

TWO WORLDS IN EUROPE



THE OLD AND THE NEW

BY *Gerald Peel*

1'

TWO WORLDS IN EUROPE

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Two Worlds In Europe

THE OLD AND THE NEW

An Eyewitness Account

By GERALD PEEL.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

India and Australia.

Indonesian Introduction.

Hands Off Indonesia.

Isles of the Torres Straits.

Quit India.

Current Book Distributors
40 Market Street, Sydney.
October 1949.

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	5
Who Wants War?	7
Who Are The Imperialists?	11
Yanks and Russians	20
Where Are These Police States?	27
Where Democracy Means Action	42
Religion In The People's Democracies	47
Some Contrasts	53
Conclusions	62

INTRODUCTION

THIS is a sort of travelogue. My credentials for writing it are these. In November 1946 I left Australia for England where I stayed five months. After that I was for a year and a half in Czechoslovakia, earning my living as a teacher of the English language and engaging in journalistic activity. I also visited France, Austria and the U.S. Zone of Germany, and Hungary and Poland, returning to Australia last November just two years from the date I set out. Having a knowledge of several European languages I was able to converse freely with people in a way that would have been impossible if I had had to get around with English alone.

Unlike many writers about Europe I make no pretence to being unbiassed. I have a working-class bias. I believe that only the working-class can lead the struggle of the Australian and other peoples for peace, progress and national independence in the world today. Thus the reader will find "liberty" discussed in these pages from the point of view of liberty for the majority of a nation, not from the point of view of liberty for an exploiting minority; and similarly with other matters. My claim to objectivity and truth in what I write is thus no "abstract" claim but a "practical" one, viz. to give the facts of what I saw from a class point of view to the useful people of Australia, or that portion of the useful people of Australia who may chance to read these pages, that they may draw such conclusions as they see fit from what I write. Those who are not interested in emancipation of the majority will not find ammunition for their cause in what I write.

This "practical" aim leads me to confine my observations in the main to those questions which are particular subjects of ideological campaigning in the class struggle in Australia

Registered at the G.P.O., Sydney, for transmission by post as a book

today. What is the truth? What can we learn from Europe? What are the forces for peace and progress in the world today? Who are the liars?

I had to mix in the course of my work with the fraternity of Anglo-Saxon journalists in Prague and elsewhere. Most of them were anti-Labour. If I did not know something about how the millionaire-owned press of this and other countries is run, I would be amazed at the difference in what I saw and what these correspondents told me they saw in Central and Eastern Europe, and what we read about those countries in the papers they are hired to get news for. As a free agent hired by no-one I therefore think it my duty to give the uncensored facts to the best of my ability to the Australian public from a democratic and working-class point of view.

Gerald Peel
Sydney May 1949.

CHAPTER ONE.

WHO WANTS WAR?

IT is not so very many months since I crossed back again over that "so-called" iron-curtain into this very different capitalist world of ours.

I say "so-called" because I have come to the conclusion this "curtain" is in very different places for different people according to their class standpoint.

Take me for instance.

I searched all over Europe for it and could not find it. I found it first at Sydney, when I landed back, getting very special treatment from the customs authorities, who summoned me specially by name over a loudspeaker and searched my baggage from top to bottom, inside and outside, presumably looking for Prague bombs, Cominform documents, Moscow gold, or something equally illusory.

Perhaps Mr. Menzies hit his iron-curtain somewhere else, I do not know. I understand he did not even bother to go and look at things in Eastern Europe for himself on his trip, although he has come back a great "expert" on the People's Democracies and iron-curtains. But then he always was an expert on iron.

In Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, and in the Soviet Zone of Austria, I enjoyed complete freedom of movement, and had every facility made available to me by the authorities to see what I wanted, how I wanted, when I wanted. Invited by shop committees to talk to the workers about Australia in factories in these countries, I never seemed to encounter any difficulty in getting in. But when the shop committee of Eveleigh workshops recently invited me to speak to them on Europe, it was the Railway Commissioner, I understand, who put up an iron-curtain, and I was not allowed in, though other speakers speak there regularly.

That is by the way.

What struck me most on landing in England, where I stopped two weeks before catching my ship home, was the war hysteria. Practically everybody I met introduced the subject of war within a very short time of meeting them, and it was always assumed to be war between England and Russia. Porters, taxi-drivers, industrial workers, bank clerks, stock-exchange brokers, scientists and artists, Labour supporters, Tory supporters and one's own personal friends, they were all talking war, as if it were inevitable, a sort of fatalism about war.

I do not mean of course to say the English people want war, far from it, they've "had war," and blitz memories are young. Nor do I mean all England is anti-Soviet, far from it. There is growing resentment against England's being made a base for the Yankee millionaires, a growing movement for peace. But war panic in England remains a fact, and a disturbing one.

And is there any wonder? From morning to night the B.B.C. screams war danger at them, screams about the need for "defence," the "Russian peril," and so on. The newspapers drum out the same theme, and so do all the other official and millionaire-owned means of propaganda—also, only too often, the pulpit. I remember on the English ship coming home a sermon, on Armistice Day of all days, the day when we remember those who fell in former wars. The preacher was an Australian bishop or archbishop, I forget which, who was returning from a European conference of churchmen. We had a number of these churchmen on board. I do not generally listen in to sermons; but this one you could not avoid, it came over every loud-speaker on the ship, even where I was sitting peacefully in the bar; like Hitler's speeches in Germany, no escape. From the beginning to end of that sermon he drooned about war, war between Russia and the west, the duty of Christians to fight against Russia for western "civilisation," and so on.

This war hysteria and officially-inspired war propaganda came as a shock after one and a half years in a different world. You see in the People's Democracies you hardly ever hear war discussed, certainly never in a panicky way, or

as something inevitable. I was in Poland for a fortnight at the height of the Berlin crisis last year, and Poland is the most war-devastated country of all Central Europe. I met literally thousands of Poles of all classes, workers in the factories, peasants on the farms, officials, intellectuals, journalists and so on, and, without one jot of exaggeration, never once while I was there did a single Pole mention the word "war" to me.

They would talk about their plans to rebuild devastated Warsaw in ten years, about their five-year economic plan, about the horrors of Nazi occupation, about the new life they were building on the ruins of the old, but not about probabilities, let alone fears, of a new war.

You see, in the People's Democracies, there is no officially-inspired war-propaganda. Newspapers, radio etc. talk reconstruction, building, not war. Anyone who travels in Europe today, if he is at all honest, whatever his political bias may be, must be convinced at least of **one thing**, and that is that there is no danger of war starting from those countries of central and Eastern Europe where there is working-class and people's power. The peoples and governments of Soviet Russia and the People's Democracies want nothing more than to be left in peace to build up their new way of life their own way.

It is equally clear that if there is a danger of anyone starting war, that danger comes from the imperialist west. When I returned to England from Czechoslovakia, and I am myself English born, I found something I hoped I would never live to see, foreign bases on English soil in peacetime, not defensive bases, but bases for mighty bombing planes, flying fortresses, weapons of attack against Europe. These Yankee bases are manned by Yankee soldiers in Yankee uniform behaving with all the insolence of foreign conquerors, extra-territorial bases of a foreign power on British soil. I was told in the villages where these bases are situated you cannot even buy in the local shops any more with the pound sterling, only with the American dollar. Is it the Communists who are in pay of a foreign power, selling the independence of the British countries? Or is it

not the moneybags and their bootlickers who are the traitors?

It is not the people of America or Britain who are organising for war. The war danger comes today, as yesterday, not from the people but from the profit hungry international monopolies, at whose head today stand the Wall St. multimillionaires.

Crisis looms in Yankeeland. There are 4½ million permanent unemployed, 12½ million part-time unemployed there. Production rises and the home market shrinks. America imports little, other capitalist countries, dollar-hungry, cannot buy this great accumulation of American goods. But profits must continue, and new fields must be found for capitalist investment. Hence the drive to war in their mad but hopeless plan to establish dollar-domination of the whole world.

In the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies on the other hand, production is not for profit, but for use. There are no big capitalists, no monopolies. "Over-production" in planned people's economy is meaningless. The more produced, the more for the people, standards rise. That is why no crisis looms in these countries. Their interests are peace. This explains what I saw in Europe. This explains why war danger comes from the "Capitalist West," not from the "Socialist East."

For the big capitalists war means huge profits, but it is the people who suffer and die in their wars.

CHAPTER TWO.

WHO ARE THE IMPERIALISTS?

I HAVE come back from Europe more convinced than ever, and I did not go to Russia, of the tremendous liberating force that the Socialist Soviet Union and its Red Army is in the world today.

You see, it is not just coincidence that People's Democracies have been established in the countries which were liberated by the Red Army, that it is precisely in these countries that there is working-class and people's power today, big industries are nationalised, land owned by those who till it, and they are going forward to Socialism; while in the countries into which armies of the western nations marched the working-class still faces great struggles.

The Resistance Movements in France and Italy were, I suppose, as strong, if not stronger, than the Resistance Movements in most of the Eastern European countries. The traditions of the working-class in these countries are glorious revolutionary traditions. The great majority of the working people actively support their great Communist Parties.

How is it we find capitalism still in the seat in these countries, a government in France which uses the old Vichy police to fire on striking miners, imports Moorish mercenary troops from its African colonies to shoot on striking workers in Franco-fashion etc.?

Why is it the picture in both countries, as in all Western Europe, is one of intensified class struggle, of strikes, of rising prices and worsening conditions for the working people, of impending economic crisis, which, particularly in Italy, makes itself shown already by the miserable sight of beggars on every street corner?

It is precisely because behind the bayonets of the advancing imperialist armies, financed by Yankee dollars, the

old capitalist forces were able to stage a temporary comeback. In the Western Zones of Germany we see revival of the big Ruhr and other monopolies which were the backbone of Hitlerism. Macarthur's policy in Japan is known to you. You know of the hundreds of millions of dollars poured into China by Wall St. in a vain attempt to prop up Chiang-kai-shek. You know of the intervention in Greece, the display of American military force and other intervention at the time of the Italian elections, and so on ad infinitum. It is not just coincidence that the Red Army has withdrawn every single soldier from Northern Korea, and there is popular power there, while in Southern Korea, the Yankee imperialists still maintain an army of occupation to prop up their puppet, anti-popular, anti-national Government.

In every country western imperialist powers have set foot in, there has been **direct intervention** in the affairs of the people.

In the countries which were liberated by the Red Army, and in which the western powers were unable to get a footing, there was no such intervention.

Power lay at the feet of the people of Europe at that time. The greater part of the old capitalist class, and the nobility on the land, had collaborated with the Nazis. The old state apparatus of the ruling classes had gone to pieces. All the people had to do was take over that power themselves.

The difference was that, in those countries it entered, this new kind of army, the Red Army, the army of Socialism, the army of the toilers, unlike the other armies, gave no protection or aid to the old exploiters in their attempts to regain power. The Red Army did give comradely aid to democratic forces, unlike the other armies which tried to hamper democratic development, but there was no intervention.

The Soviet Union has all along been scrupulously correct in her relations to these countries. It is necessary to stress this fact.

Remember, the liberating Red Army, when it marched

into Czechoslovakia chasing the Nazis, immediately handed over all civil power to President Benes' provisional all-party Government, retaining only control over military operations, and left the country just as soon as the job of finishing the war was achieved. The Soviet ended occupation while the liberal Smallholders' Party still had an absolute majority in the Hungarian Parliament, while King Michael was still on the throne of Rumania. The Communists are still a minority opposition in Finland, Russia's neighbour. All three of these countries were enemy countries. Is this how imperialists behave?

I suppose the contrast between the old rotten dying order of capitalism, of imperialism (as seen in those countries which western armies liberated for instance), and the new flourishing order of people's power, of Socialism or transition to Socialism (as seen in those countries liberated by the Red Army for instance), is more easily visible in Europe today than anywhere else in the world, with the possible exception of China.

You see, you only have to travel a few hours by train from one capital city to another, and you go into a completely different world.

I think a particularly fair comparison is the comparison between Vienna, capital of Austria, and Budapest, capital of Hungary, as I saw these two cities in 1948.

Why do I say it is a particularly fair comparison?

As you know these were the rich imperial centres of the two ruling nations of the old Austrian-Hungarian Empire. In the last war both Austria and Hungary were on the Axis side, their young men conscripted into, and fighting in, the German Wehrmacht, on eastern and other fronts. Both were defeated nations, both occupied by foreign armies after liberation.

But here the parallel ends. After the war they took diametrically opposite paths. While in Hungary there is People's Democracy, nationalisation of major industries banks etc., land reform, planned economy, end of military occupation, and re-building from internal resources, in Austria capitalism has regained its major positions, the big landlords dom-

inate the countryside again drawing their big rents from the peasantry, even black fascists like Prince Starhemberg who personally directed the shelling of working-class areas, when the city's workers, first in Europe, rose against fascism in 1934, and which I saw still smouldering when I visited there a few days after, has been given back his vast landed estates, and Mrs. Seyss Inquart, wife of Hitler's gauleiter in Austria, has been given back her property too, there is still military occupation, the country's economy is in anarchy and subservient to foreign, and satellite-domestic, monopolies.

I spent three weeks in Vienna Christmas 1947, and again three weeks in summer 1948. It was over thirteen years since I had last been there. What a change!

Vienna was not as badly bombed as London, but the damage struck you much more forcibly. Great mountains of rubble blocked the very centre of the city, little attempt had been made even to begin clearing this rubble away, let alone re-building. No work had been started on reconstruction of any of the destroyed bridges across the Danube except one rebuilt by the Red Army. It still looked like a battlefield. Austrian life is all rubble.

No country I saw in Europe reminded me more of colonial conditions than Austria. Only the rickshaws were missing. Thin, undernourished and haggard, in threadbare clothes, Vienna's citizens slouched along the streets with familiar colonial gait. The standard of living, according to official figures, when I was there, was less than 50 per cent. of pre-war, as against 13½ per cent. at that time in People's Czechoslovakia.

You walked down the famous streets of "Gay Vienna." Shop windows were empty. You saw no displays of meat in butcher shops for instance, like you saw in the People's Democracies I came from. The old cafes and restaurants were closed. It was a dreary picture.

I will give you an idea of the ration. On both my visits I lived with Austrians and drew the ordinary ration.

Our meat ration consisted of one quarter of a pound of meat per head per week, and this meat was canned meat,

canned in the U.S.A., canned horse-meat. You see Americans do not eat horses, so they are canning them and shipping them to Austria; which is called Marshall-aid. The only other meat I got was a minute portion of pork as a special Christmas ration, and last time I was there three small sausages for the whole month's ration. This was the only fresh meat I tasted while I was in Austria, and the only meat that was not horse.

When I was there this summer they had not had an issue of potatoes on the ration for three months. Similar are the miserable rations of synthetic fat, soap said to be from boiled-down concentration camp victims confiscated by the Allies from the Nazis, unappetising egg-powder made of goodness knows what, and so on.

And yet you could go down the streets of Vienna and buy everything you desired off hawkers, not only American cigarettes, real coffee etc., but chocolates, milk, eggs, butter, all those things which should have been going to the children. This is the blackmarket. To give you an idea of the prices, I remember one old lady offering me what we used to call a 3d. bar of chocolate, I think they are 5d. nowadays, the price, equivalent of fifteen Australian shillings. So you can see the working people cannot buy these things, but only the wealthy and those who have blackmarket money. The workers live on their starvation rations.

The saddest thing in Austria was the children. You would see them playing amongst the rubble, little half-starved things, with hollow sunken cheeks, white faces and little pot-bellies, most of them suffering from rickets, T.B., and other complaints of undernourishment. They do not laugh and play like other children, they are half alive, old for their years, they reminded me of Indian kiddies. I never expected to live to see such a sight in the centre of Europe, least of all Vienna. In the bitter cold of the European winter these children ran around without shoes. That is something I never saw the whole time I was in Czechoslovakia, a child on the streets without shoes, which is saying a lot, for you cannot, and never could say that

of even England, let alone some other European countries, either before or since the war.

I went to children's camps. It was sad to see the boys and girls pouncing hungrily on the dry bread, and tea without milk or sugar, which was their evening meal. In holiday homes I visited for working-class children, run by the progressive movement, helped by the Russians, which got supplies from charitable organisations abroad, they told me the children put on, on an average, seven to eight pounds weight in four weeks. I checked on the charts and this was true. How their eyes lit up when they saw their meals brought in, soup, tinned meat, jam on their bread! What luxury!

It was just before I went to Vienna the first time that the new currency reform was carried through. This "reform" finally tied Austrian economy to Wall St.

When I returned last summer, after being away some months, it appeared at first that Marshall-aid was at least delivering some goods. The formerly empty shop windows were now stocked with a profusion of goods. Some restaurants and cafes were open again, and serving real coffee, milk, cakes without coupons.

But I soon found out the truth. The black market with its fancy prices had moved into the shops and become respectable. That was all. It is still technically illegal, but nothing is done about it by the authorities. They call it the "grey market" now in Vienna.

Formerly police would "move on" the hawkers, who would then trickle back to their places one by one after the cops had gone by. Now it is a more high-class affair, and the police walk in and buy like anyone else.

But, while "grey market" prices may be a fraction lower than the old black ones, they are still fancy, and the workers still have to live on their miserable starvation rations. In fact things have got worse rather than better, because prices of some rationed goods have been raised by the authorities. Several workers told me they could not even afford to buy all their ration today, let alone make "grey" purchases. This

is what reliance on foreign imperialism, what Marshall-aid, means to the people of western Europe.

The first time I was in Vienna there was still little or no unemployment. Last summer this position had changed. One day I remember I spent at home in the flat. Six different beggars, out of work, came knocking on the door asking for money or food. At a youth meeting I attended in Lower Austria, near the Czech border, of twenty-four youths present six had lost their jobs the week before, and eight more knew they would lose them the next week. And no other work was offering in this district.

You see, everything is subordinate to the interests of the Wall St. millionaires. For instance, the Austrian Steier Motor was one of the most popular small cars in Europe. Now the Steier Motor Works are not allowed to produce, competition for American cars.

It is reckoned there are one and a half American army rucksacks on sale in the shops of Austria for every head of the Austrian population. That is Marshall-aid, dictated dumping on credit of Yankee junk which cannot be disposed of at home to "satellite" countries.

But only a few hours by train from Vienna you come to Budapest.

Budapest had a terrific bashing during the war, undergoing three months siege before it finally fell to the Red Army, the Nazis defending it street by street, house by house, in order to hang on as long as possible to their last oil-fields in Austria. It is the worst battered city I saw in mid-Eastern Europe outside Poland.

I drove all over Buda. Nothing remains but empty shells of its once glorious palaces. The more modern Pest, on the other side of the river, also suffered great destruction. Every single bridge over the Danube was blown up as the Germans' last act of sabotage. I met people who in those early days had to walk thirty miles to get from Buda to work in Pest.

The Germans stripped the factories of machines. Over 2,500 machines had been removed to Germany from one

factory alone which I visited. They took the greater part of Hungary's livestock out of the country.

After liberation the country went through probably the most terrible inflation of all history. The director of Budapest's largest factory told me how, when they started production again after the war, the wage of hundreds of thousands of inflation pengoes the workers received was only symbolic. One egg, for instance, cost 20,000,000,000,000,000 pengoes. The factory had to feed the workers and their families.

But while Austria, under four-power occupation and a Marshall-aid Government, went the way of reliance on outside imperialism, much more battered conquered Hungary, under Soviet occupation, long-since ended, and a People's Government, went the way of self-help, building anew from her own resources, the way of New Democracy.

The result? Budapest when I visited there, Spring 1948, was the most pre-war town I had met up with since I left Australia. The shops were full of the good things of life in unbelievable profusion. You saw hams, chickens, meat, cheese, butter, clothing, shoes, everything for sale, and there was no rationing at all except for some kinds of bread and a liberal one for sugar, and even this has been lifted since. Hungarians were even sending food parcels abroad to friends who had helped them in exile in England and France, and to friends and relatives in Austria. Beer was pre-war strength, what they call 12 per cent., as against Austria's 2 per cent. beer. Trams, taxis, trains were normal.

Nationalised factories I visited were scenes of great labour enthusiasm, flat out producing for the people's needs. The city is brightly lit, no blackouts. Several bridges had been rebuilt, and repair work was underway on several more. In striking contrast to Vienna, all bomb-rubble had been cleared away and new buildings could be seen everywhere. Cafes and dance-halls were functioning as usual, with first-class Gypsy orchestras, fine Hungarian wines, and "real" coffee with milk, and are freely frequented by the populace. I even tasted whipped cream.

The general impression is of a prosperous well-fed and

well-dressed, happy people. Real wages have doubled in the last two years.

You see, Hungary was liberated by the Red Army, the army of the working-class, the army of Socialism, and no imperialist army set foot on her soil. Talk to Hungarians about "red imperialism" and they will think you are mad. But Hungarian workers well know how Soviet Russia cancelled reparation payments which were her due, and Hungarian peasants do not forget how the Red cavalry, when they left, gave them all their horses, for use on the farms, nor how Red army men rolled up their sleeves and helped them in the harvest for no remuneration.

Vienna, of course, was also liberated by the Red Army, but western imperialist armies also got a footing there, and under the protection and sponsorship of the western powers, fascist and neo-fascist forces reorganised their power. If you understand this, you understand modern Europe, and what lies behind the lies of the capitalist press about "red imperialism" and "western democracy."

CHAPTER THREE.

YANKS AND RUSSIANS

IT is hard for those of us who connect the stars and stripes with the great democratic traditions of America's past to realise the degree of fascisation which has already taken place in the U.S.A. Yet this fascisation is fact. The drive against the Labour Movement, against the Communist Party, the Trade Unions etc., as well as the atom-bomb-warmongering and revival of Goebells-like "anti-Comintern" policies, is only too like conditions in pre-war Hitler-Germany. War-mongering, anti-Labour heresy hunts, suppression of democracy, race-riots, lynchings, gangsterism, the culture of Hollywood and the comic strip, is the picture of modern America. We should get clear on that or we will make mistakes.

This new picture of America was brought home vividly to me when in Europe.

There were very many American journalists stationed in Prague. They were nearly all anti-Labour in their politics, so much so that few of them were members of their own right-wing led union in the States because they objected to unionism on principle.

Yet even these people are getting worried about what is happening at home. You would hear them talking among themselves. One would tell another how a friend had written asking him to stop sending letters to his address from Prague. He was frightened to get letters with stamps of a European People's Democracy on the envelope, the witch hunt, he might lose his job. What were things coming to?

There is the same sort of mutual mistrust of their own countrymen, in case they are consulate-plimps, as there was among Germans abroad in the Hitler period. There is a general fear of, and conscription by, the consulate.

I first saw the American occupation armies on the train

going through Germany, later in Austria. They have all the attributes of an imperialist occupation force. Gone are the days of the old militia traditions of the Yankee soldiery. Today, in their steel helmets, and swagger much-bemedalled uniforms, American troops, especially the M.P.s, are the successors of Hitler's Nazi stormtroops in Europe. That is strong language, but it is in every respect true.

At night Yank M.P.'s in the American Zone of Austria arrest Austrian girls, at random, put them through V.D. tests, and brand those found infected, on the thigh, as a warning to G.I. Joes with ideas that way.

Several of the old cafes in the centre of Vienna have been turned into Blue Light Stations for U.S. troops. Large signposts on the public streets point the way. Matchboxes advertising their location, meant for American troops, were later sold to the public and caused much indignation. It is a common sight to see the G.I. Joes queuing up without any embarrassment at these stations, accompanied by young Austrian bobbysoxers who wait equally unembarrassed outside for them. Very blatant business.

Never have I seen in my life such a drunken, whoring soldiery as these Yanks in Vienna. They are a disgrace to any nation. Add to frequent rape, petty thievery, armed robbery with violence and at gun-point etc., and you get a fair picture of this new "herrenvolk" in Europe. The officers behave like cheap "imitation sahibs." Austrians are their "natives."

There were few nights in the Liechtensteinstrasse where I lived but one could witness animal-like brawls between demoralised Yanks over teen-age Austrian girls, and man-handling of these girls on the streets below. You can imagine the language. You can imagine trying to sleep. But they are the "herrenvolk" and Austria is for them, not Austrians. And can you blame these Austrian kids? The Yanks can give them chocolate, shout them wine, take them out of their hopeless dreary lives.

Disgraceful are the race-riots which take place regularly between white and negro American troops in Vienna, always started by whites, objecting to negro men sitting in the

same cafe with them, or something like that. Then white M.P.'s come along and arrest the negroes. I have seen this with my own eyes. It is a common occurrence. This is how the Yankee militarist overlords teach Nazi-trained Austrians their "western democracy." This is how they counter the Nazi-fostered race theories. No wonder anti-semitism in raising its head again in a big way in Austria!

Behaviour of negro troops, I must add, appeared to me to be good, and their relations with the populace, as far as I could judge, pretty correct.

Not only are these American troops used for political oppression, many of them fulfil the role of thieves and robbers stripping the countries they occupy. This is winked at or encouraged by their higher-ups who set the example.

I remember some American soldiers on the train through Germany telling me how the lunch I paid ten shillings for cost them only a few pence. They get American cigarettes tax free, sell them at blackmarket prices some ten or twenty times more than what they pay, then buy Leica cameras, furs, etc., sell them black outside Germany buying marks black with this foreign money, and start the process all over again. This is only the "small robbery" of the "small-fry." Much bigger things go on when the big-guns get into action. There has been nothing like it since the days of the Nabobs of Bengal.

These demoralised American troops are used as political bashers. I will not easily forget one M.P. boasting how he bashed up German workers. "The only way to treat the b—s," he claimed. But then he was only carrying out the policy of his chiefs. These military "policemen" are very brave against unarmed workers. How they would shape up in the front-line is more open to doubt.

The first time I was in Austria there was great excitement at a sentence of fifteen years jail passed by an American military court in their zone on a young Austrian Communist, a mere boy, for the only offence that he had spoken at a peaceful meeting of protest organised by housewives about a cut in milk ration while D.P.'s in a nearby camp were getting the milk and selling it on the blackmarket.

He was a boy with an excellent anti-fascist record who had been sentenced previously to ten years concentration camp by the Nazis, but the Yankee brasshats had to go one better and sentence him to fifteen.

Is this an example of the "western democracy" we hear posed as against "red imperialism"? Or is not the red imperialist theory a cover-up for the very real imperialism of these marauders in Europe?

I travelled right through the Soviet Zone in Austria. I saw many Russian troops in Vienna. I do not wish to suggest they are angels with wings. But in comparison with the Yanks, even if their uniforms are not so flashy, and, in spite of Stalingrad etc., they wear incomparably fewer medals, they made a most disciplined and orderly impression, and their relations with the populace seemed to be based on correctness and decency.

I saw many of the palaces and chateaus which formerly belonged to Nazis and which the Russians got as part of reparations. They have made them available to charitable organisations for children's homes. I well remember the comradely attitude of a Russian major, who conducted me on a tour of a Russian-controlled factory, to his Austrian driver, whom he treated as an equal, not in the Sahib-to-coolie way Yank officers do. Workers in the Russian-owned factories, which they got as reparations, told me what good "bosses" the Russians were, how they always strictly observed award conditions, etc., etc. These workers did not talk like "slaves."

To hide their own crimes the western powers invent all sorts of stories about the Russians. I suggest "slave-labour camps" come under this category. Of course I personally have not been to Russia. But then the English and American press also alleged there were "slave-labour camps" in Czechoslovakia. You cannot live in a country like Czechoslovakia for one and a half years and not know what is going on. In such a country, as an English-speaking person, you are at once the confidant of reactionary elements, who assume straightaway that all English-speaking people are as reactionary as they are, and love telling you anti-Government



Armed workers patrolling the streets of Prague.



*By 7000 votes to 10 Czechoslovak trade unionists signify their support of the Gottwald Government and decide on a general strike at the Works Councils Conference, February, 1948.
(See Chapter 4)*

stories. But never once did anyone suggest "slave-labour camps" existed there. That was too obviously untrue.

It is natural to presume the stories about Russia are the same sort of slander. A journalist I knew in Prague, by no means sympathetic to Socialism, who had travelled widely in Russia, gave this explanation.

Most ordinary jails in Russia, he said, were camps. The criminals worked in these camps, but they were paid full award rates for their work, and got holidays on full pay which all except a few incorrigibles who could not be trusted out were allowed to spend in their own homes. There were no other prison-camps he knew of in Russia, and he was sure such did not exist.

I think a little of this sort of "slave labour" would be welcomed by our own "criminals" who, as is well-known, work in our jails without remuneration.

I remember well the horror of eastern Europeans when they saw pictures of Australian aborigine prisoners working in chains.

It is quite clear to me that the Russian slave-labour lie is another hide-up by imperialist powers for very real slave-labour conditions which exist in many of their own colonies and possessions. It was Russia which proposed at U.N.O. the resolution: "Slavery and the trading of slaves is prohibited in all forms." There were 22 voices for this resolution, 17 against, 3 abstentions, and 16 absentees. Russia of course voted Yes. Do you know that among the countries which voted No were Australia, England and the United States of America?

Red Imperialism? I always thought one sign of imperialism was flooding "satellite" countries with goods. Western Europe is undoubtedly being flooded with American goods. American cars, American cigarettes, American films, American comic-strips, American wirelasses and cameras, etc., and all sorts of cheap and shoddy goods besides, are competing with home products on the British and Western European markets today, threatening to smash many home industries, such as the film industry in France.

But in the People's Democracies I saw no signs of such

Russian penetration. Russia today is making fine cars and buses, as good as anything from U.S.A. I have seen them at exhibitions, and in the use of occupation troops in Austria. But you do not see these cars on the roads of eastern Europe. Presumably under Socialism they find no need to export cars, the more cars and buses they produce the more there will be on their home roads. You see Czech cars, French cars, American cars, in these countries, not Russian ones. The same applies to other goods, cigarettes, cameras, tractors, harvesting machines, radios, toothpastes, and so on, are mainly of local make, some imported, but practically none of Russian origin.

Of course there is trade. In Czechoslovakia besides Czech films you can see Russian films as well as American, and an ever-increasing number of British films, and films from other countries. But the Czech film industry expands. These films fulfil a cultural need, they are not competition for the home trade. Similarly Russian books sell there, as do books of other countries. In the winter of 1947, after the bad harvest in Czechoslovakia, it was good to know that nearly all the white bread we were eating, and never short of, was made from Russian flour imported on credit. If such practical, cultural, and brotherly help as this, on a mutual basis of trade between equals, is what is meant by "red imperialism," no-one over there will worry about it.

CHAPTER FOUR.

WHERE ARE THESE POLICE STATES?

WE the people's police of the new Czechoslovakia are a very different kind of police to the police of the First Republic who fired on the unemployed workers in the streets of Prague in the 1930's. We are a very different kind of police to the old police who, as you know, cooperated practically to a man with the German occupiers. We are part of the Trade Union Movement, part of the people, and stand with you to a man in this crisis."

Thus a rank and file police delegate to thunderous applause at the great history-making Trade Union Works Councils Conference in Prague, February 22nd, the weekend after the right-wing ministers resigned, 1948.

Imagine the police of Czechoslovakia marching last May Day, as we saw them march, hundreds abreast up Wenceslas Place in Prague, each with a beautiful girl in national dress on his arm, and the populace wildly cheering and throwing them bouquets.

Imagine them lined up in front of the platform and, as factory delegation after factory delegation passed, shouting: "Bravo for the workers of—factory, we the people's police are with you," and the workers shouting back: "Good on you, long live the people's police."

Imagine this happening in Martin Place. I could tell you of some court proceedings, some arrests while I was in Czechoslovakia. They were court proceedings not against workers, but against people high up, collaborators with the Germans, blackmarketeers, etc.

Since I have come back to Australia there have also been court proceedings, jailings, raids of homes, etc. Sharkey, McPhillips, Healey, now Tom Wright, a Royal Commission against Communists, not against warmongers or capitalists, in Victoria, raids of workers', not capitalists', homes in

Western Australia, etc. etc. etc. Our "Labour" and "Liberal" Governments direct their police blows against working-class leaders. That is the difference. What hypocrisy of them to talk about "police states"!

Police in Bourke, when New-Guard-like thugs used violence at a Communist election meeting recently were, according to reports, conspicuous by their absence, took no action against these thugs. But interjectors at a Menzies meeting got different treatment. Our police raid workers' homes in West Australia, they are used to evict workers from their homes and so on, that is the difference.

You see the police in the People's Democracies were recruited mainly from Resistance Fighters against the Germans. They are organised in a Trade Union affiliated to the T.U.C. What was the first step of the Gottwald Government in those critical February days of last year? It was to hand out tommy guns to the workers of all the large factories and mines. I would like you to have seen the armed workers marching side by side with the people's police down the streets of Prague as I did during those eventful days.

Supposing the slanders about suppression in Czechoslovakia of Trade Union democracy, the right to strike, "police states" etc., had been true, what would those workers have done with their tommy guns. Anybody who knows industrial workers knows what they would have done. What government in a capitalist country would dare to hand out tommy guns en masse to its industrial workers in a time of crisis?

I would like workers who may have allowed doubts to be sown in their minds by the smear campaign of the millionaire press to have been with me in Prague during those days.

I will never forget what I witnessed, February 21st, the morning after the rightwing ministers resigned. It was the coldest morning of that year, the thermometer showing many points below zero. Snow was falling hard. But from the earliest hours the workers started marching in their detachments from the factory areas in and around Prague to take up their place in the Old Town Square. Offices that morning

were nearly empty of staff as the democratic working populace flocked to hear their popular premier. The working people were in possession of the streets, demonstrating their power.

What were the slogans the workers chanted? They were demanding that the President ask Gottwald to form a new National Front Government "without the traitor ministers." They were demanding extension of nationalisation and end to blackmarketeering etc.

Over a quarter of a million people packed the Old Town Square to applaud the speakers, not only Communist speakers, including Premier Gottwald himself, but leading rank and file militants, mainly Trade Unionists, of all political parties of the National Front, and non-party, including members of the Social Democratic Party, and of parties whose ministers had resigned, National Socialists, Catholic Party, People's Party.

Throughout the streets of Prague tens and tens of thousands more listened to that great meeting over the street loudspeakers, and added their cheers to the tremendous applause of the Old Town Square. The meeting ended with the singing of the International by hundreds of thousands of voices throughout the city. It was the useful people of Prague, not the drones, who were demonstrating that day. It was the useful people, not the drones, who took possession of the streets.

That Saturday the people of Prague expressed in no uncertain way their will to go forwards not backwards. It was at this meeting Gottwald first made his appeal for the setting up of People's Action Committees which were to play so important a role in the days and months to come.

You know the background.

When I first went to Czechoslovakia in 1947 about 60 per cent. of industry was nationalised, including the banks and all heavy industry, the remaining 40 per cent. was still in the hands of private capitalists. Six political parties of the National Front had stood in the elections, each with its own candidate list, election programme, and independent campaign. The Communists had emerged the biggest party with about 39 per cent. of the votes. Communists and



Prime Minister Gottwald addressing the historic meeting in Old Town Square in snowstorm.

Socialist Democrats together had 51 per cent. of the seats. Political parties had numerical representation in the new government according to their strength in the House. This new National Front Government, headed by Klement Gottwald, leader of the largest party in parliament, adopted, and put into operation, the two year economic plan which had been drafted and proposed by the Communists. There was national unity.

But with the very success of the nationalised industries in a People's State, with the success of the Two-Year-Plan, and the rising living standards of the people, with the accentuation of differences between the camps of the old and the new internally and in the international field, the top-leaderships of the right-wing parties in the National Front, who had been supplemented by elements that had co-operated with the Germans and got into leading positions in these parties, and were supported by all the racketeering elements of the nation, began to come out more and more openly with anti-People's policies in the interests of the capitalists, landlord elements, and blackmarketeers.

In foreign affairs they urged policies of sell-out to foreign imperialism. They opposed progressive measures at home, and began sabotage on the food and other fronts against the success of the Two-Year Plan. The Communists, in a minority in the Government, appealed at all critical moments to the mass organisations of the people. As a result of these reactionary anti-democratic policies of the right-wing leaderships, all conservative parties in the National Front began very fast to lose their mass basis.

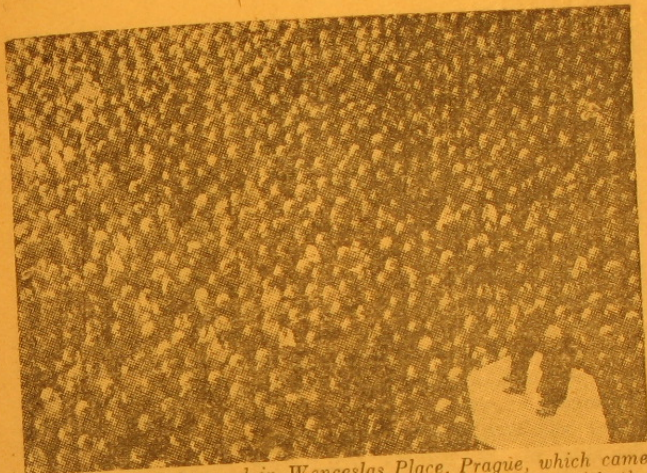
Elections were due to be held in May 1948. It became more and more clear that the Communists were going to greatly increase their vote at these elections. The workers who had lived and worked now more than two years in a People's State, and who had experienced what it meant to work in nationalised industries in such a State, far from showing any signs of wishing to return to work for a boss, were demanding extension of nationalisation. The farmers who had got land in the first land reform did not wish to lose it and others were demanding further carrying



Factory workers marching in to the demonstration in Old Town Square, Prague, the morning after the plotting ministers resigned.



One hour strike in the whole land.



Part of the vast crowd in Wenceslas Place, Prague, which came to hear Prime Minister Gottwald report on his talks with the President.



Indescribable scenes of joy in Prague when Prime Minister Gottwald reports the President's decision to ask him to form a new government of the National Front. February, 1948.

through of land reform to give all land to those who tilled it. Communist branches were recruiting thousands of new members, not only in industrial but also in country areas, often whole branches of the other parties being reported as going over en bloc to membership of the Communist Party.

All Czech and foreign journalists I knew were convinced the Communists would get at least their minimum aim of 51 per cent. of the votes and seats in the new Parliament, probably considerably more.

In this situation the right-wing top-leaderships of the non-working-class parties saw that their only hope of reversing the clock of history was to stage a palace revolution, armed coup with foreign aid, before the elections. This coup was to take place before the rank-and-file trade union conference mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, which was being convened to discuss the ever-more urgent demands of the workers for further democratic advances, and before the farmers' conference to discuss further land reform which was to follow it the next weekend. That was why they struck when they did.

This was their plan. The resignation of the ministers of the conservative parties was to be the signal. Traitorous elements these people had placed in official positions, with picked co-plotters, were to seize strategic points, including aerodromes (many officers in the Air Force were National Socialists), centres of communication, radio stations, public buildings etc.

They believed President Benes would give sympathetic support, perhaps direct aid, they thought Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, an Independent, would resign with them, they also banked on Social Democratic Ministers, or at least some of them, joining the anti-Communist bloc. They were encouraged in this belief by a victory of the right-wing by a small majority at the preceding conference, resulting in replacement of former premier Fierlinger by Lausmann as party president, and removal of T.U.C. secretary Erban from the executive.

The plan was to present the President with this coup



Father Plojhar, Catholic priest and Minister of Health in the
Gottwald Government.
(See Chapter 6)

d'etat and then get what they called a "caretaker government of officials," to run undemocratic elections, similar to the set-up after Munich.

If the plan had succeeded it would have provided a constitutional excuse of a Government Majority, which, though it would not have reflected the will of the people, would have made it easier for the Americans to be invited in to help "preserve law and order." The Yank Ambassador had made a speech a day or two before which clearly indicated the go-ahead. American occupation forces in the U.S. Zone of Germany, by the way, were mobilised all during those February days on the Bavarian border ready to march in if invited.

It is interesting that on the very morning the crisis broke out a report had been delivered to the President by Minister of Interior Nosek and Minister of Defence General Svoboda on extraordinary measures against a flood of foreign spies from the west, viz. from the U.S. Zone of Germany, a considerable number of whom were from the renewed staff of the Nazi Marshal Guderian who works for the American occupation administration.

Subsequent events showed clearly that the reactionary plotters, at whose head Ministers Zenkl, Sramek, Lettrich, Majer, were so deeply involved in plotting that they were negotiating for support of foreign imperialist forces for their treacherous plans. Nor did they care that the forces responsible for Munich were once again breeding German Imperialism and trying to produce a new Munich to sell out Czechoslovak independence.

On February 23rd, Slovak Democratic M.P. Jan Ursiny was charged with maintaining connections with the foreign spy and agent Durcansky, and betraying military secrets to him. More such exposures quickly followed. Those leaders of the plotters who managed to escape, immediately sought refuge in Munich under the wing of the Americans.

Nor did foreign imperialism even buck at stooping to murder in its interference. During the Sokol celebrations a Sudeten German and Czech emigre band of terrorists were brought to earth, after the arrest of one of their number

in Wenceslas Place, armed, and just before he could achieve his self-confessed plan of murderously shooting Defence Minister General Svoboda, second on their list of nearly all Czechoslovakia's leading personalities to be murdered, including Gottwald. One leading member of the Communist Party had already fallen to their bullets.

In the following investigations it was clearly revealed that this band of Sudeten German and Czech emigre terrorists was under the command of leading Czech traitors abroad, connected with and financed by reactionaries at home, and was directed in its murderous mission, and had been trained for the job by the American Counter-Intelligence Corps in Bavaria, Germany.

But, as events proved, these plotters completely overestimated their own forces, completely underestimated the determination and unity of the Czech and Slovak peoples for progress. Above all they failed to understand the unity and maturity of the Czechoslovak Trade Union Movement which was decisive in those days to come.

Friday night, February 20th, the Ministers from the National Socialist, Catholic, People's and Slovak Democratic Parties resigned. Premier Gottwald gave a short speech that evening over the radio announcing the mass meeting in the Old Town Square for the next day.

On the Sunday morning the above-mentioned Trade Union Conference of Works Councils commenced its sessions. It was no ordinary conference of Trade Union officials and delegates. It was a monster conference of rank and file delegates from right off the job in the factories, mines, offices etc. throughout the republic, the biggest and most representative conference of its kind in the country's history. Officials were present but it was the rank and file delegates who had the vote.

The most remarkable feature of this conference was the almost complete unanimity of these delegates, made up of members and supporters of all the political parties in the land, and of non-party people. Voting for the resolutions was 7,000, against 10. T.U.C. president Zapotocky, Communist, and T.U.C. secretary Erban, Social-Democrat, spoke at this conference with one voice. The working-class of Czechoslovakia was united in February. That was what, more than anything else, ensured the victory of the people's will. February showed again, that given unity, the working-class is invincible. In this too is a lesson for Australia.

Conference demanded of the President that he ask Gottwald to form a new ministry of the National Front, according to the Constitution, but without the traitor opposition leaders who had resigned. Conference demanded, not a return to private enterprise, but the extension of nationalisation to include the whole of the wholesale industry and foreign trade and all enterprises employing fifty people or over. Conference endorsed Gottwald's call for the setting up of People's Action Committees. Conference called for a one hour general strike for the next day throughout Czechoslovakia, which, in the transport sector, to prevent dislocation, was to be only five minutes. This was a token strike with the threat of extension if the crisis was not quickly and democratically solved.

I was in Bratislava, in Slovakia, the day of this one-hour General Strike. Never in my life have I witnessed such complete Trade Union solidarity in strike action. Remember, all Trade Union officials, and leaders from the job, are away in Prague. The only preparation for the strike was the bare announcement of Conference decisions. Yet not one factory, not one mine, not one office in Czechoslovakia worked for that hour. All transport stopped for five minutes. The rank and file responded to the call of the conference with complete unity. The working-class had spoken.

Those were days of great mass initiative. The printers in Bratislava of the reactionary Slovak Democrat paper, while I was there, refused to continue printing the lies and slanders against the trade union movement, similar to what we get in Australia, any longer; and when the party bosses refused to cut them out, seized their press, and, in conjunction with the journalists, brought out the paper themselves telling the truth.

Then followed those great days of mass demonstration in Prague. The great demonstration outside the President's palace. The great demonstration in Wenceslas Place to hear Gottwald report on his interview with the President. Mingling with the enormous crowds were also the hundreds of thousands of farmers and country folk in their picturesque national costumes, come to Prague for the great farmers' congress which was to meet the next weekend and which endorsed the trade union decisions besides making its own demands for extension of land reform etc.

No-one could mistake the people's will who saw these demonstrations. The people were in possession of the streets. And it was the Czech and Slovak peoples who were demonstrating their will, not "Russians."

Faced with this clear expression of the people's will the Socialist ministers remained en bloc with the Government and refused to resign. Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, stopped at his post. "I will always go with the people," he said, "a government led by any other party than the Communist Party is inconceivable." He was a great ally of the working-

class in those days, yet later, so low are their lies, foreign newspapers tried to make out the Communists murdered this important ally.

Old President Benes, liberal-nationalist of the old school, was not I think very happy about the way events were going. After all he belonged to the class going out not that coming in. Those demonstrators outside his palace were not bankers or university professors, a bit rough and "uncultured" for his taste, not quite the type that frequented his drawing-rooms.

He delayed, tried to find impossible compromises, but things had gone too far for that. Eventually the old gentleman had to make up his mind. Give credit where credit is due, he eventually did his duty by his nation, asked Gottwald to form a new Government of the National Front, which was the correct constitutional procedure anyway.

Gottwald formed a new all-party government, without the traitor ministers. This Government, which included in ministerial posts T.U.C. president Zapotocky, Communist, and T.U.C. secretary Erban, Social Democrat, went to parliament where it got a large majority in a vote of confidence, later receiving an overwhelming majority in the democratic elections which followed the February events.

This was the "bloody revolution" in Czechoslovakia, the "Russian putsch." The only blood, in spite of all the horrifying stories in the foreign press, shed on the streets of Prague in those days of ferment, was when one of a group of opposition students got into grips with a policeman whose revolver went off (no-one seems sure how it happened whether the student or policeman actually pulled the trigger, but everyone knew it was an accident) inflicting a slight flesh wound in the student's leg.

The people's will had triumphed. Democracy had triumphed against those who wished to stifle that will. The plans of the plotters of palace revolution had failed.

And it is this people's power, where the people are the police and the police are of the people, that our rulers so fear. Hence their lies about "police states."



Zapotocky, TUC president, now prime minister, addresses the great conference of trade unionists.

CHAPTER FIVE.

WHERE DEMOCRACY MEANS ACTION

I suppose never in history has a government put into operation so quickly demands of a Trade Union conference as did the post-February Gottwald Government in Czechoslovakia. It is no accident that the premier who succeeded Gottwald on his elevation to the Presidency, is Zapotocky, president of the T.U.C., nor that another minister in that government, the Minister for Social Welfare, is Erban, T.U.C. secretary.

It was not many weeks after the new government was formed that the whole of the wholesale industry and foreign trade and all enterprises of whatever nature employing fifty people or over were nationalised, according to the demands of this conference, and this was done overnight.

When I say overnight, I mean overnight. It came like a bolt out of the blue. Not one foreign journalist had any idea when or how this step would be taken until it was all over. I remember one crestfallen pupil who learnt English from me. He was a lawyer in his late thirties and had been an active worker for the National Socialist Party on the "cultural front." He was also director of thirty-six factories. Overnight these were all nationalised and he, poor fellow, only had his generous income as a lawyer to live on from then on.

The father of a young boy who took English lessons from me had a saw-mill. He had given the boy a motor bike for his birthday. But to get priority for purchase of the bike he had bought it in the factory's name, a mild little swindle. The factory was nationalised and the poor boy's motor bike with it. You see the sort of suffering that followed February. This is what they mean by the 'red terror.'

This is what happened. The boss would come to his

factory in the morning and find a worker standing there. "What do you want?" "I want to get into my factory." "Oh no you don't, there's a national administrator here now." You will see the boss was thus unable to sabotage the works, cook his books, remove his banking account, or any other of his tricks. The coup was too sudden for that. This is how the people took over the people's property which they built with their own labour.

That morning when I went to the privately-owned language-school I was working in the other teachers told me: "We have a national administrator here now." Who was it? A girl typist in the office, active trade unionist all her life, fighter in the resistance against the Germans and concentration-camp victim. She had, temporarily, all charge of the books, banking account etc. Later of course someone more experienced in the educational side took her place, but the first need was democratic reliability to prevent sabotage and ensure smooth change-over to people's control. That day I lunched at a posh restaurant frequented by journalists. "How are you?" I said to the smooth tailed-coated headwaiter. "Very well, thank you," he said, "I'm the national administrator here now."

Similar steps were taken shortly after on the agrarian front, so that today no-one owns land in Czechoslovakia except those who till that land.

You have heard a lot about the Action Committees which were set up during the great February days. They have been represented as being "brutal organs" of a "police state." What is the truth about Action Committees?

The important thing to realise is that they too were the creation of the Trade Union Conference mentioned above. Gottwald at the mass meeting the day after the ministers resigned called for their formation. The Trade Union Conference took the initiative in organising them. They were called "Action Committees Of The Regenerated National Front." That is to say they were real people's committees of democratic action composed of a given number of representatives of each of the political parties and organisations which make up the National Front but excluding of course

all traitorous elements who were connected directly or indirectly with the February plot.

The foreign press painted lurid pictures of purges carried out by these Action Committees. Part of their activity was, of course, purging. That was necessary. For instance in many government offices and organisations supporters of the traitorous plotters were in strategically important positions where they could do great harm to the nation.

I remember when I was in Vienna at Christmas, due to my own fault in omitting to get a return visa before leaving Prague, I had some trouble getting my papers in order in time to return to my work. The consulate went to a lot of trouble and got the matter fixed up for me telephonically. One high official in the consulate who spoke English, however, seized on this incident to try and use it against the government which employed him. "Write that up in your newspaper," he urged me. "It is this red-led government we have that causes all these difficulties. Soon we will be getting rid of it. We have our plans." That was a civil servant speaking about his own government in office hours.

There were many like him. Worse, high government officials were implicated in the armed plot, papers were found in high government offices with instructions about insurrection, showing contact with foreign military chiefs, arms dumps found in civil servants' and others' homes.

Action Committees were given the right, which they used, to immediately suspend such people from their positions. Such people were given two months' holiday, immediately operative, on full pay. Of course there were some arrests too of those directly involved in criminal operations connected with the plot, but arrests were police, not Action Committee, responsibility. Every case of an employee or official of an organisation suspended by an Action Committee had to be referred to the Central Action Committee, in the case of employees of Ministries also to the Minister in charge. They had all rights of appeal. In the case their suspension was upheld they were still generally given jobs in the same field as before, but where they could not do harm.

Needless to state, Action Committees were not set up in working-class organisations. There were no Action Committees in the factories for instance. In the first enthusiasm workers in some factories did set up such committees. This clashed with Trade Union democracy and they were disbanded by the Trade Unions.

But this necessary work of "purging" was not the only, or main work, of the People's Action Committees. I will tell you just one story to show their function. It was the only time I, in my own person, had business with an Action Committee, and I was not purged.

I lived in a small township over an hour by fast bus from Prague. I had a two-roomed furnished flat for myself and family and paid a rental equivalent to 30/- Australian a week. Perhaps to Sydney readers this does not sound a high rent, but it must be remembered that in the new Czechoslovakia rents, on the average, are only 5 per cent. of income, as against the Australian figure of 25 per cent. This was a country town, and for such a town it was a black-market rent. Rent-racketeering still existed. There were people who sucked blood in rent, battering on the victims of the housing shortage. These people had sheltered under the wing of the leaders of the right-wing parties and their officials. Such a one was my landlady.

A few days after the February events I got a letter from the local Action Committee which had been set up, asking me if I would mind a delegation from the committee coming to look my flat over as they suspected I was paying too high a rent.

This was a new experience for me, to have a rent tribunal come to you instead of you going to it. I replied stating I had no objection, and that I too had always thought my rent was excessive.

A day or so after, four members of the committee came to my flat, looked it over from top to bottom, told me I was paying too much and they would consider it at their next meeting. Within a week I got a further letter from the committee, telling me the matter of my rent had been discussed and a decision reached, which was binding on my

landlady, that the rent be forthwith reduced from 30/- to 18/- a week. Not only that, the order was made retrospective from the time I came into the flat, so that for the rest of the time I was in Czechoslovakia I paid no rent at all and my landlady still owed me money when I left.

This was no isolated case. I know from personal knowledge that in this same township they investigated every case of suspected rent-racketeering and made the necessary adjustments. And so throughout the Republic.

Where they found rich parasites occupying large flats above their needs, they would put working-class families who had been waiting for years for homes into these flats. The landlord or landlady, I think particularly of my own landlady again who lived in such a luxury flat all on her own in Prague, besides owning property in the country, could keep one room in the flat for his or her own use. There were other cases of rich people with two homes, one in town one in the country; workers' families would be moved into one of them.

The Action Committees got to work on the blackmarket and championed the interests of the useful people in all fields. You will see this was real democracy, being carried out by committees of the people, committees which understood the needs of the people, committees of action, for the majority against the exploiting minority.

Courts in Australia order working people out of their homes, in the interests of property, Police evict them. In a people's democracy it is the organisations of the people which evict landlords to make room for the workers. That is the difference. That is why our millionaire-owned newspapers are so horrified at "action committees," and cry "police state."

CHAPTER SIX.

RELIGION IN THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES

I FEEL sure most of my readers must deplore, as I do with my whole being, attempts being made by vested interests to drag religious red-herrings across the path of Australian working-class and democratic unity.

Horror-stories about "religious persecution" in Eastern Europe are being invented by these vested interests in their attempts to split the workers and divert them from united struggle around economic, patriotic and class issues.

That is why I find it necessary to deal with the religious position in these countries as I and other foreigners saw it with our own eyes.

You see, the three People's Democracies I lived in and visited, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, are all countries where the vast majority of the population are practising members of the Roman Catholic Church. If Communism persecuted the religion the vast majority of these people follow, how do you explain its majority support in these countries?

Perhaps you wrongly think that because Communists have a large say in the government of these countries, the people cannot organise resistance. How then do you explain the fact that in both France and Italy, Catholic countries where the people have not state power, and where Communism is persecuted by the authorities, the Communist Party records at every election far the biggest vote of any single political party?

Would the Catholic workers and peasants of France and Italy continue voting for the Communists if they feared that there was a threat to their religious freedom from the Communist Party? Yet in every election since the war

in France, in spite of government repression, the Communist vote has shown an increase. The same applies to Italy. Political divisions in Europe are along class, not religious lines. This is as it should be.

I would like Australian workers to have been able to see what I and every other journalist in these countries saw. I often wished I had had a movie camera to take pictures of the pilgrimages, led by their priests, singing their religious songs, which used to file past my bedroom window every Saturday and Sunday morning. There was some holy relic in that township. These processions from neighboring towns and villages were very long.

We saw with our own eyes the complete freedom of worship enjoyed in these countries. Even the greatest enemies of the new order had to admit this fact. We also saw how religious instruction in schools remained as before. No-one could convince us that there is even a vestige of truth in the fables about "religious persecution" in these countries.

What about Cardinal Mindszenty? I heard a lot about this gentleman when I was in Hungary. I am sure there will be less crocodile tears shed by Hungarian Catholics over his conviction for treason and blackmarketing than in any other country where Catholics live and work.

In Hungary Mindszenty is known politically as an open advocate of the return of the hated foreign German-speaking Hapsburg monarchy. He is an aristocrat himself, his friends are aristocrats, he openly advocates a return of the old landlord system of feudal relationships in the countryside. He does not even speak Hungarian but the hated German tongue of the old Austrian oppressors, so alien is he to the life of his own people.

But the Catholic peasantry of Hungary love their Hungary and its independence of foreign and domestic-land-owner rule.

They own their own farms for the first time in their history, and do not want to see the power of the monarchy or of the Hungarian nobles restored.

When I was there Hungary was celebrating the centenary of the Hungarian War of Liberation against Austria and the

Hapsburgs. Mindszenty openly advised Catholics to boycott the celebrations. But the patriotic Catholic masses took no heed of his advice and celebrated just the same.

Particularly vivid in my mind is a day I spent chatting with peasants outside the former palatial mansion of Admiral Horthy, ex-fascist-dictator of Hungary, in his own feudal village. These peasants were all "good Catholics."

They told me of what they called the "bad old days," when they were driven by the nobles in their bare feet out onto their fields to work for them. How though they tended cattle then too, their children had hardly ever tasted milk. How now, under their New Democracy, they, who tilled it, owned the land. Their children had milk, they got help from their government not taxes and ever-higher taxes, a fair and guaranteed price for their products, and so on.

"Now we stand up like men," they said, "we are no longer slaves but owners of the land."

Whatever they think of Tory Cardinal Mindszenty's religion, these people do not agree with his politics, the politics of the nobles.

Then I think too, of a day I spent in a Polish village in the territories of Silesia recovered from Germany. This is pioneer land. In this particular village the whole population was young, there were no old people. The Germans, when they left, had blown up the whole village, every house in it. They had stripped the farms of stock, farm implements, and everything. They had made a minefield of the whole area.

Into this waste came young Polish men and women, landless labouring peasants from the hills, most of them had been transported by the Nazis as slave labour to Germany. The new government gave them this land to reclaim. They formed a co-operative to do this.

Several lost their lives delousing the area of German mines. They had converted the wilderness the Germans left, with government aid, to a prosperous agricultural area once again. I saw them gathering in a record harvest. They had built up stock, trained tractor drivers including a young woman from their ranks, rebuilt the homes, stables,

barns, sheds and so on. That autumn the land was to be divided up among their households. For the first time in their lives these toilers on the land were to own their own farms.

I visited their homes and enjoyed their hospitality. They showed me their church which they had built with their own hands at government cost. I saw no pictures of Stalin, Lenin or President Beirut in their homes, but in every room there were pictures of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Like the vast majority of Poland's peasantry they were devout Catholics.

I asked them what their politics were. They did not know I was a Communist, just knew me as an Australian journalist. "Oh, we are not very political," they said, "just farmers." "But what political party do you vote for at election time?" "Most of us vote for the Communists." "Why?" "Because they are the party that helps us most."

And that is how the Christian and non-Christian people in the People's Democracies judge political parties, on their merits, not on the religious conviction of their leaders or members. The people, regardless of religion, are divided, in the main, along political and class lines, not religious ones; that is the truth.

Why is it that the Catholic press in Australia gives no publicity to the fact that the Minister of Health in the Communist-led Government of Czechoslovakia since February 1948 is Father Plojhar, ordained and practising priest of the Catholic Church?

Why does not this press give publicity to the fact that the Catholic Party in that country supports the present government, or to its many statements indignantly denying suppression of religion?

Why does it not give publicity to the excellent agreement the churches there have with the Government on religious instruction in the schools etc., which does not apply even in bourgeois Catholic countries like France?

If the Catholic Church were oppressed in Czechoslovakia, why did the Catholic Archbishop of Prague, for the first time in Czech history, publicly lay his hands on Gottwald's

head in the cathedral and bless him in the name of the Church at his inauguration ceremony after he was elected the Republic's President in succession to Benes in 1948?

These things are hidden from Australian Catholics. Why? Nothing is further from the truth than any idea that a Catholic political bloc exists in Eastern Europe today. The majority of Catholics support their new Governments. There are also Catholics who oppose them. In other words there are Catholic laity and Catholic priests who are for the working class, there are Catholic laity and Catholic priests who are anti-working-class. The same political divisions exist among churchmen as among other sections of the community. The same is true of Protestants and other religious denominations. The chairman of the local Action Committee which got me my rent reduction was a Social Democrat who went to the Protestant church regularly every Sunday and was a pillar of that church.

Take the Trade Union Conference I referred to in the last chapter. A great number, probably a majority, of those delegates who voted support for their Government were Catholics. This would be still more true of the Farmers' Conference which followed the next weekend.

Well over 50 per cent. of the members of the Communist Party branch in the town I lived in used to attend mass on Sunday morning at their local church and then go on to their party branch meeting afterwards. The same is true of most other country branches, and of Communist Parties in other Catholic countries in Europe, including Italy. How absurd to suggest with such a set-up there could be suppression of the Christian religion.

Nor is it only Catholic laymen who support the new order. Many priests are its supporters too. The May Day Committee in my township, for the first time last May Day, invited the local priests to march as a body in the procession. By majority vote they decided to take part. Later a ban, I understand from the Vatican, came through, forbidding priests in the New Democracies to take part in political demonstrations, but in spite of the ban some dozen or more priests marched with us that day.

It is I think generally unknown in Australia that in Czechoslovakia, and this applies to other People's Democracies too, the priests' salaries are actually paid by the Government. They receive an official Government salary. One of the first acts of the new Gottwald Government after February was a decree raising the salaries of the priests to that of the highest civil servants. "We want to see the people's priests", the Government statement ran, "enjoying the same standard of living as other cultural workers."

It is my opinion that, if Doctor Evatt must champion someone on his trips, he would be better employed championing Greek parish priests who have been shot down in cold blood by the monarcho-fascists side by side with Trade Union leaders, rather than aristocratic anti-Labour cardinals like Mindszenty who are sentenced to imprisonment for punishable offences by established democratic courts.

It is an old trick. The partition of Ireland was accomplished only because they succeeded in creating religious divisions in the national movement. The same policy was adopted in India. But Catholic and non-Catholic, Christian and non-Christian workers in Australia have fought side by side since the early days of the convict revolt against tyranny, since Eureka, in great strike struggles, in the New Guinea jungles, and right throughout our history. We Communists will fight to see this unity preserved in the tough days of struggle to come. Whatever our religious convictions, or non-religious convictions, the working people of this land must stand shoulder to shoulder in our common struggle for a better life, for democracy not fascism, for peace, for progress, for our national independence. This is the only way forward.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

SOME CONTRASTS

THE first thing we did when we landed back in Fremantle and went into Perth was to go and have a steak and egg and chips at a milk bar. It was quite a queer feeling, coming from England, to get a whole week's meat ration on your plate at one go.

Then we had a look at the shop windows.

When you have been living in a country continuously you do not notice things quite the same way, but we, coming back fresh after two years absence, could not but be struck at the big price rises. We compared the cost of everything, from pumpkin to leg of lamb, from pocket-handkerchief to men's suits, tram fares etc., and there had been big price rises all round.

This was queer coming from a People's Democracy because we had become used to prices of essentials going down all the time, not up. Just after we got to Czechoslovakia there was a 30 per cent. reduction in prices of all essential commodities.

The shoes I am wearing as I write are admired by all my friends here, they were made at the nationalised Bata works. They cost me 25/-; a year before their price had been 35/-. Last year we bought our boy of four a pair of boots, solid job such as they wear there in winter. The price was 4/-, but a year before the same boots cost 9/-.

I could give you many more examples of such price-drops. Take two items which are important for my share of the family budget, beer and cigarettes.

I remember my shock about English beer. I had been looking forward to my first pint of that solid drink. It was over a decade since I had last tasted it. When I went to the pub with my brother I got not the old English ale, but coloured water, and what a price! If anyone tells you

he got drunk on post-war English beer he is telling you a fishing story. While I was there, they diluted the colouring with still more water and put the price up again.

Czechoslovakia is the home of Pilsen beer, the best in the world. In the winter of 47 after the bad harvest, they had to use the best part of their grain for feed, there was a malt shortage. Reluctantly the Government had to water the beer a little. But, the very day the beer was reduced in strength, its price was reduced corresponding exactly to the amount of water added.

This is the difference between a capitalist economy and capitalist State power, euphoniously called "western democracy", and People's economy and People's power, where industry including the breweries are nationalised, called "police state."

When I went to England cigarettes were already very dear. There was a rise in prices almost as soon as I got there. Then another steep rise just before I left for the continent. A third rise took place while I was away. Cigarettes in Britain, before I caught my ship home, were, 3/6 English, in terms of Australian currency 4/4 for 20, the same English cigarettes which sell here for 2/8. Those are the cheapest cigarettes the English worker, on his much lower than Australian wages, can buy, and even then he is lucky if he can get them.

You can see the price the English worker has to pay in heavy taxation for Bevin's Tory foreign policy of adventurism, warmongering, and policing the world for the Wall St. millionaires.

When I first went to People's Czechoslovakia, cigarettes were still in short supply. Unlike England, however, they were rationed, and you got your ration; 100 cigarettes a month, more for industrial workers. This rationed cigarette was the so-called "Partisan" brand, which sold at 1/- for ten.

You could also get American cigarettes which were very expensive. After the liberation there was a big blackmarket in Yank cigarettes. The government defeated this by buying American cigarettes and selling them in the shops at a little under the blackmarket price. If dollars had to go out

for cigarettes the people's government should reap the profit rather than the blackmarketeers, they argued.

By the time we got there, there were already imported Balkan cigarettes selling off the ration in fair numbers, which you bought loose at 2d each. Then they introduced two other Czech brands at 1/6 and 2/- respectively for packets of ten. You could get as many of these over and above your ration as you liked.

Before I left all rationing of tobacco and cigarettes had been lifted. There were plenty of cigarettes of all Czech and Balkan brands on sale, including a new brand, still cheaper than the excellent "Partisans", which sold at 9d. for ten.

Of course fellow-passengers on the ship put the rise in Australian prices down to a 40 hour week which had been won while we were away. But in the newspapers there was a whole page which had been missing from newspapers in the countries we had come from. This was the page which showed the dividends being paid to share-holders in the big capitalist firms. It was clear from this page that, not only prices, but also profits, were showing an all-time record. Here was the clear explanation of the rise in prices in the capitalist countries, including countries where there had been no 40 hour week introduced and where money wages had gone down not up, as against fall in prices and rise in real wages in the People's Democracies.

I am often asked about wages in the People's Democracies. It is not easy to make comparisons in most cases, because of the nature of the currency, whose exchange-rate does not necessarily correspond with internal buying-rate. Take Poland, for instance. Figures of money wages based on exchange rate could be quoted to make these wages appear starvation wages. Wages in Poland were of course always terribly low. But then prices are equally low today and going down all the time, for instance a good meal in a restaurant for 7d. Then workers get special coupons enabling them to buy essentials at ridiculously low prices, milk for instance at one-fifth of the market-price. Mothers and children of working-class families get an ample supply

of free milk. In all factories workers get, free of charge, a large and substantial two or three course meal at midday in their canteen. I have eaten them and know their quality. You can see the difficulty in getting an even rough comparative figure for real wages with such a system.

In Czechoslovakia, however, there is a solid currency whose exchange rate is stable. The differentiated price system mentioned above did not exist there. Comparisons could be fairly made.

An Australian visiting Prague who was well-up in Australian award-rates for most trades, worked out with me while I was there comparisons in terms of money-wages between Czechoslovakia and Australia. We compared rates trade by trade. Our investigation showed that Czech wage rates were practically identical with wage rates in Australia. And that is saying a good deal because, though Czechoslovakia was always highly industrialised, enjoying higher standards than the rest of Eastern Europe, Czech wages, pre-war, were well below the standards of those of Western Europe.

We compared prices. For some things of course they are higher there, for others, including rent, much lower. We found on the average it would be quite fair, however, to say that the cost of living of a Czech worker was certainly not higher than that of an Australian in 1946. Thus it can be fairly confidently claimed that real wages, as well as money-wages, in Czechoslovakia, of male workers are practically identical, probably higher than they are in Australia. For women they are of course much higher. Women in all People's Democracies get equal pay with men for equal work.

But that is only half the story. You must add to this the far greater security of workers in a People's State. Every Czech worker knows he will never be unemployed again in his life. As a worker you have no worries. For instance, from the day you start work you are fully insured against all medical and dental expenses of whatever nature not only for yourself, but for your wife and whole family. You have no worries for your old age. You know your children's education will be provided according to their ability and at State cost, and that their future is also assured. When

wives work the family income is doubled, and factories provide nurseries for their children such as only rich princesses, moneybags, and socialite dames can afford in our society.

Most important of all, and far more important than the comparisons, mostly cooked comparisons, between countries, so loved by foreign journalists, and so difficult to be accurate about, is the very real feeling that every worker in a New Democracy has: "I am better off this year than I was last year, and I know that I will be better off next year than I am this, and that things will go on getting better like this for all time provided there is no intervention of aggressive war against us by outside powers."

So much for Perth. Then we got to Melbourne. This was really like being home. Our ship was held up three days there—by a strike.

This was also a queer experience coming from a People's Democracy, because for the whole time we had lived in Czechoslovakia there had not been any strikes.

That is not quite accurate. There was the one-hour political general-strike mentioned in a previous chapter. Besides factories which were nationalised outright, there were some factories and concerns which were placed under National Administration at the time of liberation pending a final decision as to their fate. Before February, when Communists, a minority in the Government, were outvoted, there were several instances of decisions to hand such factories back to private enterprise. On every occasion I know of that that happened the workers went out immediately on strike and stopped out until the factory was nationalised. There was also one economic strike while I was there. It was in the airlines and only lasted a few days before a settlement was reached.

When I was in Poland, I visited the Silesian mining areas. Most of the miners I met had worked some twenty-five years in French mines. It was interesting to hear their comparisons between conditions for mineworkers in capitalist France, an advanced "western democracy", and those they had returned to in the new People's Poland where the mines are the people's property.

"But don't you ever have strikes?" I asked.

"Strikes? Strikes against whom? Against ourselves?" they answered.

That is how workers in the People's Democracies really feel. The mines and factories are their property. What is the point of striking against yourself?

"But supposing there is some disagreement between you and the manager?" I pressed.

"The manager? He's one of ourselves, worked on the coal with us in France. Besides you don't understand there is no longer that conflict of interest between management and men. The more coal for the nation, the better off we all are, and that applies to managerial workers too. There are no bosses' men now, because there are no bosses."

Then he explained to me about their production committee. Lodge officers and management together met to discuss production problems. For instance if a question of safety arose they came together on pit-top. Managers were just as interested in safety as were the miners themselves. All were equally concerned about conditions, and all were equally concerned about production.

Lately I have been revisiting the various coalfields in New South Wales. What a contrast!

The Australian nation is crying for coal. How do the miners who get that coal live? Coalfields towns in N.S.W. are the most neglected townships in Australia.

Go to Cessnock, centre of the South Maitland fields. Here you will find the worst roads, the very worst housing conditions in New South Wales. The whole area is drab. Parks, playgrounds, flower-beds, trees etc. are conspicuous by their absence. The only recreation offering the youth are the billiard saloons and the pubs.

One of the biggest towns in New South Wales, it is in the Cessnock area that nearly all the gas-producing coal of Australia is mined. Yet there is no gas works in the town. The miners' wives have to cook on old-fashioned coal stoves.

Why is this? Almost the whole population of this great industrial area consists of wage-earners, and the small

business people who cater for their wants. The coal owners live far away from this sooty drabness. Salaried managers run their mines. The great wealth of the area is drained off into the pockets of wealthy coal, banking and shipping millionaires, who live in the posh, begardened suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne and London. Only the leavings, the dregs, are good enough for the miners who create the wealth. But these absentee owners' mummies and mistresses do not light coal stoves. They are befurred and bejewelled, pampered-pekes, nanny-reared.

Australia cries out for coal. Coal for Poland too, even more so, is the key to all her problems. But unlike Australia they are getting it. They are not only already getting much more coal, but are actually exporting more coal today than was exported before the war from Poland and Silesia put together.

Here are some of the differences.

Miners in Poland are the best-paid section of the whole community. No-one grudges them this. They risk their lives to get coal, and coal means dollars, and imports of goods for the people from abroad, that is why Poles drink real coffee, Frenchmen an acorn-juice substitute for coffee. Coal makes the factory wheels go round. Coal is the basis for their new life.

In Poland the miners, instead of being the most slandered section of the community as here, are the heroes of the nation.

They are delivering the goods.

In the People's Democracies first of everything goes to the industrial workers, only afterwards to other areas. First homes to be built are built in mining and industrial districts, only afterwards in those districts where less important sections of the community live.

Everything is upside down to what it is in capitalist countries.

In a People's Democracy, as things in short supply come onto the market, they go first to industrial areas, then other areas afterwards.

I was in Cessnock recently on a Saturday morning. The

town was dry. No beer, and I was told that for the last three Saturdays beer had been off. Imagine it! The nation crying out loud for coal, and no beer on Saturdays for the miners who get the coal. This would be impossible in a People's Democracy. If anyone had to go without beer it would not be the miners and industrial workers. So it is with everything else, electricity schemes, parks and playgrounds, new roads and footpaths, and so on and so forth.

The beer example is a bad one. Beer, the worker's drink, does not come under the category of an article in short supply. There is plenty of beer in the People's Democracies. Beer, the workers' drink, is untaxed; beer in Czechoslovakia was 3d. a pint.

Yes, everything over there is upside down from here. The funny thing is it works better, gets results better, than our way "the right side up."

Reactionaries, ex-capitalist and middle-class elements, would often try to impress me, as an English-speaking foreigner, how bad things were in Czechoslovakia. "Imagine," they would say, "the workers, people without any education or culture, get everything before us. Why, we even have to take off our ties and collars, put on worn clothes, rub our hands with pumistone to make them look like workers' hands, and try all sorts of tricks like that, to have a hope of getting any favours from the authorities. You can't imagine how bad things are today!" Or others: "Just think how bad things are in our country now, they were even better under the Germans you know. Why, when I have paid my taxes, practically all I have to live on and keep my family with is what I earn."

The other day I was reading a report given by Comrade Slansky, general secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to its Central Committee. He was talking of the duty of taxation officers in a New Democracy.

Some officials, he said, did not yet realise what it meant to be officials in a People's State.

"Take a tax official. For years he was trained and educated with the idea of mercilessly extracting taxes from the little man, but when it came to a matter of a big whole-

saler or factory owner then he was afraid to proceed against him for tax evasions or fraud, because the rich man had political protection and friends in high places, because he was a member of the capitalist political party to which the Minister of Finance also belonged.

"The good tax official today is he who understands that we now have a different tax policy, that it is the remnants of capitalism we want to tax, that we are unmerciful towards the tax evaders and defrauders who come from the capitalist class and that towards the working-class we should be more lenient and less strict in enforcing the regulations to the letter."

Readers may, or may not, think they would like to live in such a State. I hope at any rate the account I have given above will help show why it is the millionaire-paid newspapers hate what is going on there so much, and why they tell such lies.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

CONCLUSIONS

IF I have come back from Europe convinced of one thing more than anything else, it is of the tremendous strength of the working-class in the world today, the great superiority of socialism over capitalism, and the absolute bankruptcy of weakened and tottering capitalism, which offers the people only one prospect, the prospect of economic crisis, of unemployment, reduced living standards, of fascism and war.

There is, true, a drive today towards fascism in our land. But the position is different to the time when Hitler came to power. The world balance has changed today. There can surely no longer be any doubt, especially since the epoch-making events in China, that the Socialist forces in the world today are much stronger than the capitalist forces. For the first time in history, today, the working-class of the world is stronger than all its adversaries put together.

Hence the tactics for the working-class, not only of Europe and Asia, but of the whole world, including Australia, must be tactics of attack, not defence. History is on our side. We must use our strength, and we too, will soon, perhaps sooner than many of us realise, also have our People's Australia. This is the way forward.

To those who oppose this new order I say: "What is the use? You can at best only hope to delay its advent in Australia for months, or perhaps years, at the cost of great human suffering, economic crisis, perhaps even war. Get on the right side of history and fight with us. There is no third way."

A second deep impression I have brought back from Europe is just what human degradation fascism brings. Not only do I refer to what I saw in the concentration camps,

to the ruins and misery that were the aftermath of fascism's war, but also to the twisted minds left behind by it in Europe. I do not want that to happen in Australia. That stamp must not be left on future generations of Australians.

Present attacks on democracy in Australia are, however, fascism's advance-guard. Whether it be new-guard-like thug attacks on left-wing meetings, bans against working-class organisations using public halls alongside an open-go for Atom-Bomb Menzies, raids on workers' homes, arrests of workers' leaders, frame-ups and commissions against Communists, or splitting tactics supported by millionaire-newspapers in unions, all these are the road to fascism.

Remember, when fascism once gets a grip, it is more difficult than most imagine to unseat it. The time to strike is now, strike against every encroachment on democracy, small or large, one by one, as it comes.

"Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves," is an old and true saying.

In Australia we have a good chance of getting our people's democracy without going through all they went through in Europe, without all the expenses that fascism brings with it. Let us know our strength, keep on the attack, see that our independence and our democracy are not filched away bit by bit, and fight side by side for our economic, democratic and truly patriotic demands. This too is the way forward.

A third great lesson I think Europe can teach us is the lesson of working-class and people's unity. Czechoslovakia last February showed what trade union unity can achieve. United the working-class is invincible. The W.F.T.U. must remain the united leadership of workers of all countries. Let us unite our ranks in the struggle for wages, conditions, etc., in Australia and link up our movement and our nation indissolubly with the anti-imperialist forces of the world. This is the way forward.

Most important of all let us see clearly whence comes the danger of war. This danger will remain with us as long as capitalism, imperialism, exists. Let us see clearly

the forces for war, the mad atom-bomb millionaires, imperialists everywhere, and their agents in the Labour Movement, for what they are. Their insane plans are doomed to fiasco, war or no war, but a Third World War would be an unbelievable hell, its destruction unimaginable, if we allow it to come about the world we finally inherit will be a shambles which will put back humanity's onward course many years.

Let us see clearly the forces for peace, which are superior forces, the great and peace-loving Soviet Union, the People's Democracies, the new China, and the working-class and peace-loving peoples of the whole world. War is far from being inevitable. It need not happen, it must not happen, and provided we organise against it sufficiently vigorously as we must and I believe will, it will not happen.

Forward under the banner of the world's working-class. Down with those who attack our hard-won freedoms. A stop to splitters in the Labour movement. Forward, united, to a people's Australia for peace, progress, and our national independence.

Thus we shall "advance Australia fair." This is the way to victory.

FINIS.