

Section 4

The price of subservience: 1938–1940

The documents in this section take the story of the relationship between the CPA and Moscow to a convenient terminus: the declaration by the Australian government on 15 June 1940 that the CPA was an illegal organization. But though it may be the end-point for these documents, it was not the end of the CPA: the Party continued many of its activities despite the government's prohibition, its legality was re-established at the end of 1942, and it emerged after the Second World War—for a short time—with an enhanced reputation and membership (Davidson 1969, 82, 93). As the Cold War set in, the Communist Party became increasingly feared and loathed, but despite its impact on the industrial trade unions it was never a major threat to Australian democracy. The declaration of illegality is nevertheless convenient for our purposes, because contact between the Party and the Comintern seems to have been cursory between 1938 and 1940 (occupying only three *delas* in the CAAL)¹ and became minimal thereafter, until the Comintern was abolished by Stalin in 1943. Furthermore, the circumstances leading to this declaration of illegality provide abundant evidence that the CPA had in policy matters become nothing more than Moscow's handmaiden.

In the period under discussion, the CPA's fundamental orientation was towards creating alliances and fronts to combat fascism and war, and defend the Soviet Union. Where the Party had, during the 'Class against Class' period (approximately 1929–34), sought confrontation with reformist labour leaders, it now sought alliances; where it had stressed its communist radicalism, it now emphasized its democratic and 'progressive' sympathies; where it had stressed proletarian internationalism, it now claimed a link with Australian radical and cultural traditions. The new strategy was developed after Dimitrov's accession to the leadership of the Comintern in April 1934; at the Seventh Congress in the following year Dimitrov was formally elevated to the post of General Secretary of the Comintern, and the shift to the policy of 'fronts' was confirmed. Indeed, it was Franz Borkenau's view that the 'Popular Front' strategy saved the Comintern and its parties, after their influence had sunk to its lowest level ever in 1934 (Borkenau 1962, 360). But the period of confrontation had one important corollary: like the Australian party, most of the communist parties of the world underwent changes of leadership and became transformed into organizations that were, in Borkenau's words, 'ready to obey anything' (375).

¹ 495–14–306, 495–14–308 and 495–14–309.

The question of the public image of the USSR was one that continued to preoccupy Western communists during the late 1930s. Against hostile, but generally accurate, Western press reportage, they worked hard to be positive, for their fate was inextricably linked to the USSR. Moscow continued to orchestrate a campaign to present a better public image, a campaign that in one form or another had been conducted since the beginning of the Australian communist movement. In the roneoed CPA District Committee publication *Red Star* of 3 February 1933, readers were told by one Rudolph Messel that 'The first thing that impresses the traveller to the USSR is that everyone he sees in the streets looks happy and healthy.' On 19 June 1936, to take a further example, the *Workers' Star*, the communist newspaper in Western Australia, trumpeted the new Soviet Constitution under the headlines: 'Most Democratic in World!', and 'Committee, Headed by Stalin, Completes Task'. Later that month, the Constitution was described in headlines as 'A Charter of Human Freedom' (31 July 1936).

The perceptions of the USSR by communists who had visited it were mostly positive, but their exposure to Soviet reality was carefully controlled. They often visited what under an earlier regime were called 'Potemkin villages', where people were well fed in spite of starvation in the countryside around them. Audrey Blake, after visiting the Soviet Union, returned to tell Australians: 'Comrades, the youth of Australia must know that there is a youth happy and free, a youth with a brilliant future, the youth of the Soviet Union; and if it gets to know the truth about that surprising country, it will be filled with great love and admiration for the Soviet Union and its great leader, Comrade Stalin' (cited Skorobogatykh nd, 11). Such observations must have been built on a profound willingness to believe, since not all visitors to the USSR were duped by Potemkin villages. Blake's contemporary comments must be tempered by those in her memoirs, where she reflects on the disappearance of communists from the Hotel Lux, where she and her husband, Jack, lived in 1937, and on the shortages and petty regulations that made everyday life in Moscow difficult. Yet even here she admits that 'None of us knew of the camps which were filling up with Soviet people' (Blake 1984, 24).

The difficulty of maintaining one's belief in the Soviet Union's economic and political advances in the face of the often factual expositions of 'bourgeois propaganda' was compounded by the fact that in the period 1937–38 internal repression against real and supposed enemies intensified. In September 1936 Nikolai Ezhov was elevated to the head of the NKVD, and there followed two years of what has come to be called the 'Ezhovshchina'. Levels of fear and suspicion about spies, saboteurs, and foreigners increased, and much of that suspicion was turned against veteran Party members. This was the time of the great show trials against the Old Bolsheviks, Zinoviev and Kamenev (in August 1936) and Bukharin (in March 1938), accused of conspiring against the Soviet

leadership; but they were only the tip of an iceberg of mass arrests, cursory trials, and swift executions. Only Trotsky was able, from his temporary refuge in Mexico, to expose the absurdity of the charges against him—he was the chief defendant *in absentia*—and the others by way of an independent commission headed by the philosopher John Dewey (Dewey 1972). The Comintern, meanwhile, demanded that its parties exercise vigilance against wreckers secreted inside the movement, and many Comintern members within the USSR were swept away by the xenophobia that was created, and perished in the purges. In examining this period, Chase has argued that while it is highly likely there were some spies within the USSR, the frenzied response to what were in fact systemic problems of economic development in the ‘command economy’, rather than sabotage, was disastrous: ‘No spy network could have inflicted the damage [on the USSR] that the NKVD did’ (Chase 2001, 9).

The campaign against Trotskyism, orchestrated from Moscow, reached its height in the period covered in this section. The charge of ‘Trotskyism’ had been bandied about for some years, of course, since Trotsky had been internally exiled in the USSR in 1927, and expelled from the country in 1929. The first Trotskyist sympathizers expelled from a foreign communist party were James Cannon and Max Shachtman from the CPUSA at the end of 1928. But the first recorded charge of Trotskyism in the Australian party seems to come from September 1934, in a report from J. Billet headed ‘Two Trotskyites expelled from Party’ (495–94–114); they were Ted Tripp and Jack Kavanagh. Trotskyism was always a marginal feature of the Australian communist scene, but by the late 1930s ‘vigilance’ against enemies had become paranoia.

Communists and communist parties faced the ultimate test of their support for the Soviet Union in 1939. The Non-aggression Pact signed by the foreign ministers of Soviet Russia and Germany, Molotov and Ribbentrop, on 23 August 1939 came as a profound shock to them. It ended six years of communist vilification of Hitler, and forced many to ask how such a treaty could have been made with someone described for so long as a heinous criminal and enemy of the workers’ state. Communists had difficulty in interpreting the change, and they had been given no prior warning of it. This was the case inside the USSR as well as abroad. The Comintern itself had enormous difficulties in advising its parties how to respond to the Pact and the subsequent war (Dallin and Firsov 2000, 148–88), as the swift movement of *Realpolitik* blew away any semblance of principle. How much more difficult it would have been had they known of the Secret Protocol of this Pact, which divided eastern Europe (and most notoriously Poland) into German and Soviet spheres of influence. The Germans invaded Poland from the west on 1 September 1939, triggering the response from Britain and France that started the Second World War; the Russians invaded from the east on 17 September, but not as part of that war.

The difficulties created by these events can be seen clearly in the Australian case. The Pact was described by the Australian communist newspaper, by this time entitled *The Tribune*, as Hitler being 'forced to seek terms' with the Russians (25 August 1939). A week later, Britain declared war on Germany when it did not cease its invasion of Poland, and Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced in his memorable radio broadcast that Australia was also at war. On 5 September 1939, without the authorization of Moscow, *Tribune* declared 'For the defeat of Hitler'. The CPA was very soon informed, via a Soviet cable on 'peace', that the war was an imperialist war and that genuine communists could not take sides in it. Churchill was as bad as Hitler. This change was first reported in *Tribune's* issue of 6 October, and through November 1939 the paper gave significant space to the Soviet foreign minister's outpourings: 'Molotov flays war makers', and Soviet Russia 'Remains Neutral'. In Western Australia, the local communist paper *Workers' Star* had tackled the doubters head-on in its headlines of 25 August 1939: 'Press, Public, Jump to Conclusions', and 'USSR is not Selling Out'. Whether they were believed is doubtful.

Soviet actions in making a pact with Hitler may have sent the CPA into confusion (and thus 'error'), but Moscow had only to transmit the 'correct' line for it to be adopted. Indeed, the only error in the communist movement was disagreement with Moscow. A few years later, in 1944, Lance Sharkey took the Soviet criticism on the chin. There was, he conceded, a 'brief moment' when the Party had made an 'incorrect appraisal of the character of the war'. Relief was quickly at hand, as the Comintern sent out its directives and rectifications. As Sharkey more circumspectly put it, 'the Party quickly oriented itself on a correct Leninist estimation and policy' (Sharkey 1944, 36).

The war raised a number of important issues: Moscow's control of communist parties (now proved beyond doubt); the loyalty of communists to their own countries or to the Soviet Union; Moscow's espionage network; and—once again—the question of 'Moscow gold' for communist parties. In a confidential letter of 2 October 1939 to the Secretariat of the ECCI, the CPUSA bureaucrat Pat Toohey wrote that Earl Browder, the Party's leader, had given testimony before the US Congress Dies Committee. 'The Committee sought to prove that the CP is a branch of Moscow, that it is financed by Moscow ... that the CP is an agent of a "foreign principal", i.e. Moscow and the Comintern'. The Committee brought in a former member, Ben Gitlow—'stool-pigeon and provocateur' in Toohey's estimation—who testified that from 1922–29, the Comintern sent to the CPUSA \$100,000 to \$150,000 yearly and made claims of subsidies to the *Daily Worker* and other publications (515–1–4084). Toohey describes these claims as 'lies', but although they seem exaggerated, they are certainly not impossible.

Getting Moscow's money to the communist parties of the occupied and Allied countries became particularly difficult, however, since most of them were

unsurprisingly prosecuted or banned by their governments for opposing the war after September 1939, in line with Comintern instructions. They were eventually put out of their 22-month, take-no-sides misery by Hitler himself. The USSR was invaded by the Wehrmacht on 22 June 1941, and the *Communist Review* for that month was headlined: ‘All Aid to the Soviet Union’, ‘Everything for Victory of the Red Army’. By this stage, the CPA had been outlawed. But elsewhere in the world, some communist parties offered to disband if that would help the war effort to save the Soviet Union. Eventually in 1943, in the same cause, the Comintern itself was disbanded. Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, then, had the practical effect of allowing communist parties to support their governments’ war efforts against Hitler.

Perhaps the main theme to emerge from the documents in this section is an increasing focus on what might—with a touch of cynicism—be called ‘reliability’. The Comintern needed ‘reliable’ parties, that is, parties that would do its bidding. It kept a close watch on this reliability, by examining party documents and journals, by commissioning reports from trusted agents, and by compiling information on party members, particularly leaders. As the Comintern bureaucrat, André Marty, wrote in a directive to Australia in 1940:

We must tighten control of our personnel to ensure that they are fully devoted to the USSR, the CPSU (Bolshevik), and Comrade Stalin, the leader of the working class and the working people of the entire world. There must be complete clarity about this. What the CPSU (Bolshevik) and Comrade Stalin do is exclusively in the interests of the working class of the whole world. There must be no doubt about this matter, and the personnel must be able to find their bearings on this basis. (Document 85)

What the Comintern had in fact created was a collection of parties which constantly looked to the centre for direction, which could not exercise judgement, and in which fear of being out of step with Moscow paralysed independent thought and action. The Comintern may have succeeded in controlling its organization, but at the cost of weakening its parties. The CPA’s subservience to Moscow led to its disdain for the anti-Hitler cause and to its outlawing in 1940.

Document 80

RGASPI 495–14–308. no date [early 1939?], Tom Ewen: report to Comintern: The CPA since the Seventh Congress of the CI. Typescript.

Tom Ewen was the representative of the Communist Party of Canada to the Comintern in Moscow. This is a report he prepared about the CPA since 1935 for Comintern purposes, but it concentrates on the outcomes of the CPA’s 12th Congress of November 1938. The report is drawn entirely from CPA press materials, and it appears that Ewen did not have first-hand knowledge of the Australian Party. Despite its considered view that the CPA

has 'many serious shortcomings and weaknesses', the report ends on a positive note linking the CPA to Australia's democratic traditions.

Confidential

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA
SINCE THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE CP.

The Party

In the struggles of the Australian people against growing reaction, crisis, and the threat of war sharpened by the fascist war incendiaries, the Communist Party of Australia, as the leader of these struggles, has followed the line and decisions of the 7th World Congress on all major issues.

It is evident, however, from a review of the Party press, that the CP of A has many serious shortcomings and weaknesses, which hinder it from taking full advantage of the favourable objective conditions for mass recruiting into its own ranks. Its membership grows far too slowly; syndicalist and sectarian methods of work stand in the way of its rapid growth. The CPA loses much of its identity in its practical work, and is schematic and sectarian in its approach to the basic questions of building a People's Front movement in Australia. Its approach to the questions for a revised Constitution for Australia that would bring a greater measure of democratic progress, and greater assurance of peace to the Australian people needs to be improved.

These shortcomings are, first of all, reflected in the painfully slow growth of the CPA. In the Jan. issue of the *Communist Review* after the 12th Party Congress, Comrade Sharkey refers to Party recruiting as follows:-

Attention was drawn to the slowing up in the rate of recruiting, approximate figures being:—in the period of 1929–32 the Party increased its membership from 300 to 3,000; in the period 1932–38 only 2,000 new members were permanently recruited, a total of around 5,000.

Comrade Sharkey is in error when he says "permanently recruited"; it is clear from the above figures that not only is recruiting into the Communist Party of Australia at an extremely low ebb, but that fluctuation in membership recruited during 1932–38—a period of six years—is almost 90%.

Comrade Sharkey says further that "the 12th Congress of the Party generally agreed with the paragraph dealing with the slower recruiting in the CC report." This paragraph, as quoted, gives some of the reasons:—"immersion in trade union work, a relative decline in mass propaganda, distortion of the United Front concept, hiding the face of the Party and sectarian errors, inability to seize on the issues agitating the masses, more than 'prosperity' are the reasons for the slow growth."

If the 12th Congress of the CPA accepts a formulation which in essence means that the CPA is so much “immersed” in trade union work *to the extent* that it has no time to build its own ranks, then the logic of such a premise *would be* to get out of the unions if you want to build the Party, which is not only incorrect, but absurd. A much closer examination of the slow growth of the Party among the basic sections of the workers *would show that the Party is not making full use of the situation to increase its membership*. The CPA is well established in the Australian trade union movement in influence and numbers, but is apparently unable to utilise the situation to increase its membership in keeping with its influence.

Comrade Miles, writing in the Nov. issue of the *Communist Review* (page 59), also speaks of the too slow growth and heavy fluctuation in the Party. From his analysis it is clear that the CPA membership is well distributed in the trade unions, but are now known and do not work as Communists. Comrade Miles shows that the independent role of the Party—in the unions, in the anti-fascist and peace movements, and in the localities generally—is practically nil.

“Propaganda,” writes Comrade Miles, “though improved in content and attractiveness, is relatively less than some years ago, in part because fewer workers are unemployed.” The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is that organized propaganda and agitational work of the CPA was confined mainly to the ranks of the unemployed—that the CPA found its main open base of work among the unemployed, and as unemployment decreased, Party propaganda and agitational work relatively decreased also. On the other hand, organized Party propaganda and agitation that would bring the Party prominently before the masses seems to have been taboo in the trade unions and other fields of activity, thus resulting in low recruiting and high fluctuation. While it would be incorrect to minimize work among the unemployed, it is also incorrect to make work among the unemployed the only sphere of open Party activity.

There are no recent figures that would give an approximate picture of the social composition of the CPA, its distribution in the various States of the Commonwealth, or its distribution by industries, in the trade unions, etc. It is clear, however, that, while the CPA is well established in the Unions of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), our Party has been unable to take advantage of its leading and strategic position in these unions to consolidate and strengthen its ranks, or to achieve the fullest unity between the ACTU and the Australian Labor Party (ALP), thus creating a strong core for the building of a broad People’s Front Movement.

Only in the *Communist Review* of Sept. were the pages of the Party’s theoretical organ opened for pre-Congress discussion in preparation for the 12th Party Congress held in November of 1938. The first article in the Sept. issue is by Comrade Miles. In the October issues, the last before the Congress, there are

three articles by Comrades Gould, Gibson, and Sharkey. [This amounts to] a total of four articles, covering the entire area of Australia, with *very little* differentiation upon the basic *separate* problems of six different States of the Commonwealth.

The central question before the 12th Congress was the building of a strong People's Front, uniting all bodies, trade unions, Labor Party, farmers, middle classes, etc., with the objective of ousting the reactionary Lyons government, and replacing it with a government of the people. To do this, differentiation and clarity on the problems *facing the people* of the various States are vitally necessary if these are to be won for this objective.

In none of these pre-Congress contributions on the special and particular problems facing the CPA in giving leadership to the people of Australia is any mention made of the farmers, only a bare reference in Comrade Gibson's article about the threatened action of the Wheat Growers' Association. It is clear that in a country like Australia, with a diverse farm population of approximately 400,000, almost 16% of the population—and a vitally important percentage besides—that all of the best intentions for the building of a People's Front with the farmers left out will be fruitless. There is no appeal either to the party to acquaint itself with the farmers, or for the farmers to seek a solution to their problems in the programme of the Party. It is true that in the 13-point Programme adopted by the Congress, "Debt relief to the Farmers" is included, but unless this is accompanied by active work and interest in the problems of the farmers and a determination to build the Party in the farm areas, then it simply remains a paper decision.

[...]

Trotskyism

There is little to determine the extent of influence of Trotskyism in the Australian Labor movement or in the Party. There is little doubt however that [it is] the Lang reactionary groups in the ALP, and in some of the unions where syndicalist and left ideology is strong, that Trotskyist elements have infiltrated.

In the Sept-Oct-Nov-Dec 1937 issues of the *Communist Review* Comrade Jamieson wrote a series of articles on Trotskyism, its origin, its counter-revolutionary programme, and its open orientation towards fascism. But Comrade Jamieson presents the question of Trotskyism as a Russian phenonema [sic], and in no case links it up with, or draws any conclusions for the Australian Labor movement.

In the *Communist Review* of Aug. 1938 Comrade Purdy has a brief article on the role of Trotsky as a prophet and supporter of fascism. None of these contributions even remotely relate to the trotskyist menace within the ranks of Australian Labor, how to detect it, how to expose and combat it. Trotskyism is

dealt with by our Australian comrades as an abstract theoretical discussion, unrelated to its present-day role as an enemy of the people.

[...]

[Spain]

It is clear by the absence of a broad anti-fascist movement, that not all that could have been done for Spain by the Australian movement has been done, and much of the fault can still be adduced [sic] to the narrow sectarian outlook of the CPA. The task of forming a broad anti-fascist movement that will reach into the broadest masses of the Australian people still needs to be developed. Such a movement, while not excluding its present strong *base* in the trade unions, must win the support of wider sections of the ALP, the Church, middle class people, and even bourgeois elements that are breaking or have broken with their reactionary affiliations.

[...]

The Labor Party.

The influence of the CPA in the Australian Labor Party has increased considerably in the period between the 11th and 12th Congresses. *A better spirit of unity and cooperation is developing between the two parties since the defeat of Lang.*² The ALP itself has made progress in recent years, and although this progress is not uniform in regard to policy, nor uniform in each state, still it can be said that its influence and prestige is growing. It has been able to carry through the defeat and isolation of Lang and his reactionary group in New South Wales, as a result of the work of our Party, and the *Labour Daily*, once the organ of Lang for carrying through reactionary policies, has now been transformed to the *Daily News* under progressive editorship. The policy of slandering the CPA and the international Communist movement has ceased, and in general a better spirit of unity and tolerance exists between the ALP and the CPA. There is, however, still an ALP “inner group” dominated by the reactionary Lang elements who continue as a disruptive force between the various sections of the ALP. The final cleaning out of this group will depend upon the bringing of the Labor Party as such under the centralized leadership of the ACTU. The present leader of the ALP, Mr Curtain [sic], vacillated upon any basic questions, seeking shelter for his opportunism behind the non-agreement and lack of stronger unity in the

² Jack Lang (1876–1975) was the Labor Premier of New South Wales (from 1925–27 and 1930–32) who, in February 1931, proposed suspending the state’s interest payments to the Bank of England, payments subsequently made by the Federal government. On 13 May 1932, as a consequence of a related matter—instructing state public servants not to pay money into the Federal treasury, as they were required to do under the new Financial Agreements Enforcement Act—he was dismissed from office by the NSW Governor, Sir Philip Game. Lang had already earned the ire of his federal counterparts by splitting the ALP, and continued leading the ‘Lang Labor Party’ through much of the 1930s; he was denounced by the CPA at the time as a ‘left social fascist’, for perpetuating the illusion that capitalism’s effects on the working class could be ameliorated.

ranks of the ALP. In the "Daily News" of Dec 30/38 Curtin [sic] advances a 5 point programme to unite the ALP from within and free it completely from the influence of the Lang group.

In the building of a People's Front movement that will smash the reactionary Lyons Government, the CPA declares that the "ALP must become the centre of this People's Front", and that around it must be built the widest strata of the people. To this end the CPA will extend its approach to petty-bourgeois elements, farmers, etc., and seek to establish a strong alliance between the ALP and the farmers.

The recent convention of the West Australia ALP showed considerable progress over past years. It removed the anti-Communist pledge which its members must take from the Constitution. However, it must be noted that this pledge wasn't removed until the West Australia ALP Executive had expelled a leading Communist from the ALP because he had written to other ALP members asking them to join the Communist Party.

[...]

The CPA Constitution and Australian Traditions.

The 12th Congress of the CPA adopted a new Constitution. Its preamble reads:

Upholding the achievements of democracy and standing for the right of the majority to direct the destinies of our country, the CPA fights with all its strength against any and every effort, whether it comes from abroad or within, to impose upon the Australian people the arbitrary will of any selfish minority group, or party or circle.

In this paragraph are embodied all the fighting traditions of the Australian people in their struggle for liberty and the democratic future of Australia. It is still less than 100 years ago (1840) when the convict ships of English took their cargoes of rebel workers and peasants to the penal settlements of Australia;—*when England* made of Australia one huge prison camp—because these English and Irish and Scotch workers and peasants revolted against tyranny and oppression. These "convicts" brought a tradition of independence and revolt against oppression that still vitalizes the blood of the Australian people. The CPA is the inheritor of these glorious traditions, and the decisions of its 12th Congress, in spite of all the shortcomings, is the guarantee that the flame of revolt will be kept burning in Australia.

Tom Ewen—Canada

Document 81

RGASPI 495–14–308. 25 May 1939, Tom Ewen: report/letter to Comrade Kuusinen: Australia. Typescript.

Ewen's remarks in this brief letter to his ECCI colleague Kuusinen have a more critical tone than those of his earlier evaluation of the CPA since 1935 in Document 80. What had happened to change Ewen's tone is unclear.

May 25th 1939

AUSTRALIA

Comrade Kuusinen:

Just recently there has come to hand the report of the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of Australia, held in Sydney, NSW on November 18–19–20th. This report is printed in a 96-page pamphlet entitled *The Way Forward*.

In addition to this pamphlet there is another, the *Constitution and Bylaws of the CP of Australia* adopted at the 12th Congress. The new Constitution of the Party contains 12 rules and a section on Bylaws governing the organization and structure of the CP of A [...]

The Way Forward contains the main report of general secretary of the Party, Comrade J.B. Miles, as well as the reports of other leading comrades. The main line in all the reports is the need for greater unity in the Australian labor movement to defeat the reactionary Lyons government. (Lyons himself has since died and Menzies is the new Premier, but the policies of Lyons still prevail.) Special emphasis is laid upon the strengthening and unifying of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The growing unity that is evident since the Congress in the victories of a number of labor candidates in State and municipal elections shows that the decisions of the Congress are being realized.

In a number of the speeches reported, greater attention is urged towards giving leadership to the struggles of the farmers. The agrarian crisis is deepening very rapidly in Australia and is creating widespread activity among the farmers. From the Congress reports it is evident that the CP of Australia was pretty well isolated from the masses of the poor farmers.

In the report of Comrade Sharkey the Party membership has grown as follows:- 1929—300; 1932—3,000; 1938—5,000.

This growth, in view of the favorable objective conditions, is considered by the Congress to be far too slow, and special measures for rapid Party building were undertaken. The CP of Australia wields a strong influence in the Australian trade unions—an influence far in excess of its membership. The Party has not

utilized this influence to build its ranks and consolidate its press in the trade unions, and the Congress directed its attention to overcome this weakness.

The Congress laid down a 16-point programme for the building of a “People’s Front for Australia”, which would serve the labor movement, the farmers and the middle classes, and enable the growth of a great mass movement in opposition to the reactionary policies of the Canberra government. In domestic and foreign policy these points demand economic and collective security for the people of Australia.

In the Congress resolution on a “Programme for Peace” the CP of Australia raises “the danger of conscription”, and somewhat negatives [sic] its policy of defence of Australia from aggression by abstract demands for the personnel of the standing army. It demands “no compulsory military training or conscription”. Traditionally, the Australian labor movement has always opposed conscription, which perhaps explains in part the position of the CP of A in the present period and its failure to correctly estimate the changed conditions that make conscription essential to effective defense.

In its resolution on the study of Marxism-Leninism the Congress makes no reference to the *History of the CPSU(b)—Short Course*. It is possible however that the vital importance of this work had not reached our Australian comrades at the time of their Congress in such a form as to be fully appreciated.

Taken as a whole, *The Way Forward* indicates a healthy understanding of the tasks facing the CP of Australia on the way towards a real mass Bolshevik party. It calls for the doubling of the Party membership by the end of 1939, for the raising of the theoretical level of the Party leadership from top to bottom, and for the extension of the *Workers’ Weekly* and *Workers’ Voice* into daily papers. These tasks the Congress declares to be the main pre-requisites for the building of a broad anti-fascist people’s movement in Australia.

Tom Ewen

Rep. CP of Canada

Document 82

RGASPI 495–14–308. 1939 [November?], author unknown: report to Comintern: Proposals for the CPA. Typescript.

In September 1939, during the first few weeks of the Second World War, the CPA advocated the defeat of Hitler by the Allies. Having become Stalin’s new-found ‘friend’ by virtue of the Non-aggression Pact, however, Hitler had no wish to be antagonized by Stalin’s communist parties around the world. The word soon went out that communist parties must not take sides in the war, and they should not assist the war against Hitler. This document—possibly written by Tom Ewen—is one of the first analyses by the Comintern of the Australian errors in responding to the outbreak of war, and what could be done to rectify them.

Confidential

Australia

PROPOSALS FOR THE CPA.

Even with the limited material available, it is obvious that up until September 16th (London *Times*), [and] August 30th (*Guardian* CPA) the CPA was following an incorrect line in relation to the war. The first pre-requisite to the effective mobilization of the Australian people against imperialist war is the speedy orientation of the CPA to a correct political position on the war.

Mobilising the Australian people in active opposition to the war should be made the central point in the CPA building “crusade” outlined in the August 19th issue of the *Guardian*.

Under the slogan of “Free Australia from the bloody chess game of British imperialism”, the CPA should mobilize the Australian people for the defeat of the Menzies government as the tool of Chamberlain, and the election of a People’s government pledged to fight against the war.

Raising the slogan of “not a soldier nor a gun for Chamberlain” the CPA should intensify and unify the struggle against conscription; to defeat the National Register and all forms of military and industrial conscription.

Strengthen Australian defenses independent of British imperialism and raise the boycott and opposition to Japanese imperialism to a new high level.

2. The CPA should raise the issue of Australia becoming the initiator of a great Pacific anti-imperialist bloc with the perspective of weakening British imperialism on two fronts—first in active opposition to Japanese imperialism; second—in active support of the Indian people against British imperialism.
3. For the defense and extension of civil liberties and rights; freedom of organization, press and assembly. Smashing of the “dog-collar” legislation of the “Arbitration Laws” that are used to cripple the organized activity of the workers, and the trade unions in particular.
4. Utilization of the Menzies war-budget for the economic needs of the Australian people; struggle against rising prices, living costs, and war profiteering.
5. The extension of the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the CPA by mass distribution and use of the *History of the CPSU* and the classical works of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin. The transformation of the *Communist Review* into the Marxist-Leninist theoretical organ, orientation upon Australian conditions, thus strengthening the CPA and the Australian working class against reactionary British imperialism which dominated Australia.³

³ In [the] *Guardian*, August 30th, it is reported that only about 1,000 copies of [the] *History* have been sold. The membership of the CPA is roughly 4,500–5,000, while the ACTU in which the CPA wields a

6. A sharp struggle against the reactionary Socialists and Trotskyites in the leadership of the Australian and State Labor Parties, directed towards the uniting of the rank and file of the Labor Parties against the war and the ousting of the reactionary officialdom in the Labor Party and in the ACTU.
7. For helping to correct the CP line. To send advice to England suggesting that a letter be sent to the CPA signed by Comrades Tom Mann and [William] Gallacher. This letter should be written in a personal and informative manner, outlining the changes that have taken place in the CPGB and the working-class in respect to the imperialistic war. It should indicate that, while in some of the British Dominions: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc., as well as in Britain, the Communist Parties and other sections of the Labor movement supported the war in its early stages, believing it to be a war against fascism, that in the process of events they have realized its imperialistic aims, and are now mobilizing in active opposition to the war. This letter should also point out the necessity of carefully examining the nature of peace, in order to avoid the imposition of a "super-Munich" by Chamberlain and his imperialist allies, directed against the USSR. Through the medium of such a letter the CPA will draw the correct conclusions on the errors of its own policy in respect to the imperialist war.

This letter would be sent to all Dominions.

Document 83

RGASPI 495–14–309. 25 November 1939, R. Naumann: report to Comintern: The CPA at the beginning of the imperialist war. Typescript.

This document was written nearly three months after the Second World War had begun. It assesses the initial errors of the CPA in relation to the war, and their rectification. The Australian communists are here characterized as having misunderstood the complex theoretical realities behind the Non-aggression Pact. Their theoretical reliability seems to have been tested and found wanting by the war. Naumann argues, against other assessments of the Australian position by Tom Ewen, that the Australians took a wrong position on the war because they did not understand the Pact.

25 Nov 1939

Australia

Confidential

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE IMPERIALIST WAR.

At the beginning of the imperialist war in Europe, the CP of Australia took a wrong position, declaring for the support of the reactionary Menzies

big influence has approximately one-half million membership. This is obviously far below what is easily possible. [This footnote appears in the document; the ACTU membership seems to be half a million.]

Government in its participation in the imperialist war on the side of the Chamberlain Government. J.B. Miles, General Secretary of the Party, declared:

We will not obstruct any genuine move of the Menzies Government to assist the Polish people against the present barbarous Nazi attack. (*Tribune*, Sept 8, 1939)

This wrong attitude on the part of the CC in relation to the war in Europe was not accidental. It was a result of not fully understanding the non-aggression pact concluded on August 23rd between the Soviet Union and Germany. Therefore the Party was unable to explain correctly and convincingly the pact to the masses. The CC and the CP were ardent defenders of the pact, but it took partially a defensive attitude—tried to apologise for the pact and came to a wrong conclusion about the nature of the war and about the tasks of the Party. The Party looked upon this question too much from an Australian and not international point of view, expressing in this way some influence of British imperialism in the ranks of the CP of Australia, and was therefore unable to arrive at a correct position at the moment of the outbreak of the imperialist war in Europe.

That the leading comrades did not understand the essence of the Soviet-German Pact can be seen from a statement in the Central Organ of the Party, *Workers' Weekly* of August 25th:

Therefore, to enter into an agreement to that effect does not alter the Soviet's policy towards Germany an iota. (My emphasis)

Because the Party leadership did not see that the Soviet policy toward Germany was altered and that it was altered as a result of the breakdown of the French-British-Soviet negotiations, being the result of the imperialist interests and anti-Soviet intentions of the Chamberlain-Daladier Governments, the Party leadership continued the old tactical line relating [to] the “democratic” governments of Britain and France. It wrote:

The Soviet Union is not preparing to enter into an alliance of the nature of the one offered to Britain, already largely in existence with France and previously with Czechoslovakia.

If the British Government can be compelled to sign the military alliance desired by the Soviet Union, Hitler will be compelled to renounce his aggressive intentions against Poland and the smaller States and against Britain and France also. (*WW*, 25.xiii.39)

This line was followed up to September 8th, the last paper at our disposal, almost a week after the outbreak of the war. Even then the central organ of the Party wrote in a leading article:

The Soviet-German pact is not the kind of military alliance that was offered to Britain and France. Soviet Russia is in the same position as the United States, that of a neutral, with a difference that Marshal Voroshilov made it perfectly clear that Poland or Britain and France could secure all the war materials they wanted. (My emphasis, RN)—*Tribune*, September 8, 1939

The Party leadership also drew a wrong conclusion from the pact for the situation in Australia. Instead of exposing the imperialist policy of the Chamberlain and Menzies Governments, which led to such a situation *where* as a result of the failure of the British-French-Soviet negotiations, the danger of an attack on Australia by Japanese aggression increased very much, the Party paper *emphasized the other side*, that the pact reduced the danger of a Japanese attack on Australia, and made the situation of the British and French forces easier.

The declaration of the CP, for example, states,

This pact has brought about the neutrality of Japan, which is of the utmost importance to Australia. And in the event of war can mean that British and French forces do not have to fight in the Pacific as well as in Europe at the same time. (My emphasis, RN)—*Tribune*, Sept 5, 1939

Comrade Dixon wrote:

The non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany ... reduced the danger of a Japanese attack on Australia, and will strengthen Britain's hand in Europe. (My emphasis, RN)—*Workers' Weekly*, August 29th

The CC in its declaration on the war, as well as the leading members of the Party, emphasize so much the advantages of the pact for Britain and France and Australia that the impression is created that the Party wants to excuse the pact before the masses, that the Party retreated before a wave of chauvinistic, imperialistic sentiments, instigated by the Government.

On the other hand it must be noted that Comrade Dixon, in his article published in the *Workers' Weekly* of August 28th, gave a very good estimation of the coming war—in my opinion one of the best estimations given by any of the Anglo-American parties. He wrote among other things:

If war should come, however, black reaction will settle on the capitalist world.

In England, Chamberlain has invested himself with all the powers that Hitler has. In Australia, Mr Menzies apes Mr Chamberlain. Our freedom is in the balance.

The workers, as never before, must unite to resist fascism.

If war comes we will be told we are fighting for democracy against fascism.

But there will be no democracy if the governments have their way. Fascism will have been established throughout the British Empire.

Capitalism breeds fascism: it makes war inevitable.

Lasting peace and democracy will be achieved only with the crushing of capitalist rule and the establishment of Socialism.

If war comes we Communists will strike at the cause of the war—capitalism. We will inscribe on our banner the struggle for Socialism. (My emphasis, RN).

Comrade Sharkey, the editor of the Party paper at the same time made a similar declaration on the pact. In this declaration he concentrated his fire against the policy of the Chamberlain Government, and concludes it in the following manner:

It is Chamberlain and Hitler, the leaders of capitalism, who are the responsible parties for the second imperialist war.

Whilst there is capitalism and fascism, war cannot be abolished from earth.

Only Socialism can guarantee peace. (*Workers' Weekly*, August 29).

But this good beginning was not further developed, neither by these Comrades nor by the CC. On the contrary, the position of the comrades became worse. Comrade Dixon, for example, two days after publishing a good statement on the Soviet-German pact, where he declared: "If war comes we Communists will strike at the cause of the war—capitalism. We will inscribe on our banner the struggle for Socialism", he made a contradictory declaration. In one place he declares:

If war breaks out the Communist Party would support any or every measure for the defeat and destruction of German fascism.

And in other places he declares the opposite task:

If we must fight fascism then the first blow must be delivered against fascism in Australia. (*Tribune*, Sept. 1st)

The consequences of the misunderstanding of the Soviet-German pact were that the Party considered the war of the Polish Government as a just war. Germany was still considered as the aggressor and Poland as the victim of fascist aggression. The declaration of the CC, published September 5th, immediately after the beginning of the war, states for example:

The savage German fascists have launched a new aggression against Poland, and the British Empire and France are at war with Germany.

This war, launched for the purpose of the conquest of Poland and its subjection to the fascist Empire of Hitler, of Krupp and Thyssen, the German monopoly capitalists, is an act of stark aggression, without justification of any kind whatever.

Therefore, lovers of justice and liberty throughout the entire world will support the struggle of the Polish people for their independence and against the enslavement of a foreign power.

What has brought the world to this dreadful pass where it is faced with a repetition of the inferno that raged from 1914 to 1918? In the first place, the responsibility lies with German fascism. (*Tribune*, September 5th)

From such an estimation of the Polish war the conclusion is drawn that the Communist Party must support the Polish war "against fascist aggression". It is therefore quite in agreement with the line of the CC when Comrade Dixon wrote that the Communists will be in the forefront of the defence of Poland against fascist aggression.

We Communists refuse to give up to anyone our place of honour at the forefront of the fight against fascist aggression.

There must be no capitulation to German fascism.

There must be no sacrificing of Poland as a condition for peace with Hitler.

If war breaks out, the Communist Party would support any or every measure for the defeat and destruction of German fascism. (*Tribune*, September 1st, 1939).

The paper of September 8th, the last issue in our hands, shows that the Party still followed this line. Comrade Miles declared for the Party paper:

The *Tribune* stands for the independence of Poland, for the defeat of the Nazi and other fascist aggressors.

Connected with this mistake is the illusion that the Chamberlain and Menzies Governments can fight a just war. The declaration of the CC on the war states:

The working class, whilst supporting the measures necessary to resist the aggressor and the war of Poland for its independence, demands, if such a war has to be fought, that its aims be just, that there be no new Versailles imposed upon the German masses who have been forced along the path of aggressive war by the Hitler dictatorship.

There must be no annexations of territory or paralyzing indemnities placed upon the German people; they must be assisted to overthrow the fascist dictatorship and to restore democracy and freedom in Germany. The Austrians, Czechs, and Slovaks must have their national rights and independence restored. It is only on the basis of justice to all that a new and lasting peace can be established among the nations and necessary confidence in each other be established.

In accordance with the old line, the Party connected the struggle against fascist aggression with its struggle for the maintenance and extension of the democratic rights of the Australian people. The declaration of the CC states:

Whilst supporting the struggle against foreign fascism, the Australian working class and the defenders of democracy must keep an alert eye on their own democratic liberties. The Emergency regulations announced by [P]M. Menzies give to the Commonwealth Government dictatorial powers that could strangle our Australian freedom.

The suppression of the legitimate rights of free speech and press, of the right of the masses to organize and voice their grievances, must not be allowed to be smuggled in under any pretext whatever.

It is not much of a gain to defeat foreign fascism only to find that a dictatorship has been established in our land. To fight fascism demands that democratic liberties be extended and broadened among the people opposed to fascist war and dictatorship. Neither must military measures against German fascist aggression be used as a pretext by the capitalists to reduce the standards of living of the Australian people. (*Tribune*, September 5th)

In as much as the line of the Communist Party, in essence, was no different from the line of the Labor Party, the Party proceeded to carry through the old line of building the united front with the Labor Party. In its declaration the CC states:

The CP, which has inscribed the sign of unity upon its banners, again declares its readiness for a united front agreement with the ALP for the defence of democracy and of the living standards of the people. The CP will strengthen its efforts to establish a great, united people's mass movement for the defence of democracy and the restoration of world peace ...

We must strive for the removal of the Menzies Government from office and its replacement by government of the Labor Party, pledged to a democratic peace, to defend our living standards and liberties.

United against fascism, for a democratic peace.

Unclarity in the ranks of the leadership of the Party on this fundamental question created confusion among the rank and file of the Party. It is important to note that the General Secretary of the Party, Comrade Miles, recognizes the existence of some confusion on the line of the Party. In answering slanders of the Trotskyites, who declare that a crisis exists in the Comintern, Comrade Miles states:

There is no crisis in the ranks of our Party in this country. I know it from direct contact with several areas in recent days and reports from all other areas.

As in all acute crises, there is some confusion, but the firm clarity of the great majority becomes the conviction of all but the few weaklings. (*Tribune*, September 8, 1939).

Therefore, I think that the causes for the wrong position taken by the CC of the Australian Party on the question of the imperialist war in Europe have to be found *in Australia itself*. The mistakes made by the CP of Britain could only intensify these mistakes, but that did not make them possible. I also think that the statement made by Comrade Ewen is not correct when he declared that the CP of Australia “presented the Soviet-German pact in a correct manner, but drew the wrong conclusions on the nature of the war”. On the contrary, as shown above, the wrong conclusions on the nature of the war were a result of a misunderstanding of the Soviet-German pact.

R. Naumann

Document 84

RGASPI 495–14–309. 2 February 1940, S.W. Scott: report to Comintern: The Communist Party of Australia. Typescript.

Sid Scott was a New Zealand Communist who had some direct, personal knowledge of the CPA and its personnel. This report was written for the Cadres Department of the Comintern for the purpose of filing information on leading comrades in the Comintern.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA.

(For Cadres Department)

The writer’s knowledge of the CP of Australia and its cadres is strictly limited. It is only possible to give personal impressions. It would be impossible for me to be dogmatic in my judgments:

Comrade J.B. Miles.

This comrade I heard much of but only saw on one occasion for a brief time, as he was never in New Zealand, and when I was in Australia, he was out of Sydney on tour.

It is significant, however, that everybody I met in the Australian Party spoke of him with affection and pride. “I have met Comrade this and Comrade that,” was once said. “Ah, but you haven’t met J.B. yet,” was the reply.

My own one meeting with him was when I passed through Adelaide, and at some considerable inconvenience he came straight to see me, after a long journey from the back-country. In no way remarkable in appearance, he impressed me as being very shrewd and confirmed the report that he was the most outstanding Australian Comrade. He spoke of the international situation, quoted Comrade Stalin’s speech (quite recently delivered—a month before, roughly) at the 18th Congress, predicted the breakdown of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations and

expressed the opinion that the war would take place, with the Soviet Union standing outside. In this case, he stated, the war would be an imperialist war.

This clear statement, which was not duplicated by any other comrade in Australia or England—nor, was, indeed, until I heard about the pronouncements of the ECCI in later September or thereabouts—caused me to be surprised by the wrong attitude taken by the Australian Party as early as August 25th. Comrade Miles is about 51 years old. He has five children.

Comrade R. Dixon.

I know him considerably better than J.B. Miles.

He is an excellent comrade, of mild appearance, but strong character and keen intelligence, with, I think, a very good grasp of Marxism-Leninism. Of the Australian Comrades who came over to New Zealand, he impressed me as the most outstanding. He gets to the heart of a question and did not jump at conclusions the day he landed, but went into matters carefully.

Age: about 25, recently married. One of Party's best speakers. Is reputed to be Comrade Miles' "right-hand man".

Comrade L. Sharkey.

Chairman of Central Committee. Is a comrade of long experience in the Party. Editor *Tribune*. Like other two comrades, has been in Moscow. He was here in 1930–31 and again in 1935 when he became candidate-member of the ECCI.

Is capable comrade—would not be in his present position otherwise. Personally does not impress me as being so outstanding in ability or personality as previously mentioned comrades. But this, of course, is simply my personal impression. Did quite a good job of work in NZ when he came over at Christmas, 1936. Age, about 40. Married three years ago.

Comrade R. Cram.

Member of Central Committee. Newcastle District Organizer. Executive member of Newcastle Trades Council. Member of his union—I forget which. Understand he is very successful in working with non-Communist trade union officials. Is energetic, quiet-spoken comrade with likeable personality. Quite capable, but apt to jump at conclusions. (This opinion of mine is, I believe, shared with Australian CC comrades). A good all-round comrade nevertheless. Age: about 38, married, with I think two children.

E.G. Docker.

Member of the Central Committee. Leading functionary in NSW State Committee work. Age about 40. Ex-carpenter. Has been Party functionary for some years. Believe that, like most other CC members, he is attached to a union.

Good reliable comrade—not perhaps the theoretician that some of the others are, but quite capable. When he came to NZ as a fraternal delegate in 1936 (to a Plenum) and took part in a controversy with a sectarian group, he gained a reputation in Wellington for being somewhat tactless and inclined to browbeat offenders. This charge certainly had some truth in it, but I think it was because of his strong sense of Party discipline and the fact that he did not sufficiently allow for the weaker development (particularly then) of the NZ Party compared with Australia. Personally I found him a very good comrade. Like first three mentioned comrades, is on Political Bureau.

T. Wright.

Member of CC (and Political Bureau).

Secretary of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union Sydney. Vice-President of the NSW Trades and Labor Council. Age about 40. Married, with family. Capable, quiet, well-respected comrade. Told me once that he had been once removed for a period from the CC. I think it was in 1930 or thereabouts and that he sided with the Right Wing. That, however, is evidently regarded as past history in Australia now and I should think that any such errors were the result of inexperience in a time the Party, too, was weak.

Comrade Jack Simpson.

Comrade J. Simpson is the financial expert of the Central Committee. I know him from two holiday visits to NZ, which is his birthplace, as well as from meeting him in Sydney. His age is about 50. He seems to be less politically developed than the other CC members I have met and concentrates his main attentions upon the business affairs of the party, including the paper, of which he is at present, I think, business manager (or at least business supervisor). He is an expert in raising money and has a loyal, kindly and genial personality that particularly fits him for this kind of work—as does his business ability. An old Party member.

Guido Barrachi.[sic]

I met this comrade in Sydney. He is one of the acknowledged theoreticians of the Party. Age about 45. Middle-class origin, independent means (Australian born, Italian descent). Old Party member. An editor of the *Communist Review*. My impressions confirmed his reputation as a valuable and single-minded Party worker.

Other important comrades that I met during the ten days I spent in Sydney and had not known previously, I would not care to comment on. These Comrades included Lloyd Ross, Secretary, Australian Railways Union an under-cover Party member, who was once resident in NZ and is well known by reputation and writings. Several members of the Industrial Labor Party (now merged in the

Australian Labor Party) I also met. These included J.G. Hughes, now President of the NSW Labour Council.⁴

In Melbourne for only three days, I met Comrade Ralph Gibson, then Secretary of the Victorian State Committee, whom I knew by repute, but had never previously met. This comrade, whose age, I think, would be about 37, was in Moscow for 12 months, as was his wife. Originally a Workers' Educational Association organizer, a university graduate, Comrade Gibson and his wife (who is also an "intellectual" by origin) impressed me as devoted Party workers.

Melbourne is more of an "intellectual" city, less of an industrial city than Sydney and this seems to reflect itself to some extent in the Party, which, however, is very live[ly] and boasts an excellent (relatively excellent) YCL,⁵ the only one, indeed, now existing in Australia. There are, or were, about 20 party members in a cell composed of daily newspaper reporters, and the connections with university people are particularly strong.

These facts seemed to me to be significant, but, of course, my knowledge of the Party in Melbourne was and is limited.

I met no outstanding comrades in Adelaide or Fremantle [sic] (i.e., the port of Perth) being unable to make the contact. In Hobart I met the Party organizer whose name I forget (Tony *Gardner*?). This comrade was trying to build a Party organization in Tasmania. He had established fair [sic] branches in Hobart and Launceston and was concentrating his main attention then on building up a waterfront unit which was publishing its own waterfront paper and shaping fairly well.

Tony seemed a fairly capable comrade, but did not have the easiest of tasks in a Labor-governed, but farmer-dominated (and in parts, very backward) Tasmania. The proletariat in Tasmania is not very well developed. Nevertheless, some progress was being made.

The Australian Party in General.

The Australian Party in general, and particularly the biggest section, the New South Wales section, strikes me as being a very good Party, deeply rooted in the masses and in the industrial workers particularly. Its leadership I would describe as solid rather than brilliant; using good team work and based quite strongly on Marxist-Leninist principles. I would agree with the remark I once heard about it—that its industrial work is its strongest point and is stronger than its political work. Its propaganda work has always seemed to me to be far

⁴ Lloyd Ross and Jack Hughes were communists who had taken advantage of the split in the NSW Labor party from 1931 to gain significant influence (Hughes as Vice-President of the NSW Branch of the Labor Party; Ross as a journalist on the *Labor Daily*). In August 1940, however, the federal Labor Party suspended the executive of the NSW Labor Party after it had passed (at Easter) a 'Hands Off Russia' resolution, thereby reversing the gains that the communists had spent many years accumulating.

⁵ Young Communist League.

behind its agitational and organization work in the unions. In the Trade Union movement, it is, of course, exceptionally strong. Amongst the farmers, it has little foothold—an obvious weakness (which, of course, also applies to NZ).

In my opinion, the central Party organ falls short of what it might be and its sales and indeed that of general propaganda material are poor compared with what they should be. I believe that a more suitable editor could be found than Comrade Sharkey. However, this may be going beyond what is required from me, so I will conclude by saying that in my opinion the Australian Party is strongly based, solidly led and likely to steadily increase its already considerable influence.

S.W. Scott—2.ii.40

Note: All the Central Committee members mentioned here are, to the best of my knowledge, Australian born with the exception of J.B. Miles who came out from Scotland about 30 years ago and J. Simpson who is a New Zealander.

S.W. Scott

Document 85

RGASPI 495–20–4. 11 March 1940, A. Marty: General directives for New Zealand and Australia. Present in a German version only (although the German is a translation from English), typescript. Trans. by KW.

Before the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Hitler, communists in the Allied countries were advised to direct their struggle against the ‘imperialist war’ in general. In this directive to the Australian and New Zealand communist parties, Marty urges them to develop their campaign jointly.

General Directives for New Zealand and Australia

7.5.40

‘Dictated by A. Marty, 11.3.1940’

Relations Between Australia and New Zealand

In connection with the development of the imperialist war, the establishment of proper relations between New Zealand and Australia is very important for the working class of both countries. One of the principal tasks of the Communist Parties of both countries is to coordinate their common struggle. Despite different conditions, the general tasks of both countries are the same. Nevertheless the two countries are isolated from each other, but New Zealand communists are closer to Australia than to America. These tasks arise for the Australian party too. Both parties must establish connections, by means of delegations, letters, consultations etc.

The principal task must be a joint struggle and a common policy with regard to the Labour Parties of Australia and New Zealand, as well as Chamberlain’s

policies. Both parties must develop fraternal co-operation in matters of informing the press, exchanging articles, personal visits, mutual assistance and training of personnel. This must be the foundation of competition between the two countries: to see who works best. It seems that at present such an atmosphere does not exist in relations between the two countries. It is not enough to send one or two delegations or a student from New Zealand to Australia.

Mutual relations should be developed on the following basis: opposition to the imperialist war and British imperialism, and help for the cadres of both parties, for there exists the prospect that British imperialism may be smashed, and this general aim should be achieved in the course of the war. The working class of the British dominions must help the British working class against the common enemy, the City.⁶ To this end it is essential that the Communist Parties of the two countries unite in common action.

The Labor Party

In the struggle against the war a special movement must be crystallized, particularly in the trade unions. The great masses of the workers oppose the war, the politics of reaction and the anti-Soviet campaign. They support unity and a struggle in the interests of the working masses. They look favourably upon a joint struggle side by side with the communists. But at present they stand far apart from the communists, and we must therefore help them to build a movement within the Labor Party and above all in the trade unions. At the same time we must recruit members for the party from among them.

We must never for a moment forget that the British Empire must disappear and that in this struggle the social democratic parties must naturally also disappear. The question is how can we bring honest Labor Party and trade union members to join the Communist Party, the revolutionary party, and thus provide an organizational basis for the working class. This is also the way to break the power of the reformists in the labour movement. It is the first stage.

It is necessary to pay attention to the particular psychology of the New Zealand working class. It needs organization and leadership. The broad masses are dissatisfied but as yet they see no way out. The best elements still have no faith in the Communist Party. For this reason all those who are prepared to fight the reactionary trade union leaders and the Labor Party and who are therefore increasingly coming into contact with the communists should be drawn into such an organization. They will represent a socialist trend which the Communist Party must drive forward and strengthen from outside.

This question must be examined by the Central Committee. We must train these people so that they are able to struggle against the agents of British

⁶ The City of London, meaning the financial centre of the British Empire.

imperialism in their own ranks and channel the workers' discontent with the trade union and Labor Party leadership in the right direction. Our party must not only devote attention to the declarations of the trade union and Labor Party leaders, but also above all to their actions.

On the question of compulsory conscription, in view of the fact that some leaders oppose the introduction of this, it is necessary to point out that it is not the central issue. Our aim is to end the war. Not one man for the imperialists. Not one pound for the City. In this area our joint efforts are far too feeble.

The Communist Party

In numbers and otherwise our party is far too weak. It must be greatly strengthened, and our main effort must be focussed on what should be done to consolidate it. We must make clear to the best union members why they should join the party, legally, if possible, and illegally if not, so that they will be bound to the party and submit to party discipline.

The party's second primary task is to do all in its power to increase the circulation of its newspaper. A print-run of 9,000 is reasonably good, but not good enough. The paper is the best weapon the party has. With its help we show which policies the working class should follow. With its help we lead and educate the working class and strike at traitors and reactionaries. The paper can also give material form to the alliance between the workers and the farmers against the imperialist war. It must explain all these matters and problems, making use of many arguments. It must increasingly become a paper of the working class, for the working class, and produced by the working class. It is not enough to have a weekly newspaper, or, as in Australia, one that appears twice a week. Our main aim must be to have a daily newspaper. Our concern is now not to have small groups performing small tasks, but mass work undertaken to expose and attack the policies of the Australian and New Zealand Labour Parties, as well as those of Attlee and Greenwood.

All forces should be deployed against the capitalists. For example, women should be mobilized in meetings and delegations against sending troops overseas, while bearing in mind that this is not the central issue. The primary concern is to end the war.

The party must explain the policy of the Soviet Union in particular. We must forcefully attack all anti-Soviet campaigns that are whipped up in the country. We must demonstrate that the Soviet Union is the most important and most active factor for peace in the world today. It is essential to publish a special booklet against British imperialism. In addition, New Zealand and Australia are situated very close to China. They must establish connections with China.

The Question of Personnel

Finally, the question of personnel is one of the most important questions. We must tighten control of our personnel to ensure that they are fully devoted to the USSR, the CPSU (Bolshevik), and Comrade Stalin, the leader of the working class and the working people of the entire world. There must be complete clarity about this. What the CPSU (Bolshevik) and Comrade Stalin do is exclusively in the interests of the working class of the whole world. There must be no doubt about this matter, and the personnel must be able to find their bearings on this basis.

In France and Britain at the outbreak of war our comrades were unable to discern the correct line. As a result a certain error found its way into the party. In consequence of this our parties suffered heavy losses in Britain and France. It is therefore necessary that our parties grow stronger and stronger, and to this end we must select our personnel with great care and help them. Care must be taken to ensure that there are no Trotskyite elements or Trotskyite connections in our party, and we must work and struggle constantly to expose these.

It is vital to entrust a Central Committee comrade with the very responsible task of vetting the personnel.

In the international struggle of our parties in Australia and New Zealand, we should not forget the plight of the Spanish refugees and the International Brigades who are now in concentration camps in France. It is necessary to show to all how these outstanding comrades are being treated, and to raise the question of the possibility of bringing such people to Australia and New Zealand. It would be good for them and for the people of Australia and New Zealand if such courageous and able people as the Spanish refugees and the International Brigades went to those countries.