and left many feeling that it had been a futile undertaking. As a result, populations the world over questioned the wisdom of their leaders in embarking upon such destructive ventures.³⁷

This in turn negatively effected the moral basis that leaders used to legitimise their rule. Entire populations began to view their rulers as illegitimate, unconcerned with the wellbeing of their citizens. Bolshevik revolutionaries were able to capitalize on such sentiment to establish the world's first Socialist-State in 1917, based on Marxist-Leninist principles. Though some countries did experience unsuccessful Communist revolts after 1917,³⁸ no other 'great-power' was to take the path of Communism during the inter-war years.³⁹ However, the fear of revolution in Western countries remained.

One of the central features behind this fear was the Comintern. It was specifically established by the Bolshevik leadership in March 1919 to promote 'the armed overthrow of capitalist private property',⁴⁰ and replace it with Communism. A small number of revolutionaries from various countries went to Moscow for the Comintern's inaugural congress, hoping to emulate the success of the Bolsheviks in their home countries. The result of the first (and second) congress was the establishment of various foreign-based Communist Parties. These parties became affiliated 'sections' under the Comintern, while the Comintern itself was the global Communist Party. Strict conditions were placed upon

³⁷ In the opinion of McDermott and Agnew, 'Total War between 1914 and 1918 had... irredeemably undermined the nineteenth-century old order. In the opinion of many... it was doomed.' *The Comintern* p.xix.

³⁸ Hungary and Bavaria in Germany for instance.

³⁹ Mongolia did establish a Communist government in 1921, though was hardly an advanced, capitalist 'great power'.

⁴⁰ McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern* p.xix.

the Comintern's sections relating to policy, goals and tactics.⁴¹ In exchange the sections were given permission to use the words 'Communist Party' in their titles, as well as being granted membership to the Comintern.⁴² Hence from the very beginning Moscow had a hold on the international Communist movement, tightening its control over time.

The CPA was formed on 30 October 1920. The CPA affiliated to the Comintern in 1921.⁴³ With its decision to affiliate to the Comintern the CPA placed itself under the Comintern's control. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to recount the development of the CPA's subservient relationship to the Comintern during the pre-war era, which assists in providing a background understanding to the CPA's wartime activities.

It took a decade for the Comintern to consolidate its authority over the CPA. The Bolshevisation campaigns of the 1920s⁴⁴ strengthened the Comintern's influence and transformed the CPA.⁴⁵ Bolshevisation subsequently paved the way for the emergence of Stalinist leaders by the time of the so-called 'Third Period'.⁴⁶ Factions within the CPA put up some resistance to these moves, but were eventually defeated by the 9th CPA congress in 1930.⁴⁷ The new, pro-Stalin leadership with L.L. Sharkey as Party President

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp.220-221.

⁴² *ibid.*, pp.221-222.

⁴³ See Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp.53-75, for an account of the intricacies behind the long road to Comintern recognition and eventual unity within the CPA. The Comintern recognised a united CPA in 1922.

⁴⁴ For an account of the Bolshevisation of the Comintern's sections see McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, pp.41-68.

⁴⁵ A very rigid form of democratic-centralism was instituted, as was 'Bolshevik discipline' which recognised the primacy of the Central Committee above all else (except of course the Comintern and the Soviet leadership).

⁴⁶ The Third Period was between 1928 and 1933. It was known as the Third Period because it was the third period of the Comintern's existence. The Third Period was characterised by Stalinisation, radicalisation during the depression, attacks on Social Democratic organisations as well as the 'class against class' campaign to forge an identity independent of any other political party. Communist Parties sought to establish themselves as the sole working class party. For a discussion of the Third Period see McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, pp.81-119.

⁴⁷ Former CPA Central Committee members Jack Kavanagh and Jack Ryan objected to the resolutions of the 6th Comintern Congress along similar lines as those argued by Lovestone from the CPUSA. They believed that the Comintern's resolutions were inapplicable to both Australia and the USA, particularly the policy relating to economics. They were proved wrong by the depression and were subsequently removed. This represented the triumph over 'right opportunists' by Stalinists. See L.L. Sharkey, 'From the Sixth to the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.5, May 1935, pp.7-10. See also Richard Dixon, 'The CPA in the Thirties', *Australian Left Review*, no.49, 1976, pp.28-29.

and J.B Miles as General Secretary,⁴⁸ was to lead the CPA for decades, following the directives of the Comintern during the 1930s and beyond.⁴⁹

By the 1930s, the Comintern was no longer a vehicle for the export of revolution.⁵⁰ Rather the Comintern became an instrument for the advancement of Soviet foreign interests.⁵¹ Of greatest concern for the Soviet leadership was the dual threat of war and fascism. A number of elements underpinned this fear. First, there was a fear that with the depression in the Capitalist world, some form of imperialist military 'intervention' in the USSR was a possibility as it would allow capitalist governments to secure resources and increase military expenditure.⁵² Second, the spread of fascism in Europe saw the establishment of governments that were openly hostile to communism (with a far more virulent form of anticommunism than was resident in the democracies) and willing to destroy the USSR. Later events such as the signing of the anti-Comintern pact seemed to confirm this suspicion.⁵³ The spread of fascism also indicated that the anti-fascist tactics employed by some Communist Parties were unsuccessful, meaning that an overhaul of the tactics from the Third Period was necessary.⁵⁴ Third, changes in the international situation appeared to indicate an imminent threat of attack against the USSR. This fear was predominantly prompted by Japan's invasion of Manchuria, which was seen as a platform for an invasion of the USSR. The emergence, too, of pro-fascist governments in the Balkans, Latvia and Austria also magnified the threat from the West.⁵⁵ The fear of

⁴⁸ Dixon, 'The CPA in the Thirties', p.25. This leadership was formed by 1931.

⁴⁹ Indeed, the visit of Comintern worker and CPUSA member Harry Wicks, also known as Herbert Moore, helped consolidate the position of the Stalinists. See Barbara Curthoys, 'The Comintern, the CPA and the Impact of Harry Wicks', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.39, No.1, 1993, pp.23-36. See also Dixon, 'The CPA in the Thirties', pp.28-29.

⁵⁰ McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, p.xix-xx.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.xxi.

⁵² David Rose, 'The Movement Against War and Fascism, 1933-1939', *Labour History*, no.38, May 1980 p.76.

⁵³ The anti-Comintern pact was signed between the various fascist and militarist powers, implicitly against the USSR.

⁵⁴ The Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) was not all dismayed at the rise of fascism. It reasoned that Communist revolution would occur sooner under fascism due to it advancing capitalism to another level, thereby exposing class contradictions more sharply, which would then result in revolution. Quoted in Workers News Editorial Board, *Betrayal: A History of the Communist Party of Australia*, Marrickville, Allen Books, 1981, p.29. This misinterpretation, as Macintyre correctly indicates, was due to Communist theoreticians failing to recognise that race, not class, was the defining characteristic of fascism. Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.247.

⁵⁵ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.245.

‘capitalist encirclement’, dating from the civil war years, once again became prominent. The USSR sought a means to prevent invasion. Stalin believed that an ‘Eastern Locarno’ agreement (proposed as the Eastern Security Pact), with Germany and Poland was the answer.⁵⁶

Yet when Stalin’s overtures for peaceful co-existence with Hitler’s Germany were rebuffed, a new strategy was sought. The international sections of the Comintern comprised part of the answer. The USSR sought to erode international hostility by secretly sponsoring peace fronts.⁵⁷ These peace fronts were to be broad-based ‘united front’ movements, marking a break from the Third Period and heralding the beginning of the ‘Popular Front’ era.⁵⁸ The CPA had previously created a limited united front during the early 1920s upon the orders of the Comintern.⁵⁹ The CPA was also experienced in creating united fronts ‘from below’, as it had done during the Third Period.⁶⁰

But the wounds of the Third Period ran deep. Communist efforts to create a united front with the ALP and some sections of the middle-class, were more difficult than a decade earlier. The ALP never trusted the CPA. It was wary of the CPA’s rigid relationship with the Comintern and believed the Popular Front tactic an attempt by Communists to subvert the ALP, with some justification.⁶¹ The CPA had also bitterly jostled with the ALP over the leadership of the Labor Movement during the depression, accusing the ALP of being

⁵⁶ McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, p.129. An ‘Eastern Locarno’, or Eastern Security Pact, was to be modeled on the treaty of Locarno signed in 1925, which guaranteed the territorial status quo in Western Europe. An Eastern European equivalent between the USSR, Germany and Poland would have, perhaps, allayed Stalin’s fear of invasion. See Max Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941, Vol. 1 1929-1936*, London, Oxford University Press, 1968, pp.138-160, for a discussion on the efforts to create an Eastern Security Pact.

⁵⁷ Rose, ‘The Movement Against War and Fascism’, p.76.

⁵⁸ The Popular Front era was the period between 1934-1939 and was characterised by Communist efforts to build a united front against war and fascism with the support of most sections of society. The backbone of these efforts was the peace fronts and approaches by the Communists to various non-Communist organisations for united action on issues of agreement. Collective security with the USSR was promoted as an integral part of stopping the spread of fascism and the movement towards war.

⁵⁹ See M. Dixon, ‘The First Communist United Front in Australia’, *Labour History*, no.10, May 1966.

⁶⁰ Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp.245-246. A united front from below is between rank and file members and petty officials. This is distinct from a united front from above where a united front is formed with the leadership.

⁶¹ The CPA had a number of ‘secret members’ within the ALP. A secret member of the CPA was even elected to the WA parliament as an ALP candidate. See David McKnight, ‘The Comintern’s Seventh Congress and the Australian Labor Party’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 32, No.3, July 1997, pp.395-407.

servants of capitalism. Most damaging was the CPA's charge that the ALP was 'Social Fascist',⁶² a term coined by Stalin in 1928,⁶³ and repeated by Communist Parties around the world. The ALP-CPA relationship became bitter, and remained so permanently.

A Comintern sponsored peace congress was held in Amsterdam on August 1932. From this congress emerged the World Movement Against War. Soon after the CPA received orders to direct one of its existing anti-war fronts, the League Against Imperialism, to promote a new anti-war movement.⁶⁴ In March 1933, the Movement Against War was formed as the Australian chapter of the world body. By 1934 it had merged with a similar movement known as the Movement Against Fascism, to create the Movement Against War And Fascism (MAWAF), following the apparent link between fascism and war.⁶⁵

The initial success of the MAWAF was limited. The controversial visit of Czech Communist Egon Kisch breathed new life into the MAWAF.⁶⁶ The publicity generated from Kisch's visit, which was on the invitation of MAWAF for its Second National Congress in November 1934, helped increase membership. The Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 further boosted MAWAF's popularity.⁶⁷

However, the ALP and Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) frustrated Communist attempts to develop common action against fascism and war. Bans were placed on any ALP or VTHC members from joining the MAWAF, and cooperating in any way with the CPA. This was a firm rebuff to the CPA's call 'to develop the joint struggles of the

⁶² Sharkey writes on the origins of Social Fascism: 'The Social-Democrats would aid the bourgeoisie in its transition towards fascism. The Social-Democrats would utilize their influence to paralyse working class resistance to the capitalist offensive... represent a strike breaking force... and their whole policy would play into the hands of the Fascist bourgeoisie. Such was the Social-Fascist role allotted to Social-Democracy'. L.L. Sharkey, 'From the Sixth to the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.5, May 1935, p.4.

⁶³ Dixon, 'The CPA in the Thirties', p.29.

⁶⁴ Rose, 'The Movement Against War and Fascism', p.76.

⁶⁵ 'Fascism was chauvinist and militaristic, waging war against the working class at the same time that it prepared for war abroad'. *War! What For?*, June 1934, p.82, cited in Rose, 'The Movement Against War and Fascism'. This view also appeared in *The Communist Review*: 'Thus the fight against war is, in a double sense, a fight against fascism'. Quoted in 'The Moscow Conversations and the United Front Against War and Fascism', *The Communist Review*, June 1935, p.63.

⁶⁶ Len Fox, 'The Movement Against War and Fascism: A View From the Inside', *Labour History*, No.39, November 1980, p.79.

workers against capitalism',⁶⁸ and for united action to 'achieve gains of day to day importance'.⁶⁹ The CPA dealt similarly with any internal opposition to the united front, quashing dissent as soon as it emerged.⁷⁰ The CPA itself did not do enough to win the support of the ALP executive, lashing out whenever its approach for a united front was rejected,⁷¹ yet it continued to call for a united front.

The peace movement did draw some elements of the ALP. These individuals, and sympathetic ALP branches, risked the ire of the ALP and VTHC by cooperating with the CPA.⁷² This marked a persistent theme in CPA-ALP relations. As the CPA continued to get limited cooperation from rank and file ALP members, forming a united front 'from below', the leaders of the ALP were not receptive, thwarting CPA efforts to build the united front 'from above'.⁷³ Hence, the fear of losing members and supporters to the Communists prompted the ALP and VTHC to establish the Labor Anti-War Committee (LAWC).⁷⁴

The LAWC reflected the position of the ALP towards war and fascism. LAWC supported the ALP's isolationist position, unwilling to even call for economic sanctions against

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.79.

⁶⁸ L. Donald, 'Raise the Struggle for United Action to a Higher Level', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.3, March 1935, p.27.

⁶⁹ E. J. Docker, 'United Front Perspectives', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.12 December 1935, p.22.

⁷⁰ See J.B Miles, 'Preferences and the United Front', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.4 April 1935. Miles firmly rebutted a letter that criticized the new line of giving preferences to the ALP in elections as hypocritical and confusing. Miles stated that it was necessary to win the ALP to the united front by exchanging preferences and working together to improve the immediate condition of the workers (p.30). Miles also stated that the CPA had never labeled the ALP as social fascist and that the CPA would welcome an ALP government (p.31), marking a complete turn around, even denial, of the CPA's past attitude.

⁷¹ See J.D. Blake, 'Working Class Unity or Collaboration With Capitalism', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.6, June 1935. Blake argued that the ALP executive opted for collaboration with capitalism by rejecting the united front proposal.

⁷² Some prominent members of the ALP were expelled as a result of cooperation. Maurice Blackburn, member of Federal Parliament, was one such victim. Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.274.

⁷³ The CPA claimed that it was not concerned with the united front from above, that the united front from below was more important. 'Our approach to the ALP leadership cannot be regarded as the main aspect of our fight for united action'. Donald, 'Raise the Struggle', p.28. Yet the persistent approaches of the CPA for affiliation to the ALP indicated otherwise.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the LAWC see David Rose, 'A History of the Labor Anti-War Committee, 1934-1938', *Labour History*, No.43, November 1982.

Italy in 1935.⁷⁵ LAWC also reflected the disinterest of the ALP and VTHC leadership towards the anti-war movement. The APL had learned its bitter lesson from the First World War, and would not be deceived into war again. 'Neutrality and splendid isolation', not collective security, was the surest way to avoid its repetition. The disinterested leadership of the LAWC ultimately caused its demise in 1938.

The MAWAF followed the CPA's lead. This was illustrated in its call for collective security, which Stalin hoped, would result in the USSR not being isolated in the event of war.⁷⁶ It also called for unity with the LAWC, which was rejected.⁷⁷ Yet despite its blatantly pro-Communist leanings,⁷⁸ some members denied its being a Communist front. A.F Howells was resolute that the MAWAF was not a Communist front, that it was instead a broad movement, boasting the membership of many internationally recognised individuals.⁷⁹ But Howells is contradicted by former MAWAF member and Communist Len Fox, who asserted that '...MAWAF was a communist front in the sense that communists were the main force in giving birth to it and keeping it going'.⁸⁰ Fox also claimed that 'it was well known that most of our leading workers were communists or people friendly with communists'.⁸¹

The Popular Front was also transplanted to Soviet foreign policy. The USSR decided to join the League of Nations in 1934, attempting to build a united front of nations. The USSR (and the Communist Parties) had until then denounced the League as a 'thieves

⁷⁵ The CPA and MAWAF, in contrast, called for boycotts and economic sanctions against Italy, and used the Italian invasion of Abyssinia to advance its policy of collective security. See R. Dixon, 'The Abyssinian Crisis and British Policy', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.8, August 1935.

⁷⁶ See Rose, 'The Movement Against War and Fascism'.

⁷⁷ J. D. Blake, 'The Fight for Unity Against War in Victoria', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No11, November 1935.

⁷⁸ The podium at the founding world congress was adorned with banners reading 'Defend the Soviet Union' and was attended by various luminaries of the international Communist Movement. See J.N Rawling, 'Recollections in Tranquillity', *Quadrant*, Vol.5, No.4, Spring 1961 p.27. David Rose also discusses the MAWAF's changing policies in line with the CPA in 'The Movement Against War and Fascism', pp.81-82.

⁷⁹ A. F. Howells, 'Inside the "Movement Against War and Fascism" and the "Writers League"', *Labour History*, No.32, May 1977.

⁸⁰ Len Fox, 'The Movement Against War and Fascism', p.81.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.79.

kitchen'.⁸² The CPA formerly described it as the guarantor of 'the frontiers and possessions of the Imperialist Powers in the capitalist world'.⁸³ After joining the League, such rhetoric was replaced with praise: 'The entry of the USSR into the League served to strengthen it as an instrument of peace'.⁸⁴ *Realpolitik* demanded the USSR seek collective security through the League, forcing it to downplay revolution.⁸⁵

The USSR also reconciled with another of its foes, France. Prior to 1934, France was the USSR's 'arch-enemy'.⁸⁶ In 1935 the USSR and France signed a pact of mutual assistance. Stalin then lent his blessing to France's armed forces. In a speech to the 7th Comintern Congress, A. Marty said, 'Stalin understands and fully approves of the national defence policy carried out by France...'.⁸⁷ A similar agreement was reached with Czechoslovakia, though Britain was not receptive.⁸⁸

The 7th Comintern Congress in 1935 made the Popular Front official. This congress saw the completion of the policy back flip undergone by the world Communist Movement. The Communists shifted from being staunchly unwilling to defend bourgeois democracy and cooperate with social democratic organisations during the Third Period, to proposing a broad united front which would include social democratic and middle class elements, as well as promising to, at least, partially defend bourgeois democracy.

The Congress was dominated by the issue of fascism and how best to combat it. Workers in capitalist countries were presented with a stark choice. The choice was no longer

⁸² Quoted in Workers News Editorial Board, *Betrayal*, p.31.

⁸³ R. Dixon, 'The Abyssinian Crisis & British Policy', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.8, August 1935 p.4.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.5.

⁸⁵ Soviet diplomat Maxim Litvinov declared upon the USSR's entry into the League that '[Every member state of the League has]... the liberty to preserve what I might call its State personality and the social economic system chosen by it...' Quoted in Workers News Editorial Board, *Betrayal*, p.32. The simple fact that Communist Parties were pressing for a united front indicated that they had at least postponed revolutionary agitation for fear of upsetting their partners in the united front.

⁸⁶ N Rawling, 'Recollections in Tranquillity', p.28.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Robert Black, *Stalinism In Britain*, London, New Park Publications, 1970, p.103.

⁸⁸ Barbara Ward, *Russian Foreign Policy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940, p.18. This was the nearest Stalin would get to achieving his dream of an Eastern Locarno.

between 'proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, but between bourgeois democracy and fascism'.⁸⁹ The congress defined fascism as:

The open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital...fascism is the power of finance capital itself⁹⁰

The united front was hailed as the tactic that would prevent the triumph of fascism (as it had done in France in 1934) and discourage war against the USSR. The Comintern believed that fascism was victorious in Germany and Italy because there was no united front of the proletariat to stand in its way.⁹¹ However, for a successful united front, Communist agitation for revolution and class warfare was to be suppressed.⁹²

The symbolic architect of the new line was Bulgarian Communist Georgi Dimitrov. Dimitrov was himself a victim of fascism, standing as one of the accused at the infamous Reichstag fire trial in Germany.⁹³ His defiant stand won the admiration of people the world over. Dimitrov's plight provoked successful global demonstrations for his release.⁹⁴ Upon release, Dimitrov was granted Soviet citizenship and was made leader of the Comintern, largely due to his newfound star status within the Communist Movement.

Dimitrov identified fascism as the greatest danger to the working class.⁹⁵ To combat fascism, a united front was to be established in every country.⁹⁶ It is arguable, however, that the CPA had been actively attempting to establish that same front for two years prior

⁸⁹ Georgi Dimitrov, *The United Front Against Fascism: Speeches at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, August 1935*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1945, p.98.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.8-9.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.16.

⁹² Indeed one of Stalin's emissaries said to French socialist youth around this time: 'If in this period you make your revolution in France, you are traitors'. Quoted in Rawling, 'Recollections in Tranquillity', p.34. Stalin himself claimed publicly that the USSR 'never had any such plans or intentions' to bring about a world revolution. 'Roy Howard's Interview With Comrade Stalin', *The Communist Review*, Vol.3, No.5, May 1936.

⁹³ For an account of the Reichstag fire trial and the defiant stand Dimitrov and other accused Communists made see Fritz Tobias, *The Reichstag Fire Trial*, New York, G.P Putnam's Sons, 1964.

⁹⁴ Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.39.

⁹⁵ Dimitrov, *The United Front Against Fascism*, pp.7-26.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.89-95.

to that point, along the same lines Dimitrov had described. The Australian united front was to include Social Democrats, trade unionists and progressive sections of the middle-class, even elements of the United Australia Party (UAP) and the Country Party.⁹⁷ In addition, Dimitrov confirmed the CPA's policy of limited defence of bourgeois democracy, declaring:

While being upholders of Soviet Democracy, we shall defend every inch of the democratic gains [under capitalism] which the working class has wrested in the course of years of stubborn struggle...⁹⁸

The pledge to defend bourgeois democracy was to have unforeseen future consequences. Leninist principles stipulated that a 'revolutionary defeatist' position be adopted in the event of an imperialist war, which would mean a civil war against the capitalists for the establishment of a Proletarian Dictatorship.⁹⁹ Defence of a country against domestic fascists did not violate this notion. However, defence of a capitalist country under attack from another capitalist country did, and fascists were identified as the worst capitalists of all. Thus a clash emerged between Communist dogma and *realpolitik*. The inclusion of an extract from one of Lenin's works under the heading 'Defeat of 'Our' Government in the Imperialist War' in the *Communist Review*,¹⁰⁰ suggests the CPA expected to adopt a Leninist 'revolutionary defeatist' attitude towards any war.

The congress also called for the defence of the Soviet Union. This illustrates the manipulation of the Peace Front for the benefit of Soviet foreign policy. In Ercoli's¹⁰¹ report to the congress, the central slogan 'struggle for peace and defence of the Soviet Union' was introduced.¹⁰² After praising the peace policy of the USSR, Ercoli said that

⁹⁷ See, S. Mason, 'The Next Tasks of the Australian Communists', *The Communist Review*, Vol.3, No.9, September 1936.

⁹⁸ Dimitrov, *The United Front Against Fascism*, p.97-98.

⁹⁹ See V.I. Lenin 'Defeat of 'Our' Government in the Imperialist War', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.8 August 1935.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Ercoli was the alias of the Italian Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti.

¹⁰² Palmiro Togliatti, *Ercoli's Report: The Tasks of the Communist International in Connection With the Imperialists' Preparation for A New World War: Delivered on August 13-14, 1935*, Sydney, Modern Publishers, 1935, p.40.

‘in struggling for peace, we are carrying out the best defence of the Soviet Union’.¹⁰³ Inevitably, the effort to forge the ‘widest united front’ became a component of the defence of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴ In response, the CPA pledged to ‘defend the spearhead of the world revolution’ and intensify its efforts to build a united front.¹⁰⁵ Dimitrov also stressed that Communist Parties study the situation in their respective countries closely.¹⁰⁶ ‘A correct line alone’ was not enough, as the strength of fascism varied between countries.¹⁰⁷ It was a ‘mistake to lay down any universal scheme of the development of fascism, to cover all countries and all peoples’,¹⁰⁸ yet this was precisely what was happening.

The CPA naturally accepted the Comintern’s decisions,¹⁰⁹ and feverishly continued to emphasize the need for a united front against fascism. Its approaches to the ALP, however, were constantly rejected.¹¹⁰ The CPA hoped that mass pressure from below would eventually compel the ALP to accept the united front.¹¹¹ The CPA also called for affiliation to the ALP.¹¹² Yet the policy difference between the CPA and ALP was insurmountable, making affiliation impossible.

The CPA and ALP also disagreed over the defence of Australia policy. The CPA criticized the ALP’s defence of Australia attitude. It argued that the policy was indistinguishable from that of the UAP Government: one of rearmament, isolation and

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.43. Ercoli added ‘the cause of peace and the cause of defending the Soviet Union become a single cause, not a single worker will refuse to fight for it’.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.60.

¹⁰⁵ J.B. Miles, ‘Report on the Struggle For the United Front, Against War and Fascism’, *The Communist Review*, Vol. 3, No.2, February 1936, p.13.

¹⁰⁶ Dimitrov, *The United Front Against Fascism*, p.86.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.99.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.87.

¹⁰⁹ See L.L. Sharkey ‘The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International and its Historic Decisions’, *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.12, December 1935.

¹¹⁰ The CPA blamed the right-wing factions of the ALP for these rejections, which it claimed were splitting the Labor Movement. Mason, ‘The Next Tasks of the Australian Communists’, pp.27-28.

¹¹¹ E. J. Docker, ‘United Front Perspectives’, p.21.

¹¹² L.L. Sharkey, ‘Eleventh Party Congress: Report on the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International’, *The Communist Review*, Vol. 3, No.2, February 1936, p.5. ‘In the united front struggle, there arises the demand for one party of the proletariat’.

defence of capitalism.¹¹³ A defence of Australia, ‘would really be the defence of Australian capitalism, with all its evils...’¹¹⁴ That was unless a socialist Australia were in existence, or an ALP government was incumbent, which would then make Australian defence justifiable.¹¹⁵ Otherwise, the CPA would adopt a revolutionary defeatist position, which in turn breached the rules on sedition under the Crimes Act.¹¹⁶

Yet, the CPA was not against defence in principle.¹¹⁷ It would ‘oppose the enslavement [of the working class] by fascist enemies’.¹¹⁸ Australian democracy was ‘a thousand times more democratic than fascism’.¹¹⁹ The CPA also recommended five reforms to ‘democratise’ the military.¹²⁰ Thus, the CPA’s defence policy was confused, as it appeared to oppose defence, while simultaneously calling for the defence of Australian democracy. The only consistency in the CPA’s defence policy was its demand that the prevention of war was the best insurance against it, and only collective security agreements with the USSR would secure this. Unsurprisingly, the CPA’s policy succeeded in leaving some party members confused.¹²¹

The strength of fascism in Australia after the Congress was negligible. The New Guard by this time was dwindling.¹²² There was also no other significant fascist organisation in Australia during this time. Yet the CPA continued to emphasize the need to combat domestic fascism, waging a war against domestic fascists that didn’t exist.¹²³

¹¹³ See D. Morey, “Mr. Curtin on the ‘Defence of Australia’”, *The Communist Review*, Vol.3, No. 11, November 1936.

¹¹⁴ L.P Fox, *The First World War- and the Second?*, Melbourne, Victorian Council Against War And Fascism, 1936 p.25. This despite Stalin differentiating between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ capitalist countries. Under this formula, defence of some capitalist countries was more acceptable than under usual conditions. See Rawling, ‘Recollections in Tranquillity’, p.29.

¹¹⁵ Fox, *The First World War- and the Second?*, p.25.

¹¹⁶ R. Dixon, *Defend Australia?*, Sydney, Modern Publishers, 1936, p.10.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, pp.12-13.

¹²¹ See for example, G. Crane ‘I Disagree’, *The Communist Review*, Vol.4, No.2, February 1937. This is a letter to the editor opposing the CPA attitude to defence. See also R. Dixon, ‘R. Dixon Replies to G. Crane’, *The Communist Review*, Vol.4, No.5, May 1937, for Dixon’s defence of party policy.

¹²² Prior to the Comintern congress, Sharkey wrote ‘our party succeeded in dealing weighty blows at the New Guard’. Sharkey, ‘From the Sixth to the Seventh World Congress’, p.6. However, the accuracy of this claim is questionable.

¹²³ Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.75.

The CPA's struggle against domestic fascism was instead waged against the government. The CPA campaigned strongly against the Crimes Act¹²⁴ and the Transport Worker's Act ('Dog Collar' Act).¹²⁵ Both these acts posed severe threats to the Labor Movement in general, and appeared to reflect a 'fascistisation' of Australia.¹²⁶ As early as 1935, the CPA raised the prospect of illegal work for its members.¹²⁷ However, the CPA had to be cautious not to, in Dimitrov's words, 'erroneously classify all reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie as fascism'.¹²⁸

In the absence of a significant domestic fascist foe, the CPA concentrated on international affairs. Every fascist aggression became another argument in favor of collective security and closer cooperation with the USSR. The Spanish civil war in 1936 was highlighted as a failure of isolationism. The war in Spain itself became a moral crusade for Communists worldwide. Some sixty Australians fought in Spain, with at least fourteen killed.¹²⁹ Various pro-Republican organisations sprung up in Australia. The CPA did its best to support the Spanish Republic, just as Stalin was covertly supporting the Spanish Communists. Spain presented a situation where determined anti-fascists could go and fight for the cause. What angered most Communists was the West turning a blind eye to the obvious intervention of the fascist countries, while it maintained its position of non-intervention. Spain represented how urgent a united front against fascism and war had become.

¹²⁴ For a discussion of the Crimes Act see Don Watson, 'Anti-Communism in the Thirties', *Arena*, No.37, 1975, pp.40-51.

¹²⁵ See Rupert Lockwood, *War on the Waterfront: Menzies, Japan and the Pig-Iron Dispute*, Merrickville, Hale & Iremonger, 1987, pp.137-149, for a discussion of the Dog Collar Act and its application.

¹²⁶ On these acts, Sharkey wrote 'fascist measures of the bourgeois state... [which] led to fascist dictatorship'. Sharkey, 'Eleventh Party Congress', p.6.

¹²⁷ This is shown by the inclusion of an article titled 'On the Question of Illegal Work', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, No.10, October 1935, which outlined how the CPA would operate under conditions of illegality.

¹²⁸ Dimitrov, *The United Front Against Fascism*, p.88.

¹²⁹ Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.49. See Amirah Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1987, for a detailed discussion of Australians engaged in Spain and the various support committees established in Australia.

The deteriorating international situation prompted the USSR to intensify its push for peace. In 1936 it covertly sponsored another peace congress in Brussels, which saw the establishment of the International Peace Campaign (IPC).¹³⁰ This peace front was designed to 'throw the nets wider'¹³¹ in terms of respectability and appeal. It sought as far as possible to involve people that were not Communist or associated with Communists publicly.¹³² However, the IPC would still be under Communist influence. The CPA hoped that finally the recalcitrant ALP would fall into line and support the IPC.

But the ALP again rebuffed the peace movement. Unity from above seemed impossible, so the CPA began to settle for unity from below. However, the IPC was not totally under the sway of Moscow. Ralph Gibson recalls that 'most of the Executive members [of the ICP] did not really believe in collective security',¹³³ and that some members even 'advocated policies of appeasement to Hitler'.¹³⁴ Such attitudes were counter-productive for Stalin, as he urgently sought to establish a system of collective security.

International events rapidly took a turn for the worse. Japan had renewed its aggressive expansionist war against China in 1937, which provoked ambivalent responses in the Labor Movement.¹³⁵ The CPA wholeheartedly threw its support behind the Chinese, interpreting the war as one of national liberation.¹³⁶ A Japanese victory entailed dire consequences for Australia. According to Len Fox, Japan always had designs on Australia's natural resources.¹³⁷ The CPA used the situation in China to call for collective security and the defence of the USSR.¹³⁸ The CPA also attempted to organise a boycott of

¹³⁰ See Rawling, 'Recollections in Tranquillity'.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p.31.

¹³² *ibid.*, p.31-33. Rawling describes how secret Communists always dominated the IPC leadership.

¹³³ Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.63.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p.64.

¹³⁵ See Derek McDougall, 'The Australian Labour Movement and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1939', *Labour History*, No.33, November 1977, for a discussion of the varied responses to the conflict within the Labor Movement.

¹³⁶ L.P Fox, *Stop War on China!*, Melbourne, Movement Against War and Fascism, 1937, p.21.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.4-8.

¹³⁸ S. Mason, 'A Program of Peace for the Australian People', *The Communist Review*, Vol.4, No.1, January 1937. Fox, *Stop War on China!*, p.18. Fox called on the public to save the League of Nations as a vital component of collective security (pp.25-26). Fox also made an interesting offer to Hitler to join a collective security agreement (p.31). J.B Miles, 'For a Better Life in Australia', *The Communist Review*, Vol.4, No.4, April 1937, claimed that the Sino-Japanese war threatened the USSR p.11.

Japanese goods, though was frustrated by the Lyons Government and sections of the ALP.¹³⁹

The CPA intensified its campaign to win the ALP to the united front. It promised to assist the ALP in elections, to return a Labor government.¹⁴⁰ It again proposed united action on immediate demands of the workers and possible affiliation to the ALP.¹⁴¹ Dimitrov reflected the urgency when he wrote:

The establishment of united action by the working class against fascism, the common enemy, the mortal enemy of the whole of mankind, is the **CHIEF URGENT TASK FACING THE WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. IT IS THE SUPREME DEMAND OF THE MOMENT!**¹⁴²

Dimitrov also identified five tasks for the workers. They included: assist Spain and China, defend small nations against imperialism, help the people of Germany and Italy overthrow fascism and establish collective security for the USSR.¹⁴³ The CPA acted upon these tasks during this period.

European developments also heightened fears of war. Hitler had remilitarised the Rhineland in 1936. Hitler was also rapidly rearming and had concluded agreements with Italy and Japan. After Hitler seized Austria in 1938, which the CPA listed as another of Chamberlain's and Lyons' surrenders,¹⁴⁴ he turned his attention to Czechoslovakia.

The Munich agreement symbolised the apogee of appeasement. The 'betrayal of Munich' (as it became known) by Chamberlain and Daladier was greeted with dismay by the CPA. As Chamberlain returned to England brandishing a piece of paper, exclaiming that he had

¹³⁹ Fox, *Stop War on China!*, pp.27-29.

¹⁴⁰ "South Australian", 'What We Mean By Unity', *The Communist Review*, Vol.4, No.5, May 1937, p.47.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.48.

¹⁴² G. Dimitrov, 'The Supreme Demand of the Moment if UNITY!', *The Communist Review*, Vol.4, No.7, July 1937, p.19. (the emphasis is Dimitrov's)

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁴⁴ S. Prudy, 'Rape of Austria- and After', *The Communist Review*, Vol.5, No.5, May 1938, pp.9-12.

just secured 'peace for our time', the CPA was busy denouncing the agreement. The CPA accused both the British and Austrahan governments of surrendering to Hitler's blackmail.¹⁴⁵ Chamberlain had betrayed his obligations to Czechoslovakia, when the USSR was quite willing to fulfill its treaty obligations.¹⁴⁶ Gibson believed that with 'an air force one-third the size of Hitler's and a fortified frontier',¹⁴⁷ Czechoslovakia, with the assistance of the USSR and the Western powers, could have perhaps successfully repulsed a German invasion.¹⁴⁸ The CPA, in such an occasion, would have supported a war against Germany.

1938 also witnessed increased activity against fascism in Australia. The visit of the Italian warship *Raimondo Montecuccoli* sparked an anti-fascist incident. The ship's sailors abducted, bashed and took hostage an Italian immigrant, whom they mistook for an Italian anti-fascist they had fought against a few nights before. The hostage was eventually released. Following his release, a demonstration of 7,000 people was staged in front of the warship, with the burning of an effigy of Mussolini. Gibson recalled that this was 'one of Melbourne's most spirited rebuffs to fascism in the pre-war years'.¹⁴⁹ The visit of Count Von Luckner, also in 1938, prompted more anti-fascist demonstration. Von Luckner promoted himself as 'Hitler's emissary to the youth of the world'.¹⁵⁰ Von Luckner was the living embodiment of the Communist's perception of a Nazi: upper class, spy and military man. His visit sparked a series of anti-fascist demonstrations, which the 'political police' broke up.¹⁵¹ Throughout Von Luckner's visit, the CPA waged a 'Kick Von Luckner Out!' campaign,¹⁵² desperate to prevent this one man from spreading the poisonous ideas of Nazism to Australia.

¹⁴⁵ L.P Fox, *The Peace to End Peace: Czechoslovakia- What Next?*, Melbourne, League for Peace and Democracy, 1938, p.11.

¹⁴⁶ Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp.73-74.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.73.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.74.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.65.

¹⁵⁰ L.P Fox, *Von Luckner-Not Wanted*, Sydney, National Council of the Movement Against War and Fascism, 1938, p.13.

¹⁵¹ See Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp.70-72.

¹⁵² Editorial, 'Enter the Count', *The Communist Review*, Vol.5, No.6, June 1938, p.8.

The significance of these incidents is that they provided the CPA with fascists from fascist countries to fight against. The clamor over the UAP government's secret fascist sympathies and the commotion over quasi-fascist groups such as the New Guard, Silent Knights and League of National Security, paled by comparison. It was for occasions such as the visit of the Italian warship and Von Luckner that a united front and organisations such as the MAWAF were created. And it was these groups that were in the forefront against this 'fascist attack on Australia'.¹⁵³

The fear of Japan also aroused considerable concern. The Port Kembla Pig Iron strike¹⁵⁴ of 1938 was a response to the fear of Japan returning those very materials in 'the form of shells and bullets'.¹⁵⁵ The Japanese were already using the resources mined by Australians to kill Chinese civilians. It was thought only a matter of time before Australia would be on the receiving end. Wharfies at Port Kembla refused to load a ship, the *Dalfram*, with pig iron destined for Japan. The UAP government attempted to break the will of the wharfies by applying the Dog Collar Act.¹⁵⁶ Attorney-General Robert Menzies went to Port Kembla, and appealed personally to the wharfies to load the *Dalfram*.¹⁵⁷ The strike was eventually called off. But it was successful as it forced the government to cease supplying Japan with the materials of war, while the CPA praised the heroic stand of the wharfies.¹⁵⁸

Simultaneously, the CPA held its last pre-war congress. At the 12th national congress, the CPA concerned itself with the problems posed by the deteriorating international situation. It confirmed its commitment to build a united front and support for the ALP.¹⁵⁹ The congress also endorsed the CPA defence policy¹⁶⁰ and reaffirmed its affiliation to the

¹⁵³ Fox, *Von Luckner-Not Wanted*, p.29.

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of the Port Kembla Pig Iron strike see, Jon White, 'Port Kembla Pig Iron Strike of 1938', *Labour History*, No.37, November 1979, pp.63-77. For a more detailed account see Rupert Lockwood, *War on the Waterfront*, pp.107-188.

¹⁵⁵ Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.75.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* This dispute won Menzies the epithet 'Pig Iron Bob'.

¹⁵⁸ Editorial, 'No Iron For Japan', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.1, January 1939.

¹⁵⁹ Central Committee of the CPA, *Report of the Central Committee to the 12th National Congress, Communist Party of Australia*, Sydney, Anvil Bookshop, 1938, p.6.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp.9-10.

Comintern and its objectives.¹⁶¹ However, the Central Committee urged its members to do more to build the united front.¹⁶² Otherwise, the CPA continued as before: opposing fascism and war, pressing for collective security, promoting the united front by supporting the ALP in elections, and opposing the pro-fascist policies of the UAP government.¹⁶³

Such was the tense situation leading into 1939. Menzies became Prime Minister in April. His pro-fascist leaning was assumed by the CPA.¹⁶⁴ Menzies soon sought to compile a national register of able-bodied men between 18 to 65. The CPA and the unions opposed it, as it opened the way for economic and military conscription.¹⁶⁵ However, the intervention of John Curtin forced the unions to cease their opposition by the end of June. The CPA followed suit soon after.¹⁶⁶

Meanwhile, Europe was rapidly approaching war. The USSR, seeking to strengthen its security, had begun to engage in negotiations with Britain and France over a defence agreement. However, these negotiations were in vain and the Communists and the USSR blamed the West for not taking the negotiations seriously.¹⁶⁷ This was the closest the united front came to forcing the West into collective security.¹⁶⁸

Instead what followed was to shake to the core the faith of all Communists. Hitler and Stalin signed a Non-Aggression Pact on 23 August 1939. The official Soviet reason for

¹⁶¹ Communist Party of Australia, *Rules and Constitution of the Communist Party of Australia: Adopted By the 12th National Congress, Held in Sydney, November 1938*, Sydney, CPA, 1938, p.7.

¹⁶² Central Committee of the CPA, *Report of the Central Committee*, p.16.

¹⁶³ See R. Dixon, *Unite! Defeat Fascism, Defend Peace and Achieve Socialism*, Sydney, Modern Publishers, 1938.

¹⁶⁴ Menzies once stated there were 'credit entries in the Nazi ledger', among other statements. Quoted in Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp.382.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ R. Dixon, 'Register Campaign Lessons', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.9, September 1939.

¹⁶⁷ Molotov blamed the 'constant procrastination and delays' of the British and French delegates for the failure of the negotiations. Molotov also claimed that so disinterested were the British and French Governments, that 'they themselves displayed extreme dilatoriness and treated the negotiations very lightly, entrusting them to minor individuals...' V. Molotov, *On the Ratification of the Soviet-German Pact of Non-Aggression*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939, p.7.

¹⁶⁸ Communist's claimed that the united front was the key factor which forced the British government to negotiate.

the pact was to 'obviate the threat of war between the USSR and Germany'.¹⁶⁹ All the years of demonizing Hitler and opposing fascism seemed wasted. The leadership was confused, as was the rank and file.¹⁷⁰ However, compliance was achieved. The acceptance of this betrayal of principle by the CPA and other Communist Parties clearly illustrates International Communism's subservience to Moscow. It also epitomises the main theme of this chapter: That the CPA's only consistent belief was to defend the USSR and blindly obey Stalin's dictates, no matter how contrary Stalin's demands were to the CPA's policies. When the world was plunged into war a week later, the CPA continued its observance of the Comintern line, even though it had proven itself a failure to check the spread of fascism, or prevent war. Indeed, most of the mainstream was accusing the USSR, rather harshly, as being responsible for the outbreak of war.

¹⁶⁹ V. Molotov, K. Voroshilov, M. Zhdanov, *Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact Explained*, Sydney, Central Committee CPA, 1939, p.5.

¹⁷⁰ Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp.384-385.

Chapter Two

“The Present War is an Imperialist and Unjust War”: The Phony Imperialist War

The German invasion of Poland drastically altered the international situation, and, consequentially, world history. For the British and French governments, efforts to prevent war had failed; appeasement was no longer an option. Only military action could halt German expansionism. Britain decided to keep its ‘guarantee’ to Poland and declared war on Germany.¹⁷¹ The Australian government promptly, and obediently, followed Britain with its own statement that it too was at war.¹⁷²

The CPA, especially the rank and file, supported the declaration of war. The first issue of *Tribune* following the declaration of war, featured an article outlining Communist policy towards the war, with a subheading titled ‘For the Defeat of Hitler’¹⁷³. It also stated that German Fascism bore the responsibility for the war, which had been started in the interests of German capitalism.¹⁷⁴ By characterizing the war as such, the CPA implied that at least one side was fighting for imperialist ends. Hence, it was more just to support the lesser evil (i.e. Britain and France), although their war motives were also questionable.¹⁷⁵ The old slogans of the Bolsheviks during the First World War¹⁷⁶ were inapplicable to the ‘Second Imperialist War’.¹⁷⁷ To apply those slogans was considered reactionary, as they would assist a German victory, which in turn would result in dire consequences for the workers.¹⁷⁸ The call was for a just war to restore democracy and

¹⁷¹ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.152.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, pp.152-153.

¹⁷³ *Tribune* (Sydney), 5 September 1939, p.1.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Apparently Britain and France were defending the road to the Balkans, which if wrested away, left ‘the old German line of expansion, Berlin to Baghdad... [open]... This line of conquest conflicts with the vital interests of British [and French] Imperialism in the near and Middle East’. E. W. Campbell, ‘We Must Defeat Fascism’, *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.10, October 1939, p.578.

¹⁷⁶ These were revolutionary defeatist slogans calling on workers to ‘transform the imperialist war into civil war’.

¹⁷⁷ Communists believed this new development a continuation of the imperialist wars against Abyssinia, China and Spain. See R. Dixon, ‘The Working Class Against Fascism’, *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.10, October 1939, p.634.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.636-637.

freedom to Germany.¹⁷⁹ *The Guardian* slogan was: 'No retreat in the struggle against Hitler Fascism, and no retreat from full democracy in Australia!'.¹⁸⁰ Regardless of any Allied imperialist connotations, the war was in the interests of the Australian workers and the CPA would make every effort to secure victory.¹⁸¹

Communist Parties from other Allied nations adopted similar positions. The CPGB issued a manifesto on 2 September, with the unanimous support of the Central Committee, supporting the war against Germany.¹⁸² The Communist Party of France (PCF) also gave its support, and called on the French government to fight the war with the backing of the people.¹⁸³ However, neither the CPA, PCF or CPGB, gave complete support to their governments. The respective governments were untrustworthy due to their record of appeasement. The British and French governments were blamed for encouraging Hitler's attack on Poland.¹⁸⁴ The Menzies government had to be defeated and replaced by 'a progressive Labor government...with the lives and liberties of the Australian people at heart'.¹⁸⁵

The National Security Act regulations also caused grave concerns within the CPA. The powers granted by these regulations appeared to erode democracy at home, and presented a clear threat to the very existence of the CPA, if not the Labor Movement itself.¹⁸⁶ These regulations were deemed fascist, providing Menzies with the same power as Hitler.¹⁸⁷ The major challenge posed by these regulations was the restrictions placed upon freedom of speech and press. It seemed contradictory to the CPA that the government claimed to be fighting a war for democracy, while simultaneously eroding democracy at home.¹⁸⁸ The CPA held that a genuine anti-fascist war could not be fought by 'curtailing the

¹⁷⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 5 September 1939, p.1.

¹⁸⁰ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 6 September 1939, p.1.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸² Monty Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939-1941: Filling in the Blank Spots', *Science and Society*, Vol. 61, No. 1, Spring 1997, p.29.

¹⁸³ Ralph Gibson, *The People Stand Up*, Ascot Vale, Red Rooster Press, 1983, p.370.

¹⁸⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 5 September 1939, p.2.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁸⁷ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 6 September 1939, p.1.

¹⁸⁸ Campbell, 'We Must Defeat Fascism', p.579.

liberties of the people, but [by] maintaining and extending them, and by improving the standard of living'.¹⁸⁹ Menzies's assurance that the government would 'jealously guard liberties' seemed empty rhetoric.¹⁹⁰

Consequentially, the CPA adopted a war on two fronts policy. This policy called for the struggle against Germany abroad and the reactionary Menzies government at home. The CPGB instituted a similar doctrine. Both the CPA and the CPGB questioned the resolve of their governments to fight the war to a decisive conclusion due to their record of appeasement.¹⁹¹ This position did not mean opposition to the war; it merely called for the replacement of Menzies and Chamberlain with leaders that would fight the war with honest intentions (i.e. not for imperialist gain), and wage a genuine anti-fascist war.¹⁹²

The struggle against 'fascism at home' was a continuation of pre-war policy. Not only were the tactics similar to the pre-war anti-fascist struggle, but the targets were as well (i.e. Menzies and the UAP). The Executive Committee of the CPA called for a united front with the ALP 'for the defence of democracy and of the living standards of the people'.¹⁹³ Federal parliamentary ALP leader John Curtin seemed to at least support the demand for democracy, when he declared 'to conduct the fight against Hitler efficiently, we have to maintain the utmost democratic character of this nation'.¹⁹⁴

The CPA's initial war policy was more zealous than the ALP's position. The CPA was emphatic in its support for an overseas expeditionary force. A week before the Menzies government announced the creation of an expeditionary force, the CPA Central Executive stated:

We stand for the full weight of Australian manpower and resources being mobilised for the defence of Australia and, along with other

¹⁸⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 5 September 1939, p.2.

¹⁹⁰ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 20 September 1939, p.1.

¹⁹¹ Campbell, 'We Must Defeat Fascism', p.579.

¹⁹² *ibid.* The new leaders were also meant to be untainted with appeasement.

¹⁹³ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 20 September 1939, p.3.

¹⁹⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 12 September 1939, p.3.

British forces, for the defeat of Hitler... We believe that more intensive training of Australia's volunteer forces should be at once instituted to more effectively bar the way of any would be aggressor.¹⁹⁵

The CPA also stated that if an expeditionary force were created, it would instruct its members to enlist.¹⁹⁶ The ALP, in contrast, opposed sending troops overseas, even volunteers, although it stood for the 'integrity of the British Commonwealth of Nations'.¹⁹⁷ The CPA opposed both positions. It questioned how the ALP could stand for the integrity of the British Commonwealth, yet oppose the dispatch of troops to defeat its nemesis.¹⁹⁸ In addition:

If the war against Nazi aggression is justified and there are volunteers for the fight against it, then there can be no principled reason why they should not take part.¹⁹⁹

The CPA also asked 'Does the integrity of the British Commonwealth mean the denial of the right of India... to its national independence?'²⁰⁰ However these differences were to be cast aside as 'unity of the Labor Movement is the need of the hour'.²⁰¹

The CPA's lauding, and acceptance of Soviet foreign policy was a continuation of pre-war practice. After war had been declared, the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was hailed as a victory for Stalin over Hitler, as it forced Hitler to seek terms with Stalin.²⁰² The pact was credited with limiting the scope of the war, as it kept the USSR out of the war,²⁰³ and critically, to Australia's own interests, kept Japan neutral.²⁰⁴ Communist

¹⁹⁵ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 27 September 1939, p.1.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Tribune* (Sydney), 15 September 1939, p.2.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

²⁰² Harry Pollitt, 'Soviet-German Pact: Questions Answered by Harry Pollitt', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.10, October 1939, p.631.

²⁰³ *Tribune* (Sydney), 10 October 1939, p.1.

²⁰⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 5 September 1939, p.1.

reasoning was that the pact protected the Soviet proletariat and was therefore in the interest of the world proletariat.²⁰⁵

Hence, the CPA unquestioningly accepted a fundamental change in the Comintern's line in late September, to its eventual disadvantage. Although there was unanimity within most Communist Parties in support of the war, Stalin's opinion, the one that mattered, differed. With the rapid fall of Poland, Stalin recognised an opportunity to fulfill one of the secret clauses in his Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler, the annexation of eastern Poland. Enthusiastic support for the Polish cause within the Communist Parties would complicate Stalin's ability to capitalise on this part of the agreement.

Stalin had to alter the position of international Communism. On 7 September 1939, Stalin summoned Dimitrov to outline the new position world Communism was to adopt. Stalin told Dimitrov that Communist Parties should oppose the war, as it was being fought between two groups of capitalist countries for world domination.²⁰⁶ On Poland's plight against Nazi invasion, Stalin remarked, 'the elimination of that state under present conditions would mean one bourgeois fascist state less'.²⁰⁷

The Comintern secretariat approved Stalin's directives. On 9 September, it declared:

The present war is an imperialist and unjust war for which the bourgeoisie of all the belligerent states bear equal responsibility.²⁰⁸

On 14 September, the CPGB received a Soviet press telegram describing the war as 'a robber war kindled from all sides by the hands of two imperialist groups of powers',²⁰⁹ indicating a change in line was imminent. However, the change in CPGB line was only

²⁰⁵ See for example, R. Dixon, *No War on Soviet Russia!*, Sydney, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, 1940, p.7.

²⁰⁶ Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939-1941', p.28.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.29.

²⁰⁸ Quoted in *ibid.* This declaration was followed by a sentence which demanded that 'the Communist Parties, particularly in France, Britain, Belgium and the USA, which have taken up positions at variance with this standpoint, must immediately correct their political line'.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*

secured after the arrival of Dave Springhall from Moscow on 26 September, and the belated arrival of the Comintern directive of 9 September a few days later.²¹⁰ By 7 October, the CPGB adopted a new position opposing the war.²¹¹

It is highly likely that the CPA received similar instructions. However, it is unclear when these instructions reached Australia, as communications between the USSR and Australia were not as strong as those between the USSR and Britain. The CPA's new line was, at least, beginning to be publicised around the same time as the CPGB's,²¹² making it a distinct possibility that the instructions were received around the same time the CPGB received theirs.²¹³ However, the first signs of a change in the CPA's attitude towards the war occurred during the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland, which occurred before the Comintern's instructions reached Britain, but after Stalin had ordered the change in line.

The extent of the shift in attitude that was prompted by the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland was largely embryonic. Although the CPA applauded the 'peace policy' of the USSR, the official Communist press was still printing pro-war articles.²¹⁴ Therefore, it cannot be maintained that the move into Poland by the USSR was the basis for the CPA's change in policy.²¹⁵ A more plausible hypothesis is that the Comintern forced the change, as is observable through the correlating shift in attitude between the CPGB and the CPA.

The CPA welcomed the Soviet move into Poland. *Tribune* claimed that the Red Army was 'engaged in saving the White Russian and Ukrainian minorities from the Nazi

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ *ibid.* The change in CPGB policy was not met without resistance as it resulted in the removal of General Secretary Harry Pollitt and *Daily Worker* editor Johnny Campbell due to their enthusiastic support of the war. They were forced to submit declarations repudiating their positions, though they later expressed the opinion that their understanding of the war as anti-fascist in essence was the correct view.

²¹² The CPGB's anti-war manifesto was published in the *Daily Worker* on 7 October, titled 'Peace or War?'. *Tribune* published a less provocative article titled 'Lasting Peace Without Further Bloodshed' on 6 October, but with the same purpose, that is to bring a cessation to hostilities.

²¹³ The answer to will inevitably be found in the Comintern archives in Moscow.

²¹⁴ *Tribune* reported the Soviet move into Poland on 19 September. Also appearing in the same edition was the CPGB's pro-war manifesto of 2 September. The *Guardian* was also publishing pro-war articles as late as 27 September. By 6 October, *Tribune* was featuring articles that promoted peace.

²¹⁵ Craig Johnston believes the CPA's attitude towards the war changed after the entrance of Soviet troops into Poland. Indeed there was, as already mentioned, a slight shift in attitude. However the shift was not as

invasion and its accompanying horrors'.²¹⁶ Then it asserted that 'the White Russians and Ukrainians will welcome the opportunity to rejoin their kinsfolk of Soviet Ukraine and White Russia'.²¹⁷ This statement carried pan-Russian connotations, and not the usual international proletarian propaganda. Yet interestingly, the CPA claimed that the existence of those minorities was never an excuse for aggression against Poland.²¹⁸ Finally, the CPA was certain that this move would contribute to world peace and the defence of the USSR as it kept the 'Nazi armies...as far away from the Soviet frontier as possible'.²¹⁹

The problems the Soviet action caused were immense. It prompted a barrage of criticism against the USSR and the CPA. The German invasion of Poland was, after all, the reason Australia had gone to war. For another power to invade and undermine the defence of Poland seemed treasonous to a great many Australians. The fact that it was the USSR appeared to confirm the suspicion that the Non-Aggression Pact was more sinister than simply 'I won't attack you, if you don't attack me'.²²⁰ The CPA's assurances that 'the Red Army had not joined Hitler for the purpose of conquering anyone's territory', that 'it had no secret agreement with Hitler', or that it was a neutral power, appeared to deny self-evident truths.²²¹

The CPA was demanding peace by October. Hitler and Stalin launched a joint peace conference proposal.²²² The CPA followed Stalin's lead, and praised the peace proposal.

thoroughgoing as Johnston suggests. He is also oblivious to the Comintern's role during September, only noting its public intervention later on. See Johnston, "The "Leading War Party"", p.65.

²¹⁶ *Tribune* (Sydney), 19 September 1939, p.1.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*

²¹⁸ E.W. Campbell, 'Russia's policy', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.10, October 1939, p.584.

Campbell dismisses any comparisons between the Nazi's use of Germans in Czechoslovakia as an excuse to annex Czechoslovak territory, and the existence of White Russians and Ukrainians in Poland for the annexation of Polish territory. Yet the implicit sense of pan-Russianism in the Communist press contradicts Campbell.

²¹⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 19 September 1939, p.1.

²²⁰ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 6 September 1939, p.2.

²²¹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 22 September 1939, p.2.

²²² The *Guardian* quoting the official newspaper of the Soviet Government *Izvestia* stated: 'The Soviet and German governments declare that they will direct their common efforts in order to attain as early as possible the liquidation of the present war between Germany on the one hand and Great Britain and France on the other'. *Guardian* (Melbourne), 11 October 1939, p.1.

It maintained that peace was not on Hitler's word,²²³ when in fact it was quite unimaginable how it could not be. If the peace proposal was rejected, then the responsibility for the war would rest with Britain and France.²²⁴ The CPA called on Britain and France to make peace as the situation had changed, 'largely due to the peace policy of the Soviet Union'.²²⁵

The CPA had undergone a dramatic about face. It represented the ultimate subordination of the CPA to the interests of the USSR, and its relations with Hitler.²²⁶ Within the space of a month, the CPA had shifted from calling on the Allies not to make Polish independence a condition of peace with Hitler and to fight until victory,²²⁷ to opposing the war and incessantly calling for peace.²²⁸ It claimed that peace would bring about Hitler's downfall, as a 'mass struggle of the German people to destroy the fascist regime' would occur.²²⁹ If peace were achieved, a system of collective security, led by the USSR, would restrain Hitler from committing further acts of aggression.²³⁰ However, it is more

²²³ See *Tribune* (Sydney), 10 October 1939, p.1.

²²⁴ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 11 October 1939, p.1.

²²⁵ Johnston, 'The "Leading War Party"', p.65. The 'peace policy' of the Soviet Union also extended to several pacts with the small Baltic states- Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These pacts were intended to strengthen the USSR's defensive position, as a fear of invasion, not only from Germany but also from the Allies, was emerging. See L.L Sharkey, 'The Soviet Union Has Made Peace Possible', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.11, November 1939, p.689.

²²⁶ Following the completion of the Polish campaign, Germany and the USSR signed a treaty of friendship and frontiers. This understanding, supplementary to the Non-Aggression Pact, was a basis from which German-Soviet relations could have progressed. Indeed, the German-Soviet relationship almost blossomed into an alliance during late 1940. See Molotov's speech printed in *Tribune* (Sydney), 3 November 1939, p.1. During this speech, any delusion that the USSR was not applying a policy of aggression is dispelled by Molotov himself: 'One swift blow to Poland, first by the German Army and then by the Red Army, and nothing was left of this ugly offspring of the Versailles treaty, which had existed by oppressing the non-Polish nationalities'. [emphasis added]

²²⁷ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 6 September 1939, p.1.

²²⁸ As Macintyre puts it, 'The Comintern chastised the Australians for regarding the war as an anti-fascist campaign'. That was on October 4. About a month later the Comintern called for outright opposition to the war and expected the CPA to acknowledge its errors. The latter was not fulfilled as publicly as the other directives were. See Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.386.

²²⁹ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 11 October 1939, p.1. The CPA entertained ideas that somehow Communist led resistance in Germany would triumph. It overestimated the strength of the German Communist Party, and underestimated Hitler's popularity. It also completely misunderstood the success the Nazi security organisations had in destroying mass, organised resistance to the regime.

²³⁰ *ibid.* This would have resulted in a return to the uncertain conditions of six months earlier. There was no guarantee that Britain and France would agree to collective security, or that Stalin was prepared to sacrifice his newfound relationship with Hitler. Such statements illustrate the delusional and confused nature of the CPA at the time- the Allies had had enough of Hitler and simply did not trust Stalin.

likely that a peace of this sort would have been interpreted, by many Australians, as surrender to Hitler and another act of appeasement.

The Allied rejection of the Hitler-Stalin peace offer signaled the beginning of the CPA's vehement opposition to the war. The Allies were blamed for the continuation of the war. For rejecting peace, the war became totally imperialist and undemocratic, as there was 'no justification for [the] continuation of the war'.²³¹ The proscription of the PCF was cited as an example of the war's undemocratic character,²³² as was the Menzies government's attitude towards the CPA.²³³ The decision to implement compulsory military training was also denounced as undemocratic.²³⁴ The declaration of war²³⁵ and the introduction of the National Security Act²³⁶ were criticized along similar lines.

The rejection of peace also ushered in the 'Phony War' era. Communists seized upon allied inactivity on the Western Front as representing a lack of determination by the Allies to fight. The CPA believed the Allies had declared war as a warning to Hitler not to threaten their imperialist interests. The Allies did not care about Poland, as they did not lift a finger to defend it. The CPA also returned to the Third Period with its attacks on the ALP, as it accused the ALP of being a willing servant of capitalism,²³⁷ in the war that was 'between two conflicting groups of imperialist powers [fighting] for world

²³¹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1939, p.1.

²³² *Tribune* (Sydney), 10 October 1939, p.1.

²³³ A *Tribune* correspondent asked Menzies: 'Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that no attempt will be made to suppress any long-established Australian political party, without consulting parliament?' Menzies' response was: 'I have no comment to make, and, I am afraid, no assurance to give on this question'. Quoted in *Tribune* (Sydney), 17 October 1939, p.3.

²³⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1939, p.1. Compulsory military training was highlighted as the forerunner to conscription. Its introduction was undemocratic because parliament was not consulted. The dispatch of troops for overseas service was also opposed. This is in contrast to two articles that appeared in *Guardian* (Melbourne), 27 September 1939, p.1, where both compulsory military training and support for an overseas force was voiced.

²³⁵ The CPA's line of argument was similar to that made by civil libertarians. See Brian Fitzpatrick, *National Security and Individual Insecurity: An Account of the National Security Legislation and Regulations*, Melbourne, Left Book Club, 1940. Although the author is not a Communist, the CPA adopted similar lines of argument as are in this booklet.

²³⁶ See L.L. Sharkey, *Democracy for Whom? A Striking Contrast! Democracy in Australia and the Soviet Union*, Sydney, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, pp.2-4.

²³⁷ J.D. Blake, 'The Austrahan Labor Party and the Present War', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6. No.12, December 1939, p.718.

supremacy'.²³⁸ The CPA argued that the ALP did not want peace,²³⁹ as it was a lackey of the 'big capitalists', who also did not want peace.²⁴⁰

In November, the Comintern elaborated its characterization of the war. It defined the war as 'unjust, reactionary and imperialist'.²⁴¹ The war was being fought to 'divide anew...the sources of raw materials, food, gold reserves, and the huge masses of the people in the colonies'.²⁴² The blame for starting the war fell on all capitalist governments, and was to be opposed by Communists, who had 'always fought against such a war'.²⁴³ To stop the war, the Comintern demanded that 'working-class unity, and the united people's front must be established from below in a struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie and against the top leaders of the Social Democratic and other petty bourgeois parties'.²⁴⁴

Once again, the CPA echoed the Comintern's policy. Ralph Gibson, writing in the *Guardian*, placed the blame for the war on all capitalist governments.²⁴⁵ Gibson also called for the establishment of a united front from below, to struggle against the Menzies government and the war.²⁴⁶ This unquestioning acceptance of Comintern directives was in contrast to the PCF and the CPGB.²⁴⁷ The CPA was not plagued by internal division, whereas the PCF and the CPGB were.²⁴⁸

²³⁸ *ibid.*, p.716.

²³⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 24 November 1939, p.2.

²⁴⁰ E.W. Campbell, 'Who Wants War?', *The Communist Review*, Vol.6, No.12, December 1939, p.705.

²⁴¹ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 11 November 1939, p.1.

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ *ibid.* This statement amounts to a denial of the Communist Movement's previous pro-war policy.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.3. This policy was very similar to the Third Period united front. Dimitrov also demanded that 'the mobilisation of the widest masses for the struggle against the war already being waged, and to bring it to an end, is the primary task of the moment'. By 'widest masses' Dimitrov meant a 'united front from below'. Georgi Dimitrov, *The War and the Working Class*, Sydney, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, 1939, p.15.

²⁴⁵ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 22 November 1939, p.1.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.386.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

The Soviet invasion of Finland in December again witnessed the CPA following the Soviet line. The war was justified as a defensive war for the USSR.²⁴⁹ Finland had been used in the past as a platform to invade the USSR,²⁵⁰ and the CPA believed that it was about to happen again.²⁵¹ By Finland rejecting the USSR's offer of a mutual assistance pact and territory in exchange for land north of Leningrad, the CPA believed the USSR was faced with no choice but to act in its own interests and secure Leningrad.²⁵²

The CPA's attacks on Finland were malicious. The CPA accused the Finnish government of being fascist, imperialist and 'Whiteguardist'.²⁵³ The attacks continued until March, when a peace agreement was finally signed. During the entire Russo-Finnish war, the CPA barely made any mention of Hitler. Instead, it directed its anger against the Allies and the League of Nations. The USSR was expelled from the League after its invasion of Finland and the CPA proceeded to vilify the League.²⁵⁴ Amazingly, the CPA claimed the League represented the 'Phantom Governments' of Finland and Poland, and that the USSR was not at war with Finland at all!²⁵⁵ Such claims demonstrate the surreal world inhabited by the CPA in this period.

Meanwhile, the 'switch the war' fear was beginning to germinate. Following the Soviet invasion of Finland, the British and French governments considered sending an expeditionary force to assist the Finns. The CPA noted the irony of the Allies rallying to Finland's defence,²⁵⁶ while remaining inactive on the Western front. For the CPA, it

²⁴⁹ See *The Truth About Finland: With Sensational Extracts on Finland From Frank Anstey's 'Red Europe'*, Sydney, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, 1940, p.2, for the CPA's appraisal of the war, which also blamed Finland with firing the first shots.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp.3-14.

²⁵¹ 'For years the imperialists have been preparing Finland as a jumping-off ground for the attack on Soviet Russia'. Dixon, *No War on Soviet Russia!*, p.8.

²⁵² *ibid.*, p.9.

²⁵³ See *The Truth About Finland*, *passim*.

²⁵⁴ See *Tribune* (Sydney), 22 December 1939, p.1.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.* The rationale behind this idea was that the USSR had already concluded peace with the puppet Finnish government led by Finnish Comintern functionary Otto Kuusinen. The USSR granted Kuusinen's government the territory it had promised the legitimate Finnish government and established the Democratic Republic of Finland. The USSR refused to recognise the legitimate government of Finland.

²⁵⁶ Indeed, it was not only the Allies but also the Italians and Germans. See *The Truth About Finland*, pp.14-16.

proved that Germany and the Allies would 'agree to peace and combine their forces against the Soviet Union'.²⁵⁷

The CPA claimed that if the war were switched against the USSR, it would have added to its undemocratic character. Soldiers that had enlisted to fight one enemy could have found themselves fighting against another country they had no intention of fighting. As Dixon wrote: 'Young Australians who enlisted, as they thought, to fight against fascism may find themselves fighting against socialism'.²⁵⁸ This fear was particularly relevant for the Australian forces stationed in the Middle East. Dixon believed that this force was going to be used to seize the Caucasuses, where the majority of Russian oil was located.²⁵⁹

The CPA itself was increasingly under threat. Dixon argued that the precursor to an anti-Soviet war would be the banning of the CPA.²⁶⁰ Yet its statements such as, 'To this war the working class can have only one attitude- that of resolute determination to seize upon every opportunity to hasten the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of socialism',²⁶¹ did not endear the CPA to the government, especially when the position of the USSR to the war, and the obedience of the CPA to the USSR, is considered.

The Soviet position during 1940 was uncertain. Hasluck points out that the Menzies government had information that a war with the USSR was a possibility.²⁶² The government also had information that Communist 'cells' were operating within the army.²⁶³ It was believed that these 'cells' would engage in sabotage in the event of war with the USSR.²⁶⁴ A conference between representatives from the military, the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, Police Commissioners from the various states and

²⁵⁷ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 6 December 1939, p.1. See also *Guardian* (Melbourne), 9 December 1939, p.2.

²⁵⁸ R. Dixon, *No War on Soviet Russia!*, p.1.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.11.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.15.

²⁶¹ R. Dixon, 'The Real Issue of the War', *The Communist Review*, Vol.7, No.1, January 1940, p.57. Such an attitude is very near to a Revolutionary Defeatist attitude. Dimitrov called for a 'struggle against the culprits and the agents of this war primarily in their own country'. The implications of such actions in wartime would have undermined national security. Georgi Dimitrov, *The War and the Working Class*, p.13.

²⁶² Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.587.

²⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

the Department of Information was held in January 1940 to devise counter-measures against any Communist threat. The conference produced a set of recommendations,²⁶⁵ but Menzies was unwilling to implement them. Menzies was not prepared to infringe upon the rights of innocent individuals.²⁶⁶ Censorship and counter-propaganda was deemed the most appropriate response.

The CPA itself was preparing for illegality as early as January 1940.²⁶⁷ In March 1940 the CPA issued guidelines for looming illegality.²⁶⁸ Throughout 1940, until the CPA's ban, it constantly prepared its members for underground work. During this period there were also regular threats to suppress the CPA- be it the party press, or the party itself²⁶⁹ A major coal strike, lasting for two months between 11 March to 15 May 1940, aggravated antagonisms and became the domestic focal point for hostility against the CPA.²⁷⁰

The CPA also continued its 'switch the war' awareness campaign. It warned against plans to split the USSR up into smaller states,²⁷¹ or about embroiling the USSR in the war.²⁷² Indeed, the war did spread, however not to the USSR. In April, Germany overran Denmark and Norway, prompting the CPA to applaud the 'wisdom of the Soviet in securing the near approaches to Leningrad'.²⁷³

The CPA earned a major victory by capitalising on the 'switch the war' fear. At the Easter conference of the NSW branch of the ALP, a 'hands off Russia' resolution was

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.588.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*

²⁶⁷ David McKnight, *Espionage and the Roots of the Cold War: The Conspiratorial Heritage*, London, Frank Cass, 2002 p.183.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ A member of the War Cabinet told the *Guardian* that it would be suppressed if it 'continued to support the Soviet Union's action in regard to Finland'. The next logical step would have been the full proscription of the CPA. See *Guardian* (Melbourne), 6 January 1940, p. 1.

²⁷⁰ See Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp.93-96.

²⁷¹ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 14 February 1940, p.2.

²⁷² *Guardian* (Melbourne), 30 March 1940, p. 1.

²⁷³ *Guardian* (Melbourne), 13 April 1940, p. 1. The near approaches to Leningrad were secured after Stalin made peace with Finland in March.

carried.²⁷⁴ The conference carried a number of other pro-Communist resolutions concerning the Russo-Finnish war, conscription and other domestic issues. However the joy was short lived as the federal executive of the ALP intervened to expunge the 'hands off Russia' resolution. Soon after, the executive of the NSW branch of the ALP was declared bogus. The sacked executive, however, formed its own political party on 18 August 1940, called the ALP (State of NSW), or the State Labor Party NSW, as it was commonly known.²⁷⁵ This party was important to the CPA during illegality, as it functioned as the CPA's unofficial mouthpiece.

By May, the war had taken a turn for the worse for the Allies. The German occupation of Denmark and Norway shifted the situation in Europe. As a result, Cabinet announced, on 19 April, that all manuscripts of Communist newspapers, pamphlets and leaflets be submitted to censorship before publication.²⁷⁶ Communist publications were totally banned from writing about 'the war; Russia and its government; any strike within the Empire or any Allied country, or industrial unrest- real or imaginary'.²⁷⁷ The Federal Minister for Information, Henry Gullett, warned: 'unless they [the CPA] make miraculous changes and turn to patriotic service on behalf of the country which nourishes them, Communist papers are going out of business'.²⁷⁸ As a result, the CPA was left to report matters that would normally never receive its attention.²⁷⁹

However, these measures failed to silence Communist criticism of both the war and the government. On 24 May 1940, a total ban was placed on nine CPA publications. As the

²⁷⁴ Resolution read: 'Conference makes it clear whilst being opposed to Australian participation in overseas conflicts we are also opposed to any effort of the anti-Labor governments to change the direction of the present war by an aggressive act against any other country with which we are not at war, including the Soviet Union'. Quoted in *Tribune* (Sydney), 26 March 1940, p.1.

²⁷⁵ For a discussion of the process that resulted in the removal of the Hughes-Evans executive see Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp.91-93.

²⁷⁶ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp.588-589.

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.589.

²⁷⁸ Quoted in Fitzpatrick, *National Security and Individual Insecurity*, p.53.

²⁷⁹ For instance, the last issue of the *Communist Review* featured Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Even here the CPA managed to get its anti-war message across with the saying 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. 'Christ's Sermon on the Mount', *The Communist Review*, Vol.7, No.5, May 1940, p.257.

war situation deteriorated further,²⁸⁰ the threat to national security increased. So on 15 June 1940, the CPA was declared an illegal organisation under the National Security (Subversive Associations) Regulations.²⁸¹ On the same day, the USSR occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The CPA's unquestioning adherence to the Soviet line became the reason for its proscription. If it had not adopted the Soviet anti-war stance and instead remained near its initial position, then it is quite conceivable that the suppression of the CPA would never have eventuated. But when a nation is at war, and has among its population organisations that follow the instructions of an 'unreliable' foreign power, it seemed that the only logical action was to acquire some form of control over their activities. In the Australian instance, proscription of the CPA was the only way to stifle its potentially disastrous activities, especially when war with the USSR was, at that stage at least, a very real possibility.

²⁸⁰ Belgium and Holland had fallen. Italy entered the war on 10 June. undefended Paris was left to the Germans on 14 June 1940.

²⁸¹ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.589.

Chapter Three

“Demand A People’s Government”: Illegality during the Imperialist War

One of the first challenges to confront the CPA during illegality was the raids on Communist offices and homes. The Federal Attorney-General, W.M. Hughes, gave the police prior warning of his intention to ban the CPA, providing the police with time to prepare.²⁸² The ban came into effect at 9.30pm on 15 June 1940.²⁸³ Raids were then carried out, and continued throughout the night and ensuing weeks.²⁸⁴ A large quantity of Communist literature was seized, though some material was not even political.²⁸⁵ All property in CPA offices was seized.²⁸⁶ On most occasions, though not on all, the police were amicable.²⁸⁷ There were even stories of comical mishaps and very amateurish policing.²⁸⁸

However, the CPA survived this challenge. If the intention of the raids was to destroy the CPA, then the raids, while netting substantial amounts of party material,²⁸⁹ were not successful. The CPA had prepared itself for illegality,²⁹⁰ although these preparations were

²⁸² Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.396.

²⁸³ Les Barnes, ‘June 15, 1940’, *Recorder*, no.163, July 1990, p.11.

²⁸⁴ Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.96.

²⁸⁵ Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp.397-398. Shakespeare, Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, the Bible and books simply with a red cover were among the truckloads seized. See Laurie Aarons’s recollection in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, *When the War Came to Australia: Memories of the Second World War*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1992, p.22.

²⁸⁶ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.396. Macintyre notes that ‘all assets were confiscated, the presses the furniture, everything’. A stapler was confiscated among Ted Laurie’s possessions, such was the ridiculous extent of police actions.

²⁸⁷ Barnes, ‘June 15, 1940’, p.12. Barnes recorded one case where a policeman was tearing a hat apart because propaganda might have been concealed within it.

²⁸⁸ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.397. Some Communists claim to have passed off the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (which used the abbreviation CPSU on its spine) as a history of the Commonwealth Public Service Union. Barnes remembered how ‘the press was being shifted from a place in Carlton and the policeman was persuaded and did help to load the press on a trailer’. Barnes, ‘June 15, 1940’, p.13.

²⁸⁹ Some of these seized materials were later auctioned off, incurring the wrath of the CPA. See *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 December 1940, p.7.

²⁹⁰ Sharkey claimed that the party leadership had ‘supervised and led the preparations of the party organisations for the transference to conditions of illegal work’. Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, p.40. As already mentioned, the CPA was preparing itself for illegality by January 1940.

inadequate and amateurish, particularly on the part of individual members.²⁹¹ The CPA was greatly assisted by the bungling and inexperienced police, who were novices when it came to understanding anything about Communism. The elaborate and seemingly perfect measures recalled by Wally Clayton (who was in charge of preparations for illegality) over-exaggerate the successes of Communists in outwitting the police.²⁹²

It is arguable, however, that the intention of the ban was not to smash the CPA. Eva Bacon, who had arrived in Australia from Austria in 1939, found the police's enforcement of illegality 'a complete joke'.²⁹³ As Gollan wrote, 'it was far from a reign of terror'.²⁹⁴ The authorities never intervened when Communist orators spoke in public under their own names, nor did they prevent Communists from running in elections as independents. Rather, by banning the CPA, Menzies hoped to mute its criticism of the war and stop it from popularizing pro-Soviet propaganda. As the CPA was an illegal organisation, Menzies could discredit the CPA and its policies as being those of an outlawed body. By severely restricting its ability to disseminate propaganda through print, it narrowed the CPA's reach into the community.

Nevertheless, illegal conditions did challenge the CPA. The more cautious members had developed contingency plans in preparation for illegality. Hence when the police came to raid their homes, they were already 'one jump ahead'.²⁹⁵ Prominent members went 'into smoke'.²⁹⁶ Cover stories had to be devised to allay the suspicions of nosy neighbours.²⁹⁷

²⁹¹ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.400. Macintyre records how one Communist had received advance warning of the declaration of illegality, yet left an extensive Marxist library at home.

²⁹² *ibid.*, p.401. Barnes admitted that 'although we like to believe that we fooled them, looking back, our efforts were amateurish and worked mainly because the police were casual and even more amateurish'. Barnes, 'June 15, 1940', p.13.

²⁹³ Quoted in, Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.400. Eva also described the CPA's understanding of operating under illegal conditions as rudimentary.

²⁹⁴ Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.97.

²⁹⁵ Penglase and Horner, *When the War Came to Australia*, p.22. In preparing for illegality, Joyce Batterham recalls: 'We knew that the Communist Party was going to be banned and we had all sorts of preparations for it, cover addresses, and the cloak-and-dagger stuff we went in for, and when it was finally banned there was a great scurry- people moved, and the place where I was living got raided by the police, but I was one jump ahead'. p.22.

²⁹⁶ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.404. Going 'into smoke' meant simply going into hiding. Barnes was one such member that went into smoke. Barnes, 'June 15, 1940', p.12.

²⁹⁷ Barnes had his neighbours told that he had joined the army. Barnes, 'June 15, 1940', p.12.

Printing presses and libraries had to be hidden.²⁹⁸ Safe houses for leading members were arranged.²⁹⁹ If it became necessary for leading cadres to move interstate or to the country, preparations for that were also made.³⁰⁰ Consequently an underground apparatus, with a wide range of contacts and sympathisers, had to be in existence before 15 June.

The hazards of illegality should not be understated. At least fifty individuals were prosecuted during this period, though Macintyre believes this figure to be too low.³⁰¹ Sloppiness on the part of Communists hiding from the police could have had dire results.³⁰² Communists had to be very conscious about their behaviour and whom they trusted.³⁰³ If arrested, comrades had to forget heroics and be careful that the police did not trick them into any confessions or betraying other comrades.³⁰⁴ Cadres had to live by the assumption that they were being watched or followed wherever they went. Behaviour such as this was in the conspiratorial heritage of Communism,³⁰⁵ and as such the CPA received instructions about how to operate illegally from 'the experience of brother parties in countries under terror conditions'.³⁰⁶ Illegality was a strange sort of right of passage in the Communist movement. However, the police repression was not as severe as in other countries (i.e. Germany), nor were the CPA's actual measures, or the casual execution of them by some, sophisticated enough to withstand any full-scale oppression had that actually occurred.

²⁹⁸ Barnes wrote that 'every available Guardian and other papers [were hidden] under the floorboards, and we strapped typewriters on our shoulders and proceeded to dump them in a safe place' *ibid.* Davidson stated that printing presses were hidden under floors in specially prepared hiding places. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.81.

²⁹⁹ Davidson noted how party members moved from house to house in Sydney and Melbourne to evade the police. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.81.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.* See also Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.401.

³⁰¹ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.401.

³⁰² There were many cases of the police almost stumbling on Communists while they were in hiding. Joyce Batterham remembered how she hid among blackberry bushes when she was staying at a safe house while the police searched the house and found nothing. Penglase and Horner, *When the War Came to Australia*, p.22. If Batterham had been found, then she could have faced a prison sentence.

³⁰³ Instructions, Central Committee of the CPA to District Committees of the CPA, 20/6/1940, National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA][ACT], Series A472/1, Item W1402.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ See McKnight, *Espionage and the Roots of the Cold War*, for a discussion of the conspiratorial heritage of Communism and how this facilitated the ability of Communist parties to survive under conditions of illegality, and subsequently engage in clandestine activities such as espionage.

³⁰⁶ NAA[ACT], Series A472/1, Item W1402.

Illegality also forced the party to restructure. The previous rigid form of Democratic Centralism could no longer be maintained. More decision-making responsibilities fell into the hands of state committees.³⁰⁷ The Central Committee itself was controlled by a ‘smaller committee of leading comrades’ and met less frequently.³⁰⁸ The practical impossibility of continuing with Democratic Centralism meant that the national leadership did not have a great role to play and instead ‘polished up their theoretical arguments and issued illegal papers and pamphlets’ while they were in hiding.³⁰⁹ Designated couriers were entrusted with transporting instructions between the leadership.³¹⁰ Instructions from the leadership to the rank and file were also conveyed via couriers that were known personally to the recipient.³¹¹ Although this system loosened the control of the party leadership over the rank and file, it did ultimately preserve the party as a united entity.

The leadership still wanted to retain some semblance of a mass movement³¹² under the new structure. Though the restrictions of illegality, despite all the shortcomings of its enforcement, proved a constant barrier. Individual speakers could appear in public and state the CPA’s policy, though they could not publicly announce themselves as representatives of the CPA.³¹³ Similarly, the CPA’s illegal publications were difficult to print and distribute because of the risk of being caught.

The CPA exploited any opportunity to promote its policies. It made use of both legal and illegal opportunities.³¹⁴ Such action was necessary to keep the ‘party message before the masses’.³¹⁵ Hence, the party press was soon illegally restored and more vitriolic than

³⁰⁷ Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.81.

³⁰⁸ Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, p.40.

³⁰⁹ Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.97.

³¹⁰ Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.81. Ted Hill was a courier in Victoria.

³¹¹ NAA[ACT], Series A472/1, Item W1402. This was so the recipient could trust the courier and be sure that it was not an imposter.

³¹² NAA[ACT], Series A472/1, Item W1402.

³¹³ Communists were told to simply deny any links with the CPA, as it was ‘an illegal organisation and did not exist’ if they were publicly accused of being CPA members. *ibid.* The *Argus* ‘Special Staff Commissioner’ recognised this maneuver to escape prosecution. *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 February 1941, p.2.

³¹⁴ Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, p.43.

³¹⁵ *ibid.*

ever,³¹⁶ producing a reduced version of *Tribune*, *Guardian* and *The Communist Review* as well as numerous pamphlets. These efforts comprised part of the party's illegal work. As for legal work, Sharkey stated that: 'The party was able to carry out its work in the trade union movement without much hindrance and, in addition, to hold public meetings in the name of individuals, but not in the name of the party'.³¹⁷ The CPA also used its 'fraternal' organisations to promote its policies. It expected, however, these organisations to be suppressed soon after it was,³¹⁸ and some were.³¹⁹ The Friends of the Soviet Union, the League of Young Democrats, the Legal Rights Committee and the State Labor Party NSW, as well as CPA controlled trade unions,³²⁰ were all legal organisations used by the illegal CPA.

The CPA's policy orientation continued as it had prior to proscription, with a few notable additions. The ALP's non-objection to the CPA's proscription³²¹ led to attacks against it not seen since the Third Period.³²² Although the CPA criticized the ALP prior to proscription, the attacks during illegality were extremely severe. Reminiscent of the Third Period, a distinction was made between the leadership and the rank and file.³²³ A united front from below was desirable against war, whereas a united front from above was impossible because of the 'imperialist warmongering' leadership.³²⁴ The ALP,

³¹⁶ Carment, 'Australian Communism and National Security', p.252. The *Tribune* eventually expanded from four to eight pages. However, notes on all newspapers were left pleading that it not be thrown away but passed on, reflecting the difficulties of production.

³¹⁷ Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, p.43.

³¹⁸ NAA[ACT], Series A472/1, Item W1402.

³¹⁹ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.405. The League of Young Democrats remained a legitimate organisation until February 1941. The Friends of the Soviet Union had its magazine banned.

³²⁰ Johnston, 'The "Leading War Party"', p.67.

³²¹ Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p.80. The only Labor Party to object to the CPA's proscription was the State Labor Party NSW. See Lloyd Churchward, 'An Early Alliance of the Left', *Australian Left Review*, no.27, October/November, 1970, p.33.

³²² Miles and Sharkey claimed: 'By voting for the National Security Regulations, Curtin and his followers voted for the ban on the Communists, the raiding of workers homes, the seizure of literature, printing presses and other property'. Mason (J.B. Miles) and McShane (L.L. Sharkey), *What is this Labor Party*, Sydney, Forward Press, 1941, p.13. This period saw an increase in attacks on the ALP and diminution in attacks against Hitler.

³²³ 'The rank and file of the Labor Party must never be confused with the "top leaders"; a comradely attitude must always be maintained towards them with patient explanations to help them see the real role of their "leaders", to see through the demagoguery of the reformists, the loud outcries about small matters whilst they aid and abet capitalism in all its major attacks on the workers, the pre-election promises that are quietly pigeonholed once they are in office'. *ibid.*, p.16.

³²⁴ *ibid.*, p.7.

especially Curtin, Evatt, Beasley and Forgan-Smith, were the 'leading instigators and organisers of the imperialist war in this country'.³²⁵ The leadership was accused of hindering the advance of the workers.³²⁶ It was even claimed that the ALP would assist in a 'bloodbath for the workers'.³²⁷ The ALP's leaders were described simply as 'our CLASS ENEMIES, THE BOURGEOIS WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT'.³²⁸ Using Lenin's 1913 analysis of the Labor Party, the CPA labeled the ALP a 'liberal party of expanding capitalism'.³²⁹ Such unjustified hostility served merely to entrench the divisions between the two parties and hindered cooperation in the future. The CPA, for its part, was simply following Dimitrov, who had called Social-Democratic leaders 'the most perfidious enemies of the working class and of socialism'.³³⁰

This period also witnessed a change in Comintern line, which consequentially impacted on the CPA's policies. Stalin forced a subtle, yet significant change in the attitude of international Communism. World Communism was now told to call for the establishment of a People's Government.³³¹ The cause of this shift was Stalin's shock at the speed of the fall of France.³³² He had expected a long, exhaustive, battle of attrition in the West.³³³ When this did not eventuate, alarm bells rang in the Kremlin. It seemed only a matter of time before Hitler turned East. The realisation that Germany could secure a crushing victory left many Communists, as well as Stalin, terrified and grappling with reality.³³⁴

³²⁵ *ibid.*

³²⁶ *ibid.*, p.3. The ALP was hindering the advance of the workers by tying the Labor Movement to Australian monopoly capital.

³²⁷ 'Curtin wants to keep the Labor Party in reserve, probably with a view to dealing with a future revolutionary crisis and to end the long story of reformist infamy in Australia with a bloodbath for the workers'. *ibid.*, p.16.

³²⁸ *ibid.*, p.17. [emphasis in original]

³²⁹ *ibid.*, p.3.

³³⁰ Georgi Dimitrov, *The Struggle Against the Imperialist War*, New York, 1940, p.15. Cited in Craig Johnston, 'The Communist Party and Labour Unity, 1939-1945', *Labour History*, No.40, May 1981, p.86.

³³¹ The CPGB hosted a People's Convention to introduce this new policy. For an Australian Communist perspective of this convention see, McShane, 'Thoughts on the People's Convention', *The Communist Review*, Vol.2, March 1941, pp.8-13.

³³² Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939-1941', p.35.

³³³ *ibid.*

³³⁴ In Britain, the CPGB modified its anti-war talk after the fall of France. It recognised the 'appalling catastrophe that has befallen the French people' and that 'a free people organizing their own defence' withstand 'the danger of fascist invasion and tyranny'. This policy was similar to that of September the previous year, as it seemed to support the old 'war on two fronts' tactic. Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939-1941', p.34. Stahn and the Comintern intervened to alter a declaration of the PCF, which blamed the bourgeoisie and generals for not adequately preparing France's defense. Alexander

A People's Government intended to ensure that a catastrophe similar to that which had befallen the people of France did not occur again. It would prevent the rich elite from capitulating in the face of fascist onslaught.³³⁵ A People's Government would have comprised all progressive elements, excluding the leaders of Social Democracy.³³⁶ It would implement progressive reforms with the wellbeing of the population at heart, and aim, eventually, to introduce socialism.³³⁷ The CPA promised that this government would make a People's peace, or failing that, wage a People's war.³³⁸ This policy is significant, as it did not flatly reject participation in the war- it left the door slightly ajar for some positive role.

The CPA advanced the People's Government idea against plans to form a National Government. A National Government was proposed between the ALP, UAP and the Country Party for the duration of the war. The CPA considered the Menzies government already far too friendly with monopoly capitalism.³³⁹ It believed this proposed new government would unite all capitalist interests under one government.³⁴⁰ The very prospect of such an arrangement seemed to confirm to the CPA that the ALP had moved over to the side of imperialism and was splitting the Labor Movement between the 'real workers' party (i.e. the CPA) and the servants of imperialism (i.e. the ALP).³⁴¹ The ALP

Dallin and F.I. Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin, 1934-1943: Letters from the Soviet Archives*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, pp.170-174. If adequate preparations were made prior to the fall of France, then, no doubt, the PCF would have cried out against such warmongering provocation.

³³⁵ The CPA claimed that 'the "200 families" of the French capitalist class, and their politicians and generals have betrayed the French people to the fascists'. *Tribune* (Sydney), 29 July 1940, p.1.

³³⁶ *ibid.*

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p.2.

³³⁸ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.586.

³³⁹ Indeed, major Australian capitalists such as Essington Lewis and Keith Murdoch were placed in charge of key war industries. It was claimed that they wielded more power than Menzies himself. See John Lindsay, *A People's Australia and its Defence*, Sydney, Labor Council of NSW, 1941, pp.7-18.

³⁴⁰ E. Varga, Soviet economist, argued this to be the purpose of the war. See E. Varga, *Changes in Capitalism During the War*, Sydney, The Spartacus Press, 1941, p.5.

³⁴¹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 6 August 1940, p.3. Curtin's reason for not joining a National Government confirmed a fear of splitting the Labor Movement: 'Forming a national government would mean the Communist element would constitute the de facto Opposition to the national government and would attract every section of the people who were dissatisfied'. Quoted in George Healey, *ALP: The Story of the Labor Party*, Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1955, p.120. Cited in Craig Johnston, 'The Communist Party and Labour Unity', p.86.

was supposedly playing the same role Social Democracy had in France, and would capitulate before a fascist invasion as well.³⁴²

As part of the CPA's newfound realisation of the dangers posed by the Axis, it began to emphasize the Japanese threat.³⁴³ It prophesized that a Pacific war involving all the Pacific powers, including the USA, would break out.³⁴⁴ The CPA stated that a so-called 'Spanish defence'³⁴⁵ of Australia had to be organised to meet the Japanese, who posed 'a grave problem for the Australian toilers'.³⁴⁶ The appeasing Menzies government did not care for the masses, as it had not even provided adequate protection or preparation for this contingency.³⁴⁷ Only a People's Government would provide the toilers with adequate preparation and create a country worth defending.

The CPA had a chance to gauge the popularity of its policies at the September 1940 federal election. Although the CPA itself could not contest the election, many of its members stood as independents. Some did quite well.³⁴⁸ However, the main aim of the CPA was to defeat the Menzies government, which it claimed could be secured by exposing the government's 'fascist, warmongering, imperialist character and incompetent betrayal of national security' among other grievances.³⁴⁹ The alternative was an ALP government, although sharp criticism of Labor candidates was expected.³⁵⁰ The CPA did not expect any radical change to emerge from the election,³⁵¹ though the result could be used to discredit the reactionary leaders of the ALP and UAP, 'thus preparing the

³⁴² *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 August 1940, p.1.

³⁴³ See Mason and McShane, *The Coming War in the Pacific*, Sydney, Communist Party of Australia, 1941.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.5. America was also, supposedly, about to enter the war to fulfill its imperialist ambition as heir to the British Empire. Hence Australians would have to choose between dollar imperialism or pound imperialism. See 'Notes of the Month', *The Communist Review*, vol.2, March 1941, pp.5-8.

³⁴⁵ A Spanish defence was to be based on the defence of Republican Spain during the Spanish Civil War. It consisted of arming the workers and the people, while also organizing their resistance to the invaders.

Mason and McShane, *The Coming War in the Pacific*, p.13.

³⁴⁶ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 August 1940, p.2.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp.2-3. The CPA campaigned heavily for improved air raid protection for all, especially after learning of the horrors experienced by the working class in London during the Blitz. See *Tribune* (Sydney), 12 March 1941, p.1.

³⁴⁸ Fred Patterson won 18.3% of the vote. Ralph Gibson won 9.1% of the vote. See Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.406.

³⁴⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 August 1940, p. 4.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*

³⁵¹ *ibid.*

downfall of reaction'.³⁵² Communists and their sympathisers were encouraged to vote for progressive candidates first, and only vote for ALP candidates if there were no progressives on the ballot.³⁵³ Constant comparisons were made between the traitor French government and the ALP-UAP, with dire forecasts of a similar capitulation to fascism in Australia if the UAP was successful in the election.³⁵⁴

The UAP did prevail in the election and held government, albeit by a narrow margin. It was deprived of a working majority, though the ALP also did not enjoy a majority. Consequentially, the CPA's National Government fear reemerged and intensified. It told workers to: 'Sharpen the opposition. Tell the imperialist labor [sic] leaders to get out of the labor movement and formally join Menzies'.³⁵⁵ 'A real national government' claimed the CPA, was 'one representing the organisations of the people, with full freedom for the organisations of the people, with full democratic control over the government and administrative heads'.³⁵⁶

With the further deterioration of the European situation,³⁵⁷ and the danger of a Pacific war looming ominously, the CPA reevaluated its defence policy. *Tribune* warned that:

Any day now Australia may experience war upon her territory. Communists, no less than others, regard this as an alarming prospect. Fear for the security of the individual and the nation exists among the masses. *An invader must be resisted*.³⁵⁸

³⁵² *Tribune* (Sydney), 10 September 1940, p.1.

³⁵³ *ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 17 September 1940, pp.1-4. Special attention was paid to the ALP and constant attempts to cast Curtin in the mould of French Social Democrat Leon Blum, was made.

³⁵⁵ *Tribune* (Sydney), 7 October 1940, p.1. Curtin, and the other 'reactionary' Labor leaders, were told to follow the example of Billy Hughes.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*

³⁵⁷ The Red Army occupied the Romanian provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia. The CPA welcomed this as it did the Soviet's invasion of Finland- as necessary for protecting the Soviet Union's territory and people. *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 October 1940, p.2. Accusations of 'Red Imperialism' were dismissed as 'Silly'. Mason and McShane, *Soviet Russia and the War*, Sydney, Central Committee of the CPA, 1941, p 13.

³⁵⁸ *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 October 1940, p.1. [emphasis added]

After writing about the imperialist character of a future war in the Pacific, Sharkey and Miles wrote:

Does this mean the workers, the revolutionaries in Australia, should 'boycott' war, should refuse to enter the army? No! That is no solution. Under the constitution every man between the ages of 18 and 60 is conscripted in the event of invasion. Should the militant workers refuse to register and suffer the consequences? Here is what Lenin wrote on this problem: 'Boycott of war is a stupid phrase. Communists must participate even in the most reactionary wars'.³⁵⁹

The surest way to prevent a French style capitulation by the government that had 'helped create the situation' Australia found itself in, was by a 'relentless struggle against the ruling class now' and the establishment of a People's Government.³⁶⁰ Hence, a visible public shift toward a more 'defensist', rather than 'defeatist', policy is discernable in the period following France's capitulation, as was clear with the CPGB as well.³⁶¹ However, this hides the CPA's now confused appraisal of the war.

This embryonic shift in policy did not extend to support for the war. With the obvious exception of France, the war was still being fought by the same countries and governments that were involved from the outset.³⁶² The war remained an imperialist war so long as the Soviet Union was not involved. Therefore, the 'New Order' that both Axis and Allies were fighting for could only serve an imperialist purpose. Inevitably, the outcome of the war and the promised New Order meant 'fascism extended, under one imperialist group or another, to the whole capitalist world- and Soviet Russia, if they

³⁵⁹ Mason and McShane, *The Coming War in the Pacific*, p.10. This is a stunning backflip from only a few months before when it was claimed that workers had no interests in participating in an imperialist war, nor did the CPA display much regard for the constitution. Such was the confused defence policy of the CPA during this period.

³⁶⁰ *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 October 1940, p.2.

³⁶¹ See Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939-1941', pp.35-42. The hegemonic view in the CPGB also called for a struggle against its own ruling class for the defence of Britain. However, some sections of the party, led by Harry Pollitt, questioned the wisdom of such a policy under the threatening international situation.

³⁶² Although Churchill had become Prime Minister of Britain, his cabinet was comprised of similar members as his predecessor's cabinet.

can'.³⁶³ Support for the war meant support for the existence of capitalism. Hence, the CPA could only continue to oppose the war.³⁶⁴ Yet the CPA's pledge to defend Australia in the event of Japanese invasion contradicted its policy. The dilemma for the CPA was whether to continue its present policy, which was still Comintern policy, and be overrun by the Japanese. Or defend Australia and its capitalist system, and defy the Comintern? This dilemma has not, unfortunately, been addressed by historians writing of this period.

Meanwhile, the war expanded menacingly toward the Soviet Union. Italy invaded Greece in November, in response to 'British violation of Greek neutrality', according to the CPA.³⁶⁵ This new war was part of the big imperialist war between Germany and Britain. The CPA also used this war to illustrate that Britain was fighting to eventually introduce its own form of fascism, as it came to the aid of the Greek fascist General Metaxas.³⁶⁶

The British were also supposedly fighting in Africa for imperialist motives. The CPA conceded that Britain was fighting to tear Mussolini's 'African Empire to pieces',³⁶⁷ but claimed it would never hand the pieces to the native population.³⁶⁸ Hence, Australian soldiers were fighting for the 're-division of the colonies in the interests of the British capitalist class and its Australian junior partners'.³⁶⁹ In evaluating the Greek and African wars as imperialist, the CPA demonstrated its stern commitment to Stalin's initial interpretation of the war. However by early 1941, Stalin was already preparing the USSR for war with Germany.³⁷⁰

³⁶³ *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 October 1940, p.8.

³⁶⁴ Mason and McShane, *Soviet Russia and the War*, 16. Workers were told to 'end the senseless slaughter of worker by worker'.

³⁶⁵ *Tribune* (Sydney), 7 November 1940, p.2. In fact, Italy's motives for the invasion had more to do with its own interests in the Balkans coupled with Mussolini's jealous fury at Hitler's successes. See Misha Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, London, Granta Books, 1999, pp.460-477, for a discussion on how the Balkan states got embroiled in the Second World War.

³⁶⁶ *Tribune* (Sydney), 7 November 1940, p.2. See also 'Notes of the Month', *The Communist Review*, Vol.3, May 1941, under the sub-heading 'Fascists Fight for Democracy' pp.3-5.

³⁶⁷ *Tribune* (Sydney), 12 January 1941, p.1.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Besides incorporating the Baltic states and parts of Romania into the Soviet Union for defensive purposes, an 8 hour day and 6 day week was introduced to Soviet industry, migration of labour was stopped

Yet even while Stalin was preparing for the possibility of a German invasion, the CPA feared the Allies would collude with the Axis and ‘switch the war’.³⁷¹ Sharkey claimed that the ‘switch the war’ possibility was ended by the Soviet treaty with Finland in March 1940.³⁷² But *Tribune* was featuring articles warning of plans to ‘switch the war’ as late as May 1941,³⁷³ a month before the Germans switched the war against the Soviet Union.

With the further deterioration of the European situation by May,³⁷⁴ the month prior to Barbarossa saw some of the strongest criticism toward the ALP and the war. The CPA charged Curtin with needing fascism to preserve his power.³⁷⁵ It also called for struggle against the federal government, the oppressors ‘nearest at hand’.³⁷⁶ However, in the midst of all this, the CPA stated: ‘While avoiding actions which would *allow the enemy to disrupt our forces*, we must give bolder leadership in the struggles for the needs of the workers’.³⁷⁷ This statement appears to support the soldiers’ mission, rather than, as previously, simply demand their recall. The ‘switch the war’ fear gained new urgency, as it was believed that all the belligerent countries would unite in an anti-Soviet war, a war which ‘would be the most reactionary war in the history of capitalism... the most ruthless and bloody’.³⁷⁸ Thus, right up to the eve of Barbarossa, the CPA was serving the interests of the Soviet Union by urging Australians to oppose their government in the event of war with the USSR. ‘Disloyal’ policies such as these were precisely why the CPA had been proscribed, and, as this thesis has so far argued, this disloyalty originated from observing the Comintern’s policies. Muting the public reach of such ideas was the purpose of proscribing the CPA.

and workers were required to remain in their current jobs. As Gibson recalls, ‘the Soviet Union was already bracing itself against a German attack’. Gibson, *The People Stand Up*, p.378.

³⁷¹ The Australian government feared that the CPA would sabotage war industry if the Allies went to war against the USSR. Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.587. However, there was no evidence of sabotage.

³⁷² Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, p.37.

³⁷³ See *Tribune* (Sydney), 14 May 1941.

³⁷⁴ The Germans had by this stage overrun Yugoslavia and Greece, and were moving menacingly towards the USSR.

³⁷⁵ *Tribune* (Sydney), 4 May 1941, p.2.

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.7.

³⁷⁷ *ibid.* [emphasis added]

³⁷⁸ *Tribune* (Sydney), 14 May 1941, pp.7-8.

When the CPA envisaged what an anti-Soviet war would consist of, it was only half-correct. As Hitler commenced operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941, a year to the day of his greatest triumph -the formal surrender of France- he would be fighting only with the aid of his puppet fascist states and sympathisers from all over Europe, in what was, indeed, the most 'ruthless and bloody' war in history. The Allies did not join Hitler's war against the USSR. Instead they joined forces with Stalin.

Chapter Four

“Every Nerve Must Be Strained, All Else Must Be Subordinated”: Illegality During The People’s War

The German invasion of the USSR was met with disbelief by the CPA. The *Tribune* wrote, ‘it is very unlikely that he [Hitler] will attack the Soviet Union now unless there is an understanding with British and US imperialism’,³⁷⁹ particularly after, according to the CPA, Hitler had had the chance to attack the USSR with British and US support before the war. Therefore it was difficult for the CPA to determine whether the news of a German attack on the USSR was ‘propaganda or provocation’ to make war between the two, or an actual invasion by the Germans.³⁸⁰ The only certainty was to persist with the fight against the ‘class enemy at home’, thereby ending the imperialist war and safeguarding the USSR.³⁸¹

However, when the German invasion was confirmed, the CPA was uncompromising in its support for the USSR. The ‘bloodthirsty megalomaniac’ Hitler had unleashed the Nazi hordes against the peaceful Soviet Socialist people without provocation or demands.³⁸² The CPA wasted no time in characterising the Nazi-Soviet War as the ‘most just of all wars’,³⁸³ and that ‘every nerve must be strained, all else must be subordinated’ to secure a Soviet victory.³⁸⁴ Clearly the CPA, along with Stalin, was surprised by the invasion.³⁸⁵

³⁷⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 22 June 1941, p.1. Rudolf Hess’s flight to Scotland was believed to have clinched a deal between the British and the Germans to switch the war against the USSR.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.* Dixon’s response to the news that Germany had attacked the USSR was: ‘There are reports that Hitler is going to invade the Soviet Union and they’re absolutely wrong’. Quoted in Penglase and Horner, *When the War Came to Australia*, p.52.

³⁸¹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 22 June 1941, p.8.

³⁸² *Tribune* (Sydney), 30 June 1941, p.1.

³⁸³ *ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Editorial, ‘All Aid to the Soviet Union’, *The Communist Review*, No. 5, July 1941, p.1.

³⁸⁵ Stalin’s response to the news of a German invasion lends itself to interpretations that Stalin felt he had been played a fool by Hitler, and that he should have known better than to trust Hitler. Stalin said to Dimitrov. “They fell upon us, without making any claims, not demanding any negotiations, they made a vile attack like bandits”. Stalin fell into the trap of trusting Hitler. Quoted in Dallin and Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin*, p.189. The arguments used by the CPA to explain the invasion were similar to Stalin’s.

But the CPA did not lend its unqualified support to the Australian and British war effort. It is a prevailing misconception by historians that the CPA either immediately, or soon after, changed its tune to support the war.³⁸⁶ The following statement encapsulated the party's view: 'THE CHARACTER OF THE BRITISH-GERMAN WAR IS NOT ALTERED BY HITLER'S NEW WAR'.³⁸⁷ This attitude was to remain intact for months. Support for the Soviet war was justifiable, though not for Britain's.³⁸⁸ The CPA pledged that its 'contribution in Australia will be to continue the struggle against the ruling class'.³⁸⁹ Thus there was an element of truth, at least for the early part of the new phase of the war, in the statement 'it is not the Communists who will change'.³⁹⁰

The Comintern's lead was ambiguous. The clearest directive -unconditional support for the Soviet war effort-³⁹¹ was strictly adhered to, even before the directives reached Australia. However, Stalin's orders left plenty of room for Communist leaderships to use their own initiative in formulating policy, so that policy would be peculiar to a country's individual conditions. Indeed, Stalin sought a downgrading of the Comintern's role, as he told Dimitrov, 'for now the Comintern must not appear openly'.³⁹² The downgrading of Comintern activity granted relative autonomy to the Comintern's sections and signaled the beginning of the end for the Comintern. The Comintern was not to play a major role in the CPA's affairs for the remainder of the war.

There are two possible reasons for the CPA's retention of its previous policy. Either the CPA was so hardline and rabidly anti-capitalist that its continued opposition to the Allied

³⁸⁶ Gollan notes that the CPA did continue its negative attitude towards the war, though understates its duration, claiming that it supported the war effort after three weeks. Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.102. Davidson merely mentions this in passing, writing that after some initial confusion, the matter was resolved not long after the USSR's entry into the war. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp.81-82. Hasluck records most aptly the CPA's attitude during this early stage of the USSR's war, though his recollection is very brief and oversimplified. Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp.590-591.

³⁸⁷ *Tribune* (Sydney), 30 June 1941, p.1. [emphasis in original]

³⁸⁸ The *Tribune* wrote: 'Communists cannot fulfil their duty to the working class by swinging behind the imperialist enemies of Germany as some naïve people, wishful thinkers, hope, imagine and suggest we will'. *Ibid.*, p.2.

³⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.1.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.8.

³⁹¹ Stalin's words were: 'The parties everywhere will develop a movement in defense of the USSR'. Quoted in Dalhn and Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin*, p.189.

war effort was a matter of principle. Alternatively, past experience had taught the CPA leadership to tread carefully when formulating new policy without the Comintern's guiding hand, as it had already been corrected on a number of occasions by the Comintern following its adoption of an independent position. The latter is more plausible as the CPA would eventually complete a somersault and support the war effort, abandoning any anti-war principles it embraced during the early stages of the new phase of the war.

Nevertheless, the Comintern's directives plainly indicated a change in approach. Stalin demanded the Nazi-Soviet war not be portrayed as a conflict between capitalist and socialist systems, and that Communists 'not raise the question of a socialist revolution'.³⁹³ Such talk would 'impede the international cohesion of all anti-Hitler forces'.³⁹⁴ Instead, Stalin proposed the war be portrayed as a patriotic war against fascist Germany, which would free enslaved Europeans from fascist tyranny.³⁹⁵

The CPA's attitude hardly assisted the 'international cohesion of the anti-Hitler forces'. The problem for the CPA appears that it observed *too* closely the Comintern's directions. For instance, part of the Comintern directive read: '*For the Soviet Union* it is a patriotic war against fascist barbarism'.³⁹⁶ It is possible that the recipient of the instruction interpreted this as only meaning the Soviet Union, not the other Allies. Yet the remainder of the directive, and common sense, should have made it clear that it extended to *all* the Allied states. The Comintern's silence on other issues, such as attitude towards the home country's war effort, was interpreted as meaning the continuation of the previous policy.

Consequently, the CPA began the 'People's War' phase of World War II by opposing one half of the war effort. The CPA opted to remain near its previous anti-war position, only supporting the Soviet war. It is notable that this distinction has not been identified by historians of the CPA. Ironically when the Communist leadership appeared to have

³⁹² *ibid.*

³⁹³ *ibid.*, pp.189-190.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.190.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.189.

finally understood the gyrations of Comintern demands, a drastic change was needed. The change did not materialise. A survey of the Communist press in the months following Barbarossa reveals the Communists were as vitriolic in their attitude towards the ALP, Curtin and Menzies as ever. Instead of seeking to build a popular front, as was desired by Moscow,³⁹⁷ and support the domestic war effort, the CPA renewed its assaults.

The continuation of policy was almost complete. The CPA still demanded a People's government,³⁹⁸ although the Comintern had abandoned that idea in favor of a People's War. The main blows of Communists were still directed against the imperialist class and Labor imperialists, namely Menzies and Curtin, so as to prevent their providing 'aid to Hitler's efforts to destroy socialism and save capital'.³⁹⁹ They still feared the Allies would switch the war against the USSR.⁴⁰⁰ This fear compelled the CPA to make outlandish predictions, such as: 'The Anglo-American imperialists can switch the war even while keeping the façade of real war on German towns, even while allowing supplies to reach Soviet Russia'.⁴⁰¹ These attitudes were out of line with the Comintern.

The attacks on the ALP, and in particular, on Curtin were just as vicious as the preceding months. He was continually labeled a fascist, and at least on one occasion was said to have a 'prostitute relation to Menzies'.⁴⁰² While the CPA attacked Curtin, and called for elements within the ALP to depose him, it asserted that whoever took over as Labor leader and became Prime Minister would only 'expose the bourgeois Labor Party and reveal the "lefts" in the Curtin camp in their true colors'.⁴⁰³ It was a throwback to the language of the Comintern's Third Period.

Cracks were beginning to appear in the CPA's position by late July. A confused policy was emerging, one of support for the Allied war effort, mixed with opposition. It praised

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 190. [emphasis added]

³⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁹⁸ *Tribune* (Sydney), 30 June 1941, p. 8.

³⁹⁹ *ibid.* This statement went against Comintern instructions, as Stalin did not want the war characterised as a capitalist versus socialist war.

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁰² *Tribune* (Sydney), 16 July 1941, p. 3.

the cooperation between the USSR and Britain, calling this ‘a strong international front...between the Soviet Union and those bourgeois forces which also aim to defeat Hitler’.⁴⁰⁴ Yet in the next breath the CPA clarified its position: ‘To put it as some well-meaning, and other ill-meaning, people do, the Communists are now behind the war effort, is to put it too simply’.⁴⁰⁵

The source of the confusion was the growing cooperation between the USSR and Britain. After the signing of the Soviet-British Pact of Mutual Assistance on 12 July, one of the ‘imperialist belligerents’ was now in alliance with the ‘homeland of socialism’. There was no question about whether to support the agreement or not. Indeed, the CPA ‘wholeheartedly welcomed the agreement’.⁴⁰⁶ Yet the CPA had difficulty in accepting the new conditions, which meant having to support the Menzies government and its war effort.⁴⁰⁷ There were still fears ‘of a switch’ as workers were told to be ‘vigilant and determined against a switch’,⁴⁰⁸ and accusations that the British did ‘not want a decisive victory for the Red Army’.⁴⁰⁹ The right to strike was also jealously guarded, a right the CPA would never surrender to Menzies or Curtin.⁴¹⁰ So while wholeheartedly supporting the agreement between the British and the USSR, the CPA still pushed for ‘a mighty People’s movement and a People’s government’ to ‘realise a real People’s program’.⁴¹¹ Hence, there was a resurrection of the ‘war on two fronts’ policy (against Menzies and Hitler) of two years earlier.

The CPGB experienced similar anomalies. The CPGB unanimously supported the Soviet Union’s war effort, as did the CPA. And like the CPA, the CPGB continued its negative

⁴⁰³ *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 August 1941, p.4.

⁴⁰⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 July 1941, p.1.

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.2.

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.3.

⁴⁰⁷ The CPA refused to support Menzies and Churchill on grounds that ‘such a price will not be paid because it would not ensure the victory of the Red Army over the German imperialists and over all imperialists who fear a Soviet victory’. *ibid.*, p.7.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.6.

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.7.

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.8.

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*, p.3.

attitude towards the Churchill government.⁴¹² Thus confusion reigned in the CPGB, as the old 'war on two fronts' policy also made a comeback. When William Gallacher was asked in the House of Commons whether the CPGB would commit its full energies to the war effort, his response was: "I must ask for notice of that question".⁴¹³ The Comintern was unimpressed with the CPGB and soon intervened, for the last time, to secure the victory of the moderate faction, led by Harry Pollitt, over the leftist faction, led by R. Palme Dutt, by the time of the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Mutual Aid Pact. Pollitt and his supporters adopted a pro-Churchill position and remained the hegemonic group until the end of the war.

The CPA did not fall into line as quickly as the CPBG. Whereas the CPGB was able to lend its support to the conservative Churchill government, the CPA never uttered a word of support to the conservative Menzies government. Instead, the CPA line changed as the danger to Australia increased. In August, Japanese expansion into Indo-China was highlighted as a looming danger to Australia.⁴¹⁴ Menzies and Curtin were identified as 'friends of Japanese imperialism' and had to be ousted from the government and the ALP respectively, for the 'immediate security and welfare of the people'.⁴¹⁵ Only a People's government could secure the 'security, liberties and well-being of the masses'.⁴¹⁶ Although the CPA's attitude was beginning to warm up to international realities, it was still cold to domestic cooperation with the political mainstream.

With the CPA tentatively beginning to change its attitude to the war, efforts to restore its legality grew. The NSW Labor council supported a lifting of the ban.⁴¹⁷ The CPA believed that legality could only be won by mass support.⁴¹⁸ It also attempted to

⁴¹² A statement from the CPGB Political Bureau declared that it had 'no confidence in the present government, dominated by Tory friends of fascism and coalition Labour leaders'. This view was dominant on the Political Bureau, but not unanimous. Johnstone, 'The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939-1941', p.42.

⁴¹³ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 8 August 1941, p.1.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.2.

⁴¹⁶ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Tribune* (Sydney), 8 August 1941, p.1.

⁴¹⁸ *Tribune* (Sydney), 18 August 1941, p.8.

emphasize the ‘consistent anti-fascist approach’ it believed it had pursued.⁴¹⁹ In making its case for having legality restored, the CPA was attempting to broadcast to the people that it was becoming the ‘leading war party’, and so legality should be restored to facilitate its role as such.⁴²⁰

However, the CPA could not realistically expect to have its legality restored while it was not fully supporting the domestic war effort. By late August and early September, the CPA had moderated its attitude to the Allied war effort due to a discernable increase in Allied support to the Soviet Union.⁴²¹ However, it still attacked imaginary fifth columns in the ALP and other ‘Friends of Hitler’.⁴²² When the newly formed government of Arthur Fadden assumed office following the demise of the Menzies government,⁴²³ it was treated just as harshly as its predecessor.

The Atlantic Charter was also criticized. It was compared to Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen points and condemned as a ‘flop’.⁴²⁴ The CPA, in criticizing the Atlantic meeting, implied that it was a waste of time, and that increased bombing of German targets, and greater supply of war materials to Russia, were more urgent.⁴²⁵ Its evaluation of the Atlantic Charter contradicted the Comintern’s directives. The CPA articulated its view that the Charter was an imperialist creation and would only serve imperialist ends,⁴²⁶ thereby criticizing the USSR’s ally Britain. The CPA also prophesized the rising of the masses towards socialism after their liberation from Nazi tyranny, claiming that it was

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴²⁰ ‘The Communist Party demands the restoration of its legal position and its printing presses in order that it can use every ounce of energy at its disposal to fulfill the Anglo-Soviet pact and strive for the defeat of Hitlerite Germany’. The priority was still the USSR. See McShane, ‘For A People’s War and the Defeat of Fascism’, *The Communist Review*, No. 6, September 1941, p.14.

⁴²¹ The official Soviet government newspaper *Pravda* and the Red Army organ *Red Star* were the barometers used by the CPA to gauge the extent of tangible, material Allied aid to the USSR. See *Tribune* (Sydney), 28 August 1941.

⁴²² *ibid.*, p.8.

⁴²³ The CPA ‘did not regret his [Menzies] going’ upon the news of the demise of the Menzies government. Reflective of the confusion within the CPA, it then demanded the ALP stop ‘shillyshallying’ [sic] and ‘take office in the Federal Parliament’, after criticizing the ALP for not driving out the Menzies government sooner. ‘The Passing of Prime Minister Menzies: Labor’s Duty’, *The Communist Review*, No. 6, September 1941, p.3.

⁴²⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 7 September 1941, p.3.

⁴²⁵ *ibid.* It also urged workers to ‘increase their pressure for more aid in every way to ensure victory for the Red Army’. G.S., ‘The Atlantic Meeting’, *The Communist Review*, No. 6, September 1941, p.6.

then ‘the duty of the workers to keep the hands of the imperialists off the movements for national freedom’.⁴²⁷ Stalin, and the Comintern’s directive, made strict demands that no mention of socialist revolution be made about the war, an instruction that conflicted with an ingrained habit the CPA’s propaganda making.⁴²⁸

The CPA fell into line when Curtin became Prime Minister in October. The CPA criticized Curtin until he assumed office, its last allegation accusing him of splitting the Labor Movement by ‘imposing bans on ALP members from associating with Soviet aid organisations’.⁴²⁹ It initially viewed the Curtin government as the lesser of two evils.⁴³⁰ It was ‘the entry of the Soviet Union into the war...[that had] made a new attitude to the Labor government possible’.⁴³¹ If Labor had assumed office before the entry of the USSR into the war, ‘the revolutionary workers could do no other than strenuously oppose it’.⁴³² The CPA called for unity to defeat Hitler, ‘between the working class and all sections of the people who see the common danger and refuse to allow other issues to stand in the way of united action’.⁴³³ While the Curtin government was not a People’s government, ‘a broad People’s movement can support the Curtin government’.⁴³⁴ Thus, the CPA pledged its support to Curtin ‘for all appropriate actions’ and ‘a maximum, all-in, anti-fascist, war effort’.⁴³⁵ It is, however, unclear whether the Comintern or the CPA itself was responsible for this shift.⁴³⁶ The Comintern did not, or could not, force the CPA to change its tune towards the Menzies government, and there is no reason why Moscow would desire a change when Curtin became Prime Minister.

⁴²⁶ *ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *ibid.*, p.4.

⁴²⁸ The CPA often used Marxist dogma about class warfare. For example, Yelnia wrote: ‘Class struggle is the essence of the war against German Fascism’. Yelnia, *Destroy Hitlerism!*, Sydney, Spartacus Press, 1941, p.4. It was precisely such rhetoric that Stalin sought to end.

⁴²⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 7 October 1941, p.4. This criticism was also extended to the Executive of the ALP in Victoria, where it was denounced ‘as part of Hitler’s fifth column...they are trying to prevent MPs and others from associating with friendship organisation’. G.S., ‘The Atlantic Meeting’, p.20.

⁴³⁰ ‘The Communists welcome this change, not because the Labor Party has been transformed, but because its programme and policy are progressive in the existing political situation and by comparison with the policies of Menzies and Fadden’. McShane, ‘The Labor Party in Office’, *The Communist Review*, No.7, November 1941, p.7.

⁴³¹ *ibid.*

⁴³² *ibid.*

⁴³³ *Tribune* (Sydney), 7 October 1941, p.5.

⁴³⁴ McShane, ‘The Labor Party in Office’, p.9.

⁴³⁵ *Tribune* (Sydney), 17 October 1941, p.5.

The CPA also made a united front proposal,⁴³⁷ with a number of conditions. These concerned workers receiving more power in the factory, an investigation into profiteering, an improvement in the standard of living and price controls.⁴³⁸ The other conditions intended to further the CPA's agenda. They included restoration of the CPA's legality and its press, and diplomatic representation with the USSR.⁴³⁹ Curtin dismissed these demands as 'blackmail',⁴⁴⁰ and the united front did not materialise.

The change in attitude was firmly consolidated by events in Japan. With the change of Japanese government, the CPA warned of 'imminent action by the Japanese military fascists'.⁴⁴¹ The significance of the situation was not lost on the CPA as it promised Curtin:

Full support for the most energetic measures to place the people in readiness for defence on a full war footing in order that our country may play its part in the struggle to smash the Axis...⁴⁴²

By November, the CPA had lost all sense of anti-war principles. In fact, it was so pro-war that it urged 'the people of the USA...to deal a mortal blow at the Axis, by entering the war of freedom and justice'.⁴⁴³ No longer was it abhorrent to witness the extension of the imperialist war, it now wanted to embroil as many nations as possible on its own side. The war was now unequivocally deemed a People's war, 'the sacred war of independence and freedom'.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁶ Inevitably the answer will be found in the Comintern archives in Moscow.

⁴³⁷ A united front was now possible from above and below, because 'reformism...[was playing]...a progressive role'. McShane, 'The Labor Party in Office', p.9.

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, pp.7-8.

⁴³⁹ *ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in Johnston, 'The Communist Party and Labour Unity, 1939-1945', p.81.

⁴⁴¹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1941, p.1.

⁴⁴² *ibid.*

⁴⁴³ *ibid.*, p.1 and 8. On another occasion, the CPA stated: 'The moment for American entry into the war also has arrived'. Editorial, 'Britain and the US Must Act', *The Communist Review*, No. 7, November 1941, p.3.

⁴⁴⁴ Editorial, 'Britain and the US Must Act', p.3.

This new period of support also brought confusion. The CPA vehemently attacked the 'subversive writings and reprints' of the *Bulletin*, accusing it of being 'pro-Hitler, pro-Musso and anti-working class'⁴⁴⁵ and demanded restrictions against it.⁴⁴⁶ Although this smacked in the face of the democratic goals that it claimed to be fighting for, and using as a justification to get the Communist press restored,⁴⁴⁷ it is a clear illustration of how the CPA had shifted to a more patriotic position.⁴⁴⁸ The release of two Communists, Horace Ratliff and Max Thomas, from months of internment following demonstrations, campaigns, petitions and a hunger strike, indicated to the CPA Curtin's desire to wage 'an anti-fascist war in a democratic manner'.⁴⁴⁹ The final piece in the jigsaw for a full, democratic home front was the restoration of the CPA's legality, yet this was not forthcoming.⁴⁵⁰

The Japanese, and US, entry into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor brought the CPA to the point of no return. It was Pearl Harbor that cemented the CPA's position as a 'leading war party'. The CPA plainly and fully comprehended the danger and imminence of the Japanese threat. It now acknowledged that there could not be a 'switch' against the USSR.⁴⁵¹ Its propaganda for the remainder of the war had a definite tone of urgency and fierce commitment, which was lacking previously. As a result of the Japanese entry into the war, the CPA demanded 'more real efforts toward a full war mobilisation' and an

⁴⁴⁵ By anti-working class the CPA means anti-Communist Party.

⁴⁴⁶ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1941, p.2.

⁴⁴⁷ The CPA bemoaned the injustice of having its publications outlawed, while 'pro-Hitler rags' were permitted. It demanded that all anti-fascist papers, namely the Communist press, be restored in keeping with the democratic spirit of the new character of the war. See *ibid*.

⁴⁴⁸ The CPA also warned against domestic enemies of the USSR and fascists, who were 'endangering Anglo-Soviet relations and sabotaging the struggle against German Fascism'. There was to be no compromise with them, as they all had to be rooted out. Yelina, *Destroy Hitlerism!*, p.5. It is ironic that the CPA was now accusing its enemies of committing crimes that the CPA was previously accused of committing.

⁴⁴⁹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1941, p.2. The internment of Ratliff and Thomas in June 1941 was previously used as an example of the undemocratic character of the war. See Australian Civil Rights Defence League, *The Case of Ratliff and Thomas: An Exposure and A Challenge*, Sydney, The Australian Civil Rights Defence League, 1941, for an account of the Ratliff and Thomas internment and a contemporaneous example of the broad based campaign for their release. See also Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp.609-612, for an account of the events surrounding Ratliff and Thomas.

⁴⁵⁰ Even though legality was not restored, the CPA stated 'our contribution will continue whether present restrictions on our organisation are removed or not'. G.S., 'For Victory, Legalise Communist Party', *The Communist Review*, No. 7, November 1941, p.10.

⁴⁵¹ *Tribune* (Sydney), 12 December 1941, p.1.

increase in support for the Curtin government.⁴⁵² Discipline and support for the government were essential to secure the defeat of the Axis.⁴⁵³ The CPA also changed its view that the Nazi-Soviet war was distinct from the rest of the war. The war was now 'one world war between the forces of blackest reaction and the forces of progress'.⁴⁵⁴

The CPA defended the USSR's neutrality on the Pacific front. It reminded the public that the USSR was already the main battlefield,⁴⁵⁵ and that opening a new front would severely weaken the USSR. Instead, it demanded the Western Allies open a second front against Hitler, thereby securing Hitler's defeat quickly, freeing up sufficient forces to then defeat Japan,⁴⁵⁶ thus shortening the 'endless agony of the nations'.⁴⁵⁷ This was wholehearted endorsement for the 'beat Hitler first' strategy adopted by the Allies.

The clamorous demand for a second front in Europe best demonstrated how the CPA was attempting to aid the USSR.⁴⁵⁸ The urgency for the opening of a second front was such that whoever opposed it was 'doing the work of Hitler'.⁴⁵⁹ By early 1942, the Soviets had pushed the Germans back from the gates of Moscow. Stalin, and the CPA, believed that a second front for Hitler could be created in 1942, and would consequentially signal his demise.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵² *ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Tribune* (Sydney), 19 December 1941, p.1. But the CPA warned against dictatorship.

⁴⁵⁴ *Tribune* (Sydney), 12 December 1941, p.1.

⁴⁵⁵ *Tribune* (Sydney), 19 December 1941, p.1.

⁴⁵⁶ *Tribune* (Sydney), 12 December 1941, p.4.

⁴⁵⁷ Editorial, 'Britain and the US Must Act', p.3.

⁴⁵⁸ The demand for a second front and the turn in support of the war, due to the entrance of the USSR, was not made without criticism from cynical contemporaries. See Michael Lamb, *Red Glows the Dawn: A History of the Australian Communist Party*, Melbourne, M. Lamb, 1942, for a critical contemporaneous account of the CPA's support for the war and its campaign for a second front.

⁴⁵⁹ Yelnia, *Destroy Hitlerism!*, p.5. Some Communists opposed the opening of a second front because they believed the Allies would suppress any workers revolt that might have occurred. The CPA dismissed these ideas.

⁴⁶⁰ According to the CPA, the Russian victory at the gates of Moscow opened 'up the possibility of a comparatively rapid Allied victory'. McShane, 'Bring the Fascist Beast to Bay', *The Communist Review*, No. 8, January 1942, p.3. J.B. Miles was also talking up the Allies chances of victory in 1942. See J.B. Miles, *Full Report of Speech By J.B. Miles, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia: Delivered at and Broadcast from a Mighty Demonstration at Sydney Town Hall on June 22, 1942, to Celebrate the First Anniversary of the Soviet Union's Fight for Democracy*, Sydney, Mastercraft Print, 1942, p.1.

If the imperialist phase of the war saw the CPA return to Third Period tactics, then the People's war phase saw a return to the pre-war Popular Front era. The broadest possible united front was demanded. Tactics from the pre-war period, such as the united front with the ALP from above and below, was also revived. Hence, unity with the ALP was essential for national unity.⁴⁶¹ Reminiscent of the pre-war era, the CPA downplayed revolution in favor of securing the cooperation of as many sections of society as possible. The defence of the state was no longer contingent upon socialist reforms. It was now simply defence of the existing, capitalist, state.

This new united front was to be the backbone of Australia's war effort. As the war was defined a People's war, it had to be fought in the interests of the people. Profiteering had to be controlled, while the rich had to bear the burden of the financial cost of the war.⁴⁶² Australia's resources had to be 'fully mobilised and sent into action with all speed'.⁴⁶³ This included the work of Communists in the military. It was the duty of Communists in the military to get 'rid of antiquated methods of training, incompetence, inefficiency, and undemocratic methods on the part of sections of the commanding staff'.⁴⁶⁴

The CPA's greatest contribution to the domestic war effort was in the field of production. Production, especially coal, was critical for victory over the Axis.⁴⁶⁵ The CPA demanded a rapid increase in war production,⁴⁶⁶ and the transfer of workers from non-essential and luxury industries to war industries.⁴⁶⁷ It also urged the government to spend more on the war, as only twenty percent of national income was devoted to the war, whereas Britain was devoting fifty percent.⁴⁶⁸ It proposed that worker's committees be set up in factories:

⁴⁶¹ Yelina, *Destroy Hitlerism!*, p.9.

⁴⁶² McShane, 'Bring the Fascist Beast to Bay', p.5.

⁴⁶³ Political Report to Conference of Party Organisations in Victoria, 'Some Notes on the Communist Party in a Just War', *The Communist Review*, No. 8, January 1942, p.7.

⁴⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁶⁵ See Len Fox, *Coal for the Engines of War!*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1942, for CPA's view on the role of coal miners in securing an Australian victory.

⁴⁶⁶ R.D., 'Production for Victory', *The Communist Review*, No. 8, January 1941, p.12.

⁴⁶⁷ Communist Party of Australia, *Aussies Can Do The Job!: Communist Statement*, Richmond, Richmond Chronicle, 1942, p.2.

⁴⁶⁸ R.D., 'Production for Victory', p.12.

To consult regularly with the management in all questions relating to production, to stepping up production and on wages and conditions or any matter that is causing dissatisfaction among the workers and slowing up production.⁴⁶⁹

The improvement of wages and conditions was to be tied to any increase in production. As the CPA put it: 'The prospect of increased wages can be an additional incentive to the workers to increase production'.⁴⁷⁰ It then urged Communists to understand this principle before they campaigned for an increase in wages. This 'pro-management' attitude was a departure from the CPA's fundamental principles and was unimaginable a few months earlier, yet the CPA was forcing it upon its members.

The CPA also compromised on its anti-colonial position. The CPA was always a very committed anti-colonial party. However, for the duration of the war, colonised people were supposed to 'understand the need for the immediate building of a great united front for the defeat of Hitler'.⁴⁷¹ Thus the CPA was, in effect, calling for the postponement of independence for the colonised world until after the war.

Although the CPA compromised some of its fundamental principles, its *policies* remained consistent after 1942. Its adulation for the USSR and Stalin never diminished. The Soviet government was the yardstick by which to compare other governments. The perceived military successes of the Soviets before Stalingrad were seized upon as indicating that Australia's military commanders were out of touch with the realities of modern warfare and were in need of replacement.⁴⁷² This deficiency was made more acute because 'Australia is... placed in jeopardy, is in danger, for the first time since white man came to this continent, of a large scale invasion'.⁴⁷³ However, 'Australia, with the aid of her

⁴⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁷¹ Communist Party of Great Britain, 'The War and the Colonial Peoples', *The Communist Review*, No. 8, January 1941, p. 17.

⁴⁷² 'We want to be rid of those blundering conservative militarists who lack ability and audacity and who are losing the war for us. We want a new virile leadership that will bring administrative efficiency into the existing chaos, a leadership determined to attack the enemy whenever and wherever the opportunity occurs'. R.D., 'Some Problems of Australian Defence', *The Communist Review*, No. 9, April 1942, p. 17.

⁴⁷³ Editorial, 'Australia Can Smash the Japanese Invaders', *The Communist Review*, No. 10, May 1942, p. 1.

allies, can smash the Japanese invaders', because Australia had a united people, 'except for a few traitors, such as the 'Australia First' gang and a few big war profiteers'.⁴⁷⁴

The CPA exaggerated any divisions within Australia. It overstated the influence of fascism, and support for Japan, within Australia. It also mistook some sections of the ALP, both rightwing and leftwing, for fifth columnists.⁴⁷⁵ Indeed, the CPA continued its attacks against elements within the ALP even after Curtin took office. The rightwing was accused of splitting the Labor Movement and dividing the nation. 'National unity can be secured only in the struggle against them [the rightwing of the ALP], in pursuing a consistent anti-fascist policy'.⁴⁷⁶ This faction of the ALP was considered a source of weakness in the Labor Movement.⁴⁷⁷ When C.G. Fallon attacked the USSR's commitment to the war, the CPA was swift to respond. The CPA claimed that it was 'not our job, as Australians, to criticize our Allies'.⁴⁷⁸ And as Fallon was supposedly weakening Allied unity, he was doing the work of Hitler.⁴⁷⁹

The attitude to the ALP rightwing was contrasted by the attitude towards the ALP's leftwing. The CPA pledged to defend the ALP's leftwing from 'attacks and provocation'. Hence, by defending E.J. Ward (a Labor government Minister), 'we defend the Labor Government'.⁴⁸⁰ The CPA would further defend the Labor Government by building a 'great National Front' that would rally around the government and be reflective of the anti-fascist determination of the people.⁴⁸¹

The Communist defence policy was constantly promoted. Although the CPA supported the Australian military, its most pressing demand was to prepare Australians for guerilla

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁵ The CPA warned against fifth columnists in all spheres of society: 'They lurk in the Labor Movement, in some so called places of learning, in some managerial positions, and in the Tory wing of the political parties of the capitalist class'. See Miles, *Full Report of Speech By J.B. Miles*, p.6.

⁴⁷⁶ R.D., 'The Labor Government', *The Communist Review*, No. 10, May 1942, p.5.

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ Communist Party of Australia, *Fallon: Irresponsible or Malicious?*, Richmond, Richmond Chronicle, 1942, p.6. However, the CPA itself occasionally criticized some of Australia's allies.

⁴⁷⁹ As the CPA put it, 'ANYONE WHO ATTEMPTS TO WEAKEN OR DISRUPT THIS FRONT IS A FRIEND OF THE AXIS AND AN ENEMY OF AUSTRALIA'. *ibid.*, p.5. [emphasis in original]

⁴⁸⁰ R.D., 'What Kind of National Government?', *The Communist Review*, No.11, June 1942, p.4.

⁴⁸¹ *ibid.*

warfare. Australians were to draw inspiration from the various underground resistance movements operating behind German lines.⁴⁸² Australians were believed to be equal to the task, as guerilla warfare was 'part of our British tradition'.⁴⁸³ The Soviet Union's preparations for guerilla warfare were praised and demands were made to make similar preparations in Australia.⁴⁸⁴ But Australia's leaders had to provide 'ringing SINCERITY in the whole of our war effort',⁴⁸⁵ by mobilising Australia's full resources.⁴⁸⁶

The CPA's 'People's defence plan' rested on a number of points. First, it proposed the creation of a decentralised guerilla warfare organisation in every street around Australia, with leaders elected for every street, suburb, region etc. until a national leadership was elected.⁴⁸⁷ Second, the full mobilisation of Australia's resources and better cooperation between management and workers.⁴⁸⁸ Third, the 'purging of blimps and brass hats of the High Command'.⁴⁸⁹ Fourth, better civilian Air Raid Protection, the expansion of the Volunteer Defence Corps and the arming of the workers. Fifth, the application of a scorched earth policy.⁴⁹⁰ Sixth, the opening of a second European front.⁴⁹¹

The signing of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance in mid-1942 was interpreted as adding to the just character of the war. The treaty was praised as:

⁴⁸² The Yugoslavs, Russians and Chinese were highlighted as examples worth emulating. See Rupert Lockwood, *Guerilla!*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1942, pp.3-15.

⁴⁸³ *ibid.*, p.6. 'Australians with their record of militant protest against tyranny, their love of country, their fierce pride and independent spirit, plus their bushcraft, should make guerillas equal to, if not better than, the famous guerillas of other lands'. p.6.

⁴⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, pp.7-15. Among the proposed measures was the training of children in the handling of arms.

⁴⁸⁵ Communist Party of Australia, *They Shall Not Pass: A Preliminary Plan For A People's Defence*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1942, p.4. [emphasis in original]

⁴⁸⁶ Communists became super-patriots on issues concerning organisation of manpower. 'It is the task of all truly patriotic organisations to assist in every possible way a total mobilisation of the huge war potential that at present remains comparatively untapped in the People'. *ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁸⁷ It was the responsibility of this leadership to train and coordinate the people. See Communist Party of Australia, *They Shall Not Pass*, pp.8-15 for the full list. There were fifteen points altogether.

⁴⁸⁸ In the event of invasion, the CPA recommended war industries be moved away from coastal areas, to more secure, inland locations. The Russians also used this measure. *ibid.*, p.15.

⁴⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.11. J.D. Blake would later call some military officers 'pleasure seekers'. J.D. Blake, *Communist Plan Victory: Report Delivered By J.D. Blake to the State Conference (Victoria)*, Communist Party of Australia, February 12-15, 1943, Melbourne, Communist Party of Australia, 1943, p.29.

⁴⁹⁰ The CPA's enthusiasm for the scorched earth policy, and a chance to attack capitalists, appeared to find no bounds: 'Property-loving capitalists who don't want to see their property destroyed must be swept aside and the scorched earth policy applied ruthlessly'. Dixon, *Knock Out Japan!*, p.7.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.14. Australians were also warned to 'watch for Quislings' and 'Red Baiters'.

A document of a new type. This treaty breathes a new spirit; that of a just war, a People's war, a war of liberation. It is a People's treaty arising from a People's war.⁴⁹²

The treaty demonstrated to the CPA that the British were willing to fight until victory, as a clause in the treaty made impossible a peace with Hitler unless both allies agreed to it.⁴⁹³ The treaty also ensured the non-imperialist and democratic character of the war as it excluded annexation of territory and guaranteed the independence of small nations.⁴⁹⁴ The treaty, along with the Atlantic Charter, to which the Communists had a change of heart, assured the CPA that peace would be just and lasting.⁴⁹⁵

With the signing of the treaty, the clamor for a European second front intensified. The British promised Stalin a second front in 1942,⁴⁹⁶ but it did not materialise.⁴⁹⁷ The CPA, until D-day, never relented its campaign for a second front.⁴⁹⁸ The second front was the swiftest way to defeat the Japanese, and would have more quickly heralded the beginning of the just peace promised in the Anglo-Soviet treaty. The CPA alluded to the possibility that the USSR was 'the only fighter on our side',⁴⁹⁹ as it was forced to do all the fighting against the Germans, while demands were made for it to open a Pacific front.⁵⁰⁰ Those Australians that were more concerned with the Pacific war were accused of 'doing the

⁴⁹² Essel, 'A New Kind of Treaty Has Been Signed', *The Communist Review*, No. 12, July 1942, p.1.

⁴⁹³ *United For Victory: The Anglo-Soviet Treaty 1942*, Melbourne, Australia-Soviet Friendship League, 1942, p.4. 'Any possibility of a negotiated peace by either side is ruled out'.

⁴⁹⁴ Essel, 'A New Kind of Treaty Has Been Signed', p.1. See also Miles, *Full Report of Speech By J.B. Miles*, pp.8-10.

⁴⁹⁵ *United For Victory*, p.12. The treaty made provision for post-war cooperation in reconstruction and security for twenty years.

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.3. The CPA also believed that 1942 would see the opening of a second front.

⁴⁹⁷ Churchill described his meeting with Stalin and Molotov, where he informed them that no second front would be opened in 1942, as 'extremely unpleasant'. Quoted in Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.122.

⁴⁹⁸ Indeed, Blake said 'we will ease up on this campaign for the second front only when the armed forces of America and Britain are actually fighting on European soil'. J.D. Blake, *Communist Plan Victory*, p.8.

⁴⁹⁹ Communist Party of Australia, *Fallon: Irresponsible or Malicious?*, p.3.

⁵⁰⁰ The CPA argued that the USSR was rendering immeasurable assistance to Australia in the Pacific war. Although the USSR was not in the war, it had tied down twenty-five to thirty Japanese divisions on the Soviet-Japanese/Manchurian frontier, by placing large numbers of Red Army troops on the border. The Japanese were forced to divert these divisions to watch the Soviets, and thus spared Australia having to deal with them. See *ibid.*, p.4.

work of Hitler'.⁵⁰¹ Australia would simply have to hold the line until the Allies defeated Germany, and then turned their attention to Japan.⁵⁰² In advocating such a policy, different from that advocated by other patriotic organisations around Australia, the CPA remained 'disloyal'. It was more concerned with the USSR's wellbeing than the security of Australia. However, this was blurred due to both sides being allies during a time of war. Hence the original purpose of the CPA's proscription –preventing its advocating policies favorable to a potentially hostile foreign power- was no longer a factor, as the international situation had fundamentally changed from two years earlier.

The CPA's determination to fight was embodied in its support of conscription. It supported both military and economic conscription. It demanded 'every able-bodied man, women and youth to be organised for war service in the armed forces, production and civil defence. No evasions to be tolerated'.⁵⁰³ The purpose of this training was to prepare the people for 'anti-invasion warfare, street fighting and guerilla warfare'.⁵⁰⁴ Any opposition to conscription was ruthlessly dealt with. For instance, Maurice Blackburn, a man the CPA would normally praise, was attacked:

That hopelessly befogged 'Liberal', who even wants 'liberty' for fascists, Maurice Blackburn... [has]...elevated anti-conscription into a fetish and a dogma.⁵⁰⁵

By the end of 1942, the CPA had been enthusiastically supporting the Curtin government and its initiatives for over a year. It rendered its fullest cooperation for an increase in war production and industrial harmony. It was in the forefront of efforts to win the war.

⁵⁰¹ R.D., 'The Battle For Australia', *The Communist Review*, No. 15, October 1942, p.4.

⁵⁰² The CPA still had some criticism of the Allies: '...For Britain and America the argument of preoccupation in the fight against Hitler cannot be used to excuse the failure on their part to devote powerful military forces to the war against Japan in the Pacific'. Communist Party of Australia, *Smash Japan!*, Melbourne, International Bookshop, 1942, p.15. The CPA believed at the start of 1942, that Australia would have to hold the line for nine to twelve months. Dixon, *Knock Out Japan!*, p.3.

⁵⁰³ Communist Party of Australia, *Aussies Can Do The Job!*, p.2. The CPA departed from its previous attitude of doggedly defending the rights of conscientious objectors from conscription.

⁵⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.4.

⁵⁰⁵ Essel, 'Anti-Conscription- Yesterday and Today', *The Communist Review*, No. 17, December 1942, p.2. Blackburn was also branded a reactionary because he was thought to be hampering the war effort. Blake, *Communist Plan Victory*, p.17.

But the CPA was still an illegal organisation. Although it was operating openly for almost a year, and was barely effected by the ban,⁵⁰⁶ it still sought a restoration of its legality. Sharkey explained:

The Communists want a legal status in order that, free and unhampered, we can take our part in the national effort to defend Australia's independence and contribute our full share towards the defeat of the Axis tyrants.⁵⁰⁷

Restoration of legality was deemed the last component in the full restoration of Australian democracy,⁵⁰⁸ after Menzies had attempted to destroy it (so the CPA believed). The lifting of the ban would also extend to all the CPA's auxiliary organisations. The League of Young Democrats (LYD) promised to increase production and strengthen the military if legality were restored.⁵⁰⁹

The lifting of the ban came on 18 December 1942. Division of opinion in the ALP was a major reason for the belated restoration of legality.⁵¹⁰ The united front approach in 1941, with one of the conditions being lifting of the ban on the CPA, was rejected as 'blackmail' by Curtin. In December 1942, the CPA was asked to assist in war production in exchange for the restoration of legality.⁵¹¹ The CPA accepted this offer.⁵¹² The

⁵⁰⁶ The CPA managed to obtain paper for its banned publications, known leaders were able to receive travel permits and J.B Miles was permitted to make a speech from the platform at the Sydney Town Hall. Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.591.

⁵⁰⁷ L.L. Sharkey, *For National Unity and Victory Over Fascists: Lift Communist Party Ban*, Sydney, Legal Rights Committee, 1942, p.3.

⁵⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.5.

⁵⁰⁹ See K.C. Miller, *Lift the Ban from the LYD: To Smash Hitler Fascism*, Melbourne, K.C. Miller, 1942, pp.1-2, for the LYD's promised contribution to the war effort.

⁵¹⁰ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.591.

⁵¹¹ Johnston, 'The Communist Party and Labour Unity, 1939-1945', p.81.

⁵¹² The CPA's previous demands were not made again largely due to their already being a reality. Soviet-Australian diplomatic relations were opened by December 1942, price controls were in place, and the standard of living was not falling. The only demand left was the restoration of legality to the CPA.

government emphasized that it did not lift the ban out of any civil libertarian considerations, and would re-impose the ban if the CPA breached its promise.⁵¹³

The lifting of the ban permitted the CPA to hold its party conferences. The Victorian State Conference was held in February 1943. J.D. Blake confirmed the Victorian CPA's support for the war,⁵¹⁴ and called for increased aid to the USSR and China. The Pacific front would have to wait until the Axis was beaten in Europe.⁵¹⁵ The workers were also asked to make sacrifices to guarantee the greatest production and secure victory.⁵¹⁶ Unity of all people around the Curtin government was crucial,⁵¹⁷ while the CPA also attacked anyone that opposed Curtin.⁵¹⁸ It even publicly postponed its drive for socialism.⁵¹⁹ The National Conference, held in March, made the same commitments as the Victorian Conference. The only addition was the greater emphasis on the united front, and the notable exhumation of pre-war united front doctrines and slogans.⁵²⁰ Both the congresses confirmed the CPA's commitment to the Curtin government, and to see it returned in the 1943 elections.⁵²¹

⁵¹³ Officially, the government lifted the ban after it had received from the CPA, 'satisfactory undertakings guaranteeing assistance in war production and in preventing stoppages and absenteeism'. Quoted in Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p.591.

⁵¹⁴ Such was the complete about face to the war, that Blake told Communists: 'The Communist soldier must be the best and most efficient soldier; he must be an example to his mates; and let it be understood that a bad soldier is a poor communist'. J.D. Blake, *Communist Plan Victory*, p.30.

⁵¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 15. Blake stated that the workers had to sacrifice some of their traditional rights, but also that the rights and liberties of the workers had improved under the Labor government. p. 16.

⁵¹⁷ *ibid.*, 18. The CPA called for better unity between the workers and farmers, 'for a stronger war effort'. pp.18-20. See also Communist Party of Australia, *A Communist Policy for Farmers: For the Defeat of Fascism*, Melbourne, Communist Party of Australia, 1943, for the CPA's policies for farmers.

⁵¹⁸ Menzies was accused of not concerning himself with Australia's war effort. *ibid.*, p.21. The CPA had previously accused Menzies of treason. Dublin, 'Envoy to Moscow: Australia "Grows Up"', *The Communist Review*, No. 16, November 1942, p. 1.

⁵¹⁹ 'It is clear that socialism in Australia cannot become a practical issue until world fascism is destroyed'. J.D. Blake, *Communist Plan Victory*, p.34. This attitude was consistent with the Comintern's instructions.

⁵²⁰ The CPA recalled Dimitrov's speech at the seventh Comintern congress, restoring the link between fascism, finance capital and war. See Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, *A United Working Class and a National Front for Victory: Resolution, 13th Congress, Communist Party of Australia, March, 1943*, Sydney, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, 1943, pp.3-5.

⁵²¹ The CPA's slogan was: 'Everything for the victory of democracy and the return of the Labor Government'. J.D. Blake, *Communist Plan Victory*, p.23. See also *The Communists: What Do They Want? Campaign Manifesto for E.A.H. Laurie*, Camberwell, Kooyong Communist Campaign Committee, Communist Party of Australia, 1943, for the CPA's election campaign and the policies it was promoting.

The CPA's freedom was further increased by the Comintern's dissolution in June 1943. Stalin had long contemplated dissolving the Comintern.⁵²² He had considered abolishing it in April 1941, 'to preserve friendly relations with Hitlerite Germany'.⁵²³ 1943 presented a better opportunity. The Comintern was starved of funds⁵²⁴ and became relatively inactive, at least for the CPA, after Barbarossa. The Communist Parties had established their pro-war positions without much guidance from Moscow, and were following, by 1943, the precise line Stalin had desired. Indeed, Stalin believed that Communist Parties would follow the USSR's lead without the Comintern's assistance and that, if anything, the Comintern was hampering their independent development.⁵²⁵ Thus, Stalin saw the Comintern's dissolution as 'proper and timely because it facilitates the organisation of the common onslaught of all freedom-loving nations'.⁵²⁶ The Comintern's dissolution would end the lies spread by the Nazis that Communist Parties were controlled from abroad,⁵²⁷ and would facilitate the independent development of Communism.

Whether Stalin was sincere in allowing Communist Parties to develop independently remains in doubt. What is certain is that Stalin rushed through the Comintern's dissolution,⁵²⁸ perhaps to allay the fears of the West. It is also clear that Moscow retained some control over International Communism through a new, lesser-known organisation, the Department of International Information.⁵²⁹ With the abolition of the Comintern, the CPA was freed of a burden that presented it officially as a tool of Soviet foreign policy, and forced it into sudden policy changes. The reality was different. Although it had

⁵²² Dallin and Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin*, p.252.

⁵²³ McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, p.206.

⁵²⁴ See Dallin and Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin*, pp.195-197, for Dimitrov's pleas to Stalin to increase the Comintern's budget to support its basic services, for example, its telegraph service.

⁵²⁵ *ibid.*, pp.227-228.

⁵²⁶ Quoted in Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents, Volume III, 1929-1943*, London, Oxford University Press, 1965, p.476.

⁵²⁷ *ibid.*, pp.476-477.

⁵²⁸ Dallin and Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin*, pp.252-253. The Comintern's sections had to approve its dissolution, though Stalin told Dimitrov, 'We ought to rush with the publication [of the resolution to dissolve the Comintern]'. p.253. The CPA interpreted the dissolution of the Comintern as meaning a redoubling of efforts to overcome all divisions in the Labor Movement. R. Dixon, 'The United Front and Labor Reactionaries', *The Communist Review*, No. 22, June 1943, p.67.

⁵²⁹ The Department of International Information was staffed by former Comintern functionaries and its role was not too dissimilar from that of the Comintern. Dallin and Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin*, p.254.

officially gained independence from Moscow, the CPA was still effectively influenced by Moscow, either through the Department of International Information, or its adherence to Soviet policy reported through the Soviet media. Hence, the CPA never managed to shrug off Moscow's guiding hand.

Conclusion

The CPA completed the war without major policy changes. It saw an increase in its membership,⁵³⁰ as well as witnessing a rise in its popularity and prestige. Its emphatic pro-war stance, coupled with its ties to the Soviet Union, and the great outpouring of support to the Soviets as a result of their heroic struggle, was the deciding factor. As Ted Hill noted: 'The Communist Party had suffered in its following of the Soviet Union in the twenties and thirties, but now the very cause of its unpopularity turned into the cause of a great rise in popularity'.⁵³¹

The post-war era presented the CPA with a fresh start. However, the scourge that handicapped the CPA during the early phases of the war, its subservience to Moscow, returned to haunt it during the Cold War. The CPA could not consolidate its popularity in the post-war era, and instead succumbed to the allure of Moscow and high Stalinism. The Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) would have precisely the same impact its predecessor, the Comintern, did. The CPA would willingly adopt its policies, no matter how unpopular, in the belief that it was furthering Communism. This relationship would eventually lead the CPA to political obscurity.

It was, however, another event originating during the war, which spelt the end for the CPA's post-war ambitions. That was the revelation of espionage.⁵³² Ironically, Communist espionage did not occur during, or before, the CPA's period of illegality. Indeed, none of the feared subversive activities eventuated during illegality. Espionage occurred after the ban had been lifted, when the CPA was growing in stature.⁵³³ However, the period of illegality was of fundamental importance to espionage, as it laid

⁵³⁰ The CPA's membership rose from about 4,000 members before illegality, to 23,000 members in 1944. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp.82-83. It is worth noting that a substantial portion of these new members were from the NSW State Labor Party, after it amalgamated with the CPA in 1944.

⁵³¹ Hill, *Communism and Australia*, p.108.

⁵³² The deciphering of Soviet intelligence cables, known as project Venona, revealed an extensive system of Soviet spies in Western governments. For a discussion of Venona see Haynes and Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*.

the foundations for a clandestine apparatus that could perfectly facilitate espionage activity. Adding to the irony, Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister who proscribed the CPA, was also Prime Minister during the revelation of Communist espionage.

This thesis has argued, contrary to the historiographical consensus, that the period of illegality was a result of the CPA's subservience to the Comintern. The CPA had a history of obeying the Comintern's orders. It had willingly adopted the united front tactic in the 1930s, even though it was a radical departure from its Third Period attitude. It then swallowed the Nazi-Soviet pact. It did not put up any resistance to the Comintern's instructions to oppose the war, even though support for the war was strong among its members. It then attempted to popularise the Comintern's idea of a People's Government, without much success. And when the USSR finally entered the war, the CPA unflinchingly supported its plight.

All these interventions by the Comintern had a significant impact on the CPA's domestic policy. The most damaging, as far as the CPA was concerned, was its decision to accept the Comintern's characterization of the war as an imperialist war, and consequentially oppose it. It had to then adopt domestic policies that were consistent with its opposition to the war. This brought it into conflict with the Menzies Government, as Menzies sought to play some part in winning the war. The CPA, with its influence in the unions and among sections of the public, was a source of opposition to the war. At a time of growing efforts to win the war, the CPA's opposition to the war was counterproductive to the war effort and hampered the development of a united Australia.

There was the further fear of the USSR's precarious position. During 1940, the USSR was not in the Allied sphere of friendship. Hitler had been courting Stalin, and Stalin was receptive. Germany and the USSR had signed numerous agreements, among these a treaty of friendship, and Molotov had visited Hitler, while Germany was bombing Britain. It appeared that Germany and the USSR would come to an understanding and

⁵³³ There were at least ten Australian that spied for Moscow. See Desmond Ball and David Horner, *Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB network, 1944-1950*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1998, for a discussion of their activities.

join forces to defeat the Allies. In that event, the Comintern, and its sections, would become indispensable in organizing sabotage, espionage and other obstacles to the Allied war effort.

With the deteriorating international situation in early to mid 1940, national security assumed a new sense of importance. Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France had all fallen to Hitler's war machine. Italy entered the war around this period. The USSR was supplying Hitler with crucial war materials, and had itself expanded into Poland, the Baltic states and fought a war of aggression against Finland. Britain, with its Empire, stood alone. The CPA was critical of the war and the government, and was hampering the war effort.

Hence, with the Allies experiencing major problems, the presence of a domestic obstacle to an effective war effort had to be muted. The Menzies government was left with little choice but to mute the CPA. It did not seek to destroy it, as that would be reminiscent of the fascists Australia was fighting to defeat. But, the silencing of the CPA would, at least, remove one source of opposition, or at least restrict the extent of its appeal. Thus, it becomes clear that the CPA's proscription was a result of its relationship with the Comintern. Its relationship to Moscow, and the uncertainty of where the USSR stood vis-à-vis the war and Hitler, gave the distinct impression that if some action were not soon taken against the CPA, it could be doing the work of Hitler, as a fifth column, through the name of Stalin.

Fortunately, the CPA did not support Hitler's war. It would instead, rather embarrassingly, expose itself as a tool of Moscow when Germany invaded the USSR. It threw itself behind the Soviet war effort, and eventually, Australia's. The about face was unmistakable, as was the reason for it. When the rationale behind the CPA's illegality evaporated (by the start of 1942), the Curtin government did not seek to lift the ban. Instead, the ban was lifted after the tide of war was beginning to turn in the Allies' favour (the ban was lifted during the battle of Stalingrad), and after the CPA had promised to assist the war effort, presumably regardless of future Soviet policy. But by this stage,

Stalin was committed to fighting the war to its conclusion. And the attitude of Stalin was, after all, critical to understanding the CPA, because the CPA did believe that 'Stalin was never wrong'. Following Stalin became a dogma, and the CPA continued to observe it, regardless of the consequences, right up until Stahn's death.

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