

# The Russian Revolution— Its Impact on Australia

Edgar Ross



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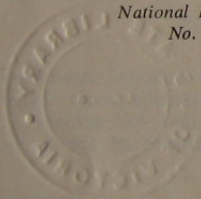
Edgar Ross

*Mr. Ross was a member of the national committee of the Communist Party of Australia from 1939 until 1970, when he was expelled for activity in opposition to the anti-Soviet policies of the party leadership.*

Published by the Socialist Party of Australia, 111 Sussex St., Sydney on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics on December 30, 1922.

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No. ISBN 0 85587 043 5



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Printed by Walter Stone & Sons at The Wentworth Press  
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## FOREWORD

The first Congress of the Socialist Party of Australia held September 29-30, October 1-2, 1972, firmly based itself on the finest working class traditions of the Australian Labor Movement and adopted a programme of struggle for advance to a socialist Australia.

It aligned the Socialist Party with the world Communist movement and unanimously supported the Declaration of the meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties held in Moscow in June, 1969.

In fighting for the national interests of the Australian people the Socialist Party sees them integrally linked with the struggles of the working class of all countries for peace, democracy and socialism.

Our Party shares with the writer of this book, Edgar Ross, the firm conviction that it was the great October Socialist Revolution of the Russian people in 1917, that opened the way for socialist advance by the peoples of all countries.

The impact in Australia was considerable, as this excellent book very clearly shows.

It played a considerable part in influencing the thinking of socialist fighters of the period and led to the joining together of the various socialist groupings into one genuine socialist party.

The Marxist Movement in Australia has a proud history with many victories to its credit and of course inevitably some mistakes.

Of recent times the ideological struggle within the Australian Marxist movement has taken sharp forms.

These struggles led to the formation of the Socialist Party of Australia as a necessary step to continue to maintain in Australia a Marxist Party based on the Australian working class and firmly linked with the International Communist movement.

Writing in the Australian Marxist Review (September, 1972) Edgar Ross had this to say, "It is now clearly of the greatest importance that the Socialist Party of Australia be consolidated and strengthened as the banner bearer of Marxist-Leninist principles and practices that are common to the communist movement in every other country of the world . . . important from both national and international standpoints."

The Socialist Party is proud to take part in the production of this excellent book which we are certain will help Australians to understand the impact of the 1917 revolution and enable them to see the path forward to a socialist Australia.

P. Clancy  
President

SOCIALIST PARTY OF  
AUSTRALIA

P. Symon  
Secretary

November, 1972

## INTRODUCTION

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Russian revolution of October, 1917, the Department of Political Literature of the U.S.S.R. invited communist parties throughout the world to write essays on the impact of that event in their respective countries.

I was commissioned by the leaders of the Communist Party of Australia to write its contribution to the series. I wrote it while in the Soviet Union in 1966 and it was published in the Russian language and widely sold there.

This booklet consists basically of the text of that publication, with some revision and additions to bring it up to date. Now we have another anniversary, to mark the 50th anniversary of the coming together of the individual nations to form the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics — on December 30, 1922 . . . an appropriate occasion for this publication.

In tracing the influence of the Soviet Union on Australian developments, from the first dramatic impact of 1917 to the present day, this outline should serve as a reminder that the improvement of relations between our two countries has been achieved only by unceasing activity by those seeking it.

For the story tells of the continued hostility — sometimes active and violent, at other times latent, but always to be reckoned with — of ruling capitalist circles, here and elsewhere. It is an hostility that has poisoned relations and, indeed, periodically ruptured them. It has been marked by misrepresentation and slander that has always to a greater or lesser degree been the approach of the mass media.

As capitalist newspapers could not be relied upon to give an accurate account of the revolution, so they are no more reliable today in estimating Soviet trends and policies, if now more subtle in their approach. It is a truth that should never be forgotten.

It is hoped that this booklet will assist towards an understanding of the whys and wherefores of that situation, why one's attitude to the Soviet Union is a crucial test of one's revolutionary integrity, and so will strengthen the appreciation of the importance and significance of the U.S.S.R. in world affairs and help to stimulate activity directed towards a progressive improvement in Australia-Soviet relations, in the interests of world peace.

In a particular sense, the outline reveals the debt that Australian socialists owe to the founders of the world's first socialist State and their present representatives and hence should help to counter the shameful cynicism, opportunistic denial of the international relevance of Russian developments in determining revolutionary strategy and tactics, and even anti-Sovietism that is fashionable in some labor — and even professed communist-circles — today.

It is axiomatic that the Soviet Union's socialist progress from 1917 to the present day carries vital lessons for and inevitably exerts a profound influence upon those who would chart a course to socialism in this, as in all countries. Those who choose to ignore that doom themselves to revolutionary impotence.

## Hands Across the Seas

Two citizens of the U.S.S.R. recently met beneath the Kremlin walls and paused in reverence at the grave of Fyodor Andreievich (Artem) Sergeiev.

Nothing unusual about that, you may say, for many a silent tribute has been paid to that famous Bolshevik, whose name has been immortalised in the city of Artemovsk, with a mine, a university and other institutions also named after him.

But there was something especially noteworthy about this particular meeting, for these two comrades, both members of the Communist Party, had not seen each other since they were associated with Artem in the days of the Great October Revolution, 1917, and their thoughts on the storming of the Winter Palace in Petrograd were concerned with the influence of that world-shattering event on a country far away from Russia.

For it was not in Russia, but in Australia that these three, all citizens of Australia, first heard the news of the Bolsheviks' bid for power. Artem returned to Russia to play a prominent part in it. The others remained in their adopted country to assist in its moves towards socialism, inspired by the events of October, 1917 including, and most importantly, the formation of the Communist Party, of which they became early and honored members.

And so the meeting at the grave of Artem Sergeiev on the eve of the 50th anniversary of Red October of these two citizens of the U.S.S.R., Vasily Tranovich ("Tom") Pikunoff and Boris Rosenberg, had a symbolic significance, linking Russia and Australia in a life-long continuity of communist endeavour.

On this day of reunion in Moscow their thoughts took them back to the days after the 1905 revolution when they became exiles in the land beyond the seas . . . to their activities in welding together all the Russians into an organisation for mutual aid . . . to the arrival of Artem Sergeiev and the transformation of the society into a political body with marxist aims . . . to their participation in the struggle of the Australian working class for emancipation.

The unity of purpose between the socialists of Russia and Australia, symbolised by these two Russian, formerly Australian, citizens, has been maintained ever since, but friendship and understanding between the two countries now extends far beyond the Labor movement in Australia to the people in general, who hail each new achievement of the U.S.S.R. and accept its great role as bastion of world peace.

But let us retrace our steps to those historic "October days" when the news flashed across the world that the Bolsheviks of Russia had "stormed heaven" and founded the first socialist state mankind had known.

### OCTOBER DAYS

It was on November 8, 1917 (our calendar) that the newspapers of Australia reported "As a result of the conflict between the Russian Government and the Soviets' Revolutionary Committee regarding the control of the Petrograd military headquarters it is reported that the Soviet Committee has proclaimed itself a new Provisional Government" (Melbourne "Age").

Portentous words . . . and the people of Australia paused in their daily activities in amazement and wonder. What did it mean? Strange new words came into the newspaper headlines . . . the Smolny, the Winter Palace, the Aurora, Lenin, Trotsky . . . what was their significance? Would it all affect them, the people of Australia?

Sections of the working class had no doubt that something epoch-making was taking place. They sensed that here were workers like themselves being installed as rulers of their country. From the canefields of Northern Queensland to the timber mills of Victoria came examples of workers downing tools and celebrating the great event for two days, uninterruptedly.

Russian migrants were elated beyond words. Their organisation in Brisbane proclaimed itself an Australian Soviet. Their comrades in Melbourne stormed the offices of the Czar's representative and occupied them for a period. Surely, the Great Day was at hand, for the workers of Australia, as well as Russia.

The news that the Bolsheviks had won power in Russia was reported in Australia on the same day that the reactionary government led by W. M. Hughes announced its second attempt to gain approval of the people for the introduction of military conscription for service overseas in the imperialist war — the First World War.

The Labor movement was in a mood of confidence, having defeated the first such attempt a year before and now in a situation of rising popular opposition to the European war . . . the people of Australia have a long tradition of opposition to reactionary imperialist conflicts, since the days when they demonstrated against the sending of troops to crush an anti-colonial rebellion in the Sudan in 1885.

The mood of revolt against tyranny stimulated by the Easter uprising in Ireland of 1916—there were many Irish rebels in Australia fostering a militant spirit in the working class—had also not by any means died away.

So the shouts of defiance rang out again . . .

No! No! No! Let Australia answer "No",

For the Devil's at her shoulder  
Plotting for her overthrow.

Tempting, taunting, goading, flaunting,  
Shall conscription lay her low?

Never! Keep her free for ever!

Answer NO! (M. Browne).

Leaders of the Labor movement sensed that the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia would reverberate throughout the world and have an influence on the outcome of their second trial of strength with the ruling class of Australia on the issue of military conscription.

Members of the socialist groups functioning in Australia since the 1880's were quick to react to the important news from Petrograd. Public meetings which were being held regularly in all capital cities to conduct socialist propaganda were devoted now to explaining what was happening in Russia . . . for Australian socialists had understood the significance of Russia's 1905 . . . they had recognised the Kerensky regime as but a passing phase, and now grasped the full meaning of Soviet Power. On the Sunday following its proclamation no less than twenty meetings were held in the parks and on the street corners of Sydney, with a similar quickening of political interest in all Australian major cities.

Among the speakers in Sydney was socialist veteran John Kilburn, who had taken part in attempts to stop the Czar from landing in England in 1905.

Recalling that happening on the eve of his 90th birthday in 1966, Kilburn said, "When we heard of the failure of the 1905 revolution and of the terrible slaughter of the workers and peasants, the four socialist parties combined in a campaign to prevent the Czar from visiting his relatives in London. We held week-end meetings for fully three months and the British Government was forced to bring him into England by the back door. The experience remained indelibly impressed on our minds, and we remembered it quite vividly as the great news came through in 1917 of the Czar's overthrow."

John went on, "We had a tremendous crowd at our meetings in Sydney on that memorable Sunday, and they enthusiastically applauded our statement that we were witnessing the coming of working class power in Russia, and that we in Australia must take the same path to rid ourselves of poverty, exploitation and insecurity."

In Brisbane there was J. B. Miles, later to become general secretary of the Communist Party, addressing meetings on the significance of Russian developments. Still a member of the party's political committee today, "J. B.," affectionately known as "the old man," commented; "Brisbane was a militant centre in those days, with a long record of socialist propaganda work. At three open air meetings on the Sunday after the news came there were speakers from the Labor Council, the Australian Socialist

Party, the Anarchists and the Russian Workers' Association, and there was unanimous and enthusiastic acceptance of our estimate of the Petrograd events as signalling the socialist revolution" (Miles died in Sydney in May, 1970-E.R.)

From the trade union halls the Red Flag was flown to mark the revolution and the Labor Councils set on record their support of the new regime. By resolution, the N.S.W. Labor Council declared, "We rejoice in the revolution in Russia and congratulate the people of that country on their efforts to abolish despotic power and class privilege, and urge the workers of other lands where similar conditions exist to follow their example with the same magnificent courage and determination". Congratulations to the Russian people were extended by the Federal conference of the Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.) meeting in Perth.

Labor journals were outspoken and unequivocal in their support of the new regime. "The Australian Worker," official organ of the country's biggest trade union, the Australian Workers' Union, based on the rural industries, wrote editorially; "The Russian Revolution represents the downfall of ancient despotism and the uprising of the downtrodden proletariat."

"Who among us", asked the paper's W. F. Ahern, "after the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1905 ever expected to see a successful revolution 12 years later? . . . because of the failure of 1905 the lessons it taught the Russian masses . . . manifested themselves 12 years later."

Ahern added prophetically, "History will tell our children that the world has known no greater messengers of freedom . . . now accomplishing the liberation of millions of souls who today draw their first breath as free citizens and human beings in what may prove to be the most advanced democracy in the world . . . Lenin and Russia have brought joy and hope to a world writhing in pain, bloodshed and misery. No longer will the iron rule of Autocracy oppress the people of mighty Russia!"

R. S. Ross, secretary of the Victorian Socialist Party and Editor of its paper, "The Socialist" (father of the writer of this outline), exclaimed "All power to the Soviets" was a cry that rang reverberantly through the world . . . With that cry the Old Order breathed its last; that cry marked the birth pangs of the New Order. How the cry electrified us as it swept all before it in the immortal October and November when the Russian proletariat took command . . . No thinking man of the Labor movement but who must admire — and tremendously admire — the greatness of the Soviet idea and more especially its invention, its use and its application in Russia. All of it partakes of the nature of genius. It touched the heights. It is extraordinarily and epochally colossal. If you can imagine such a phenomenon, it is like an immense lighthouse set on the highest mountain peak in the world, with inspiring rays sweeping all continents . . . It is an event among the few holy and rare events I call corner-stones of history."

The Victorian "Labor Call" published the early proclamations of the Soviet Government and an article praising Lenin as "a real statesman, premier of the world's first industrial democracy, mighty Russia."

Writing in the Brisbane "Daily Standard", Ernest Lane, one of three famous brothers who contributed much to the development of the socialist movement in Australia, the others being Will and John, hailed the revolution as "the mightiest achievement in recorded time," declaring, "The Russian people have thrown off the murderous tyranny of Czardom . . . they have enthusiastically and courageously promulgated and instituted humanitarian principles compared to which the democracy of Australia . . . is but the glow of a lamp to an almighty sun . . . they have fought their way to the goal of the real Co-operative Commonwealth."

## IN OUR TRADITION

The Australian Labor movement saw the Russian revolution as in the tradition of struggle for social justice of its own working class, immortalised in the rebel songs of Francis Adams, the novels of Tom Collins (Joseph Furphy), the ballads of Bernard O'Dowd, and, above all, the stirring verse of the much-loved Henry Lawson, who had written in the Queensland "Worker", first trade union owned paper in Australia, in 1891—

So we must fly a rebel flag,  
As others did before us.  
And we must sing a rebel song  
And join in rebel chorus.  
We'll make the tyrants feel the sting  
Of those that they would throttle.  
They needn't say the fault is ours  
If blood should stain the wattle!"

And as the movement extended its hand across the seas to the workers and peasants of Russia it acted in the spirit of working class internationalism, expressed in its support of the strike struggles of other lands, such as that of the London dockers in 1889, and the wave of revulsion that spread throughout the country at the massacre of the workers of the Lena goldfields in 1912, and in its continued allegiance to the workers' international day, May First, from 1889.

Enraged by the popular support for the new regime, ruling circles in Australia, as those of other countries, unleashed a vicious campaign of lies and slander, tinged with ridicule and expressions of hope in the early collapse of the Soviet government, and sought by distortions to undermine confidence in the ability of the Bolsheviks to consolidate their rule.

Despatches from correspondents on the other side of the world published in the Australian papers presented a picture of utmost confusion. On November 9, 1917, the "Sydney Morning Herald"

wrote—"The Bolsheviks' movement so far has been abortive and will probably result in prosecution by the Government. The all-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviets is backing the Government of Kerensky". But on the following day, the paper reported, "The extremists of Petrograd have deposed Kerensky and seized the reins of Government."

Still, the correspondents continued to speak of the Bolshevik movement as "Lenin's conspiracy" and stated that "the vast majority of the population of Petrograd is loyal to the Government" (i.e. of Kerensky).

The Australian Prime Minister, Hughes, cried out in anguish, "If the Kerensky Government has fallen it appears that the last barrier that stood between the madness of anarchy and the policy that could achieve that liberty which the Russians so fervently desire has broken down. I hope most earnestly that later indications may clarify the disquieting news from Russia but it is evident that . . . it is the most formidable manifestation of the sinister, insidious and menacing German propaganda that . . . since the outbreak of the war has been unceasingly working in the territories of the Allies and has dealt a deadly blow to our cause."

Earlier, Hughes had stated that he would prefer a vigorously pro-Allied Czarist tyranny to a non-combatant revolutionary Russia.

This stupid lie of "German" responsibility for the revolution was peddled unceasingly by the capitalist newspapers of Australia, seeking desperately to explain away the triumph of socialism, represented by the achievement of Soviet Power. The Bolsheviks were depicted as conspirators, German agents, concerned merely with weakening the Allied front in the war.

But truth cannot for long be hidden from the public. Gradually, the facts of the October developments began to emerge in the despatches in the Australian press.

A correspondent from the London "Morning Post" declared, "The whole operation of capturing Petrograd was carried out in admirable military manner. The approaches to the Winter Palace were taken without opposition."

On November 10 the Australian newspapers published in full the first proclamation of the Soviet Government putting into effect the promise of "Peace, Bread, Land." A correspondent from the liberal London paper, "The New Statesman" declared that the new government was "cleaning the country of bribery and corruption."

Still, the enraged capitalists of the world would not accept that the Soviet Government would survive. Wishful thinking brought its influence to bear on reports published on happenings in Russia. A correspondent from London was quoted on November 12 as referring to developments as "a temporary fit of madness." The Melbourne "Age" referred to the Soviets as "a comic opera government" and, assuming the mantle of prophet, asserted, "The Moscow revolt of 1905 fizzled out in a pandemonium of drink

and vice and it looks like the Petrograd revolt is doing the same thing."

On November 13 the "Sydney Morning Herald" headed its report — "Kerensky Rallies-Fall of the Bolsheviks" — and solemnly pronounced that "the liquidation of the Bolsheviks is only a matter of days." On the following day it was case of "The Bolsheviks are no longer masters of the situation."

Hopes continued to rise, and on November 16 the "Herald" boldly announced — "Kerensky's troops are understood to be victorious in Petrograd and Moscow." But doubts developed again, and on November 19 it was "impossible to forecast the future-chaos prevails in Petrograd." Then hopes rose as the counter-revolution got under way and . . . "General Kaledin is the man of the hour . . . a military dictatorship is expected hourly."

By December 1 the battle was over, as the "Sydney Morning Herald" announced "Lenin's Downfall," reporting Kerensky to be approaching Petrograd, and a "private message" from Copenhagen claimed that the Bolshevik regime was "shaky" . . . "a new revolution can be expected hourly." By December 27 Lenin was "preparing to flee from Petrograd".

#### THE RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS—ARTEM SERGIEV

As the weeks went by such reports were recognised as wishful ravings. True, there was a basis for some genuine concern, as world capitalism fought back, confronted with the socialist challenge of the October happenings in Russia, and even some friendly intellectuals began to expound theories that the new regime was "transitory". But confidence in the outcome remained the prevailing mood in the Australian Labor movement, with the hard core of marxists readily grasping the significance of the sharpening class struggle following in the wake of the Bolsheviks' seizure of power.

Prominent among the latter were the Russian immigrants, including those we have already met, Pikunoff and Rosenberg and, standing before Artem's grave on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the revolution, they recalled some of the names. There was the secretary of the Russian Workers' Association, Peter Simonoff, who started his life in the Russian town of Novaya on the Volga and emigrated to Australia in 1912. There was Alexander Suzenko, also prominent in the Russian Workers' Association, Peter Utkin, Alimov, Kalnin, S. Zanders, V. Kurnatovsky, Seresheninov . . . and many others.

But the acknowledged leader of them all was Artem Sergeiev. Arrested for political activity at the age of 16 years, Artem was exiled to Siberia, but escaped in 1911 and left Russia for Australia, with credentials as a member of the Bolshevik section of the Social Democratic Party.

Artem's very life was socialism, and it is on the record that on the voyage to Australia he spent most of his time seeking to make his fellow passengers class-conscious . . . "We manage things badly on this old earth" he said, "There are so many riches around, means to satisfy the demands of men, yet hundreds of millions of people are never properly fed, millions die from starvation and systematic malnutrition. We manage things wretchedly on our planet".

Artem quickly mastered the essentials of Australian society, and in a letter home he wrote; "Australia is a wonderfully good and calm country. In it one has a feeling of confidence. It is spacious, rich and free. . . There are no starving masses, a higher and more developed form of capitalist exploitation serves here as the basis for creating the wealth of the bourgeoisie . . . but in 'fortunate Australia' also exploitation is merciless and if the workers organise and struggle for improvement in their lives, as is the case anywhere in the capitalist world, this leads to class struggle, to strikes and lock-outs."

Artem set to work to change the character of the existing League of Russian Immigrants, which had been largely an organisation of mutual assistance. He insisted that they must set their sights higher, to engage in industrial and political activity . . . to accept responsibility for keeping the Australian people in touch with Russian events and understanding their significance, to take part in the struggles of the Australian working class, and, particularly, to spread marxist thought, not only in the Russian community but throughout the Australian Labor movement. The constitution of the league was changed, and Artem became president of the reformed body.

Applying the new concepts, Sergeiev established a circulating library of working class literature, conducted classes and started newspapers to propagate marxist ideas. He worked in many Australian industries, played a prominent part in the general tramway strike in Queensland in 1912, became a militant member of the Waterside Workers' Federation, achieved a reputation as a public speaker on socialism, took part in fights for free speech and, generally, played a leading role in the Australian Labor movement.

In the words of P. J. Farrell, author of "The Russian Revolution and the Labour Movement of Australia and New Zealand, 1917-1922" . . . Australian Labour was deeply influenced in its estimate of the Russian situation by the enthusiasm, analysis and opinions of the Russian socialists living in Australia. Just prior to the war, a small number of exiled Russian revolutionaries had come to Australia, joining socialist organisations and forming Russian associations.

"Upon the outbreak of revolution, their formative influence was felt not only informally and through the increased activities of the Russian Associations, but also through the widespread circulation of their views, as solicited by labour and socialist organisations. The local Russian convictions immediately following March

were that the Soviets were "the true revolutionary elements" in Russia and that merely the first phase of the revolution had occurred — a second, labour versus capitalism, being imminent. These views were accepted generally within the labour movement" (International Review of Social History, Vol. VIII, 1963).

With the setting up of the Kerensky Government, Artem's understanding of the laws of revolution taught him that the hour for the establishment of a working class regime was approaching, and in May, 1917, he returned to Russia illegally. He became leader of the Kharkov Bolsheviks and at a conference of the Donetz-Krivoi Rog Bolsheviks was elected secretary of the regional party organisation. Subsequently, he was elected a member of the central committee of the party, led the intensive work of preparation for the armed uprising in Kharkov, was assigned to Petrograd and took part in the October events. After the latter he was elected president of the Council of People's Commissars of the Donetz Krivoi Rog Republic and carried out many important assignments for the party until his death in a railway accident in July, 1924, at the age of 38 years.

So Artem Sergeiev left his mark on the revolutionary movement in both Russia and Australia, and by both he will be long remembered.

### HAIL THE SOVIETS!

But to return to our story! While the marxists in Australia led the way in demonstrating solidarity with the workers of Russia in their historic march to socialism, expressions of friendship and understanding extended far beyond the socialist groups.

For instance, leading members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy like Archbishop Mannix, of Melbourne, who had played a prominent part in the campaigns against conscription in the tradition of militant Irish republicanism, adopted a positive attitude towards the revolution as freeing Russia from reactionary Czardom (although when the historic moment passed Mannix veered sharply to the right and became a sinister force in Australian politics as a virulent anti-Communist).

The writings of those who had been in Russia at the time of the revolution or had visited the country since the October days were eagerly sought and devoured in the search for a full understanding of developments.

Among them were the newspapers, pamphlets and books written by A. Rhys Williams, Phillips Price, Arthur Ransome, with a tremendous impact particularly being made by American John Reed's "Ten Days That Shook The World". These were joined by Australian writers like Labor M.P. Maurice Blackburn, R. S. Ross, Ahern and Peter Simonoff of whom, more anon.

In a desperate attempt to undermine support for the Soviet Government, the Australian ruling class intensified its campaign



of slander. Describing the situation, Pikunoff wrote. "The capitalist press behaved abominably . . . Poisonous labels, accusations and all kinds of filth flowed on the Soviet Union from the camp of the warmongers every day."

Wrote Ernest Lane during 1918; "Probably never before in the history of nations has there been launched throughout the world such an infamous, slanderous and vituperative campaign of lies as has been directed in the past six months against the revolutionary workers of Russia . . . No crime has been too dastardly, no movement too atrocious for these apparent disciples of the devil to perpetrate" (And have they changed all that much today, if now more subtle?).

Typical was the despatch published in the "Sydney Morning Herald" on November 23, 1917, which read . . . "Several Petrograd newspapers exposed the Bolsheviks' cruelties . . . the decapitated bodies of cadets told their story . . . women were subjected to every possible cruelty . . . religious shrines were looted."

On December 6 the paper "reported" . . . "Women were brutally handled and many were thrown into the Neva. Many suffered indignity at the hands of the uniformed mob who spent two days in destroying priceless treasures like mad, senseless barbarians. They slashed great works of art."

The capitalist newspapers were filled with invented stories of atrocities committed by the Bolsheviks and of their alleged terror against the people, but a correspondent from the London "New Statesman" wrote; "Where White Guards temporarily occupied a district they carried out a terror on a scale that the Red Guards never dreamed of."

So it was in regard to policy. The programme of the new Soviet Government was distorted out of all recognition. One well known Australian writer in the "Australian Worker", Randolph Bedford, satirised in verse what he described as "a quaint cable lie, distorting the new Russian system of controlling prostitutes" . . . All women in Russia are the property of the State. The private possession of women has been abolished. The distribution and management of women has been transferred to the Anarchist Club."

Wrote Bedford . . .

Do they think that we are crazy? Do they think that we are blind?

That they send a yarn like that across the wave and wind?  
We know natural selection was extant ere Darwin thrived,  
And good old sex attraction was ere Caliban was wived.  
Get this, poor cable liar! Let the cold fact make you think—  
You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.

For the Bolshevik has eyes and ears, and of legs the usual list,  
And the Russian has two kidneys, and a heart the Anarchist;  
And proclamations do not shift a man's loves and desires;

And an iceberg under Bolsheviks is not consumed with fires.  
In Russia still are lovers—lovers' lies pinched from Above—  
You can lead a man to Russia, but you cannot make him love.

The gross misrepresentation of the work of the new Soviet government rebounded against those responsible. Optimism grew in Australia that the Russian Revolution would usher in a series of socialist changes throughout the world, echoing the announcement of Harvey Harrigan, reporter in New York, that "The Russian Revolution will paint the globe red."

Wrote H. E. Boote, editor of "The Australian Worker" under the heading, "Gods Who Are Doomed" . . . "I have a notion that things will happen after the war . . . History will be made of a kind not included in the programme of the ruling class of the nations. Does anyone imagine that Russia is going to have a monopoly of revolution? The workers are questioning their rulers . . . And they are putting capitalism through an examination that probes its pretensions to the very core . . . during the war workers have discovered what an arrant fraud is this capitalist system they have suffered so long. And when something happens after the war the capitalist will be in it. The Russian Revolution will then be dwarfed by the world revolution."

R. S. Ross developed a thesis that the advent of the socialist revolution in Russia would be so influential that it would of itself bring about socialist transformation in other countries, and generally there was an expectation that it would trigger off other similar revolutions.

## REPRESSION UNLEASHED

The mood of optimism in Australia regarding the future development of the Labor Movement received a tremendous fillup with the announcement on December 21, 1917, that the second attempt to impose military conscription had been defeated, and by a more decisive vote than in the previous year. As the working class took the offensive, ruling circles increasingly resorted to repression.

Ross was sentenced to six months' imprisonment (reduced to a fine on appeal) for allegedly sending a blasphemous document through the post. This consisted in an article published in his journal "Ross's Monthly" satirising the atrocity stories concerning the Bolsheviks still appearing in the capitalist newspapers. The article, stated to have been reprinted from "a recent issue of 'The Daily Liar' was headed—"Bolshevism has broken out in Heaven-God Abdicates". The Article was a contributed one but Ross, as editor of the journal, was held responsible.

There were many other prosecutions for breaches of censorship regulations, contravening rules prohibiting public meetings under certain circumstances, for incitement of persons against joining the armed forces, etc.

Special attention was directed to the members of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), set up in the early years of the century to propagate the ideas of Daniel De Leon. The I.W.W. "locals" carried out consistent activity for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Their blunt approach to the class struggle captured the imagination of the Australian working class for a period.

As the American, parent, organisation of the I.W.W. split, the Australian movement adopted the position of the extreme syndicalist wing led by Trautmann, and, taking advantage of the war situation, organised strikes, called for sabotaging of the war effort and revolutionary activity. It was declared an illegal organisation and twelve of its leaders gaoled on framed charges of having tried to burn down Sydney. (Subsequently, after a sustained campaign in which the entire Labor movement took part, a Royal Commission found that the men had been convicted on perjured evidence and they were released.)

Among the leaders of the I.W.W. who was gaoled for sedition was Tom Barker, the editor of "Direct Action". He was deported to Chile and eventually found his way to the Soviet Union. He accepted a position as a commercial representative of the Soviet government and was sent to London, where he served in that capacity for many years. He became a Labor Party alderman and a firm friend of the U.S.S.R. until his death a couple of years ago.

Another Labor activist arrested during the lively days of 1917 was Monty Miller, a veteran of Australia's most violent historical episode, the Eureka Stockade of 1854, when the gold miners of Ballarat defied the armed forces of the State in a bid to redress their wrongs.

#### "HANDS OFF RUSSIA!"

Repression failed to crush the Labor movement or seriously undermine its feelings of solidarity with the working people of Russia, but in the news from overseas came the ominous indications that world capitalism, abandoning its hopes that the new Soviet regime would collapse of itself or be defeated by the counter-revolution, was adopting measures of open intervention in an attempt to bring the Bolsheviks to their knees . . . intervention in the form of sabotage, economic blockade and the despatching of armed forces to Russia.

And Australians learned with a sense of great shame and rising anger that their own government, to its lasting discredit, was actively taking part in these measures. News penetrated through the censorship that not only were Australian officers attached to the forces fighting the Bolsheviks but the Australian warship Swan had been sent with a French vessel to the Sea of Azov.

Here, then, was another issue for the progressive people of Australia arising out of the revolution. Reports of discontentment

among the Allied armies fighting in Russia were seized upon as a focal point for propaganda. A sarcastic poem appearing in an Army paper printed by the 31st infantry division sent by the Americans to fight in Siberia was reprinted in many Australian trade union journals, including the "Seamen's Journal" and the Queensland "Worker".

The poem, headed "Saving Russia" opened . . .

My mother says, says she to me  
"Most patriotic you must be,  
Stand ready, boy of mine, to be a hero  
Be ready with your gun in hand  
To fight for this, your native land.  
Although its provocation sink to zero  
I'll send you, laddie, night or day  
To die for the old U.S.A.

Against its foes for Britain, Spain or Prussia"

But what she never said to me  
Is that she'd send me overseas  
To die for Russia

The poem went on . . .

The Russians may be good or not  
(They seem a fairly decent lot  
Although their arguments are thin and squeaky).  
But maw, she never said, "My boy  
If you would fill my heart with joy  
Go save the Russian from the Bolshevik."  
I'd like to ask maw if she knows  
Why I should tramp through endless snows  
Now that the stuffings out of worthless Prussia  
To ask her if with joy she'd yell  
Should I return all shot to 'ell  
Through saving Russia.

But more than ridicule was required to defeat the plans of the interventionists, and the Australian Labor movement began to mount a big campaign around the slogan, "Hands off Russia!"

The Federal conference of the Australian Labor Party carried a resolution "protesting strongly against the use of armed forces and against the Allied policy of starvation by blockade" and proclaimed the right of the Russian people to work out their own destiny.

A similar resolution was carried by the Queensland Trade Union Congress.

The N.S.W. Labor Council issued a manifesto calling upon the workers of Australia to strongly protest against Allied policy and to take steps to frustrate it.

The manifesto declared that in the attempt to overthrow "the first genuine socialist government the world has ever seen" the capitalist Powers had not only been responsible for the direct murder of thousands of Russian citizens but by their economic blockade "in violation of all international law" had brought

"misery, untold privation and death to millions of Russian workers and their wives and children." This was categorised as "the most atrocious crime against humanity that the world has ever witnessed". It was pointed out that Great Britain alone had expended £100 million to promote "its diabolical adventure". But in spite of it all, it was emphasised, the Soviet Government had defeated all its enemies because it had the majority of the people behind it.

The manifesto ended, "We congratulate the Russian working class on its triumphant vindication of communist principles. We join hands in fraternal relations with them. We declare that the Australian working class will refuse to support these activities." "Hands off Russia!" It was a cry that was to ring out many times in the coming years, marking a consistent determination to defend the Soviet regime.

As the workers of Australia responded to the call of their political and industrial leaders, great meetings were held throughout the country and threats of industrial action were made if the Australian authorities attempted any extension of Australian participation in the conspiracy. The authorities acted to stem the rising movement, launching a vicious attack on the right of assembly and free speech.

The symbol of resistance to repression became the flying of the Red Flag, historic expression of internationalism, which was made an offence under the anti-democratic War Precautions Act.

A pattern developed somewhat paralleling the treatment meted out to the suffragettes of England, fighting for the right of women to vote in parliamentary elections, under the notorious "Cat and Mouse" act, as it was called. Socialists flying the Red Flag at their meetings would be arrested and imprisoned. Upon their release they would repeat the "crime" and, so, back to gaol . . . and so it went on. Many activists spent more time in gaol than out of it in those turbulent days. The cell of one of them, well-known socialist poet, Richard Long, of Melbourne, became famous as a "show place", as he spent his time writing verse and framing it, executing paintings depicting the struggle for free speech and sculptures of working class leaders, including those of the Russian revolution.

There were some humorous aspects of the struggle, as the "Red Flag" movement spread, as, for instance, when the Brisbane Tramway Trust banned the red flag, traditionally used as a danger signal in traffic operations and substituted a yellow one!

But there was nothing amusing about the orgy of repression let loose as the movement in support of the revolution, as an answer to allied intervention, gathered momentum. There were many sharp clashes as the police broke up public meetings and arrested working class leaders.

One of the fiercest took place in the streets of Brisbane in March, 1919. Socialist veteran Norman Jeffery, who was to become a foundation member of the Communist Party, recalled

the details shortly before his death in 1966 . . . "After the suppression of the I.W.W., of which I was a member, we formed the Industrial Union Propaganda League and conducted meetings regularly. On that day in March, 1919, we decided to hold a procession through the streets of Brisbane. The Trades and Labor Council recommended that for tactical reasons no red flags be flown, but we decided to defy the decision. As the marchers proceeded down the street we were attacked by mounted police and the procession was broken up. There were many clashes between the police and ourselves and about 400 were arrested, including 100 members of the Russian Workers' Association. Among them were Bycoff, a Left Socialist Revolutionary from Siberia, Tolstabioff and, most prominent of all, Suzenko. Fourteen were sentenced to six months' imprisonment for illegally carrying the red flag. They were treated as ordinary criminals and, on Bycoff's initiative, they conducted a hunger strike and forced recognition as political prisoners, being then allowed to wear their own clothes, have their own meals sent in, and freed from doing prison work. The Labor Council started a fund to raise money for the supply of prison amenities."

Shortly after their arrest, Suzenko, Bycoff and others were deported. En route to Russia, Suzenko was detained in gaol in Turkey. After the happening, T. J. Ryan, former Labor Premier of Queensland, challenged the legality of the regulation prohibiting the flying of the red flag but the High Court upheld it, so the fight for free speech continued, gathering more and more support and increasingly linked with the issues arising out of the Russian revolution.

## FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET

While socialists and industrial militants led the movement in support of the Bolsheviks, there were examples of Labor Party parliamentarians who played a prominent part. The most noteworthy were Frank Anstey, a member of the Federal parliament, and Percy Brookfield, N.S.W. parliament. Anstey, one of the most colourful orators Australia has produced, had made an outstanding reputation in the campaigns against conscription and, as soon as the news came of the October uprising, publicly announced his support of the revolution.

As the intervention developed, Anstey determined to see things for himself and, as a delegate from the A.L.P. to the International Conference in Berne, he toured Europe. Brilliantly, in his book "Red Europe" he unmasked the Allied conspiracy against Russia, with special reference to activities through Finland, and carried despatches regarding events there to Litvinov in London. In scathing language he denounced the Allied Powers for their attempted encirclement of Russia and had special denunciation for the Labor leaders who had taken their lead from "their bour-

geois masters" and raised the cry of "Rather the Kaiser than the Bolsheviks". He described the way in which the Russian communists had defeated their enemies while consolidating their regime as "a miracle", expressed supreme confidence in the outcome and declared that the October revolution presaged the ultimate defeat of capitalism throughout the world . . . Anstey was to end his days as an active supporter of the Communist movement.

Brookfield's activities, too, were in the best traditions of the fighting working class of Australia. A miner from the silver-lead field of Broken Hill, he carried into parliament its far-famed class consciousness and industrial militancy. A leader in the movement against conscription also, Brookfield made the N.S.W. parliament a forum for debating the issues raised by the Russian revolution, unequivocally taking his stand for Soviet Power. When praising the deeds of the Red Army, he was confronted with the provocative question, "Would you like to see it marching down the streets of Sydney?" His reply, "Yes, if it would mean socialism".

Brookfield threw himself energetically into the campaign that developed for the recognition of Peter Simonoff, secretary of the Russian Workers' Association, whose credential as official representative of the Soviet Government, forwarded by Litvinov from London, the Australian Government refused to accept. When Simonoff was arrested under the War Precautions Act, he was released on bail provided by Brookfield, and the campaign for recognition continued. In refusing an invitation to a State dinner to the visiting Prince of Wales Brookfield told parliament he had a prior appointment with Peter Simonoff.

Sneered at as "The Bolshevik", Brookfield became one of the most hated figures in the eyes of the enemies of the Labor movement. In 1921 he was murdered on a railway station by a "white" Russian who told arresting police that he had committed the crime after being offered money to kill Brookfield. He refused to disclose the source of the proposal. The Russian was acquitted on the ground of insanity and committed to a mental institution where he spent the rest of his life. While the consensus of opinion was and is that there was really no political significance in the crime . . . that the Russian simply "ran amok" . . . there are still those who think otherwise.

### SEEING IS BELIEVING!

The first anniversary of the October Revolution was celebrated by the Labor movement of Australia midst scenes of considerable enthusiasm, and then the second. Wrote "Dialectic", of the Queensland "Worker": "In its great task the Soviet republic has the sympathy and support of the workers of the world, for they realise that Labor's objective of complete economic emancipation has been brought nearer because of Russia and that the bitter path which Russia travelled will make their progress easier when

they decide to bury the capitalist system and usher in socialism". It was a thought which figured more and more prominently in comments on the revolution.

Support for the Soviets gained strength as the "first hand" evidence of their constructive work began to arrive. The first visitor to have actually been in Russia since the revolution was Professor W. T. Goode, Moscow correspondent of the British "Manchester Guardian", who had interviewed Lenin. Goode toured Australia under the sponsorship of committees set up by the various socialist groups, such as that of J. B. Miles in Brisbane and the Russian Workers' Associations. He addressed meetings and wrote articles on a wide scale seldom equalled, making a marked impact.

Professor Goode reinforced the confidence of the Australian socialists in the durability of the new regime. In a widely distributed booklet, "In Russia", published early in 1920, he wrote: "The Government is strong. On a prior grounds it could be argued that a regime that could hold out for two years under the appalling conditions obtaining in Russia must be strong. But I have evidence of its strength. The men in power are sincere—fanatical, if you will—in the strength of their adherence to the principles of the Revolution . . . They are capable administrators . . . I found an industry broken by six years of war and lacking the necessaries still functioning and providing, in spite of everything, for the wants of the people partly and for the army wholly . . . Despite the difficulties of intervention and blockade . . . Bolshevism grows stronger".

But there was nothing like seeing the evidence for oneself, and Goode's visit to Australia whet the appetite for more—for really first-hand information. As a ferment of discussion developed on the character of the Soviet regime and its implications for the rest of the world, the Labor movement of Australia, as those of other countries, began to examine ways and means of sending delegates to Russia to bring back reports. But, first, how to overcome the resistance of the War Precautions Act, still operative, with ruling circles determined to prevent friendly intercourse between the workers of Australia and the hated Bolsheviks?

Almost immediately after the revolution, socialists had tried to arrange visits to Russia, but without success. One of these was a young barrister of Victoria, A. W. Foster, destined to become chairman of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. Foster applied to the Minister for Territories for a passport to enable him to visit Russia in March, 1918, but the application was refused. The same fate met other similar attempts in the early period.

The first Australians to visit Russia after the revolution were leading figures of the socialist groups, J. Howie, W. Earsman, A. Rees, W. Smith and union activist from Broken Hill, Patrick Lamb. A pioneer socialist, Lamb had given refuge to Paul Freeman, I.W.W. agitator, whose case became a cause celebre

when the authorities hounded him from one end of Australia to the other and then sought to deport him, transporting him three times around the world seeking a country to accept him! Finally, he found a haven in the Soviet Union, from where he wrote to Lamb and others, urging them "to come and see for themselves". In Moscow, Lamb renewed his acquaintance with Freeman, but personal tragedy followed. Freeman, Lamb and Artem Sergeiev were sitting together in a rail car, the invention of a Soviet engineer, Krassin, when the accident occurred in which Artem lost his life, together with Freeman, the Broken Hill visitor miraculously escaping, to return to Australia—to return with a report that shocked all who heard it.

True, the Soviet Government was strongly entrenched, as reported by Professor Goode and others. But at what cost! Visitors to Russia brought back news of a terrible toll taken by the years of war and counter-revolution, armed intervention and economic blockade . . . for famine stalked the land. To the demonstrations of support for the Soviets must be added practical aid in the form of relief.

Initiated by the socialists, a campaign of assistance was launched and, receiving the endorsement of the Labor Councils, resulted in large sums of money being raised for despatch to London, thence to Moscow. Some trade unions levied their members a percentage of their earnings for famine relief.

### HISTORICAL SETTING FOR CHANGE

Reaction to the October events went deeper than admiration for the Russian workers and peasants, respect for the Bolshevik leaders, solidarity in resistance to the Allied intervention and material aid to the victims of the years of strife.

What lessons did the Russian revolution carry for the people of Australia and, particularly, for its socialists? How, if at all, could the experiences of the Bolsheviks be applied in furtherance of the socialist cause in Australia?

As the Soviet regime was consolidated, with the defeat of the counter-revolution and the Allied intervention, and the Bolshevik programme unfolded, there developed throughout the Australian Labor movement a polemical discussion around those basic questions.

Since the days when the first Australian settlement was founded as a gaol for the victims of class savagery in the British Isles, there have been strivings for social justice, economic security and political freedom.

The paths advocated have been many and varied. From the "old country" in the early days came such striking indictments of capitalism as those of Robert Blatchford's "Merrie England" and Robert Thressall's "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists", with idealistic calls for humanitarian principles in the verse of such as

William Morris. More concrete in its plans for communal living was the Co-operation proposed by Robert Owen, with some actual examples to be emulated.

Especially appealing in its apparent simplicity to the land-hungry settlers of Australia in the early days was the "single tax" plan of Henry George. The rousing calls to struggle of the American Eugene V. Debs, given lyrical expression in the verse of Walt Whitman, struck an answering chord in the first Australian proletarians.

But they were confused voices in this early Australia, bespeaking of a groping for solutions to the problems of social injustice rather than any practicable plan. This was the Age of the Utopians, the most noteworthy of them being William Lane, one of the three brothers referred to earlier. Lane led the way in carrying the message of socialism to the people and was primarily responsible for the setting up of the Australian Labor Federation (A.L.F.) with a scheme for national trade union organisation clearly inspired by Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trade Union. In twelve months the A.L.F. reached a membership of 15,000 in Queensland, and the organisation launched "The Worker", with the slogan, "Socialism in Our Time".

However, after a serious trade union reverse in the first major trial of strength with the rising capitalist class in the so-called "maritime strike" of the 1890's, Lane abandoned the task of winning the Labor movement for socialism in Australia in favour of a courageous but inevitably futile attempt to establish a "communist society" in the jungles of South America, away from the corrupting influence of capitalism.

Thousands of enthusiastic social reformers followed Lane into the wilderness, only to return full of disillusionment, as the primitive community founded . . . to find there was no escaping the class struggle, still raging more sharply than ever in capitalist Australia and calling for militant, socialist activity face to face with the enemy.

### INFLUENCE OF MARX

In the unfavourable soil of early, rural Australia, lacking heavy industry, marxism had made little headway. Indeed, the marxist trend in the Australian Labor movement was insignificant, despite the fact that it was Karl Marx and not Owen or Bellamy (author of the popular idealistic picture of socialism, "Looking Backward") or Henry George who had been able to make a correct analysis of Australian society and interpret the events in its early history.

For instance, while the Australian socialists of the period found nothing of historical significance in the revolt of the Ballarat miners in 1854, objectively occupying the same position as the sneering commentators of the ruling class, from abroad Marx saw the important implications of the Stockade, which, indeed, laid the foundations of Australian democracy.

In an article contributed to one of the American liberal papers of the period, Marx pointed out that the underlying causes of the revolt were similar to those which gave rise to the American War of Independence in 1776, the chief demand of the Ballarat miners being identical with that of the earlier American colonists, "no taxation without representation". But whereas in America it was the middle classes who headed the revolt, Marx claimed, "in Australia the opposition against the monopolists united with the colonial bureaucrats arises from the workers" ("News from Australia", Marx, 1855).

It is true, of course, that there were socialists in Australia claiming to be marxists, and, indeed, there were tentative links with the First International set up by Marx and Engels in 1864, but the Utopians were dominant and those claiming allegiance to marxian concepts developed organisationally as sects isolated from the mass movement.

From 1887, when the Australian Socialist League was formed, there was more attention paid to the views of Marx, the Communist Manifesto was reprinted and the popular presentations of marxist philosophy and economics began to appear, mainly via the Kerr publishing house in America . . . such as "Value, Price and Profit", and "Wage Labor and Capital". The Paris Commune of 1871 was hailed with enthusiasm and annually commemorated, but as a courageous revolt rather than with any real appreciation of its basic significance as an historic experiment in achieving working class power.

The divorcement of the socialists from the mass movement, and the continued dominance of utopian concepts materially contributed to the character of the reaction of the working class movement to its defeat in the 1890's . . . a reaction which was to set the pattern for the frustrating "two party" parliamentary system.

Again, it was Marx who saw the essential weakness of the workers' position in their first great clash with Capital, pointing out that "while trade unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of Capital, they fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class ("Value, Price and Profit", Vol. 1, p. 337).

And it was Lenin who summed up the fatal weakness in the Australian workers' reaction to their defeat, when he observed, "the masses learn from life, and not from books, and, consequently, individuals and groups constantly exaggerate and raise to a one-sided theory and one-sided system of tactics now one, now another feature of capitalist development, now one, now another 'lesson' of this development. ("differences in the European Labor Movement", p. 81)

## REFORMISM TESTED

Noting that the capitalist State had been primarily responsible for their defeat, with its army, police force and courts, the workers correctly turned to politics, but the party they formed, the Australian Labor Party, was not a party to **attack** capitalism and its repressive institutions, but to **administer** capitalism, while seeking to win the same limited trade union aims by parliamentary means.

As Lenin expressed it, "By trade union politics is understood the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for the alleviation of the distress characteristic of their position, but which do not abolish that position, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labor to capital ("What Is To Be Done?").

"Trade union" politics were the keynote of the first programme announced by the Labor Party, which included the Eight Hour Day, a Workshop and Factories Act, an amended Mining Act, abolition of the Masters and Servants Act, amendment of the Apprentices Act, establishment of a Department of Labor, Government contracts . . . "any measure that will secure an equitable return for all human labor".

As the Labor journalist Winspear commented: "There is nothing very revolutionary or radical in this platform. Most of the planks in one form or another have floated about for years before between the two old parties".

So, the Australian Labor Party, which had early electoral success, set out to "alleviate distress" and did, in fact, introduce many useful reforms, such as the regulation of conditions in factories and mines, pensions for the aged, legal recognition of trade unions.

But, as pointed out by Lenin, this was not its primary mission . . . "The Labor Party has to concern itself with developing and strengthening the country and with creating a central government. In Australia the Labor Party has done what in other countries was done by the Liberals, namely introduced a uniform customs tariff, uniform federation act, a uniform land tax and uniform factory acts".

The party also started some publicly owned enterprises but there was nothing of socialism in the approach to them; rather, they were actions taken within the context of increasing the efficiency of capitalism and when any of them threatened to challenge the position of private enterprise, they were generally allowed to die.

Fighting an election on issues posed by a coal mining strike in 1910, the Labor Party was returned to office on a promise to nationalise the coal industry and start a Government-owned steel industry. Instead, it handed over to the Broken Hill Proprietary Company, which was to become Australia's most powerful monopoly, virtually controlling the whole of the country's heavy industry.

It was a lesson on the limitations of Labor-in-politics that was to be given many times.

Even the period of continual social reform ended and the workers had the spectacle of seeing the Labor Party in office behaving during economic crises in precisely the same way as non-Labor governments and acting just as viciously as the latter, to be repeated over and over again in Australian history.

So, exploitation continued unchecked, economic insecurity remained a feature of Australian society and social injustice was the cardinal principle in operation.

Experience, indeed, justified completely Lenin's summing up: "The Australian Labor Party does not even claim to be a socialist party. As a matter of fact, it is a liberal bourgeois party, and the so-called Liberals in Australia are really Conservatives. . . the leaders of the A.L.P. are trade union officials, an element which everywhere represents a most moderate and 'capital serving' element, and in Australia it is altogether peaceful and purely liberal ("In Australia", Pravda, No. 134. June 13, 1913).

So, the stage was set for the Labor Party's betrayal of even its professed principles during the First World War. As the gathering war clouds became clearly visible, the leaders of the Labor Party, along with those of other social-democratic parties, went on record in support of the course mapped out by the Extraordinary International Socialist Congress at Basle in 1912. . .

"If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved, supported by the co-ordinating activity of the International Socialist Bureau, to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the sharpening of the general political situation. In case war should break out anyway, it is their duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule" (Quoted in the Collective Works of Lenin, Vol. XVIII).

To the contrary, the leaders of the Australian Labor Party, consistent with its record of serving capitalism in internal affairs, declared their complete support for the imperialist war, and at the first parliamentary election vied with the Tory parties in entering into commitments on behalf of Australia, the party's leader, Fisher, offering to take part in the war "to the last man and the last shilling".

The early period of the war found the Labor Party in government federally and in every State of the Commonwealth. True to its election promise, the party set out to gear the country for maximum participation in the war, which meant the sacrifice of living standards and democratic rights by the working class and super-profits for the capitalists.

To enforce its reactionary edicts the Labor Party Government introduced the War Precautions Act and other repressive legislation to curb militant working class activity in defence of living standards, to prevent expressions of opposition to the war, and, in essence, eventually to undermine support for the Russian revolution.

Socialist groups, with trade union support, declared their opposition to the war and stepped up their activity by way of written propaganda, public meetings and demonstrations. The Government retaliated with attacks on democratic rights. Newspapers opposing the war were muzzled by censorship and any defiance of it led to arrests and prosecutions. Estimating that it had effectively intimidated its opponents, the Government launched its move for military conscription. The repression continued, leaders of the socialist parties and the I.W.W. being gaoled. Misguided returned soldiers reinforced the State authorities in terrorist actions against the peace movement. So, there was revealed a continuity of capitalist class rule whether the Liberal or Labor Party occupied the government benches.

#### ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM ALSO A FAILURE

The war-time experiences demonstrated for the enlightenment of the working class the bankruptcy from the standpoint of socialist change not only of reformism, as represented by the Australian Labor Party, but of anarcho-syndicalism as represented by the I.W.W.

The I.W.W. had conducted a courageous struggle against the imperialist war and the repressions that inevitably accompanied it, but often with a sectarianism that lost rather than won support. Yet that was not its main weakness, but its completely incorrect and self-defeating attitude towards the capitalist State and its instrumentalities. Its sneering at the opportunists who called "Bump me into parliament on next election day" was based upon not only rejection of all parliamentary action but a rejection of politics itself.

As expressed editorially in the first issue of its paper, "Direct Action" — "For the first time in the history of the working class movement in Australia a paper appears which stands for straight out direct actionist principles, unhampered by the plausible theories of the parliamentarians, **whether revolutionary or otherwise.**" (Our emphasis).

The big moment to test its concept that industrial action was all-sufficient came in 1917, when an attempt was made to introduce speed up methods into the N.S.W. railways, leading to a general strike. The State moved in, as it had done in 1890 and 1909, the I.W.W. was banned, the unions' leaders were arrested, and the strike smashed, leading to the victimisation of thousands of workers and leaving a legacy of disruption and division that has not yet been completely eradicated.

So, the I.W.W., which had grown on the basis of its opposition to the war and exposure of reformism, proved as incapable as the reformists of providing a socialist way out of the imperialist war or an alternative to reformism in the bid for social change. When attacked by the government, its structure of "One Big Union" was shown to be built on sand, and the I.W.W. itself collapsed.

It was Lenin who revealed a common source of reformism and syndicalism when he wrote, "Bourgeois ideologists, liberals and democrats who do not understand marxism and the modern Labor movement, are constantly jumping from one helpless extreme to another. Now, they explain that it is all because wicked persons 'incite' class against class, and, now, they console themselves that the workers' party is a peaceful party of reform. Both anarcho-syndicalism and reformism must be considered as the direct product of the bourgeois world outlook and influence. They both seize upon one side of the labor movement, raise this one-sidedness to a theory and declare as mutually exclusive such tendencies or features of the labor movement as form the specific peculiarity of one or other period, of one or other of the conditions of activity of the working class. But real life and real history include in themselves these various tendencies, just as life and development in nature, include in themselves both slow evolution and rapid leaps, breaks in gradualism.

"The Reformists consider as phrases all arguments about 'leaps' and about the principles underlying the antagonism of the labor movement to the old society. They accept reforms as a partial realisation of socialism. The Anarcho-syndicalist rejects 'petty work', particularly the utilisation of the parliamentary tribune. In practice, these latter tactics amount to waiting for 'big days' and exhibit an inability to gather the forces for big events. Both the Reformist and the Anarcho-syndicalist hinder the most important and urgent business of uniting the workers in big, strong and well functioning organisation, capable of functioning well under all circumstances, imbued with the spirit of class struggle, clearly recognising their aims and trained in the real marxian world outlook" (Lenin, "Differences in the European Labor Movement, Marx, Engels, Marxism, p. 81-2").

### THE SOCIALIST GOAL

War-time experience not only dealt a mortal blow at the concept of "no politics in the labor movement" and revealed the bankruptcy of the reformist brand of politics but was also a testing time for the "political" socialists. They proved magnificently capable of building a people's movement against military conscription and marshalling considerable opposition to the war itself but quite incapable of making basic socialist progress by taking advantage of the war situation. United by the conscription issue,

it was a unity which interrupted incessant disputation on such questions as the relative emphasis to be given to industrial and political action, the attitude to be adopted towards parliament, relations with the Labor Party, the attitude to be taken in the trade unions. Conferences called to resolve ideological differences and forge organisational unity had proved abortive.

Into this arena of sharp class struggle, socialist confusion and reformist bankruptcy there dramatically stepped . . .

**The Russian revolution** for the Bolsheviks were the only party in the Second International which acted in the terms of the Basle resolution. Under Lenin's slogan, "Turn the Imperialist War into Civil War", the Bolsheviks did, in fact, utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the people to bring about an end to the class rule of the landlords and capitalists of Russia.

It was a world-shattering event which posed the issues that had plagued the Australian Labor movement for years with a new sharpness, a new clarity, a new urgency. Here was Theory become Practice!

"All Power to the Soviets!" Was this, then the answer . . . the "path we have been looking for?"

Eagerly, the activists of the Australian Labor movement began to re-examine the writings of Marx, study the works of Lenin, seek information on this new type of Organised Power, the Soviets.

Wrote R. S. Ross on December 11, 1918 — "Never before had a revolution such close scrutiny, such deep study . . . from all angles, from all viewpoints, the inquiry proceeds".

And as the inquiry proceeded, there came a critical questioning of past methods and policies . . . the performance of the Australian Labor Movement.

Why was it still a capitalist instead of a socialist Australia? Where had the Movement gone wrong? What had happened to the socialist aspirations of its founders?

Labor Party governments, but capitalist policies! A strong trade union movement. but no socialism!

And, indeed, the record was not an inspiring one. As far back as 1888, under the influence of William Lane, an inter-colonial congress held in Brisbane had adopted a socialist objective, which was accepted by the Northern Provincial Council of the Australian Labor Federation in 1890.

The declaration called for "the nationalisation of all sources of wealth and all means of producing and distributing wealth, the conducting by State authorities of all production and all exchange". It asserted that there should be "a just division among all citizens of the State" of all products, only those being retained as were required for public use. The reorganisation of society was "to proceed uninterruptedly until social justice is fully secured by each and every citizen". It was stipulated that the objective was to be achieved "by constitutional means".



The platform disappeared within three years, but, despite the disillusionment resulting from the failure of Lane's "New Australia" settlement in South America, Queensland remained in the vanguard of socialist thought, its Labor Party returning to the socialist objective in 1905. Victoria also adopted it.

However, a proposal for the adoption of the objective by the federal authority of the party was rejected in that year in favour of a wishy-washy proposition from New South Wales which, while vaguely calling for "the collective ownership of monopolies" placed main emphasis on "the cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity (that is, "White Australia") and the development in Australia of "an enlightened self-reliant community".

Only one delegate took exception to the executive's formulation, protesting that Australia "was part of the world-wide socialist movement". He was H. Scott Bennett, rationalist and socialist lecturer (who subsequently was elected as a socialist to the Victorian parliament but resigned after one term in protest against the opportunism of the Labor Party).

An attempt to sharpen the socialist objective was unsuccessfully made in 1908. The party's position was summed up by leader Fisher, when he said, "No Labor Party worthy of the name can deny that its objective is socialism, but no socialist with any parliamentary experience can hope to get anything for many years to come".

In fact, little more was heard of socialism in the councils of the Labor Party. The socialist groups were responsible for a continuity of propaganda activity but, generally speaking, they were either sects divorced from the mass movement or functioned more or less as a "left" wing of the Labor Party, achieving little therefore by way of socialist progress.

Further mention is appropriate of the propaganda and educational activity along clear marxist lines for which the organisations of Russian immigrants were responsible. Our "Australian" Bolshevik, Artem Sergeiev, revealed a persistence in conveying the teachings of marxism-leninism to his circle — and, indeed, beyond into some of the trade unions and other socialist groups — that has rarely, if ever, been excelled, this despite continued suppression by the Australian governments.

Shortly after his arrival in Australia, Artem launched "The Australian Echo", the type for which was set up by hand. It called upon the Russian immigrants to play their part in the struggles of the Australian working class and hammered the point of the need to end the wages system. When it was banned, Artem reorganised and issued it as "The Workers' Life". Subsequently, it, too, was banned but after a period issued in another form. Artem joined the Australian Socialist Party as did also our two friends, Pikunoff and Rosenberg. Although denied official recognition as consular representative of the Soviet Government, Simonoff engaged in a tremendous amount of writing and lectur-

ing in support of the Bolsheviks, with one clear message—"Follow the Russian example and emancipate yourself in Australia". He pointed out that this would also assist Soviet Russia by frustrating capitalist attempts to overthrow it. ("International Socialist", 6/4/18).

## RUSSIA AND AUSTRALIA—THE GREAT DEBATE

Now, let us turn our attention to the great debate on strategy and tactics with a socialist aim that was triggered off in Australia by the advent of the Russian revolution, with special reference to its impact upon the Australian Labor Party and the trade unions.

Labor Party leaders, trade union officials and labor intellectuals soon revealed a wide range of opinion on the implications of the revolution, but **they all agreed on its relevance for Australia.** There was an overwhelming opinion that the success of the Soviets constituted a challenge to the Australian Labor movement to adopt measures to give it a socialist orientation politically and greater militancy industrially.

To quote O'Farrell again — "The political tradition associated with the great conscriptionist betrayal-reformism, 'State Capitalism', opportunism, vote-catching, 'the fetish of leadership' — was renounced, branded as non-labor. Labor's spokesmen insisted that the movement must return to first principles, to a rank and file idealism, both unionist and socialist, akin to that associated with the formation of the Labor Party in 1891".

The editor of "The Labor News", Arthur Rae, one of the founders of the Australian Shearers' Union, later Australian Workers' Union and editor of its first journal "The Hummer", wrote "The issue is whether Labor is to be a middle class party with a platform of palliatives or a working class movement for complete emancipation and reconstruction on a socialist basis".

While warmly supporting the Bolsheviks, Rae thoughtfully canvassed the possibilities of a non-violent development of socialism in Australia, pointing out that "the universal ballot plus industrial pressure, perhaps organised through soldiers' and workmen's councils would open the way to peaceful legal and complete change in ownership" ("Labor News", 18/1/19).

Rae made a passionate plea for unity, declaring "Laborites, socialists, communists and Bolsheviks are all at one in their desires, their aims and aspirations". (Rae later became a Labor Party Senator. He was consistently Left in his viewpoint and ended his days as a member of the Communist Party.)

The viewpoint that the Soviet system, while admirable for Russia, was not suitable for Australia was most comprehensively developed by R. S. Ross, who wrote more about the Russian revolution than any other Australian socialist. In a series of articles in the Queensland "Worker" under the general title of "What's Wrong with Unionism?" he examined critically the whole position of the Labor movement, and, in the light of the Russian

revolution, called for a more militant approach to the achievement of socialism. In a book entitled "Revolution in Russia and Australia" he made a thoughtful examination of the Soviet system, dealt with the dictatorship of the proletariat and presented his "Australian alternative".

Ross's starting point was that "the two boiling countries (i.e. Russia and Australia) are more complementary than antagonistic". He affirmed, "I have no doubts whatever as to the Soviet way being the way — and the right way — for Russia, and indeed the only sound and sure way for anywhere, given a catastrophic revolution against capitalism..."

"Thus, granting generously the fullest measure of praise, will we not be justified in asking if it be necessary for all lands to travel the same road into socialism? To put it another way; must capitalism everywhere be violently overthrown? Australia needs neither violent revolution nor the Soviet system, but may march along evolutionary lines until the hour of capitalism's collapse... then comes Sovietism, if required, then comes Socialism..."

"As for a programme making towards working class emancipation what has been done by the Labor movement of Australia—admitting to the full the shortcomings, defects and final inadequacies of the accomplishments, justifies the continued reliance upon industrial organisation and Parliamentaryism..."

"I submit the continuing to do as in the past all we can do, both on the industrial and political fields... plus making the industrial 'immediate aim' the One Big Union, and the political 'immediate aim' Nationalisation, with the further aim of blending the two as the State on the day of the conquest of political power by the working class, with Lenins on hand to dare and do... One Big Unionism and the Soviet system are in essence as alike as two peas."

Another influential propagandist with a similar approach was H. E. Boote, who had played an outstanding part in rallying support for the "framed" I.W.W. men, and in the conscription campaigns.

In rejecting proposals that had been advanced to counter militant tendencies in the Labor movement, such as "co-partnership in industry" and "profit-sharing", the N.S.W. Labor Council in May, 1920, urged the workers "to unite their class in one organisation for the complete overthrow and abolition of capitalism without delay".

The council's resolution added, "In pursuing the policy of using every available means to reach this goal, class-conscious workers should endeavour, wherever co-operative societies exist, to secure control of their governing bodies for their future use as a bastion of the coming Socialist Republic".

Such was the mood of the militant section of the trade union movement which became infectious and expressed itself in a clamour for early action by the Labor Movement to match the

achievements of the workers of Russia with some definite, concrete progress in Australia towards socialism.

## THE SOCIALISATION OBJECTIVE

The 1919 conference of the Labor Party established a record for the number of successful motions advocating nationalisation. Apart from private banking, it specifically sought the nationalisation of insurance, health services, shipping and cold stores, and urged a capital levy.

Reflecting the impatience within the Labor Party to "get on with the job", breakaway movements developed when militant elements found themselves confronted with frustrating opposition to any change in policy on the part of the leadership. It appeared that the workers of Broken Hill might have found the way with their formation of an "Industrial" Party, effectively represented in the New South Wales parliament by Brookfield.

And at the annual conference of the Labor Party in New South Wales in 1919, A. C. Willis, general secretary of the Miners' Federation, led a group of militant trade unions out of the conference to form "The Industrial Socialist Labor Party", which set out to win support in other States around a programme rejecting parliamentary action in favour of setting up the "Industrial Republic of Australia".

Muddled though the thinking was, and still influenced by discredited anarcho-syndicalism, the movement away from the Labor Party seriously disturbed its leaders, particularly the parliamentarians who depended on the major unions for support. The concern developed into alarm as the leaders of the New South Wales Labor Council announced their participation in the formation of a communist party (of which, more anon).

In October, 1920, the Federal Executive of the A.L.P. reacted to pressures with a decision that was without precedent in the annals of the Australian Labor movement. Declaring the time had arrived for a bold move forward, the executive called upon "all bona fide trade unions" to meet in conference "to see if they could find a surer and shorter road to the socialist objective". It was provided that the decisions of the trade union conference would be placed before the A.L.P. executive for submission to an A.L.P. conference.

Hailing the move, Ross wrote, "Let us speak up for the convocation of a gathering that may be to Australia... what the All Russian Soviet was to Russia".

In the event, when the congress assembled in Melbourne in June, 1921, it was found to be the largest and most representative gathering of the trade unions yet held, with the aggregate number of unionists represented estimated at about 700,000.

In opening the congress, the president of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, E. J. Holloway, who was also president of the

A.L.P. executive, said that there had been "lightning changes" all over the world which must be studied. The federal executive of the party recognised that large numbers of workers were not satisfied with the party's policy and some members considered it no longer corresponded with the changed conditions and, was, in fact, obsolete.

The outcome of two days' debate was the adoption of a socialisation objective for the Labor Party. In addition, a detailed scheme of industrial unionism patterned on the One Big Union concept of the I.W.W. (which had already been adopted by the Miners' Federation) was drafted by a special committee and endorsed by the congress.

In the following October the Federal conference of the A.L.P. was held in Brisbane to consider the decisions of the trade unions and it soon became clear that the right wing politicians had used the intervening time in feverish activity directed towards nullifying the results of the trade union congress. However, the congress decisions had been received throughout the movement with tremendous enthusiasm, as an Australian answer to the challenge posed by the Russian revolution, and all State conferences of the A.L.P., with the exception of Queensland, had instructed their delegates to support the socialisation resolution.

The attack on the objective was launched by E. G. Theodore, who was to occupy during his life the positions of Labor Party Premier of Queensland, treasurer of a Federal Labor government and Big Business magnate.

Theodore declared, "We are asked to abrogate the whole of the methods of the party over twenty years, and adopt something quite revolutionary... it is going to be the end of the Labor Movement... You might as well change your name to the Communist Party and be done with it".

After the two days' debate, noteworthy for the frequent quoting of Russian developments, the resolution to change the party's objective was carried by 22 to 10 votes. A further motion to place the socialisation plank in the forefront of the party's fighting platform was then put forward, stating, "that all parliamentary representatives be required to function as active propagandists of the socialisation objective".

After a bitter debate this motion was rejected in favour of another calling for the establishment of a special sub-committee to consider the position. At the committee meeting Maurice Blackburn commented that if the socialisation objective were relegated "to the obscurity of a pious objective" it would be "pigeon-holed and forgotten" (prophetic words!). The proposal for socialisation to be a fighting plank was defeated by 20 votes to 11. Division having developed, it spread throughout the party, and some branches rejected the socialisation objective.

In the following year, the trade union congress adopted the decisions of the A.L.P. conference, if with some resentment, and proceeded to take steps to implement the positive aspects, with

special reference to educational activity in favour of socialisation and the reorientation of industrial organisation along the lines of the One Big Union.

The congress outlined a series of steps as "methods", which included that "industrial and parliamentary machinery" be utilised to achieve the objective, industrial unionism, the nationalisation of banking "and all particular industries", the setting up of boards upon which the workers and the community would have representation, to run the nationalised industries, establishment of an elective "supreme economic council" by all the nationalised industries, facilities for training workers in management and moves for organisational unity between "all schools of working class thought".

The congress also set up a Council of Action to direct the implementation of the decisions, and resolved to establish "a chain of Labor daily newspapers" throughout the Commonwealth.

Despite the modification of the trade unions' proposals by the A.L.P. conference, the decisions were hailed by the left wing with great enthusiasm, except for the socialist groups, which were generally sceptical.

"We are going to make the next ten years a transition to socialism" declared Willis, adding "the adoption of the socialisation objective was one condition, without the adoption of which I would have nothing to do with the Labor Party."

Ross summed up the programme as "Nationalisation first and then control by some sort of Soviet system... As part of the policy for Australian Labor seeking socialisation I say, nationalise, and hand over control to the industrial unions and so, having no speculators or exploiters, establish the New Order in Australia".

R. J. Heffron, later to be Premier of New South Wales, wrote "... By supplanting capitalist dictatorship with proletarian dictatorship we will be reaching the goal of our dreams, on the road to which Russia is the greatest milestone passed".

But others struck a more cautious note, an indication of things to come, such as James Scullin, later to become a Labor Party Prime Minister and to "toe the line" in the great capitalist crisis of the 'thirties.

Quoth Scullin: "The socialisation objective is ultimate, not immediate. The capitalist system is crumbling, and world events point to the end. To seek to accelerate it will bring about chaos. If there was ever a conference undoubtedly trying to prevent revolution by force this conference is doing that at present."

So, the socialisation objective, brought into being under the pressure of a wave of militancy largely resulting from the impact of the Russian revolution, soon receded into the background as far as the Labor politicians were concerned. Socialisation was hardly mentioned in the election campaigns following the Brisbane conference and when reference was made to it the purpose was generally to "explain it away".

In sections of the trade union movement, however, the objective was accepted with sincerity and there were campaigns for the nationalisation of particular industries, such as the coal mines and marine transport, but even nationalisation became a "dead letter" and Labor Party leaders restated their traditional concepts of moderation and gradualism, declaring that "there was nothing to learn from Russia".

Indeed, the leaders of the Labor Party who a few short months before had hailed Bolshevism as the beginning of a world socialist revolution now veered sharply to the right and followed the lead of the ruling class in blackening the name, giving it a sinister meaning, making it a "dirty" word to be flung at anybody with progressive ideas, in lieu of serious argument, and, it must be conceded, with some success.

As expressed by Ross, "Looking back on the past, and knowing a little of the martyrdom of the many, who is there with even a nodding acquaintance with Labor history can help marvelling at how, over and over again, the people rise to the bait and so hook themselves to tyranny? ... Why in Australia the terror, the gag, the intimidation, the many nameless forces now operating anent Bolshevism, have been successfully tried within a few years in regard to Red Ragism, the Socialist Tiger, the I.W.W., anti-Conscription and Sein Fein, and so on, not quite, but nearly ad infinitum ...

"Admitting something legitimate to fear — from the standpoint of capitalism — in most of what were assailed, yet also see the cute foes of Labor adroit enough-masterly in their cunning — to turn even their fears to excellent profit, and by passing them on use even the menace to buttress the system."

Sincere elements in the rank and file of the Labor Party sought courageously to keep the socialisation objective alive on a propaganda level, but failed to arrest the drift to the right.

Sadly disillusioned, Ross commented on the 1924 conference of the Labor Party in these words, "Conference in the main treated working class emancipation as a dream, or even a myth". At the 1927 conference there was a successful move for the revision of the objective and methods, "the constitutional utilisation of existing governmental machinery" being substituted for the Supreme Economic Council, etc. In 1930 Ross could not even get a seconder to his proposal to restore the "methods" adopted in 1921.

Yet, paradoxically enough, reflecting the two-class character of the Labor Party and the continuing sensitivity of its leaders regarding the activities of the Communist Party, the A.L.P. has retained its socialisation objective despite many right wing moves to have it abolished, while consistently rejecting all proposals calculated to work for its implementation and even refusing to agree to educational campaigns being conducted around it. There have also been important modifications by way of "interpretations" of the objective, such as the particularising of industries declared

to be appropriate for nationalisation on the basis of the degree of "exploitation" involved in them.

Moves to implement the decisions of the 1922 conference in the industrial sphere did meet with some success. On the initiative mainly of Willis, negotiations were opened between representatives of key trade unions to set up the One Big Union. In the initial conferences agreement was reached by the Miners' Federation, the Australian Workers Union, the Australian Railway Union and the Seamen's Union to become "Departments" of the O.B.U.

Other unions also showed early interest and registration was sought for the new organisation with the arbitration court. The application was refused. Officials of the A.W.U., which was the bulwark of the Labor Party, became fearful of an organisation they might not be able to dominate and, as the leaders of the A.L.P. moved to the right the A.W.U. somersaulted and came out in violent opposition to the whole scheme.

The Miners' Federation tried to "go it alone", changing its name to the Workers Industrial Union of Australia, Mining Department, but the movement eventually petered out as the right wing reached a position of dominance in the Labor Movement. But, basically, the One Big Union scheme foundered because it sought to short-circuit necessary historical steps in transforming union organisation from a craft to an industrial basis and was muddled in its approach to the issue of political power, repeating, in essence, the erroneous ideas of the I.W.W., which, indeed, had originally formulated the scheme.

One positive achievement emerging from the whole period of testing Labor policies and methods and organisation in the light of the Russian revolution, however, was the establishment through the Councils of Action of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

While rejecting the O.B.U. concept, the A.C.T.U. did set itself the task of developing union organisation along industrial lines, a principle that is embodied, in part, in the "industry group" basis adopted in electing its executive and those of its branches, the State Labor Councils.

## FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

From its beginning in the wake of the Russian revolution, the A.C.T.U. has developed into a strong, authoritative, representative trade union centre, with none of the "rivals" attached to religious authorities or sectional political interests that exist in many other capitalist countries.

The A.C.T.U. was formed, too, with the socialisation objective and has, generally speaking, adopted a better position than the Labor Party on basic political issues, including attitudes to the Soviet Union, to which it has generally been friendly.

Meanwhile, there were important developments among the socialist groups, which had displayed a united approach in admira-

tion of the Bolsheviks and recognition of the significance of Soviet Power but joined issue with each other on the application of the Russian experience to Australia.

The major group was the Australian Socialist Party, which had emerged from a Socialist Federation of Australia formed at a unity conference of the socialist organisations existing in 1907. It acknowledged without equivocation its allegiance to the philosophical position of Marx and Engels and at its founding conference the Federation had carried a resolution reading,

"That we most heartily congratulate our revolutionary and socialist comrades of Russia in the magnificent fight they are waging against a most ruthless and vicious form of despotism engineered by the capitalist class. We congratulate them upon their splendid display of courage and efficiency of their fight. We hope to see them particularly triumphant as part of the world's proletariat. We protest against the despotic tyranny again showing itself by the autocratic, forcible breaking up of the Duma, and promise them the best support it is in our power to give them."

The Socialist Labor Party, which had more or less followed the line of De Leon, refused to link up with the Socialist Federation and continued its independent existence, becoming more and more isolated from the rest of the Labor Movement.

Active in Victoria was yet another socialist party, that maintained close ties with the Labor Party, with which it was affiliated for a period.

While past its hey-day after 1917 the I.W.W. continued to function in one form or another and exerted influence among the militant industrialists gathered around the various Trades Halls.

Could these divergent groups, all sincere in their acceptance of the marxist content of the Russian revolution, hammer out a unity on the important question of how to further the movement for socialism in Australia?

Into their consideration in 1919 came the experiences of the socialist movements of other countries which were orientating their organisation towards the Leninist model and uniting for mutual aid in the Third (Communist) International, with, as its industrial expression, the Red International of Labor Unions (R.I.L.U.).

"The Bolshevik revolution has successfully proved that socialists must overthrow parliamentary government and set up industrial democracy" said the A.S.P., which, in May, 1918, suggested the formation of Australian Soviets.

"What's good enough for Russia is good enough for me!" proclaimed the leader of the S.L.P. . . . but insisted as a basis for unity adoption of the position of the "political" wing of the I.W.W. However, the I.W.W. in Australia published with approval an appeal from the Third International to the organisation in America to change its syndicalist position, stating, "Every experience of Russia indicates to communists that something more

than industrial weapons are necessary to combat the internal and external machinations of the capitalist class during the transition period towards the Communist Order . . . The idea of building a new society within the shell of the old is no longer valid."

Active in the discussions on the important question, "What is to be done?", too, were the members of the 'Russian Workers' Association, led by Suzenko, who had returned to Australia with first hand information on developments in other countries. (Subsequently, Suzenko was forced to return again to Russia and became captain of a merchant ship and active in Soviet affairs).

The Victorian Socialist Party was a veritable battleground of conflicting ideas. While Ross had expressed himself as being in favour of considering affiliation with the Third International, in practice he uncompromisingly resisted all attempts to reorient the party along Leninist lines and retained his belief that only the Labor Party could, in the final analysis, be the instrument of socialist change in Australia. A prominent part in the battle in the V.S.P. was played by the Russians, led by the secretary of the association there, J. Maruschak, and including our reunited pair, Pikunoff and Rosenberg.

At length, the important issue of the future orientation of the socialist movement in Australia was resolved with the formation of the Communist Party, the most significant and historically decisive development to follow the Russian revolution.

The decision was made at a conference of left wing and socialist groups called together in Sydney by the Australian Socialist Party on October 30, 1920. A provisional executive of twelve included three representatives of the A.S.P. and leading officials of the N.S.W. Labor Council.

Wrote L. L. Sharkey, in "An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party", of which he was then General Secretary (1944), "The formation of the Communist Party was one of the decisive revolutionary acts of the Australian working class. The formation of the Communist Party was the outcome of the experience of the working class gleaned in the struggles and growth of the Labor Movement from 1890 to 1920. In this period the working class experienced the limitations of 'Liberal' Labor governments and reformist trade unionism. It experienced the futility and bankruptcy of socialist sectarianism (Socialist Labor Party, Australian Socialist Party, etc.) and anarcho-syndicalism (Industrial/Workers of the World) . . . it represented the victory of marxism-leninism over various petty bourgeois pacifist 'socialist' theories (Victorian Socialist Party, 'peaceful revolution', Fabianism', etc.).

"At last the Australian workers started to find the true path to their emancipation, i.e. along the lines of the theory and practice of marxism-leninism, embodied in the Communist Party.

"The formation of the Communist Party was therefore one of the historical milestones on the road of the Australian working class toward its liberation".

## THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

The Communist Party came into being as the logical development of the testing in historical practice, in Australia as elsewhere, of the various ideologies, the Russian people in their revolutionary acts climaxed in October, 1917, setting the seal on the choice of marxism-leninism.

First Secretary of the Communist Party was W. P. Earsman, prominent in the Amalgamated Engineering Union, who was one of the most active members of a Labor College formed at the Sydney Trades Hall which taught, among other things, marxist economics.

One of the most colorful but unstable personalities on the first provisional executive was J. S. ("Jock") Garden, secretary of the N.S.W. Labor Council. Others included Tom Glynn, one of the twelve members of the I.W.W. framed and gaoled in the 1917 struggle, S. Zanders, already referred to as a prominent member of the Russian Workers' Association, and A. S. Reardon, secretary of the Australian Socialist Party.

A foundation member of international repute in literature was the novelist Katherine Susannah Prichard, who wrote marxist tracts as a member of a socialist circle in Western Australia before the formation of the party. She was a member of the party's central committee for some years. (Katherine Prichard broke with the present leadership of the party over the issues posed by the events in Czecho Slovakia in 1968. She died shortly afterwards.)

Into the party in its early days stepped our friend Pikunoff, who had played an active part in the campaigns against military conscription, and for free speech, and had maintained the continuity of the Russian Workers' Association papers, with "Knowledge and Unity" until it was suppressed by the authorities in 1919. His re-discovered colleague Boris Rosenberg claims to have been a foundation member of the party in Melbourne. Simonoff supported the formation of the party.

But to form a revolutionary party is one thing, and to consolidate it quite another, not to mention providing it with a clear-cut policy, as the foundation members of the Communist Party of Australia quickly discovered. It was almost two years before differences were ironed out and a united party established, the marxist trend triumphing.

Responding to the call of the Communist International, which played a key role in the unification, expressed in the slogan "To the masses", the united Communist Party set out to strengthen its ties with the working class movement. A United Front conference called by it was attended by representatives of a hundred different trade union bodies. Power, a prominent member of the Labor Party, chaired the conference at the first session and his place was taken later by Jack Howie, a prominent communist.

The conference called upon the Labor Party to change its rules to allow for affiliation of other working class parties, same to have the right to maintain their own independent organisation and to conduct their own propaganda but with responsibility to accept majority decisions of representative conferences.

The matter was debated at the annual conference of the Labor Party in New South Wales in 1923. The vote was even and the chairman, A. C. Willis, delivered his casting vote in favour of the motion, declared to be the first decision for communist party affiliation to be adopted by any Labor Party in any part of the world.

Immediately, the party set out to consolidate the affiliation. In a manifesto addressed to the rank and file of the Labor Party, "The Workers' Weekly", official organ of the Communist Party, in its first issue wrote . . . "The objective of our Party is the same as the Labor Party—the Socialisation of Industry. The main difference between the men you have chosen as your leaders and ourselves is that they believe the Socialisation of Industry will be an easy matter, while we believe that it will be the most difficult task that the workers have ever had to perform. We believe that only the workers themselves can accomplish this task. Your leaders believe that they can do it for you. But whatever differences we may have today can only be settled in the future, while on the other hand we are in agreement upon the things that matter now.

"You believe in high wages and shorter hours—so do we, and our Party takes the lead in fighting for these conditions. You believe in educating the workers to an understanding of the working class position—we carry out that educational work. You believe that someone must take the lead in the fight in the every day struggle—this we are prepared to do. Our party formulates a fighting policy for the every day struggle and organises the workers to carry on the fight".

The right wing leaders of the Labor Party, led by the "left" demagogue, J. T. Lang, were determined to frustrate the development of working class unity, the A.L.P. executive violated the conference decision, removing Garden and Howie from the executive and expelling all known communists from the A.L.P. There was abundant evidence that the rank and file of the A.L.P. favoured affiliation and "The Workers' Weekly" published a list of 70 Labor Party branches and trade unions who had gone on record in support of it.

However, at a blatantly "rigged" conference at the end of 1923 the A.L.P. rejected a continuance of affiliation by the party on a vote of 169 to 110, although it was pointed out by the "Workers Weekly" that the members represented by the minority far exceeded those of the "majority".

Nevertheless, the negative decision became the policy of the A.L.P., communists being excluded from the party, and, in a situation marked by an improvement in the economic position of

the workers, with the immaturity of the Communist Party also a factor, affiliation ceased to be an issue, and the communists turned their attention to building unity by other means.

On several occasions since 1923 the issue of affiliation to the A.L.P. has been raised and specific proposals submitted to the A.L.P. leadership, but without result, while communists have continued to exercise considerable influence in the A.L.P. and have periodically established a condition of effectual unity with supporters of the A.L.P. in the day-to-day struggles of the Australian working class.

The Communist Party's failure to make an impression in early bids for parliament led to a liquidationist move inside its ranks but, after a bitter struggle lasting for some years, the opportunists were routed and the party's position consolidated. But one of the communists' major problems is still how to find the way to parliamentary representation.

Industrially, the party made great headway, big opportunities coming as the rumblings of economic crisis began to be heard and the ruling class of Australia set out to tame the working class with planned onslaughts on living standards. The communists played a significant role in mobilising the workers for resistance around a programme of positive demands for higher wages, shorter hours and improved conditions generally. Major clashes occurred in the heavy industries, on the waterfront, the timber industry and the mines. As unemployment grew, the party organised the Unemployed Workers Movement. As a fascist threat emerged through the New Guard, communists took the lead in meeting it.

In accordance with tactics recommended by the international communist movement, the Australian party organised the Militant Minority Movement, which took the lead in the formulating of policies to drive back the employers' offensive and, as a sequel, led to a marked change in union leadership, with the election of communists to official positions.

But let us retrace our steps to the October revolution and its aftermath!

### AID FOR RUSSIA

One of the earliest successes achieved by the united Communist Party of Australia was in the organising of relief for the victims of the counter-revolution and Allied intervention in Russia. Assistance in this regard was rendered by Hercovici, who arrived in Australia via London. And again the colleagues of Artem Sergeiev came into the picture. Pikunoff being secretary of the committee set up in Victoria. The campaign received the official endorsement of the N.S.W. Labor Council and it contributed substantially to the fund.

As the need for actual famine relief receded, the movement swung over into one for raising money to send equipment to Russia to assist in industrialisation, a committee set up in Sydney

being headed by the miners' president, J. M. Baddeley, with a Russian, Bolotnikoff, as secretary. It included among its members R. J. Heffron, an early member of the Communist Party.

### HIGH PEAK OF INTERNATIONALISM

It was under the inspiration of the Russian revolution that the Labor Movement of Australia reached its highest peak in working class internationalism, revealing a sharp differentiation between reformism and communism.

True, there had always been socialists and industrial militants ready to forge links with the progressives of other countries. There had been such a link with the First International formed in 1864 and the N.S.W. Labor Council had raised money to send a delegate to a conference of international working class organisations in London in 1886 in the period leading to the formation of the Second International. An outstanding example of internationalism in practice was the material aid rendered to the dockers of London in their historic strike of 1889 (associated particularly with the British socialist Ben Tillett, who subsequently visited Australia and, incidentally, laid the foundation stone of the Broken Hill Trades Hall in 1898).

But the development of firm international links was stultified by the ascendancy of the Labor Party, the leaders of which were insular in their attitude and lacking in the spirit of internationalism.

Socialistically-minded activists in the A.L.P. were continually frustrated in their attempts to induce the party to link up with the Second International. In 1905 they had obtained a favourable decision from the Federal conference of the A.L.P., but the resolution that steps be taken to secure representation at the next conference of the International was never implemented. In 1912 the A.L.P. conference spoke enthusiastically about the need for "international working class solidarity" and of the "advisability" of sending a representative to the Second International, but, again, nothing was done.

R. S. Ross hailed the coming into being of the Third International, the manifesto of which was published in "The Socialist", with these words: "We can no more make scientific and correct headway as a Movement unless part of the international process within the international proletariat than we can unaided cast off the bonds of capitalism . . . Internationalism, and the bringing into being of the Third International, demands the keenest and most zealous enthusiasm and knowledge our Movement can bring to bear upon them."

But the right wing of the Labor Party were even less interested in associating with the Third International, even while expressing support for the Russian revolution, than they had been in linking up with the Second International and soon veered over into a position of active opposition to such a course.

In 1930 the A.L.P. was still proposing an inquiry concerning affiliation with the so-called Socialist International (based on Amsterdam) but again did nothing about it.

It was the members of the Communist Party who acted in accordance with the best traditions of working class internationalism born in the early years before the advent of the Labor Party.

In the words of Lenin, "The First International laid the foundations for the international, proletarian struggle for socialism.

"The Second International was the epoch of preparing the ground for a further spread of the movement among the masses in a number of countries.

"The Third International has gathered in the fruit of the labors of the Second International, has shed its opportunistic, social chauvinistic, bourgeois and petit bourgeois rubbish, and has begun the realisation of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (quoted by O. Kuusinen in "Twenty Years of the Communist International").

Australians attended the third congress of the Communist International and a conference of the Red International of Labor Unions (R.I.L.U.) held at the same time, both in Moscow in 1921. The N.S.W. Labor Council affiliated with the R.I.L.U. and its secretary, J. S. Garden, attended the congress of the Communist International in 1923, being appointed a member of its executive committee. He was accompanied by Earsman and T. Payne (the latter still active in the progressive movement and a firm friend of the Soviet Union).

Upon his return to Australia, Garden contributed a series of articles to "The Workers' Weekly" on the October revolution. In his first he said, inter alia, "Every communist regards the Russian revolution as one of the greatest events in all human history. It was predicted that although a proletarian revolution had occurred in Russia, and the workers had taken control, that owing to her backward state industrially the Revolution would not survive; that it would be overthrown long since through the series of armed invasions, boycott of all nations, plagues, famines, industrial breakdowns, etc., but, contrary to all predictions, anticipations, and desires the workers still retain power; they have already overcome mountains of difficulties, and are going right on extending and consolidating their power against great odds. The Russian workers gain the admiration of all visitors because of their tenacity of purpose to overcome every difficulty.

"The brains of the Russian revolution is the Communist Party. The visitor who tries to analyse the organisation of Soviet Russia admits it is the most remarkable in human annals. It is the organised driving force, courage and idealism . . . the very sauce of life of the Revolution."

Considerable attention was also paid to the building of organisation embracing the trade union movements of the Pacific countries, leading to the establishment of the Pan Pacific Secretariat, which received Labor Party support and an affiliation from the A.C.T.U.

The Secretariat carried on useful propaganda work for a period on the problems of the colonial countries. Associated with its organisation was Rubinoff, from the Soviet Union.

In the first decade of its existence the Communist Party in Australia conducted a number of international campaigns. These included solidarity actions in support of the Chinese national revolution. Assistance was organised for the British seamen who in 1925 went on strike in all Australian ports against wage cuts. Support actions were also organised for the British general strike of 1926.

Campaigns were also conducted by the party against the electrocution of the "framed" American anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, and for the release of the American I.W.W. agitator, Tom Mooney. These solidarity actions led to the formation of the International Class War Prisoners Aid, which raised funds for victims of capitalist class persecution in many parts of the world.

With the stabilisation of capitalism throughout the world the revolutionary tide which had flowed so strongly after the Russian revolution receded but the historic days of 1917 were never forgotten, the event being regularly commemorated throughout Australia.

More important even, the lessons of the Russian communists' tactics and strategy were consistently kept before the Labor Movement and the people as a whole, and the pronouncements of Soviet leaders on world affairs eagerly sought and studied and their policies examined for Australian application.

## STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM

A development forecast by Soviet leaders, the rise of fascism, was watched with growing anxiety by the people of Australia . . . "the dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialist capitalist elements, and its plans for the fomenting of war for a redivision of colonies and spheres of influence at the expense of the weakest countries" (Joseph Stalin).

And, as the Japanese militarists marched their troops into Manchuria in 1932 the Labor movement of Australia, on communists' initiative, organised "Hands off China" demonstrations, instituted a boycott of Japanese goods and backed the waterside workers in refusing to load pig iron for Japan and in resisting the intimidatory measures introduced by the Government.

In accordance with the decisions of the Communist International (Seventh World Congress), the party in Australia adopted as its main slogan "Unity against Fascism and War". As the fascist march developed in Europe, the party enthusiastically endorsed the policy put forward by the leaders of the Soviet Union of collective security which, after keen debate, became accepted as the official policy of the trade union movement.

Hence, the important "ground work" done by the Communist Party in the days following the Russian revolution and under its



influence in reviving the spirit of internationalism and applying it concretely to situations as they arose, now paid dividends in the wide support won among the Australian people for the concept of an alliance with the Soviet Union in its proposals for halting fascist aggression.

Not only the Communist Party but the Labor Movement as a whole came out strongly for full economic sanctions against Italian fascism as it rained bombs on the villages of the Abyssinian people and for the closing of the Suez canal. So, too, with the call for full support for the Republican Government of Spain in the struggle against counter-revolution and fascist intervention.

The party organised an Australian detachment of the International Brigade to fight on the side of the Spanish Republic and several members lost their lives in the struggle. A broad committee also organised the despatch of an ambulance, with a staff of nurses, to aid the Spanish people.

Through the Movement Against War and Fascism, the Hands off China committees and the Spanish aid movement, all organised on the principle of the united front recommended initially by the Communist International, large numbers of workers and intellectuals were drawn into activity.

In the event, the world-wide movement in support of the Soviet Union's call for collective security proved not strong enough to overcome the treachery of ruling circles in the capitalist countries outside the fascist orbit, including Australia, war came, and difficult problems came with the outbreak of hostilities.

When, at the conclusion of the Polish campaign, the Soviet Government associated itself with proposals for a peace conference, Australian communists supported the move, as appearing to offer a last-minute chance of averting a world conflict. When the offer was rejected and the war began to spread through Europe, the party called for a people's government that would organise a real people's war against fascism.

Difficulties arose out of slanderous misinterpretations of the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression and, as plans became clearly visible on the part of the British Government, supported by the reactionary Australian government of Menzies, to "switch the war" against the Soviet Union, the slogans of the days of the Allied intervention after the October revolution were revived.

The cry "Hands off Russia" again echoed throughout Australia as preparations were made in Britain for "an Expeditionary Force" to aid the White Guard Mannerheim in his plans for an invasion of the Soviet Union through Finland, while similar plans were made for an entry through the Crimea.

Significantly, defence of the Soviet Union became a "test" in a major struggle that had developed in the Labor Party as its leadership moved to the right in the period of the economic crisis.

Central figure in the struggle was J. T. Lang, Labor Premier of New South Wales, who had encouraged the formation of "socialisation units" in the Labor Party to educate and plan for

socialism but liquidated them as he veered right and set out to consolidate right wing power in a tight bureaucracy that became known as "the inner group".

The struggle developed around the issue of control of the Labor Party's daily newspaper and the Labor Council's wireless station. Active members of the socialisation units, who had worked in unity with the communists, took the lead and, backed by most trade unions, succeeded in retaining control of the wireless station, regaining control of the newspaper, and defeating the Lang group in the party.

In the columns of The Labor Daily progressive Labor journalists (including the writer of this outline) conveyed militant leadership, socialist leadership, to the Labor Movement, and popularised Soviet foreign policy.

The Labor Party executive in N.S.W. came under the leadership of men who had stood for aid for Spain, opposed the policies of appeasement of the fascists, and been consistent in their support of the Soviet Union. Policies were formulated representing a break from the "traditional" attitudes of reformism, emphasising the socialisation objective.

Thoroughly alarmed, the right wing of the Labor Party began to move to undermine the progressive forces in the party, and the issue was joined on the question of attitudes to the Soviet Union almost a case of "back to the 1920's".

At its annual conference in 1940 the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party, after a keen debate, carried a resolution condemning the attempts being made to switch the war against Russia and, specifically, defending Soviet actions in Finland.

Immediately, there was an enraged outcry from ruling circles, echoed by the right wing of the A.L.P., against what became known as the "Hands off Russia" resolution. The federal executive of the party demanded that the resolution be expunged from the records and, shortly afterwards, it intervened in New South Wales, declared the State executive disbanded and set up its own hand-picked group.

The displaced executive re-convened the annual conference and decided to defy the Federal authorities, establishing "the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales", the federally-sponsored body giving itself the name of the "Official Labor Party". The State Labor Party, as it became known, continued its policy of supporting the Soviet Union but the big majority of Labor Party adherents transferred their allegiance to the Official Party. Still, the State Labor Party, boldly proclaiming a socialist position, polled the highest votes in elections ever received by a party openly acknowledging such a standpoint.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party boldly defended the Soviet Union, in a situation in which Soviet policy was widely misunderstood and the victim of a vile campaign of slander. It was declared an unlawful association and was forced to go "underground". Repression was extended to the trade unions in which

the party had influence and the most drastic censorship in Australian history was introduced to cover such publications as the "Maritime Worker" (official paper of the Waterside Workers' Federation) and "Common Cause" (edited by the writer), which were specifically forbidden to even mention the war, strikes or the Soviet Union. Among publications completely prohibited were those of the Friends of the Soviet Union and the Movement Against War and Fascism.

However, the party had learned from the revolutionaries of Russia how to combine legal with illegal work, and had planned for illegality. Its activity, far from showing any decline, actually increased despite the arrest and gaoling of about fifty members.

### THE GRAND ALLIANCE

It was one week after the first anniversary of the outlawing of the Communist Party, on June 22, 1941, that the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union and the whole character of the war began to change. The peace movement, which had been unable to prevent the outbreak of the war, did succeed in directing it against the fascists on the basis of changes in government, bringing into being the great anti-fascist coalition for which the Soviet Union and the communists throughout the world had fought for so many years.

In Australia the Communist Party declared its support for the war and for closer relations with the Soviet Union and launched a campaign to back the demand for the opening of a Second Front in Europe. The party advanced united front proposals to the Federal Labor Party with the objective of replacing the Menzies Government with a Labor Party government. Although the proposals were not accepted, their impact on the Labor Movement was clearly evidenced and a month later the leader of the Labor Party, John Curtin (who had started his career in the socialist movement) took advantage of a parliamentary crisis to assume office, an efficient war effort then being organised.

The people of Australia followed with growing admiration the epic resistance of the Red Army and the Russian people to the Nazi invaders, which aroused tremendous enthusiasm, sweeping all before it in determining political attitudes.

Little regard was paid to the sneering defeatism (or was it secret hoping?) of ruling class circles, exemplified in the "famous" forecast of Menzies that the conquest of Russia would be accomplished in six weeks.

True, there was some natural concern and anxiety as the Nazi divisions bit further and further into Soviet territory and there were feelings of deeply felt sympathy with Russia's travail as the terrible toll of death and destruction mounted . . . but beneath it all was a feeling of confidence that the people who had defeated the armies of intervention in 1917 and successfully withstood so

many subsequent provocations . . . a nation now immeasurably stronger in every way . . . would be equal to the present task, superhuman though it appeared.

But the Australian people were not content with merely watching and waiting. Considerable support for the Soviet Union was organised, with the communists playing a leading part in a broad people's front. Leaders of the party spoke with the leaders of the Labor Party in the public halls and streets in the capital cities which had been customarily used as forums of "The Establishment". Two broadly representative bodies were set up to organise practical assistance, Russian Medical Aid and Sheepskins for Russia, headed by the Lord Mayors of Australian capital cities.

For the first time in history, the coveted right to sell "buttons" in the streets was granted to the committees raising money for the Soviet Union and with pride workers displayed badges indicating that they had made the maximum contribution. Public meetings in the town halls, with the broadest of platforms, attracted big crowds, resolutions being carried for the strengthening of relations with the U.S.S.R. and the stepping up of material aid.

At its 13th congress in March, 1943, the Communist Party declared, inter alia, "The people of Australia, immediately threatened by Japanese militarism, Hitler's gangster partner in the Pacific, must, whilst organising the maximum effort against the Japanese enemy, think internationally and see our problems and tasks in relation to the world-wide war of the United Nations to defeat the fascist Axis . . .

"The efforts of Soviet Russia to establish a system of collective security to prevent war were frustrated. The policy of appeasement was aimed at reaching an agreement with the fascist aggressors so as to divert the attack eastwards against Soviet Russia, the great stronghold of the working class.

"This policy turned out, as Stalin warned it would, to be a fiasco for the appeasers in Britain, France, America, Australia and other countries . . . This is the price exacted by history, a price not yet paid in full, for the failure of the democratic peoples to unite against fascism, put an end to appeasement, and enter into an alliance with the great peace-loving nation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

"Today, the world is divided into two great warring camps. Japan's attack in the Pacific, by drawing the U.S.A. into the war, completed the line-up of freedom-loving nations against fascism.

"The Anglo-Soviet Treaty and the British-Soviet Agreement with the United States, which is the basis of the international anti-fascist front, has not yet resulted in that co-ordination of strategy on a world scale essential to victory.

"This Congress declares that Hitlerite Germany can be defeated in 1943, thus opening the way for the speedy defeat of Japan. The Soviet Army, which has withstood the main weight of the Hitlerite

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armies since June, 1941, and is now in the process of defeating and destroying the fascist gangsters in Eastern Europe, has created the conditions of this victory.

"What is required now is that Britain and the United States open a second front in Europe and join with the Soviet people in a final all-out effort to put an end to the Hitlerite power . . . Congress calls upon the people of Australia to demand a Second European Front."

The sounds of battle as the Red Armies "tore the guts out of the Nazi army", as expressed by Winston Churchill, reverberated throughout Australia . . . in the factories and workshops, the trade union assemblies, the political hustings and was expressed in a new enthusiasm for a united war effort and a greater sense of dedication to worthy causes.

What more worthy cause than that of socialism? If the Red Armies represented communism, then what more appropriate field of endeavour than in the ranks of the Communist Party? And so thousands entered the party, which transferred its meetings from out-of-the-way halls in back streets to the main assembly places of Australian cities and established its headquarters in the centre of them all. Perspectives appeared to be opening up again for a decisive move forward for the revolutionary movement in Australia. Such was the impact of the Russian revolution in the phase of the war against fascism.

## THE COLD WAR

The war-time agreements between the major powers, capitalist and socialist, appeared not only to seal the doom of fascism everywhere but to promise a durable peace in which the socialist movements of the world could follow the path set by the Russian communists in 1917 with less accompanying violence.

But how shattered the vision, as the agreements were torn up, fascist war criminals installed in high places in the governments of West Germany and Japan, rearmament proceeded with nuclear weapons within their reach, and military intervention became the order of the day to prevent national liberation and socialist advance ruling circles in the leading capitalist countries called for "a preventive war" against The Soviet Union.

With the coming of "cold war" policies directed against the new socialist States of Europe and Asia, as well as the Soviet Union, and aggressive capitalism moving to take advantage of a post-war economic boom, the socialists of Australia found that the historic moment for taking up sharply again the great issues posed by the Russian revolution had slipped by, and it was now a case of defending the position of the Soviet Union and its socialist allies, supporting the national liberation struggles, resisting fascist trends at home, and building working class unity to enforce "new deal" promises of improved living standards and social services made during the war.

A period of special difficulty developed as Soviet forces, in the spirit of true internationalism, moved to assist the people's government of Hungary in defeating foreign-inspired counter-revolution, and, in an atmosphere somewhat reminiscent of that at the time of the Finnish war, progressives were called upon to defend the Soviet Union against its traducers.

Responding to a plea from Washington and London to step up the cold war, Australia's Prime Minister Menzies returned from overseas to call for preparations for war "in three years". As part of the plans, the Communist Party's leader, L. L. Sharkey, was gaoled, significantly for repudiating charges of "aggression" against the Soviet Union and stating that Australian workers would support Soviet forces pursuing aggressors. Other gaolings followed, generally arising out of similar utterances. Among those gaoled was the nominal publisher of the party's paper, "Tribune", W. F. Burns. The Government moved to ban the Communist Party, introducing legislation designed to deprive of their freedom and livelihood not only communists but anybody "declared" to be a communist by reason of supporting anything communists advocated.

Such legislation was too drastic for even Australia's High Court to accept, it being declared invalid, and the Prime Minister committed the cardinal error of seeking popular support by referendum to make it valid. The Communist Party was able to rally the entire Labor Movement and many liberal elements to oppose the Government's plan on democratic grounds and, as a result, yet another attempt to outlaw the party was frustrated.

Still pursuing his reactionary course, Menzies sought in other ways to get the same result of intimidating opposition to his war plans and, specifically, to tame the Labor Movement and destroy the influence of the Communist Party, and, hence, undermine support for the peace initiatives of the Soviet Union. The method adopted was to amend the Crimes Act which, for the first time in Australian history, now makes provisions for the death sentence for action deemed to be "treason" on the evidence of secret informers—and be it noted, not only "treason" against Australia but against any other country "proclaimed" by the Government to be an ally of Australia.

It is significant, however, that despite—or is it rather because of?—a great growth of opposition to the Government's foreign policy, no attempt has been made to use the provisions of the amended legislation, although opportunity seemed to present itself as the Australian Government joined American Imperialism in seeking unsuccessfully to destroy the socialist regimes set up in North Korea and North Vietnam.

But imperialism never gives up . . . There came the attempt to subvert the socialist State of Czecho-Slovakia . . . to repeat the Hungarian counter-revolution . . . another testing time for the progressives and particularly the communists of Australia . . . a

testing time of attitudes to the Soviet Union and the concept of an integrated socialist camp.

Alas! The test this time found the Communist Party of Australia wanting, its leaders selling out to Imperialism, it being left to a strong opposition within the party to keep alive the spirit of internationalism and maintain support for the key revolutionary and peace-making role of the Soviet Union. The split eventually led to the formation of another party, the Socialist Party of Australia, to carry on marxist-leninist policies.

### HALF A CENTURY OF SUPPORT FOR THE SOVIET UNION

What emerges from this historical outline? The essential fact is that despite the continued efforts of reactionary circles, their many provocations, their periodical campaigns of intense slander such as those relating to the Finnish war and the Hungarian and Czecho-Slovak episodes . . . even despite the defection of the Communist Party of Australia . . . the support for the Soviet Union won in the days of October, 1917, and strengthened particularly in the course of the Second World War, has never really been lost. The world-shattering impact of the Russian Revolution of October, 1917, has never been eradicated, but, indeed, has grown and deepened with the passage of the years.

Nothing succeeds like success, as the saying goes, and the way in which socialism has transformed the backward, primitive, degenerate country of the Czars into a major industrial power, with social services and cultural and scientific standards second to none, has won wide admiration and respect.

Each new achievement of the Soviet Union has been acclaimed and, particularly, one will never forget that historic night when the first man-made Russian satellite was sent encircling the globe, to be followed by the epic flight of Gagarin, when the Russian work "sputnik" became part of the language, as a permanent tribute to the leadership of socialist science . . . a leadership maintained in many other "firsts" in space exploration.

And it all started back in the historic days of 1917, when science, as well as culture and education, were freed from the shackles imposed by a private profit system, releasing the pent-up forces of human endeavour to grapple with Nature in a way never before possible.

So, from an attitude of belittling the Russian communists and ridiculing their policies, the Australian ruling class, as others, swung over to a position of painting the U.S.S.R. as a monster to be feared because of its very strength.

But that approach has been no more successful than the earlier depicting the U.S.S.R. as weak and "a failure", for facts will out and the people of Australia have seen the fact demonstrated over and over again of the Soviet Union using its now freely-acknow-

ledged strength not in aggression but in the patient pursuit of peace. In the ebb and flow of State relations between Australia and the Soviet Union, the consistent peace policy of the Russian leaders has triumphed over "cold war" slanders.

It is the concept of the peaceful co-existence of States with differing social systems, consistently advocated by the Soviet leaders from 1917 to 1972, from Lenin to Brezhnev, that is the starting point for the organised peace movement in its activities against the Vietnam war, its resistance to the establishment of war bases on our territory, its support for the step-by-step advance to nuclear disarmament. The many peace initiatives of the Soviet Union and activity against "local" conflicts have been widely endorsed.

It can be truthfully said that, in its broad outlines, with some modifications here and there, the peace policy of the Soviet Union has come to be supported by the Australian Labor Movement, communists and laborites, and the Australian Trade Union Movement . . . and has won the allegiance of big sections of intellectuals, churchmen, professional workers, students. That policy will eventually be at one with the national policy of the country.

While the "hard core" of support for the policies of the Soviet Union has been the communists, basic sections of the Australian Trade Union Movement have never wavered in their position since their first declarations welcoming the 1917 revolution. "Crises" in relations have left them generally unmoved.

### RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE

In the Australian Trade Union Movement the spirit of internationalism, reborn in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution, has continued to grow, if with some unevenness and even setbacks from time to time.

History was made in 1956 when the first trade union delegates arrived from the Soviet Union and China on an official visit sponsored by the Miners' Federation, the Building Workers' Industrial Union, the Boilermakers' Society and the Sheetmetal Workers' Union. The visitors were welcomed by leading officials of the A.C.T.U., the Communist and Labor Parties.

The door having been thrown wide open, many exchanges of visits between the Australian Trade Union Movement and that of the socialist countries have taken place; indeed, have become a regular feature of trade union life, despite periodical opposition of the extreme right wing and acts of sabotage by the capitalist "powers that be" in refusing to issue visas.

The message of working class internationalism is given special emphasis on May Day, which has become the most widely representative demonstration of the Australian working class. From the earliest days the May Day commemoration has had a markedly

socialist content, which was materially strengthened after the Russian revolution, while reflecting also the current immediate political and economic demands of the working class and advancing the traditional appeal of international trade union unity. It has been an occasion for boldly reaffirming friendship with the Soviet Union and support for activities towards the maintenance of world peace, while expressing allegiance to the socialist objective of the Australian Labor Movement.

An important instrument for conveying accurate information to the Australian people about conditions of life in Soviet Russia, developing friendly relations and organising exchanges, has been the friendship movement, dating from the setting up of the Friends of the Soviet Union between the two world wars to the present Australia-U.S.S.R. Society (with its Russian counterpart, the U.S.S.R.-Australia Society).

The friendship movement has been responsible for extending the hand of welcome to all visitors from the Soviet Union and meeting the crews of Soviet ships visiting Australian ports.

There has been a gratifying and, in many ways, spectacular growth in "exchange", with many writers, artists, theatrical performers and scientists from the U.S.S.R. visiting Australia, as well as "tourist groups". Official recognition has been accorded the visitors through civic receptions by Lord Mayors and functions attended by State representatives . . . a far cry, indeed, from the days when Peter Simonoff, Soviet consul, was refused any recognition and hounded by the State police in the days following the 1917 revolution!

In the ever-widening public recognition of the Soviet Union, the communists provide the **fundamental** link between what the Soviet Union stands for in terms of the elimination of exploitation and social injustice, and the guarantee of continued raising of living standards in conditions of complete security, and the ideals and aspirations of the Australian people.

Regular commemoration of the October revolution and other landmarks in Russia's socialist history, such as the birth of Lenin, is an acknowledgment of the great debt Australian communists owe to the pioneers of the Soviet Union.

But more! Australian communists continue their earnest study of Soviet experience, now together with the development of socialism in other countries which have taken the socialist path, in the determination to find the correct way to apply the basic teachings of marxism-leninism to Australian conditions, so to build socialism in this country.

Communists of Australia accept, as expressing the world outlook of the communist movement, the declarations of the important conferences of Communist Parties of 1957, 1960 and 1970, which acknowledge the leading role of the Soviet Union in the world-wide movement for peace and socialism.

We stand completely convinced in the correctness of the basic position of struggling to prevent nuclear war and to achieve the

peaceful co-existence of States with differing social systems and seeking, if it is possible, a peaceful path to transition to socialism. These concepts are seen not as contradictory with, but the logical development of, the historic stand of the Russian communists of 1917, who, in breaking the first link in the capitalist chain, laid the foundations for a powerful socialist sector strong enough to be decisive in determining international trends more than half a century later.

And whatever the actual path taken to end capitalist rule in Australia it will, in the final analysis, owe its greatest debt to the Russian revolution of 1917 . . . the inspiration of the revolt itself, the clarification of basic socialist theory and practice that it brought, the demonstration that socialism **works**, the unleashing of forces that brought socialism to other countries—establishing a world communist camp—the new parties of scientific socialism that its example brought into being, and the establishment of world conditions for continued irreversible socialist growth.

Well, this is the story, personified, in a way, by Tom Pikunoff, the Russian become Australian become Russian, who, standing before the grave of Artem Sergeiev in the year of the 50th anniversary of the October revolution, looked back reminiscently over his years of endeavour in the communist movement . . .

A Russian representative in the Australian socialist army, Tom lived again the years of struggle against the Imperialist war of 1914-18, with its dramatic ending in socialist revolution, and recalled the proud moment when he entered the ranks of the Communist Party, itself a product of the revolutionary upsurge brought about by the October revolution.

He traversed again the important events in Australian Labor history as, under its new communist influence, the working class joined battle with Australian capitalism with an awakened consciousness and a more intelligent unity.

But, above all, Tom Pikunoff remembered emotionally the great leader and teacher, Artem Sergeiev, and the work of the League of Russian Immigrants, the exiles of 1905, he had helped to organise, and its important activities under Artem's guidance in interpreting events in Australia through Leninist eyes . . . so that when the October revolution rocked the capitalist world, its members were able to clearly explain its full significance, impacting thereby the Labor Movement.

One must agree with Tom Pikunoff in his assertion, "When a true history of the Queensland Labour Movement is written, a few pages in it must be dedicated to activities and participation of those pioneers of socialism, political refugees from Czarist Russia . . . ; at the very root of it lies a great principle and objective—the International Solidarity of Labour . . . Time has proved that the work was not in vain" ("In Defence of Socialism", T. V. Pikunoff, 1959).

Applying that principle concretely, Tom had become a pioneer member of the Friends of the Soviet Union and, through the

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columns of "The Maritime Worker" and other union journals and the communist press, and, indeed, the capitalist newspapers also, had kept before the eyes of the Australian people the far-reaching implications of the Russian revolution.

As he wrote on one anniversary, "The great eventful day of the seventh of November, 1917, should go into the history of mankind as the most memorable day for ages. It is not because the new Soviet regime brought about a liberation and equalisation of the many nationalities which populate Russia, but because it inspired and stirred the desire of all oppressed peoples of the world for their liberation. In short, it was a turning point in world history."

In a half a century Tom had seen the U.S.S.R. defeat all its enemies, consolidate its State, achieve great industrial power, emerge to a position of world leadership and have its policies completely vindicated in Life, "the best teacher", as Lenin often emphasised.

In 1959, then 75 years of age, Tom Pikunoff returned to Russia to see for himself, with his own eyes, the fruits of fifty years of activity, but, characteristically, retained his membership of the communist movement in Australia . . .

Maintaining a link that speaks of history and holds out the promise of even closer, much stronger relations, when the years of patient endeavour of the Labor Movement of Australia, with a marxist-leninist party playing a decisive role, are brought to fruition, leading Australia into the camp of socialism, alongside the U.S.S.R. and the other socialist States of the world . . .

And Tom's colleague, Boris Rosenberg, since his return to Russia in 1923 a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (when this outline was written in a local branch at Smolovichi, near Minsk) shook his hand emotionally and, in the Australian manner, shouted "Hear! Hear! I'll drink a toast on that!" . . .

And on that note this interesting reunion ended, and Artem Sergeiev, pioneer of Australian and Russian socialism, was left to his rest.

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