

*R. Gibson, My Years in the CP*

erally. This now notorious character first made his fame during the Spanish War as the ally of Hitler and Mussolini.

### **WE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY**

Meanwhile, year by year, we pressed forward our work to secure a united front between ourselves and the Labor Party. The circumstances of the depression years which brought us into frontal opposition with the Labor Party had undergone a change. On the one hand Hitler had taken power in Germany, the world was faced with the menace of fascism of the worst kind and world war, and this menace had led to the actual formation of a working class united front in France and certain other countries. On the other hand the Labor Party, clear of the worst of the economic crisis and back into opposition, was supporting the 40 hour week and certain other working class demands; our own influence in the labor movement was greater and was used much more consciously to achieve unity.

In March, 1933, we made our first official appeal to the Labor Party State Executive for a united front against war, fascism, and capitalist attacks on living conditions. In the 1934 Federal election we called for second preferences for Labor Party candidates in electorates where we were standing, and for first preference votes in other electorates, instead of making no recommendation as between the Liberal and Labor Parties (which had been our policy in 1931). In July, 1936, we made our first call for a Labor Government to replace the Lyons-Menzies Government and at the end of 1936 we made the proposal that we become affiliated with the Labor Party, retaining, of course, our right to criticise and campaign for a change in Labor Party policies. The Labor Party State Executive emphatically rejected all unity proposals. We did, however, win a good deal of unity in practice with rank and file members and supporters of the Labor Party.

It was an important triumph of our work for unity when the Australian Council of Trade Unions Congress in 1937 declared for collective security and a united peace movement, despite the official Labor Party

policies of isolation and banning; and again in 1939 when the A.C.T.U. proclaimed a boycott of Menzies' "national register," a manpower register intended as a lead-up to industrial conscription in war-time. The boycott was so successful that only 500,000 out of 1,500,000 workers had registered two days after the closing date. Only the urgent intervention of Federal Labor leader John Curtin finally persuaded the A.C.T.U. to call off the boycott.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF TROTSKYISM**

Throughout these years we had to do continual battle with a group which claimed to be "left" of the Communist Party, which bitterly attacked the Soviet Union and its peace policy, bitterly attacked our united front policy and the whole leadership and system of organisation of our Party. I refer to the Trotskyists of that day who in Victoria were formed partly from certain of the Lovegrove supporters who had been expelled from the Communist Party early in 1933. (Lovegrove himself had moved to a right wing position by this time.)

A "Workers' Party" supporting the views of Trotsky was formed in Sydney in May, 1933, and issued a policy document. Later another body known as the "Leninist League" appeared in the Domain in Sydney and on the Yarra Bank in Melbourne.

The ideas and aims of the Trotskyists of that day were in many respects similar to those of the "Left Communist" Party now led by E. F. Hill. Like Hill, they directed their main fire against the policy of peaceful co-existence.

When the Socialist Revolution triumphed in Russia in 1917, and not in other countries, the Russian Communist Party and its leader Lenin had to decide the question: could socialism be built in one country alone and in a backward country at that, in the midst of hostile capitalist countries? Could it build peaceful relations with those countries and hasten the coming of socialism in these countries by its example? Or would the Soviet Republic have to "help on" revolutions in

other countries, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, in order to build Socialism at all?

The Australian Trotskyists, in the Workers' Party document of May, 1933, called Soviet socialist construction "utopian," said that the attempt to build socialism in one country resulted in the "sacrifice of international revolutionary struggle" and that Soviet foreign policy meant "acceptance of the indefinite stabilisation of world capitalism." The document said "utilisation of the vast resources of the Soviet Government for building the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries would undoubtedly, in view of the present crisis, have caused an extraordinary growth of the revolutionary movement the world over."

The Trotskyists violently denounced the Soviet Union's entry into the League of Nations in September, 1934, and its policy of collective security which would have meant the forging of strong links between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries in the interests of world peace. Criticism of Khrushchov and his successors for pursuing a policy of peaceful co-existence is thus seen to be nothing new or original. The same criticism was hurled, in terms quite as virulent, against the same policy as commenced under Lenin's leadership and carried on under Stalin's in the period before the Second World War.

On the home front the Trotskyists criticised our policy of seeking working class unity. This policy, they said, meant "an actual decline to a reformist position" and "the obscuring of our independent identity." The very theme song of the Hill Group today!

The Trotskyists were proved wrong by the march of world events, by the success of the socialist Five Year Plan (which Trotsky had called a "bureaucratic fantasy"), by the long period of peace gained by the Soviet Union between the two world wars, by its victory in the Second World War, by the winning of millions to the cause of socialism through its example in war and peace, and by the growth of the spirit of working class unity everywhere.

In fighting and defeating Trotskyism, we in the Communist Party were taking our stand with the great Communist thinkers of the past

In 1919 Lenin said in his pamphlet "A Great Beginning" that the newly born social system would prevail over capitalism because it would create a new and much higher productivity of labour. This, he said, was why capitalism had triumphed over feudalism, and this was why socialism would triumph over capitalism. In a speech of December, 1920, to Moscow Party activists, Lenin said: "Socialism possesses the power of example. Force is a power against the one who wants to restore his domination. But there the significance of force ends, and after that it is influence and example that are powerful. We must show in practice, by example, the significance of Communism."

This was in line with the teaching of Engels who wrote in 1882: "One thing is certain. The victorious working class cannot confer its benefits on any other nation without undermining its own victory by so doing."

#### THE BRUSSELS PEACE CONGRESS

In 1936, a new and wider movement for peace was born. An International Peace Council headed by the British Conservative Lord Robert Cecil and the French Radical Pierre Cot, and including such varied personalities as the Czech President Benes, the Archbishop of York and Mahatma Ghandi, called a world peace congress at Brussels. A Victorian Committee was formed to support this committee with Judge Foster as chairman, the Rev. Palmer Phillips and Professor Harold Woodruff as vice-chairmen and Dorothy Alexander (later my wife) as secretary. The committee covered a wide range, including the president of the National Council of Women, the secretary of the League of Nations Union (Miss Constance Duncan), the secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association, Mrs. Essington Lewis (wife of the managing director of Broken Hill Pty.), and other prominent citizens. The Rev. Palmer Phillips, who had been an outspoken advocate for peace over many years, was chosen as delegate to the world congress. There was altogether an Aus-