

# AMR



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- **The state of the whole people and the struggle for Socialism in the 21st Century: a perspective of the influence of Socialism on Australia**
- **Everyday experiences of a communist family**
- **AMR interview with Comrade Jimmy Donovan**
- **The struggle for Continuity in revolutionary change**



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**Front cover image: Lawrence Aarons in Mayday march in Sydney, 1966. Photo: ASIO / © Copyright National Archives of Australia 2023 (CC BY 3.0 AU)**

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## Editorial Board

David Matters (Editor)

Roland Boer

Christian Goopy

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Postal: 74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia  
Phone: +61 2 9699 9844 Fax: +61 2 9699 9833  
Email: [cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)  
Website: [www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au)

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Issue #74 – March 2023

# Editorial

The editorial board of the *AMR* has collected some interviews and articles to assist its readers in gaining an understanding of the developments in the international workers movement. The setback to Socialism in Europe with the reclaiming of whole nations by the imperialists and the building towards imperialist encirclement of China is part of the struggle in what we still see as the era of proletarian revolution.

The continued independence of hundreds of nations in the world is a legacy left to us by the heroic sacrifices of the working class of the Soviet Union and its Red Army. The liquidators and bourgeois apologists within the camp of the working class would have us believe that struggle is futile, that the USA and its European and Japanese stooges are the “hope of freedom.”

The opening of a new cold war and the creation of a proxy war in Ukraine is designed to test weapons and to bury the historic memory of the Soviet Union in the hope that a united front of Western-controlled nations can be forged to snuff out national independence and Socialism. The Australian working class had for many years the words “Peace and Socialism” on their banners. The most progressive stood against the crimes of Imperialism and supported the struggles of workers and their allies in the countries of our region.

This *AMR* goes to print in a period where the militarists of Australia are squandering the wealth of this nation in military equipment designed and developed to crush the progressive forces in this region. In issue No 73 of the *Australian Marxist Review* we showed how Australia as

a middle-sized imperialist power is part of this imperialist network. The new militarist blocs are part of the class struggle: AUKUS, the QUAD, and the other alliances are attempts by the US oligarchs, along with our own oligarchs, to tie our nation to this decaying system. All this is not in the interest of our working people. Instead, they offer new forms of poverty, death, and destruction, seeming to lead towards a world war that has only one purpose: to maintain and establish US dominance over the people of the world. The rhetoric of “democracy” and “freedom” is actually camouflage, which is used to cloak poverty and actual denial of democratic rights. The slavery at the centre of this empire is based on suppression of the interests of the working class through more and more destructive weapons.

The gains won through the success of revolutions and struggle by working people are being overturned to pay for this new war of aggression. The high level of propaganda and mind-numbing “news” cycles, which present right-wing oligarchs as people’s champions and fascist-style regimes as champions of democracy, must be challenged. At each turning point in history the struggle of ideas and the understanding of our reality assumes immense importance.

In this issue we seek to offer some contribution to improving the clarity in understanding events that have led the working people down this dead-end and contributed to the rise of reaction in this world.

We reprint an article first published in 2010 in the journal *World Review of Political Economy*, under the authorship

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of our editor David Matters. The article traces the question that arose in the Soviet Union: the concept that the working class surrender its state to a new formation, the state of the whole people. It is argued that this development ran counter to the development of Socialism and developed into a state above the people. Subsequent developments allowed the bourgeoisie with their international connections to seize this state and to dismantle it from within. This left the working class without the mechanisms to defend its own interests.

Much more needs to be done in understanding these developments. So to contribute to this understanding the *AMR* has interviewed participants in the struggle of our class and our Party to see how these developments had an impact on our class and its Party.

The first interview is with a comrade LC, who grew up in the Party (name not used as the comrade still lives in a rural community). LC describes the experience of growing up in a Communist family, and how their father – despite being a veteran digger from the Kokoda track during the Second World War – suffered the persecution and hardship at the hands of the anti-Communists. Nevertheless, LC also describes the tremendous work carried out by the Party and its members, as well as the wider united-front humanitarian work undertaken by these comrades. LC's interview also reveals the damage caused to individuals and the Party when factional differences overcame comradesly unity. The splitting up of the Party did not strengthen but weakened the Party and its class.

The second Interview was with a veteran Comrade Jim

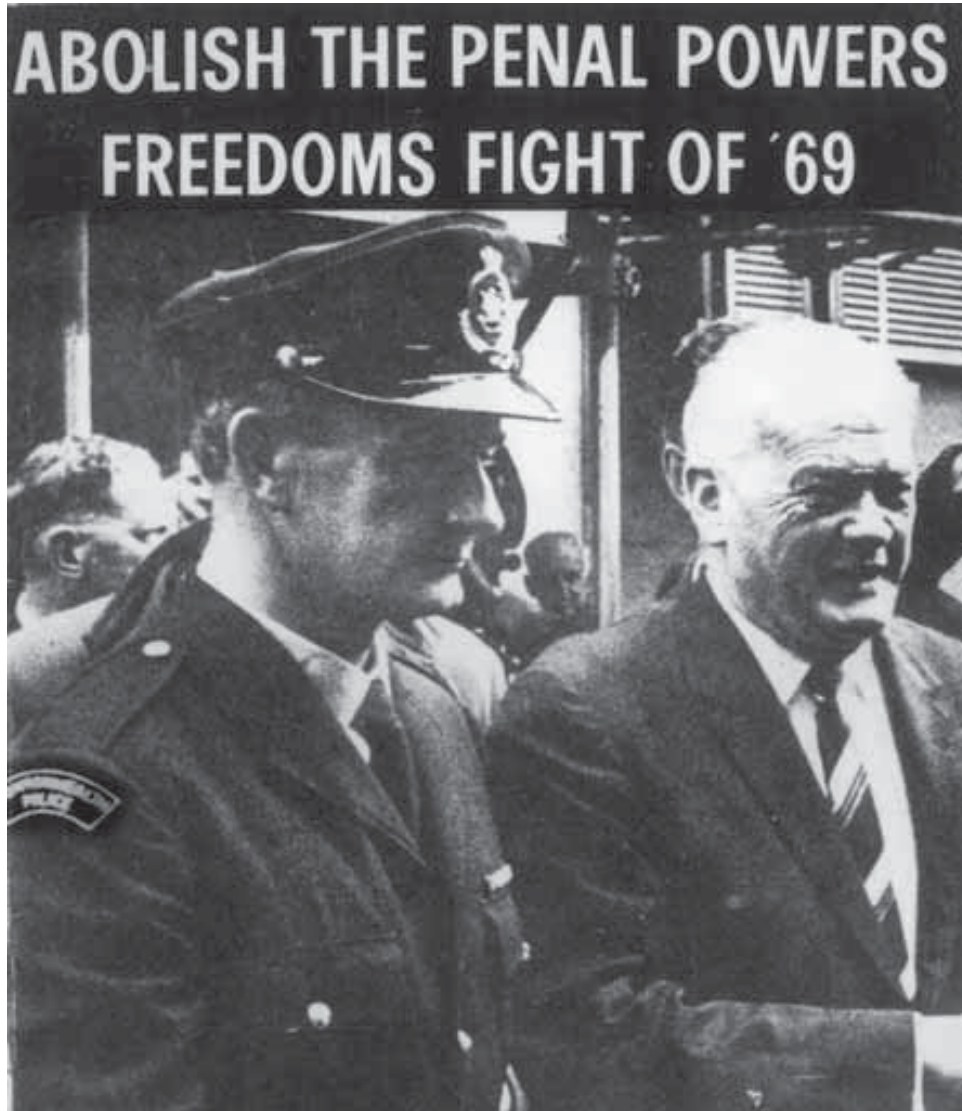
Donovan. Jim gives us some beautiful images of the Party as a grass-roots organisation of our class, and of the stalwarts of our movement as people and not marble monuments. He also shows us the damage done by those who placed themselves above the class and the Party. The basic fact is that the Party was of the class and made very real contributions to the welfare and support of the people. The *AMR* editorial board thanks Comrade Jim Donovan for his extensive and in-depth contribution which will be published in two parts, with the second part to follow in *AMR* #75.

The final article is under the name of our editor David Matters, but it was created and developed by contributions from all of the *AMR* editorial board members, as well as being inspired by study sessions on the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism. The article seeks to show the continuity of our Party with the struggle for revolutionary change, and to expose the many breaks with revolutionary continuity and the damage that these breaks have caused. It is argued that this continuity and the task of understanding it is fundamental to the process of renewal, which will lead to the unity of the Party and the class. This struggle is essential if we are to lead the class towards regaining momentum in the struggle to replace capitalism with Socialism and thereby end all forms of slavery.

We hope you find this issue of interest and that it provides a small but significant contribution to our struggle.

# AMR





Penal Powers: In 1968, Clarrie O'Shea, Victorian Tramways Union leader, was jailed for refusing to pay thousands in fines levied under the Penal Powers Act. These powers were introduced by Menzies in the late '50s and used most aggressively in the late '60s by employers to deter unions striking over claims for higher wages.

The day after O'Shea was jailed, a million workers across Australia stopped work to demonstrate their support for him and the fine was paid by an anonymous benefactor. Soon after O'Shea's release, the government moved to modify the laws.

# The state of the whole people and the struggle for Socialism in the 21st Century: a perspective of the influence of Socialism on Australia.

David Matters

**Abstract:** The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was historically significant for the fundamental revision of Lenin by the introduction of an idealist concept that the proletariat could surrender state power to the whole people and that this voluntary liquidation of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat could happen and still lead to communism. This, coupled with the attack on the cult of the personality, was a cover for an attack on the fundamentals of Leninism and Lenin's view that the class rule represented by this dictatorship will exist right up to communism. This article also shows how this revision influenced the decline in the communist movement in Australia along with the changes caused by the scientific and technical revolution. This led to the reestablishment of a bourgeois state at first without a major bourgeoisie but then seized by the counter-revolutionaries under Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

**Key words:** proletariat; dictatorship; state; whole people; communism; Lenin; idealist

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In the last decade of the twentieth century the representatives of imperialism triumphantly proclaimed the end of history. They were celebrating the restoration of capitalist relations in the territories of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European people's democracies.

The People's Republic of Yemen was the scene of street fighting and violent upheavals. In the Balkans Yugoslavia was dismantled and Albania captured by gangsters and criminals. The assets of the people were seized and in many cases removed from their home countries. Seemingly overnight, violent wars began between Soviet republics, some of which are still unfolding.

In Asia the isolation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was intensified and Cuba went through the special period and through sacrifice survived the counter-revolutionary onslaught.

In China danger threatened when one of the so-called

democratic revolutions was orchestrated to coincide with the visit of the liberal democrat Gorbachev. In Romania and Afghanistan the leaders of the communist parties were murdered by the so-called revolutionaries.

In the German Democratic Republic an assault on the Berlin wall and an internal coup within the party brought down the defences of the socialist state, the annexation of the GDR by the FDR occurred dramatically. In the Soviet Union the Communist Party was declared illegal and its assets seized by the newly emerging capitalist gangster state. Throughout the region fascist groups emerged almost overnight and communists were divided and repressed. In the Baltic states, extreme nationalism emerged and progressive and communist forces were pushed underground. Estonia, Lithuania and others fell into the hands of extreme nationalists.

In Czechoslovakia the so-called "velvet revolution" restored capitalist rule and in its first act partitioned the country into two new republics. Vaclav Havel was distinguished by the connection with the previous ruling families which had owned large parts of Czech industries before the people's revolutions. What had not been possible to achieve by armies of intervention by the fascist hordes and decades of sabotage and isolation was seemingly done in a relatively short period of history and in a relatively bloodless way.

There were common elements though in all of these developments:

- A weakening of the communist parties and their connection to the people.
- Demonstrations in the major cities.
- Extreme nationalist movements, including revivals of racial hatreds.
- Changes to the mechanism of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.
- A flooding in of assistance by large mainly US corporations (e.g. Xerox), religious and other NGOs.
- A revival of religious groups and restorations of state religions.
- Economic dislocations in some economies.

- Corruption within the ruling parties.
- Emergence of leading figures of communist parties as part of the new emerging capitalist trend.
- Loss of direction by the state apparatus and paralysis of the mechanisms of the state.

## A crisis and paralysis

The crisis that ensued was further increased as those who fought the changes were deemed conservatives and many of the parties became pluralists and social-democratic. Former senior leaders of the communist movement emerged as local tyrants heading capitalist and nationalist regimes, for example Edward Shevardnadze in Georgia.

The ideological disintegration caused paralysis, and the damage to the movement amongst the working people in the world was exacerbated as this disintegration spread to communist parties throughout the capitalist world and formerly large communist parties, such as the Italian Communist Party, disintegrated. In all continents, communist parties dissolved into democratic movements or shifted to the position of multi-tendency parties. The Socialist Unity Party of the GDR had a party that now declared six platforms in one party.

## The crisis was not new

In Australia this disintegration and ideological confusion was not new. The communist movement had undergone a series of splits and divisions which increased in frequency at the turn of events locally and internationally. That which divided the international communist movement was magnified and fought out all over the country. As a people of an immigrant country, with each international struggle touching and influencing our development, Australians look to developments in other countries, particularly the country of their origin. Waves of Irish looked to the struggles of Ireland, Russians had influenced early trade union struggles as they fled tsarist persecution, Greeks and Cypriots played their part in our labour struggles. It was the influence amongst Italian sugar cane growers and rural workers that led to the only representative of the Communist Party in an Australian parliament, Fred Patterson in Queensland. The influence of British trade unionism was also strong in the Australian context, and the colonialism of Britain dominated right up until the 1970s in the “backward” sections of the working class. International events became the mask that was used by opportunist forces to split the party in Australia. Events in Europe or Asia generated followers and led to formations in Australia.

## A proud history

The party that was now rent with these divisions had itself been inspired by the development of socialist revolution in Russia. Thus in Sydney the Comintern persuaded the two communist parties that had been formed to unite and create the Communist Party of Australia in October 1920. So began the turbulent history of our movement. As a party there is much to be proud of, as it was a fighting organisation from the beginning. It was the first party to treat the Aboriginal people as human beings and to begin with the great pioneers of that liberation movement struggled against the colonial vestiges and for the survival of a people. As part of a strident effort to bring forth the progressive aspects of an Australian culture, the author Katherine Susannah Pritchard did much to show the struggle of the people in everyday life and the shameful treatment of the Aboriginal people – exemplified in her truly legendary work, *Coonardoo*, and her commitment to telling the story of Australian working people. The new theatre movement added to the wealth of culture. The leading role in the struggle against war and fascism, sheepskins for Russia and the movements for democratic rights and the right to speak in public all built our movement. The Communist Party, in alliance with the trade union movement and the Labor Party, were able to defeat the referendum launched by the reactionaries to ban the Communist Party.

Within the trade union movement the influence and leadership of the party extended during the 1940s to the 1960s and included party organisation in many workplaces and industries. Many trade unions were transformed into fighting organisations of the working class, the concepts of which were well expounded in Lance Sharkey’s *The Trade Unions: Communist Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism* (1961). Hundreds of works on all aspects of Australian society and international questions were published.

The party was a unified force of the Australian working class and a part of the international communist movement. This movement, though, is and was a part of the class struggle between the successful proletariat and the defeated bourgeoisie.

## Changes in Australian society and the rise of opportunism

The continued expansion and the growth of industries led to what has been called a prolonged boom after the Second World War in which Australian society changed and developed. A conscious policy to tie the workers to home ownership and vast new suburbs created the illusion of continuous progress under capitalism. This at home increased the aristocracy of labour and embedded the Labor Party as the second party of capitalism which in



the main was based on this new affluence. Incomes rose and welfare was extended to include many aspects of life.

Reforms in recent years have tied the working classes of the world imperialist system to the financial position of imperialism. Superannuation for sectors of workers share market investment and home ownership, suburbanisation of populations and mixing up the class compositions of communities are all useful for dissolving organisations.

It was these trends that influenced the development of class consciousness and led towards opportunism in the Australian communist movement. These manifested in the twin rise of petty bourgeois tendencies towards left opportunism and right liquidation along with an increase in social democratic tendencies.

Opportunism is an international trend and this Australian “disease,” as it was sometimes called, had manifestations in all parties. It is linked to and results in capitulation to imperialism. It weakens the proletariat and disarms the class consciousness of the vanguard. In 1914 it had tragic consequences for the people of the world and was reflected in the capitulation of the Second International to national chauvinism. Kautsky and Bernstein have shared the role of the personification of this trend.

I would argue that the distinction goes to Khrushchev in the former Soviet Union and to the Aarons brothers in the case of the communist movement in Australia. It is the source of their distortions that we should examine, not because they themselves have created the distortions but because they reflect the idealist trend in the movement that has allowed revision through the door of the movement. The actual class and material basis for these distortions is still the subject of much conjecture. What is it that led to the changes in view that saw tractor stations privatised, that led to the declaration of socialism as achieved whilst capitalist relations still prevailed in the collective farms? Was it due to simple mistakes or was there a class force at work? The actual overthrow of socialist relations took over three decades, and even during this period there were still developments.

What of the failure to deal with corruption and the rise and rise of the black economy? The urbanised population took to the streets and carried out what was in effect the first colour revolution and installed the drunk Yeltsin to power as the representative of a gangster bourgeoisie. The state fell under the influence and use of the counter-revolutionary forces.

## The 20th Congress

The ideological position of these forces was assisted by the decline in prestige of the communist movement, and

the popular trend is to assign this to the role of Stalin and the “cult of personality.”

This cult was denounced by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Party and, despite Khrushchev’s later removal for economic mismanagement, does not ever seem to have been reviewed. De-Stalinization became a code word for many changes that were implemented during this period and resulted in damage to the international movement. A chain of events occurred and led to a split between a number of communist parties and the Sino-Soviet split that caused divisions in all communist parties.

There was a wave of counter-revolution that seems to coincide with the so-called de-Stalinisation of the socialist communities. Khrushchev’s speech and the struggle in the Soviet Party around the concept of the cult of the personality, and the unscientific way in which this issue was handled, opened the road for an attack on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The airbrushing of Stalin out of Soviet history and the demonisation that grew each year led to an attack on basic concepts of the Marxist-Leninist movement.

Throughout the communist movement loyal communists came under attack for their alleged support of the cult of the personality, and in the Communist Party of Australia statements against Stalin were delivered to all party organisations. Those who did not fall into line were condemned as Stalinists. Confusion and distress were compounded by the fact that the speech which was “secret” in the Soviet Union was anything but to the Western capitalist media. The term “Stalinist” was hurled from all directions at those who supported the revolutionary concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and distortions of the concept were paraded by modern anarchist trends that appeared under flags of Trotskyism and Maoism. This added to the ideological confusion and there was little firm ideological ground for Marxist-Leninists as undetected revisions of the basic tenets caused the ground to fall out from under the communists’ feet. The attack from Khrushchev restored legitimacy to and borrowed heavily from Trotsky’s denunciations of Stalin. That there was no analysis of the process was testament to the success of the method used of cloaking the distortion in revolutionary verbiage.

Literature from the Soviet Union expunged Stalin and replaced him with Khrushchev as the source of wisdom; the 20th, 21st and 22nd Congresses were lauded as decisive contributions to the theory of Marxism-Leninism. Changes were subtle in approaching the question of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Under the guise of learning from experience of building socialism, distortions of Marxism-Leninism appeared.

Under the influence of these congresses, V Afanasyev, in his *Marxist Philosophy: A Popular Outline* (1961), in the

chapter entitled “The State of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the State of the Entire People” (pages 318-320), makes the following assertions:

The state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as we have seen, exists during the transition period from capitalism to socialism. The working class needs it to crush the resistance of the exploiters, to abolish the oppression of man by man and to build socialism, together with the peasants and other working sections of society.

The working class in the Soviet Union successfully carried out this epoch-making task with the aid of all state power: socialism won completely and finally in the Soviet Union. With this victory the conditions which necessitated the dictatorship of the proletariat disappeared. The working class, in the words of Programme of the CPSU, “is the only class in history that does not aim to perpetuate its power.”

Having brought about the complete and final victory of socialism – the first phase of communism – and the transition of society to full scale construction of communism, the dictatorship of the proletariat has fulfilled its historic mission and has ceased to be indispensable in the USSR from the point of view of the tasks of internal development. The state which arose as a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat has, in the new, contemporary stage, become a state of the entire people, an organ expressing the interests and will of the people as a whole.

The state of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitory phenomenon of history. It must arise when the working people are confronted with the task of building socialism. When socialism triumphs completely and finally, the dictatorship of the proletariat comes to an end. When the victory of socialism is secured, the working class voluntarily renounces its rule over society and transforms its dictatorship into a state of the entire people.

Absurdly, Afanasyev goes on to assert that this “does not mean that the working class loses its leading role in society”; and then, “only with the disappearance of classes, ie with the building of communism, will the working class complete its mission as leader of society.”

And further: “The experience of building socialism and communism in the Soviet Union shows that the dictatorship of the proletariat ceases to be a necessity before the State withers away. But the state as an organisation of the entire people will be preserved until the complete victory of Communism.”

In contrast to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is “the further development of democracy.” It is in this context that Lenin and Marx are revised. On pages 20-28 of the

1949 edition of Lenin’s *The State and Revolution*, Lenin discusses the state as an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class by the exploiting class. And he then points out that “The Supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian State is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian State, ie of the State in general, except through the process of ‘withering away’” (ibid., page 33).

To assert that the proletariat can abolish the state by surrendering power is an idealist interpretation; to talk of socialist democracy being established after such a transfer of power is an attack on the actuality of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as the last form of the State and not in fact a state in the traditional sense. This attack derives from the unprincipled attack on the efforts of the socialist society to this date.

The attack on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the surrender of power to a state of the whole people could only result in a state above the people. As states are instruments of class rule, the state of the whole people being in fact a departure from the dictatorship of the proletariat weakens the class rule of the proletariat and slows the withering away. As such the state provides a vehicle for the re-emergence of the class that was defeated: the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is not as yet a fully formed class but exists in embryo and grows from the vestiges of capitalist relations that still exist under socialism from the continued commodity production and in relations with the capitalist world and from outright corruption and theft. This is what led to the substitution of the rule of the proletariat for the rule of an elite that began to respond to imperialism; rather than a withering away of the state a strengthening of the state as above the classes (of all classes) reverses the gains of the revolution.

The strengthening of the peasants’ hold on the economy through the abolition of state controls opened the door to the re-emergence of commodity economy. The separation of central control to the creation of a commodity market enacts the economic development of this position. The privatisation of tractor stations and the transfer of some enterprises to the peasantry through collective farm property transform the relations of production. The emergence and tolerance of the black economy and the failure to deal with the questions of exchange with the imperialists. These are symptoms that were manifest prior to the new leadership, and there certainly had been a development of privilege, but none of these are in and of themselves decisive; it is an accumulation of material actions taken and not taken that have led to the changes.

It has to be asked: What was it in the development of Soviet society that caused the Soviet leadership to see that their tasks were the removal of the status of Stalin? Who did it benefit and what were the changes that it engendered?

The attack on the cult of the personality led to denial of the role of the party and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the struggle to establish socialism. It placed the individual outside of the class and the historical period. It was idealist in that it placed all negative developments at the feet of one man. This has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism. In the 30 years of Stalin's leadership, socialism was consolidated, the fascists defeated, and collectivisation of agriculture achieved. The total negation of Stalin's contribution cut off a whole generation of revolutionaries from a correct understanding of the movement's material base and led to a series of counter-revolutions; the necessary suppression of these moves led to rising nationalism within the people's democracies; a weakening in the understanding and practice of socialism undermined the development of socialism in those countries and opened the movement to revision of the basic concepts. This subjective approach was manifest in other practices and is what gradually cut off the party from the people and the real material genesis of the socialist revolution.

In European parties the concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was denied and thus many of these parties walked away from revolution, instead becoming stuck on transforming the capitalist state. It is thus that Lenin states on page 51 of *The State and Revolution* (1949 edition):

To proceed. The essence of Marx's teaching on the State has been mastered only by those who understand that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from "classless society," from Communism.

In a later text on political economy by Konstantinov, *The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy* (1974), pages 423-429, the distortion continues.

The political forms of the Socialist state may be of various kinds (the Soviet form, the forms of proletarian dictatorship that have become established in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, Asia and in Cuba; other forms of socialist state are also possible, including the parliamentary republic). But the essence of all these forms is one and the same dictatorship of the working class, its leadership of society, of the state.

The phrase quoted uses this sleight of hand to reduce the concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as the form of the state and instead reduces the role of proletariat to the leading role; it is not the rule of one class. It also slips back to a form of bourgeois democracy, the Parliamentary republic, and again introduces the concept of capturing and using the bourgeois state rather than abolishing it.

Konstantinov continues: "From being an instrument of the majority of the population directed against the exploiters the state becomes the instrument of all members of society; it ceases to be a means of suppressing the resistance of exploiters, who have disappeared, and embodies forms of people's unity."

Socialism is not a classless society; vestiges of capitalism remain if only in the relations of production. This creation of a new stage before communism, a stage without class rule the concept of a state, above class rule, of the whole people has proved to be false. This falsification is the core of the revision of Marxism-Leninism that has plucked the revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat out of Marxism-Leninism and has led us to the present mess. The involvement of the whole people in the administration of the state is part of the process of withering away of the state. The class character of the state is not changed by this process and this is fundamental in a socialist state, for the restoration of capitalism remains on the order of the day whilst imperialism continues in the world.

The transfer of state power to other classes and groups in the Soviet Union was completed by the Gorbachev clique when they moved from soviets to dumas (the parliamentary republic). At any time during this prolonged period a restoration of the Soviet state was possible; it required the conscious activity of the Communists to mobilise the proletarian dictatorship to restore the class rule of the proletariat.

This is what Andropov attempted during his brief period as general-secretary. It was the military and political pressure of the United States that influenced other classes in Soviet society, and the dispersal of the state power away from the proletariat introduced notions and concepts that eventually led to new thinking and its weakening of the Soviet state. The internal dynamic of the black economy and other forms of corruption undermined the morale of the proletariat. The paralysis that was obvious during these counter-revolutions was sourced from the removal of revolutionary content in the form of the state.

## The influence of these revisions on the Communist Party of Australia

As stated above, the storms and divisions of the international communist movement during this prolonged period were rent out in the Communist Party of Australia. Forces loyal to Ted Hill sided with the Chinese party in the disputes that arose between the Soviet Union communists and the Chinese communists. Complicating this development was the de-Stalinisation of the Australian party. Developments within the Chinese party also had an effect on the party formed, the Communist Party of Australia



(ML). As different changes occurred within the socialist world, splits were the result of differences over international positions. Reflections of the Cultural Revolution and other stages of the Chinese party found their way into the movement. The divisions that arose caused divisions of the communists within the working class. This, though, could at times be overcome when the reality of the struggle within Australia stepped forward – and one such moment of great unity was when the working class fell in behind the CPA (ML) led Tramways Union and a general strike was called against the penal powers legislation of the Menzies government in 1968 and the jailing of Clarrie O’Shea.

During this struggle the pattern of working class militancy and the unity displayed led to a massive defeat of the employing class. The unity of the forces was short lived and the division in the Communist Party of Australia began to come to the fore. A section of the leadership was moving towards the right and adopting an opportunist approach to the developing youth, environment and women’s movements.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, under the influence of the Vietnam war, a youth radicalisation movement broke out questioning all aspects of contemporary society. It reflected on the fact that youth had increased its numbers in society and that in developed capitalist countries many more university students were required as a result of the scientific and technical revolution. This presented a challenge to the contrast of labor by hand and brain. The individualism of this layer contrasted with the collective spirit developed by the proletariat over decades of struggle. It was their intellect that was shifting the process of labor and technicians became more in touch with the proletariat.

It involved new layers entering the Communist Party and some old layers not attached directly to the industrial working class. The attack on Stalin and the cult of the personality was accompanied by an anti-communist campaign, with the Menzies government continuing its attempts to ban the Communist Party. From within the labour movement Trotskyists and right-wing groups organised within the Catholic Church began their attacks to destroy the communists and any progressives within the working class movement. During the two to three decades communists were jailed including the general-secretary of the party, Lance Sharkey. In Balmain, Nick Origlass from the Pabloite Fourth International succeeded in having the elections for the Ironworkers’ Union overturned and communists were jailed. The Catholic-inspired groupers captured the Ironworkers’ Union with the assistance of the Trotskyists. This occurred also with the Federated Clerks’ Union and the Shop Assistants’ Union; these groups still exist and are seen as a respectable part of the Labor Party in modern times.

In 1948 the Chifley Labor Government had launched an all-out campaign against communist influence in the Coal Miners’ Union, the army was used to load coal and the communist leadership of the union was defeated. The Catholic groupers captured the Labor Party but were repelled and a split occurred: many anti-communists left the Labor Party and formed the Democratic Labor Party, whose main aim was to side with the conservatives and keep the Labor Party from government, and at the same time to break up unity between the communists and progressive labour. There was an all-out assault on left and progressive forces in the union movement and many Communist-Labor alliance leaderships were challenged.

During this period the Pabloite Fourth International adopted a strategy of “entrism” into communist and labor parties. An agent for this trend, Dennis Freney, began discussions with the national secretary of the Communist Party of Australia, Laurie Aarons, about entry into the Communist Party and the formation of a faction. They were attracted by the anti-Stalin rhetoric and a growing criticism of the Soviet Union. The new student radicalism and the shift of some layers of the party towards the actual lifestyle of the petty bourgeois strata added this new dimension that enabled this trend to penetrate layers of the party. The working class sections of the party came under attack.

The Communist Party under Aarons’ leadership began to expel long-standing communists and to disband industrial branches, such as the maritime branch, simply for disagreeing with the leadership. The philosophy of this leadership was later confirmed by Laurie Aarons’ brother Eric in the book *Philosophy for an Exploding World*. Whilst this book was not the basis for the split, it confirms the idealist politics of this group and their departure from Marxism.

In *Philosophy for an Exploding World* Eric Aarons calls for a “values revolution” and launches into an attack on the fundamental foundations of Marxism. Aarons substitutes the newly emerging youth and student movements for the working class as the mainstay of change and adopts the idealist view that change is from within the individual. He explains his position on page 8:

Associated with the turmoil and change of our century there is already a groundswell of new thinking – the kind of revolution of attitudes and ideas that has accompanied and promoted every major social change in history. The people of all countries – socialist and capitalist, “east” and “west,” industrially advanced and undeveloped are for the first time simultaneously involved ... Consequently the thinkers of all nations are forced to consider the most fundamental conceptions ...

And further on: “The nature of ‘values’ themselves is under scrutiny. Are they purely man made norms, or do



they emerge as the expression of some world spirit?" And after several juxtapositions of these concepts, we read this:

I would wish to contend that the changes with which we are confronted today are not inexorably determined facts of history, but something with which we have a continuing relationship of active exchange: not only do these conditions suggest new ideas to us, but with these ideas we can and ought intervene in history, striving to shape it to our needs and desires.

This book outlines views that led to divisions and splits in the Communist Party of Australia. Marxism-Leninism was replaced with an idealist world view. Many members of the party became renegades and launched attacks on existing socialism. Whilst it is important to study what is new and coming into being, it is also true that ideas are based on the material world and have material reality as their starting point; even madness has a material basis. This attack on proven historical facts is what enabled the leading cadre of the Communist Party to move away from the working class and attack actually existing socialism, instead substituting their fantasies for the reality.

In his *False Philosophy Exploded*, Bill Brown from the newly formed Socialist Party replied to this mess as follows:

Since material reality is under challenge as the sphere determining ideas, this is clearly a shift in philosophical standpoint away from Marxist materialism. What is the alternative? The shift can only be towards the standpoint of placing ideas in the primary position.

And referring to the author's attack on Marx:

Further, the booklet implies that Marx adopted a wrong position in not recognising the role of ideas reacting back onto practice or material reality. This is merely resorting to the hackneyed "straw man" device of attributing to the person under challenge views which he did not hold.

It was as this trend that had developed within the Communist Party of Australia that brought on the formation of the Socialist Party of Australia from amongst those expelled and others who left the Communist Party.

The Socialist Party adopted the view that those forces who had captured the Communist Party would eventually liquidate it. This view was confirmed in 1992 when, having fulfilled their role of splitting the movement, the liquidators gained the dissolution of the party and created the Search Foundation as an organisation to manage the considerable assets of the old party.

It was not long before the union activists that were associated with the Communist Party adopted more useful

positions to the capitalists and began through majority leadership in unions, such as the Australian Metal Workers' Union, to adopt class collaborative approaches. Documents such as *Australia Reconstructed* and many similar publications came from a nationalist and protectionist position, and the struggle for socialism was relegated to a back seat.

The pro-Soviet Socialist Party had a majority of union activists in the construction, maritime and transport industries, and it continued activity from 1971 until the early 1980s when a split developed over the question of the Prices and Incomes Accord and party discipline. Party president Pat Clancy, construction leader Tom McDonald, and sections of the maritime and transport branches, adopted support for the policies of the Labor Party for an agreement on wages restraint in exchange for a social wage. Ideologist Bill Brown came down in favour of the Accord with Labor. This Accord is what eventually led to the loss of militancy of the working class.

The forces around this group that had come together in the Socialist Party were mainly associated with different leaderships in the industrial unions. The militancy of the communist and left labour leaderships and the long post-war boom had led to these groups of workers enjoying a better standard of living than some other groups of workers, and the concept of the united front was distorted to serving the economic struggle rather than the political struggle of workers.

This led to this section of the party coming to a detente position with the right-wing Social Democrats in the ACTU and gave a guarantee of class peace and wage reductions in real terms for a social wage as a means of ensuring the continuation of Labor governments.

Clancy used the capitalist paper *The Australian* to launch an attack on the party; he had also maintained international relations with forces in the Soviet Union, a strategy of hedging his bets revealed later in Tom and Audrey McDonald's biography *Intimate Union*. Clancy was expelled from the party and using this he whipped up an anti-party campaign, splitting dozens of rank and file workers from the party.

The anger was such that fist fights and intimidation was used by the Clancy forces against the party. Two organisations were formed: one was the short-lived and misnamed Association of Communist Unity; and the other was the Maritime Union Socialist Activities Association, which still exists in some ports. The majority of the members of these organisations dissolved into the Australian Labor Party, others set their life towards single issue campaigns.

During the decade of the Accord union membership went into decline, and the membership in trade unions of the Australian working class fell to 15-25 per cent from nearly

60 per cent. Industrial activity plummeted and unions that engaged in actions against the capitalists were deregistered, a process that in other times when a union lost its registration was respected, in this period those unions found their members conscripted by the state into other unions.

Where there was an award system covering all workers in a given industry, the end of the Accord era and the Labor government saw the new system where each company or workplace had its own agreements. Bargaining across industry was made illegal and the new Liberal government was able to take the step of introducing individual contracts to workers in 1996 and further extending this during a decade of government.

The Labor government was able to introduce extensive privatisations of government assets and took workers to the position where their retirement savings were frozen and became part of the capitalist share market. The social wage, at first increased, was eroded by the privatisations, and workers' employment conditions were increasingly individualised.

It has taken a long time but the Socialist Party has begun to recover from these splits and has now enacted its constitutional provision and reformed as the Communist Party of Australia in 1996.

During this period the party correctly rejected the new thinking of the Gorbachev era and has maintained relations with the international communist movement. The damage that has been done is the shift of the working class away from the political struggle against capitalism and the increasing dispersal of left forces away from an active role in the working class.

The newly reformed Communist Party of Australia does not reject the lessons of history nor attack existing socialism. We see that the diversity of views within the communist movement can best be united by open application of the unity of theory and practice.

As the writer of this article I offer a view on the question of socialism in the 21st century, and that is that it cannot be built unless we are prepared to accept the experience of those who built socialism before us, and our history is a continuity of that struggle. Some who create the concept of 21st-century socialism can make the mistake of not accepting and developing that continuity.

The most basic tenets of Marxism remain that only by the replacement of bourgeois class rule with proletarian class rule can we change towards socialism. To get to this position still requires the application of the vanguard of our class organised as a communist party.

It is important that we learn from life and apply theory and practice as a unity.

The path to socialism is obviously not a straight road but it requires clear and careful direction by the principle of Marxism-Leninism. These principles include the class rule of the proletariat as the transitional form of socialism to communism and are guided by the party principle.

In Australia the distortion of these tenets has led the working class up a blind alley and to a weakening of the class consciousness. This has set back the struggle for socialism in Australia.

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## Interview

# Everyday experiences of a communist family

**Introduction:** The following interview with a Party member was held in early January of 2023. Most of the interview concerns the everyday experiences of a communist family in the 1950s and 1960s. It is told from the perspective of one of the children of parents who were active members of the CPA, and is based on the vivid experiences that have been clearly remembered, on written autobiographical material from the father, and from ASIO files on the family that were obtained.

**AMR:** Comrade L, thanks for agreeing to do this interview. It is for publication in the *Australian Marxist Review*, and the editors are keen to hear about experiences of older Party members about what it was like to be a member in the past, what it was like in a local branch, at home, and so on.

**L:** I was thinking that I would mainly like to talk about our family, and how we were all affected by being members of the CPA. Maybe I should give you a bit of background about the family.

**AMR:** Of course, readers will be very interested.

**L:** My dad was born in 1921, left school at the age of 14 and became an apprentice carpenter. Later, he was a soldier in the Second World War and ended up on the Kokoda Track in Papua-New Guinea. On his way up the track, he saw lots of dead Aussie diggers, lying on stretchers. They were skeletons, with their uniforms on and guns by their sides. He was only 21. For the living, the experience was mud, rain, hunger, and horrible things to see.

Have you heard about the “biscuit bombers”?

**AMR:** Yes, I have. The “biscuit bombers” used to drop the food to the soldiers.

**L:** There was a “biscuit bomber” that had dropped some rations down in a clearing. The diggers were always hungry, starving, cold, and wet. Some of the soldiers ran into the clearing to get the rations. As dad was running to the drop, he was machine gunned down from behind. The Japanese were waiting for them, but the Aussies didn’t know that.

**AMR:** Only 21, and gunned down!

**L:** Yes, he was shot in upper left leg, about half-way up his thigh. His muscle was mangled and his femur was shattered. His leg bent forward in front of him as he fell over the top of it.

**AMR:** How did you find about all this?

**L:** He told me all this on an ANZAC Day when I was a teenager. He’d never spoken about it before, but then he finally did.

**AMR:** What happened next after he was gunned down?

**L:** He told me that it was lucky he’d done a first-aid course not long before he went over. He said, “I knew I had to stop the bleeding.” He pulled his leg back and held the artery to stop the bleeding. And he lay there.

Do you need all this information?

**AMR:** Yes, please go on.

**L:** Dad had to pretend he was dead when the Japanese soldiers came along, because they would bayonet anyone they found alive. He was finally rescued 24 hours later. He was put on a stretcher and carried down the track until they were far enough away from the front line. He was handed over to the “Fuzzy Wuzzies,” who carried him to Port Moresby, and then he was flown back to Australia. The “Fuzzy Wuzzie angels” they called them. They were so gentle and kind to the Diggers.

**AMR:** What condition was he in by then?

**L:** He had gangrene in his leg, malaria, and he heard the doctors say that they didn’t think he was going to live. But he did. He was sent to Tamworth where he was operated on, his leg was amputated, and later he was sent to Baulkham Hills for rehab for about two years.

**AMR:** What about your mum?

**L:** Mum was working at a factory that made swimming costumes. The young women used to go up and see the soldiers, visit and take them gifts and generally socialise with them. That is how mum and dad met.

**AMR:** What did they do for work after his rehab and after they were married?

**L:** Dad went down to Wollongong to open up a carpentry



business, and mum followed soon after with me (I was very small). The business lasted for about seven years, but because of all the post-war shortages he couldn't get the materials he needed. He went bankrupt, so he had to close the business.

**AMR:** Pretty tough!

**L:** There's more. Dad used to have nightmares, with screaming. Mum would try to wake him up and calm him. That affected me a lot. I was only little, but it was really frightening.

**AMR:** What did you do after the carpentry business was forced to close?

**L:** Soon after, we travelled up to visit mum's sister on Mother's Day in 1952, and on the way back we had a car accident. The car was a write-off. Dad broke the stump of his leg (he was using a prosthetic leg), mum went into the windscreen, and I had a fractured skull, broken nose, and concussion. The three of us ended up in hospital. Only my 3-year-old brother escaped injury.

**AMR:** (*swearing*).

**L:** By 1952 we were completely broke. Dad had a small disabled veterans' pension, but it wasn't enough to live on. Some time before, Dad had bought a block of land near Port Kembla steelworks. He'd been building a shed, for a workshop. But when all this happened, we ended up moving to the shed. It was just a concrete block with a tin roof on it. No lining, no ceiling, no electricity, and a cold water tap out in the yard. The westerly winds used to blow in under the eaves and our hair would blow around while we were in bed.

Let me tell you this little bit. Prior to moving to Lake Heights near Port Kembla, we were renting an old decrepit house in Wollongong. After the car accident we were completely broke. Dad decided we would have to move out to the shed in Lake Heights because we couldn't afford to pay the rent in Wollongong, so we scraped up enough money to pay a week's rent. The night we were heading up to the shed, dad went in to see the landlady and told her we were leaving: "We have to leave, since we don't have much money and can't afford the rent." The landlady said, "You've got to give me a month's rent, since you have to give me notice you're leaving."

**AMR:** No!

**L:** We were so desperate. We were short of money, and still the landlady wanted that week's rent and a month on top.

So that's our background.

**AMR:** Did you live in the shed for a while?

**L:** Yes, we did. We lived pretty rough, as you can imagine. So I know what it's like to be poor.

**AMR:** What about the Communist Party?

**L:** Dad had met people in the Communist Party of Australia while running his carpentry shop. He also met a workmate who was a Party member and who became a very good friend of mum and dad. Because of his mate's influence, dad and mum joined the CPA, in 1952, while we were still in Wollongong.

**AMR:** Can you say a bit more about how some members of the CPA helped your dad and your family, since that seems to have influenced the decision to join?

**L:** I was only a kid, but I know they rallied around. They always helped. The CPA offered to lend mum and dad some money to tide them over but they declined the offer of the loan because they wouldn't be able to repay the loan. The CPA always helped people. They helped in our move over to the place at Lake Heights. I don't know whether they also helped directly with money, since we were pretty well broke, but they often raised money for hard-up Party members. Like I said, when we moved into the shed, we didn't have any electricity connected, or plumbing, or water into the shed, although we had a water tap in the yard outside. We used to have a wash out of a bowl and would go to Party members' places for showers and baths, since we didn't have a bath tub or running water.

**AMR:** Yes, it's those everyday, practical sorts of things that communists in the past have been known for – helping people who are hard up. It would not be the first time that one of the reasons someone joined the Party was because they'd been helped by communists.

**L:** So dad joined the CPA. Let me go back a bit. I was about 7 when I first heard about communism. I used to be friends with some people down the road with an Italian background. I used to play with their daughters. I was up at their place one day, and Mrs P., my friend's mother, said to me: "Your father's a communist." And I went, "Oh?" I didn't even know what it meant, but it felt like I was being accused of some terrible crime. I was just a little kid, but that is my first memory of communism.

**AMR:** What about your wider family?

**L:** Mum came from a strong Irish Catholic family, and when her family found out we were part of the CPA, we were basically excommunicated from the family. Mum had four sisters, but only one of them used to talk with us after that. That was very hurtful. I found out later on that there had been a "family conference," where they wanted to excommunicate us. That's how bad it got.

**AMR:** Did you also get sent to a Roman Catholic School?

**L:** Yes, since mum came from that background, religion





A poor family during the Depression at "Happy Valley," Brighton-le-Sands, Sydney, 1930's. Photo: Sam Hood – (No known copyright restrictions.)

had a strong hold. Even though she had joined the CPA, she couldn't let go of the religion and she kept sending us to the Catholic School. That was terrible, since the priest was in the pulpit on a Sunday, ranting about communism and how bad it was and I would be sitting in the pew thinking that he was directing his vitriol at me.

I would like to talk about the school. The nuns were cruel: we got caned for everything. Missing mass on Sunday was a big deal and we would be caned if we missed going to mass. We were also were caned for spelling or maths mistakes. When I look back, I realise that the nuns were completely overwhelmed because we had a huge influx of migrants and refugees from the war. Our class sizes were large. My brother's class had 93 kids and mine had 74. When I got to sixth class in the school, I wasn't doing very well scholastically due to the overcrowding and poor teaching skills of the nuns. They concentrated more on religion and not enough on our basic education. I didn't pass the sixth-class exams, which would have qualified me for high school. I was told I could either go and do domestic science or repeat sixth class. I didn't want to do domestic science, so I repeated. But I went to the public school. Mum pulled both of us out of the Catholic school. The years in the public school were better and my grades improved. I came first in the class for English and did reasonably well in all the other subjects. I did well enough to go into the top class at high school. When mum pulled us out of the Catholic school, the priest (Irish Catholic as well) came around to our house ... oh, my God! He was demanding that mum send us back to the Catholic school and they had a big argument on the doorstep. Dad told him to leave.

**AMR:** How did all this make you feel?

**L:** My younger brother and I felt really guilty because we belonged to a family that was in the Communist Party. We were isolated from other people in our community. There were only a couple of friends, and all the rest used to make derogatory remarks, such as "you're a commo,"

or your "father is a commo," and so on. I remember one day, mum and I were walking down the street. I was in my early teenage years. It had been raining and the road was dirt at that time. This fellow, who lived in our community, deliberately drove into a puddle so that the mud splashed up all over us. We knew he was an anti-communist. That's the sort of thing we had to put up with.

**AMR:** So your family, school, and even neighbours ostracised you?

**L:** Yes, we were excommunicated from the family, shunned by a lot of the community where we lived, and went to the Catholic school which was a horror.

**AMR:** Did all these experiences affect your communist convictions?

**L:** My brother and I felt guilty about being a communist family, but I still held to the Communist Party's ideals. We were always terrified that people would find out that we were children of communists and that they would exclude us. All my life, I have felt like a satellite going around, on the outside. I have never fitted in. That was my legacy, I think, from all that.

**AMR:** Not an easy time.

**L:** It wasn't an easy time. I would like to tell you about a couple of incidents that have stayed in my memory forever. The first incident was when my dad was very sick with rheumatic fever. He needed to be seen by the doctor but we didn't have a car and we lived about 7 kilometres from the doctor. Dad was too sick to go by bus, so mum asked for a home visit. The problem was that we didn't have enough money to pay the doctor, so he put it into the hands of the debt collector. I remember when the sheriff (I think that was what he was called) came to serve the paperwork. When he saw the conditions we were living in, he was very upset and he said to dad, "Gee mate, I feel terrible having to do this to a digger. This is terrible, but I have no choice." The debt collector came around after

that to arrange for the collection of the money. We paid 2/- (shillings) a fortnight. That would be equivalent to 20 cents.

The other incident was after the family discovered that mum and dad had joined the Communist Party. Our auntie (one of mum's older sisters) arrived at our house when mum and dad were out. I think they were at a party meeting. The auntie started searching through the cupboards and wardrobes. My brother and I watched in horror when she found the Party literature in the wardrobe. We didn't know what to do to or what to say. We were so scared. I would have been about 11 or 12 years of age; my brother is nearly 5 years younger than me but he also remembers this incident. I often wonder what the purpose of this action was. Was she asked to search this out or was she just curious? I never found out.

**AMR:** What do you remember about your dad's involvement in the CPA?

**L:** Dad was a fighter. He started up the local Progress Association. He became the president and he used to help people in the community. The Progress Association also started up a Youth Club and tried to give the kids something to do. They had some gym equipment and they encouraged the young people to attend. I can't remember how long the Association ran for. You can imagine in the post-war 1950s: there was a huge migration, and many refugees.

**AMR:** Yes, my parents came from the continental Europe to Australia in the mid-1950s. You don't hear about it much, but there was a massive depression in Europe from the end of the Second World War until nearly the end of the 1950s. So, they came to Australia.

**L:** We weren't the only ones living it rough in Lake Heights. There were people living in the foundations of houses or in shacks and humpies. I even heard of some people living in a chook-house. One of my childhood friends lived in a tent with her mother and older brother before they eventually got a Housing Commission house at Lake Heights. I met her when I started at the public school. She was 11 years old, I was 12. Some people had started to build, ran out of money, and so lived in the foundations. All around us there was a real working-class struggle.

**AMR:** A real struggle.

**L:** Funnily enough, our next-door neighbour was a Hungarian Nazi. Dad used to say, "I bet he has the horrors, because he moves out to Australia and ends up living next to communists!"

**AMR:** Ha ha ha!

**L:** This neighbour would get his family outside. He would have them standing in a line – his mother, his wife, and his

three children. He would yell at them and they appeared frightened. He would click his heels and of course we didn't know what he was saying.

**AMR:** Nazis in Australia?

**L:** Because dad started up the local Progress Association, and was helping all of the people, mostly migrants, a lot of them would tell dad who were Nazis or SS men, and that sort of thing. We knew who were Nazis in our community. There was a Polish SS man down our road as well. There were lots of Nazis who came out to Australia in that period.

**AMR:** So the USA and UK were not the only ones who helped Nazis "escape."

**L:** Let me tell you this. When my friend and I were teenagers, maybe about 18, we used to go to the "German dances." We were there one night, and I think they played the old German national anthem. As it played, about a third of the people stood up, clicked their heels, and gave the Hitler salute.

**AMR:** (swearing).

**L:** People don't believe me: we were inundated with Nazis.

**AMR:** That reminds me: I had a "friend" in primary school, and the family had immigrated from Germany. One day he invited me to their place. He showed me a cupboard with a Nazi uniform, and all sorts of other Nazi things, and said: "My father says Hitler was a good man." I didn't realise what he meant at the time, I was about 7 or 8, but I do now.

**L:** Yes, people nowadays have got no idea of what really happened. But we had first-hand knowledge, especially since dad was president of the Progress Association and was told all about these things.

**AMR:** What sorts of Party activities did you get involved in?

**L:** Dad used to get on the back of the truck and he would go up the main street of Port Kembla talking through a megaphone. We used to sell the Party paper, *The Tribune*. And we used to go out at night and stick communist posters on the telegraph poles. But we had to keep our eyes out for the police, since it was illegal. We all went out as a family.

**AMR:** A family event!

**L:** Yes, we would go around and stick these posters on the telegraph posts. We carried a pot of glue and a big paint brush. We used to put leaflets in letter boxes as well, if I remember rightly. We would go on the May Day marches. When I was 14 years old, my friend and I held a sit-in

strike on the school bus because the bus company was raising the price of the weekly bus ticket from 2/- to 4/- (shillings). Some of the other kids participated, but not for long as the bus driver was not amused. So they gradually gave in and left the bus. My friend and I stayed longer, but eventually we had to get off the bus. I might add that they didn't raise the bus fare, so we had a win.

**AMR:** What about Party branch meetings?

**L:** They used to have meetings at our place. I remember one time, my mother's older sister came down to visit (another sister from the one who went through the cupboards while mum and dad were away). Dad and mum were in the middle of a Party meeting at our place, and that's when mum's family initially found out they were in the Communist Party.

**AMR:** Was your dad a branch secretary?

**L:** He could've been, not sure. Dad was always doing those sorts of things, but I don't really know. We used to have meetings and all sorts of activities at our place, so he might have been.

**AMR:** What about branch meetings?

**L:** If you look at the minutes, you will see that they were concerned with people's struggles, about getting into housing, and all sorts of things about social help.

**AMR:** Did your dad's membership of the CPA affect his work?

**L:** Dad was black-banned from work. When we moved to Lake Heights, we were really, really doing it tough. Like I said, dad was on a veterans' invalid pension, but it wasn't a lot. Dad tried to work at his trade (carpentry) but he couldn't do it since he had one leg. He worked for George Adams, who was a builder, but he was terribly anti-communist, so dad ended up getting sacked. Dad was involved in the union and all that so that didn't help.

Dad's written about all of this. Would you like to read it?

**AMR:** Definitely.

**L:** After that, dad did get a start on the switchboard at the BHP steelworks at Port Kembla. He got accepted, but somehow or other they found out he was a communist, so they told him not to come to work. He couldn't get work anywhere. He was absolutely black-banned.

**AMR:** Pretty tough.

**L:** Yes, they were the tough years. The Communist Party had a talk with the South Coast Labour Council and they managed to get him a job at the PMG (Postmaster General). I've got his ASIO file, and in this file he is classified as a "Category A" risk.

**AMR:** Did you have to put in a special application for his ASIO file?

**L:** Yes, and funnily enough I'm mentioned in the file. I worked in the Communist Party rooms for a while, when I was about 17. Whoever the spy was, I would love to know. It was obviously someone I knew, because the spy was at the meetings and I had talked with him or her, and so on. The file says I was about 17 years old and that I was the daughter of R and L and it had our address. I actually have two entries in dad's ASIO file. I might have an ASIO file too, I don't know.

**AMR:** The old problem of spooks in the Party.

**L:** Absolutely. I'd love to know who they were. It's so interesting reading the file. It says so-and-so was here and attended this meeting. So it was someone who was attending the meetings. Here's another quote from the ASIO file about our move to Lake Heights: "It is reported that R and L are going to move shortly to their partly completed cottage at Lake Heights. They have a lot of personal troubles and appear to never have any chance of getting any money. They have borrowed money from the banks but had not borrowed enough to complete the house. The Party had offered to lend them money, but that was no good because they could see no way of repaying it. They claim that they were going to give the Party away for a while to give them time to work out their problems." That was the 14th of December, 1954. But dad and mum didn't give it away for very long, or at all, because we continued to have meetings at our place.

**AMR:** How did your dad finally find work?

**L:** As mentioned previously, he eventually got a job at the PMG (Postmaster General). That sent the authorities into a tailspin, because working at the PMG was like entering into the citadel of capitalism.

**AMR:** Ha ha, yes indeed!

**L:** Since dad had a "Category A" security risk, they tried to get dad's boss, who lived in our local area, to sack dad. They said, "Why don't you get rid of that commo bastard?" but the boss wouldn't sack him. The boss said, "I don't care what his politics are. He is my right-hand man and a good worker." So the boss was the one who saved our bacon, since from then on dad had a permanent job and an income. Dad stayed at that job until he retired.

**AMR:** That's an interesting one. So the boss was under pressure to sack a communist, but the boss says, "No, his politics don't matter. He's a good worker and very reliable." Can I ask, what about you? When did you join the Party, after all those experiences as a kid?

**L:** I joined in 1962. Then I started nursing in 1964, and that put an end to a lot of it because it was in-hospital



training in those days. So you worked full-time and then you did your lectures in extra time. Then I got married in 1966 and had a child in 1970, so I was quite occupied. When I could, I attended the marches, such as the May Day marches and the anti-Vietnam War rallies, or peace marches as we used to call them. After I was married, I dragged my husband along to the peace marches as well.

**AMR:** What about later events?

**L:** When the Soviet Union fell apart, it was terrible. I don't know how to explain it. It was like a blow to your whole being. I think I had swapped Catholicism for communism, that was my belief system, it was so devastating. Dad was disheartened. It was like a punch in the guts. And then there was the "big split," between the Soviet Union and China, and we also had struggles between the two factions in the Party, the Maoists and the others. That was awful.

**AMR:** And events in Australia?

**L:** I remember when Gough Whitlam got in, and there was a big change in our society. They were heady days; we were all so very excited. We got involved in the elections, and manned the election booth for the local candidate. Not long after, Gough started asking questions about Pine Gap and what was going on there, and then trying to bypass the WEF and get money from another source. That was the suicidal act. Then we had the dismissal, another devastating blow. I couldn't get over it. I couldn't believe that the Australian people didn't fight for Gough.

**AMR:** The US imperialists got their way back then.

**L:** Yes, they control absolutely everything. Actually, I did in desperation join the Labor Party a few years ago. I had hardly entered the place and the next minute I was the president of the branch. I did that for a couple of years and then said, "No, it's not for me." It's not addressing the issues, and that's when I started looking around for the Communist Party, making inquiries once again, and I re-joined a couple of years ago.

**AMR:** Why did you re-join the Communist Party?

**L:** I was frustrated, because there is no-one I can talk with. I came from an industrial area in NSW, where it was very unionised and then I came up to country Queensland, where it is completely the opposite. My friends up here are farmers, and they haven't lived. They don't know what it is like and they are all LNP voters so you can't talk with them. So I felt frustrated, because I'm on my own and I can't talk with anyone about anything political. In desperation, I started looking on the internet and found the CPA, and put in my application to join.

**AMR:** Are there other Party members in your area?

**L:** There's one other young fellow, but otherwise the rest of the Party is far away. I've got plans to tackle homelessness

in our area, but I've had a terrible year health-wise and I'm only just starting to feel better now.

**AMR:** How do you feel about telling people you're a communist these days?

**L:** I won't tell anyone up here I am a communist. I live on my own most of the time and I need some friends and I am afraid that if I tell them my political views I won't have any friends. We used to be afraid before that people would find out. But in recent years I've made contact again with some of my cousins. We've always had some sort of contact, but they came up recently to visit. We were sitting around in the hotel home, and one of them said, "Your father was in the Communist Party, wasn't he?" I was absolutely stunned, because I've never told anyone. I thought, what am I going to say? And then I thought, bugger it, I'm sick and tired of keeping this secret. So I said, "yes, he was." From then on, it came out into the open and that was a bit of a relief.

**AMR:** What do you do about talking with people that have the same communist worldview?

**L:** I get a bit frustrated, because there's not many people to talk with, about politics, current events. You feel a bit isolated and it would be great to meet more.

**AMR:** Is there any other material you think is relevant?

**L:** Yes, there is. I got dad to write his story before he died. I'll go over that again.

**AMR:** Do you think there's any chance to publish that in the AMR, after you go over it?

**L:** I think it could be, but I'll need to go over it again. I'd also like to write our family's story, but then I don't know if anyone would be interested.

**AMR:** I would encourage you to do that very, very much. There would be plenty of people interested in your family's story, Party members, and plenty of others. So if you've got the energy, definitely do it. It's a really important task, for yourself, for your family, and for the Party.

**L:** It's all made me very strong. My family has had lots of adversity, lots of isolation. But you get knocked over, and you come back up. You get knocked over, and you come back up. My childhood experiences have made me: frightened of being poor, I get very anxious if I don't have any money in the bank. Also, I do not rely on anyone and have become as self-sufficient as possible, so if the chips are down I will be able to survive. Further, I have become something of a "prepper." That's why I have worked all my life and only stopped working in 2022 due to health issues. I feel very insecure if I am not working. Finally, I became very empathetic, even at a young age, and I try to help people in need. I often say I am cursed with the empathetic gene and worry about people.



# AMR interview with Comrade Jimmy Donovan

## Part 1

### Introduction:

Comrade Jim “Jimmy” Donovan is a lifelong member of the Communist Party of Australia where he is a member of the Maritime branch in Sydney and is also the President of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Veterans Organisation. He is a retired wharfie and leader of workers in what was the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) but is now amalgamated with other unions covering workers in the Maritime industry to form the Maritime Union of Australia.

The *Australian Marxist Review* has conducted this interview with Jimmy to bring forward some of the events and history of the party.

**AMR** = CG, **JD** = Jimmy Donovan

**AMR:** Comrades, I would like to begin by thanking Comrade Jimmy Donovan for agreeing to be interviewed by the *Australian Marxist Review* to talk to us about the history of our party and his experiences within the communist movement.

**JD:** It’s an absolute pleasure.

**AMR:** When did you join the Communist Party of Australia and what was it like to join it?

**JD:** Well, oddly enough, it sticks in my memory over 60 years later but I was working on the NSW railways as an apprentice boilermaker to start with and then as a boilermaker. I joined the party on the 5th of December 1957. What was it like? Well, I joined the party because there were great people that I was involved with as an apprentice boilermaker to start with, and the leader of the boiler makers of that period of time was Hughey Grant, a sort of raconteur type of bloke. He wasn’t the quintessential, how do I say this, communist but he was the secretary of the Redfern branch of the boilermaker’s society, and he was a very entertaining, charming person so that was one of the reasons. I joined the party on that date, I have never left it, till this date in 2023, and I have no intention of ever leaving it.

**AMR:** What was the branch of the CPA that you joined?

**JD:** It was the Redfern branch of the Communist Party



Comrade Jim “Jimmy” Donovan. Photo: CPA

of Australia and it consisted of any person, anyone who worked on the railway and especially at the Redfern part there was two party branches as a matter of fact. There was the loco branch and the wagon branch. On one side of the workshop was locomotive repair, where I was a boilermaker, and on the other side the coaches were repaired, the trains that carry the passengers that’s where they were repaired and built, mainly repaired because there wasn’t that much built from scratch but there were the two sides, and there were two branches of the party!

The beauty of it was there was a tunnel that went under from the locos side to the other side where they did all the coaches, so we used to travel across and meet one another. In the railways you could go missing for four hours and they wouldn’t know.

*AMR: Laughter*

**JD:** So, we would be transgressing and go from one side to the other talking about the party and talking about what we were doing, can we improve our work, etc., etc. And it was very good, a learning curve for a 17-year-old, 18-year-old boy.

*AMR:* So these branches were they locality or workplace branches?

**JD:** They were workplace branches. Loco, that included the repair and, we never ever built them from scratch, they were always bought overseas, sent out and of course those locos they were steam driven and so they were fired up through the majority of their life and of course they, when the inside of what they call the firebox was the most intense part where the heat was and where the steam was produced to move the train. And so, we used to repair them at Everleigh, and on the other side, the wagon side where all the other work was done on the coaches, that is the coaches that carried the passengers. We used to travel between one side and the other and we did a lot of party work during the working hours, a lot of party work.

*AMR:* That's excellent!

What were the kinds of party work that branches engaged in in these workplace branches?

**JD:** To build the party was the main feature of the work that we did, sometimes we were successful and sometimes we weren't. We would build our numbers up every now and again, but people got older and they retired, a lot of people just opted out for personal or any other reasons, and so our numbers fluctuated greatly during that period of time we were able to bring in a lot of young people to the party on the loco side because of the work that the communists were doing in the movement, in the trade union movement in that period of time because the boiler makers, the what were they called the machinists, a couple of other trade unions were communist led. Hughey Grant as I already said he held the Redfern branch (of the Boilermakers Society), we held the national position, I can't think of his name now, but we held the higher positions in that union and so did many other communists in that period of time! And especially held which I later joined in 1963 the waterfront and of course the Sydney waterfront was officials galore for the communist party. Still in that period of time there was unity with the ALP forces and with the non-aligned people. So, it was a really interesting period for me as a young bloke to join the party and be involved.

*AMR:* When you moved to the waterfront, what was the nature of the party's organisation on the waterfront at that time, how many branches were there?

**JD:** Yes, well oddly enough there were four branches, two

of them named after a dispute and there were two areas that were of the pickup for wharfies, they were called the street and the deep sea. The street, the bin there was the party and in the deep sea which is down at Walsh Bay there was another branch of the party, and in the 2 other areas there were 4 branches of the party in Sydney, let alone any other part of Australia. And so it was, there was always something happening, and it was only happening by the communists! There was always job meetings, we would organise for party functionaries to come down to the waterfront and have a speech about the latest economic or the latest positions, where the wars were, wherever there was something happening we would get the party organisers, people like Jack McPhillips and Peter Symon who was the General Secretary of the party was a wharfie in South Australia and so he knew a bit about it. But no other branch of the Waterside Workers Federation was as organised, as well organised as the Sydney branch.

When I went, when I left the railways in 1963, in fact I didn't leave of my own accord, I was helped out by the works manager and the assistant works manager because of my politics. Anyway, they did me the greatest favour of all because I came onto the waterfront and here was this hive of activity. It was just a change; it was a breath of fresh air. We thought we were good, we had two branches of the party at Everleigh, but when I got down there as I just said just a little while ago there were communists organising something. The party would have a fraction meeting, what they called a fraction meeting, not a faction! A fraction that meant it was a fraction of the (party membership) that only met to discuss things about the particular areas where comrades worked. We would have them, and nearly all the officials, when I went there was Bob Bolger, Maddy Monroe, Stan Moran the treasurer; wonderful, wonderful people. They were doing something: they were organising political marches, demonstrations, and not only that there was a great fundraiser for the party. We would stand on the pay line in those days, as a communist, with a little cup, for the party! (Chuckles). Micky Power, another great comrade, lovely, wonderful man, he did more collecting than any other person in the party. And there would be a few wags going past saying "Mick when are we going to have that party?," you know Mick was an old fighter, he'd always admitted he may have had one too many (fights), he'd come from Melbourne, he reckoned he'd had one to many, but he said that the worst thing that had happened to him was that in those days had he been able to advertise on the soles of his shoes he said "cause every time I got knocked out you would go down and your feet, the soles of your feet were showing and you could be advertising." So that was the type of bloke that Mick was.

As I said, we had party organisers, the Sydney waterfront had a party organiser paid for by the four branches on the waterfront. Now you think of it, here we had our



own organiser, and he knew about the waterfront. Eddie Marles was the first one, good bloke Eddie. He came to all the meetings, and the stop-work meetings, and everything that was going on so he could learn the tasks before him as being the party organiser. And then we had the marvellous Jack McPhillips. We even opened a headquarters at 111 Sussex Street. It was an old fish and chip shop and we; you got no idea what we had to move out of there when we set it up at 111 Sussex Street, and that is where Jack became the first full time organiser paid for by the wharfies, the 4 branches, and he became the party organiser. And we'd get Jack down, Jack was a very, he was a hard man really. Some of the party, not in the waterfront, but in the Party Jack got people offside. But nevertheless, the work that he did offset that by a 1000 per cent. So, Jack became the first organiser after Eddie Marr and here we had our own communist organiser on the waterfront, and it was really it was getting down to meetings away he would go and nobody would dodge a meeting. Don't know what it was, they were there in those days prepared to go and listen in their own time during smoko to an organiser of the Communist Party of Australia to get the latest of what was happening. So, you can see in that period the waterfront was a hive of activity, wonderful activity.

**AMR:** The Waterside Workers Federation had its own structure including vigilance officers, could you describe these and their roles?

**JD:** When I first joined the waterfront there was the national body, Jim Healy had retired by then and Charlie Fitzgibbons had taken over from the communists, he was a member of the ALP, we will deal a bit with that later, but in Sydney (WWF branch) there was Tom Nelson as the secretary, Stan Moran as the treasurer, and then we had Bob Bolger, Matt Monroe as vigilance officers, like organisers, they would be what you called organisers today. And then we had Ronny Maxwell who was paid by the employer, he was in charge of the distribution of labour, and we were able to get him a job to be, he was a communist and a well-known communist. In fact, he stood, him and a chap from the sheet metal workers, will remember his name in a minute, both of them stood for the city council and were both elected as councillors in the 1950s.

The queen came out I think in 1954, 56, somewhere around that period, anyway she had to meet these two communists as they were councillors on the city council! And they were entertaining. It was in all the papers, the



Party members at the 90th anniversary May Day march in Sydney, 1981. Left to right – Alan Miller, Peter Symon, Ina Heidtman, Jack McPhillips. Photo: CPA

rotten *Telegraph* “Queen forced to meet communists” or something like that. But anyway, the party, even though they tried to make it subjective, we still got some good publicity out of it, you know because communists are meeting the queen! What more do you want? Here, do it for us! They would have been better off saying nothing.

And here we are, Ronny Maxwell was loved on the waterfront, he was a messiah to workers because if you had a problem, he would fix it up. If you failed to go to a job, or if you was missing off the job, or you did something wrong on the job and you had to front the what they called “The Authority” in those days, the Australian Industry Waterfront Authority, and they were no good as it was under Menzies when it first kicked off.

They were ruthless, and even for missing a job you would have to fight hard to retain your job. If you hit a foreman or knocked someone over or a supervisor or someone like that you were sacked automatically it was hard to get your brief back.

What they called your brief, everyone had one, the authority would just rip it up as they used to say and you were no longer a wharfie. Ronny Maxwell had to deal with all of that, and he dealt with it magnificently. He was loved by all, but recognised as a communist. Maddy Monroe was recognised, you know “here he comes, here comes a commo, he’s going to have another meeting, ah well we’d better go down,” you know.

**AMR:** *Laughter*

**JD:** Maddy was a character. And then Bob Bolger, he was quieter than Maddy but nevertheless so then was Tom. I didn’t serve on the executive with Tom Nelson, he left in 1970 and I got elected on 1972 as a vice president, but I still have my fraction meetings where Tom would come along and explain to all the rank and file what the position was and what we were trying to achieve, whether it was more blokes on the job or higher wages, better conditions. I mean when I first joined the waterfront there was three weeks leave you know and you had to do thirteen years to get the long service leave, well all that’s gone. And all that happened under the leadership of Charlie Fitzgibbons which we will deal with in a minute, but the majority of the changes and the good changes came when the communists were either in the federal office and or in the Sydney branch. And there were communists in Newcastle and Melbourne, although Melbourne disintegrated in the 1960s over the “China line.” The officials, a couple of the officials down there were what they called the “China line people” and it disintegrated, and we lost all the positions.

**AMR:** What was the relationship that existed between the branches in the Maritime industry?

**JD:** The 4 branches on the waterfront, it was pretty

competitive. One would be boasting that they’ve collected the most money, the other would be gloating that they’d had the most job meetings, another would be gloating because they’d held more demonstrations and you know, so a good healthy competition between the four branches (on the waterfront). At the end of each year, we would all come together and celebrate around the Christmas period of time and all gloating about who’d had the best year, what branch had the best year. So it was competitive, communists competing against one another to see who had the best year and who had collected the most money. Of course, you know it was a great period.

**AMR:** It seems to me that many of the leading communists that you described were really loved members of the waterfront, and this reached right across the waterfront. What would you think were some of the methods of work that they used in establishing this credibility and respect amongst workers?

**JD:** Well, Jim Healy and Tom Nelson, Healy was the national secretary of the WWF, and Tom Nelson was the Sydney branch secretary. Both of those had a lot in common. Marxist-Leninists to start with, they knew the working class and the reasons that the working class were being robbed because of the very nature of capitalism. And for them it was pretty easy for them as they were gifted orators, that’s an important part being an orator and a gifted orator, explaining the position to the workers, why we are doing this and why we are doing that, and why we are not doing this and not doing that. The waterfront was known as the place where there were more stoppages per head of membership than anywhere else in Australia. We were achieving it; they had the leadership to achieve it and we used to achieve. Some new members of the MUA came in on Wednesday of this week and we were offered the veterans a half an hour to go and talk to these new inductees. And we took that up, I normally go and do the induction of new members I have been doing it for years and I do that because as a communist I start from the very fact that I don’t tell them that I am a communist at the start, but at the very end I say “the majority of the conditions that you are going to enjoy when you come onto this waterfront was never ever given, the boss has never ever given anything to you for nothing.” The reason I do the classes for the new inductees is because of the communist of the leadership majority and of the united front of the party; we were bringing on board progressive ALP and independent progressive people. That’s how they worked together and that’s why you are going to get the best wages and conditions of any worker in Australia. I point out that it was won by communists.

Another reason that the leaders were revered, and they knew they were communists, they never ever jammed down in stop work meetings, wherever there was a meeting they never jammed down that “I’m a communist



and I'm doing this because I'm a communist." Nothing! They never ever spoke about it, they were known as communists, they were known! They didn't shove down the throat of the workers that "you can only get this if you are a communist and if you are not a communist you will get nothing." Never ever! I never heard Tom Nelson in all the years that I was a wharfie, before he retired, of him ever saying that this all comes about because I'm a communist, I'm a member of the communist party, not once! And neither did any of the other communists. They were known! When the groupers tried to come to the fore in the 1950s, the Catholic reactionary groupers, they tried to use that as a wedge that there is a communist. And of course, Hungary in 1956 didn't help, and Poland didn't help, we will deal with that a bit later, but they (the groupers) went to town on the communists, they went to town on us! In that period of time, I wasn't on the waterfront in 1956, but it was, the reactionary catholic people, mainly in Melbourne, there was a little bit of a sprinkling here in Sydney, but it didn't get off the ground. I suppose, well put it this way, workers would have thought that "alright they shouldn't have done what they did in those countries but nevertheless they are the people that get me a wage increase and better working conditions, keep having them as part of my leadership."

**AMR:** Before you mentioned how the "China line" and the Sino-Soviet split led to significant setbacks to the organisation in Melbourne, do you remember when that started and how that process with that split began?

**JD:** I do remember it happening, as to the finer details I must say that the 83-year-old brain can't fully reflect how it came about and started, well it came about because the Soviet Union tried to assist the Communist leadership of China, but they wanted to do it the Soviet way. The Soviets and Chinese took exception to the method and ways that the Soviet Union was dealing with it in China. In the end the Chinese said they'd had enough; we aren't going to tolerate it anymore and that's when the split arrived. And then there were the communists here in Australia, mainly in Melbourne, a few in Sydney that agreed with China's position and then of course left in droves and formed the China-line group of the communist party aligned to the Chinese position. That didn't help, it really didn't help in any way. In fact, it really fractured the party in that period of time. Not only that some of them, there was a bloke here in Sydney called Sidney Clare, in the end there were only about two or three of them here on the waterfront in the China-line party, but nevertheless he was causing a lot of havoc and a lot of discontent by attacking the people that he helped get elected two, three and four years before. Clare and his China-line people at the stop work meetings, in fact in the end were howled down by the workers, they'd yell "sit down!" they'd say "sit down! We've listened to this crap! Sit down! Let's get on with the business of the stop work meeting, you've got a problem you sort it

out, but we're here to sort out what's in the best interests of the workers!" You know, so they were howled down. Let me tell you they never recovered. Sidney Clare stood in the elections for office on many occasions, but got two votes, him and his best mate. Nevertheless, it was a fracturing and disturbing time in the party in that period.

**AMR:** In the mid to late 1960s changes occurred to the old CPA that led to the formation of the SPA. Do you remember much about what was happening at the time?

**JD:** Yes, I was up to my eyeballs in it. We had as I said Jack McPhillips had become the party organiser on the waterfront and we were in constant contact. Jack was in my view a great teacher of Marxism-Leninism and we used to do a lot of schools and he kept young people like myself, well I wasn't young then I was in my 30s, but he brought us up to, you know some things were happening that were even beyond Jack, but nevertheless there was a tendency that, there is always an answer to any crisis. In the end there was an answer and that was to expose these people for what they really were. You know they used the split during that period of time for their own benefit. It didn't benefit the movement, it didn't benefit the trade union movement, it didn't benefit the communist movement, in fact it hindered it because there was this competition between what you would then call the Soviet aligned communists and the Chinese aligned communists, more so in Melbourne. But it did, it fractured the movement with devastating effects.

To some degree we recovered, but the China-line never grew beyond what it started out with, and of course it doesn't even exist today on the waterfront. But the communist party exists and is vibrant, well we've got the National Deputy Secretary of the MUA Warren Smith, we've got Paul Keating Sydney branch secretary, we've got Paul McAleer as a leader in the ITF here in Australia, International Transport Federation. So you know the party if you look back as a secretary, since 1937 when Jim Healy was elected, the majority by far have been communists at the helm. So, you go up to Tom Nelson 1948 until 1972, then Bob Bolger, then we had an imposter by the name of Tom Supple, who was a careerist and anyway we got rid of him (laughs), with great delight! He was never a communist, never a communist! party member for thirty, forty years. Anyway, he went up to help Tom move and in the bin was the forty-five volumes of the selected works of Lenin! And Jimmy said to Tom "What are you doing with these!?" and he said, "ah I've read them three times, I don't need them anymore." Three times! He wouldn't have read one paragraph three times! He was an imposter! He wasn't a communist, he was masquerading as a communist. So it's very interesting in that period. Bob Bolger, he was a lovely bloke Bob, but he was taken in by this Supple. When we got rid of Tom Supple then the party improved considerably because we have been spending

time and effort trying to fix problems he caused, we got rid of him and away he went, so the party started to function a whole lot better. Then some years later I was elected as the secretary treasurer of the Sydney branch and so it was back in good hands. The branch was back where it should be with a communist at the helm.

**AMR:** When were you elected as the secretary treasurer of the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers Federation?

**JD:** Well let me say that I was first elected as a vice president. A vice president in that period of time gave you access to about 6 months in the union as a relieving officer. There were 4 vice presidents. There was the president, secretary, treasurer, vigilance officer who later became an organiser, two of those, and 4 vice presidents. I was elected in 1970 as vice president, in 1969 I stood against an organiser/vigilance officer. In 1972 I was elected as president of the Sydney branch. In 1993 we amalgamated with the Seamen's union to become the Maritime Union of Australia and I became President of the MUA.

And so I retired in 1999. I retired in my opinion a bit early. I was only 59 and in reflection I could have stayed on a few more years. The Wharfies, the union officials didn't get anything better or more than what the wharfies got, we equalled our wages to what they got, we got the same holidays as what they got, the same everything. We didn't put ourselves above and beyond what the wharfies were getting, and the seaman at that time 1993, what they were getting is exactly what the officials got. That worked out as no one could ever go "how come you are getting an extra week of long service leave or an extra week's holiday" or you know something like that. We were never open to any criticism that we were getting more than what the rank-and-file members of the union were getting. That's continued until right till today, as I said I retired in 1999, I think I went a bit too early.

**AMR:** There was the Clarrie O'Shea strike that occurred in 1969 against the penal powers which was quite significant, do you have any recollection of this?

**JD:** Oh yes I do! You know, you often look for martyrs, if you can get a martyr and a cause and the reasons are right, right for what we did at that period of time. Clarrie O'Shea was, it happened at the perfect time. Here's the first official, the last official before Clarrie I remember being jailed would have been Jack McPhillips. Or Ted Roach? Ted Roach was the assistant national secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation. Jack McPhillips at that time was the assistant secretary of the Ironworkers, both of those men were jailed because they refused to give details because the New Zealand wharfies were out and money had been collected to send over there to the New Zealand wharfies to help them out, and it was quite a substantial amount of money. Both of them refused to divulge where the money was and they were both jailed. That was in the

1940s. So, when Clarrie O'Shea, he was the next martyr that came along if I can be as bold to put it that way. When this happened, you didn't have to go around to jobs and tell people to stop work on the waterfront, they were stopping work! Because they had heard that you know here's an official of the union being jailed by the penal courts! What!

We'd been fighting against this for so many years, so you used to go around to hold a meeting, but when we went around to all of the jobs they'd already stopped and gone home. So the officials didn't have to tell the workers to stop work because Clarrie O'Shea was most probably the catalyst. They never ever tried it again, because they know what the reaction was in that period of time. I'm not sure if it would be Bob Hawke who was the Secretary of the ACTU, I'm not sure. But anyway, it was a spontaneous walkout by the whole of the people who were capable. The unions who were capable in that period to go out in support of Clarrie, who was being jailed. You need a catalyst, that catalyst was it, he was the martyr because they had used the penal provisions, which were anti-working class and so anti-communist, they are even worse today.

It was a day that I will never ever forget. We went up to Hyde Park, by the time we got to Hyde Park the joint was full, full of other unionists. We marched up from a couple of the areas, Woolloomooloo, from Darling Harbour, from Pyrmont, and the coppers, the coppers didn't expect it, they weren't prepared and here we are marching up the road stopping traffic and they couldn't do anything, there was none just a couple of them "what are we going to do here? Just let them go." So it was a good period.

**AMR:** So that protest, that occurred on the day he was jailed or was it a short time after?

**JD:** It occurred on the day he was jailed.

**AMR:** It's a shame because on one hand you have the working class being very highly developed in this time, but on the other hand the divisions within the communist movement were only increasing.

**JD:** Yes, it was, I have to say it was an interesting period. Brought about by Aarons and his cohorts. Dixon was one of them, and the last person who I thought would be swayed by the Aarons in their anti-Sovietism and also their methods of work by the Aarons. To me, I had been in the party then for 12 years, but the method and way that Aarons had become so anti-Soviet, and not only became anti-Soviet, the capitalist press sought every remark of his, not of the party, but they sought every remark that they could get their hands on portraying because obviously he was anti-communist. It was anti-communist propaganda. And Aarons fed, fed, and fed them. It was an awakening period for me. How could this happen? Because the rest of the world was going anti-Soviet, he wanted to be

anti-Soviet. Here is a time in my opinion that you become more pro Marxist-Leninist and more supportive of the Soviet Union, and we did. We did that!

The Socialist Party of Australia was formed in 1970. I went to the founding congress of the party, and Christian it was a relief that we'd left them. When we left I didn't feel as though there was a big void within my political life, because I had then joined the Socialist Party of Australia. The Socialist Party grew by virtue of our persistence, we didn't grow in a lot of numbers, but the strength and the teachings of the party was higher because we had been through this awful period, we had learnt by it. The old saying, if you don't learn anything by the struggle you have been in you shouldn't have been in the struggle. Go in it, but learn something from it, and that was a great teaching. We learnt, I learned because we had people like Peter Symon. We had people like Jack McPhillips.

We had people like Bill Brown, Freda Brown, Freda was the president of the World Federation of Women. She was a wonderful, wonderful woman. When she became president, she lived overseas for many years and her husband Bill Brown was a journalist on the *Tribune*, and then later on, on the *Socialist*, the Socialist Party's paper from the 1970s. We had people like that had come over and from their perspective is one of the reasons why we formed the Socialist Party, one of the reasons because they were so respected from within the communist movement and the communist party, when we formed the Socialist Party, we had people like that who were renowned communists and well-known communists but who could not continue in the Communist Party because of what Aarons and his cohorts were doing to the party.

When people like that have given their life to the party, a lot more than what Aarons has done. I don't remember one thing that Aarons has done that he was noted for doing or saying that enhanced the Communist Party. I don't remember. I remember a lot of the teachings and sayings said by Freda and Bill, and the people like that, people like Jack McPhillips and Peter Symon. I can remember because they were genuine Marxist-Leninists; they were genuine. They knew what Marxism-Leninism was all about. The Aarons knew nothing. All they wanted to do was get on the bandwagon of anti-Sovietism.

**AMR:** What do you think was the basis for the growth of this anti-Sovietism by the Aarons leadership but also not only them? Were there discussions around this in the branches at the grassroots level of the party that indicated that this process was underway?

**JD:** I may be a bit presumptuous here, but the Aarons to my knowledge didn't make much of a positive contribution to the party. By their actions in relation to anti-Sovietism that was being expounded at that period of time, to me there was an ulterior motive. There had to be an ulterior

motive. Laurie Aarons I think could see that his time at the leadership of the party was coming to an end and he didn't want to go out a loser. He wanted to make sure that if he went that the whole party suffered.

I just think there was a bit of that involved with Aarons because his position was starting to wane considerably, and had we remained within the party I don't think we would have had the forces or numbers to oust him. But then, when we left there's no doubt in my mind, that's when a number of the party people started to wake up. Mavis Robertson was another supporter of what I call the Aarons and she left the party; well the fighting was at its fiercest and she became a journalist for some paper. So, you know it really showed that here was this Mavis Robertson, one of the proponents of the Aarons position and then goes and leaves the party and goes and works for somebody else. She really was a bitter opponent; we were pleased to see her go but by that time we had already left and formed the Socialist Party. You know, had we not left when we did and formed the party I am of the opinion that we wouldn't have maintained the forces we had when we finally established the party and got it going. Had we not done it when we did it then we wouldn't have had the forces, a lot of people would have gone "stuff it, I'm sick of this infighting, I'm sick of this and that."

But then when we formed the party it was a "hang on, let's see if there's a difference with the leadership," and then it was Peter Symon and Jack was the, how do I say it, Jack was a go-getter. Jack wanted things done yesterday. His impatience I think got the better of him, but he was a very fine Marxist-Leninist. If it wasn't for him, there would have been no classes, no Marxist-Leninist classes in the Maritime branch. He did them all. From the formation of the Socialist Party Jack did all the education. And in that period, wharfies if you got a bit of time off we used to meet. In fact, the first party schools were held at my place in Gladesville. I had a big backyard and I have got photos of it as a matter of fact where the first school was held there in 1975.

There was very little education when Aarons and them were around, they buried it. Well, I suppose they didn't want any education, people getting educated because that would have moved them away from their point of view. You know you have got to have a bit of education.

Well what I'm saying about Jack, he put people offside there's no doubt, but he put the right people onside. He put the right people, people like Harry Black, people like Ina Heitman, people like Tom Nelson the secretary of the Sydney branch (WWF). Jack would often before he went to the party HQ call in and have a talk with Tom Nelson, and the bloke that took over from him Bob Bolger he didn't want Jack coming in anymore because he didn't want to be educated. You could see it. Him and that Tom



Supple. Anyway, so they banned Jack from coming into the union rooms. When I got elected I unbanned him and brought him in.

You know, a very interesting time. It educated me and other people, I'm just going to mention some people, Jack and Harry and Micky Power. Micky Power was an old fighter, an old gutter fighter from Melbourne, but he loved, whether he could understand it as much as he thought he did, he loved Marxism-Leninism. He loved Jack, he used to go to the pub next door at the Royal George next door to 111 Sussex Street late afternoon when Jack knocked off. We would have a few. Jack didn't have much of an income so we bought all of the drinks. We were wharfies earning a fortune and so we paid. And then we had people like Ina Heidman, who was the party maritime branch treasurer, Tom Nelson's secretary. A wonderful, wonderful comrade.

**AMR:** Sometimes communists find that their family members end up being affected by their membership of the Communist party in one way or another. Have you had experiences with this?

**JD:** No, I haven't myself, my family has been 100 per cent behind my party membership. Even my two boys who are now in their fifties, and my grandchildren know that I am a communist and they ask me questions about it because my two sons have told them that pop's a communist, but they are up to their 30s now but of course the anti-communism that was around when I was twenty and thirty isn't here today, so they didn't ask any what you would call inquisitive questions. There's no anti-communism in them whatsoever because it hasn't been around. My family, my two boys, my first wife Shirley, well we held the party schools at our house up in Gladesville. My wife then, who died some years ago, Shirley was the main supplier of lunch, we always with Jack McPhillips you always had morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. He was insistent on morning and afternoon teas, let alone lunch. And my wife supported me when she was alive and we were married, and my present partner now of many, many years Julie is the same. I told her yesterday I was doing this interview and she said "oh that's interesting, tell him to give you a copy" and I said "I don't think it will be ready yet darling."

**AMR:** Before the split a move was made to disband the CPA Maritime branch, do you remember much of that? What happened and how did that occur?

**JD:** Ah well of course. The Aarons mob saw their enlightenment and the growth of the party in the social movement, you know the student movements, the peace movement, and the Hiroshima day movements, you name it, rather than the rank and file. They attempted, just before we formed the Socialist Party they made a decree that all of the members of the then Maritime branch should go into a non-industrial branch and dissolve the maritime branch.

Then when the Socialist Party was formed, the majority of the true Marxist-Leninists went with the Socialist Party. They went with the Maritime branch of the Socialist Party because they were the leaders. Tom Nelson was the secretary of the Sydney branch (WWF), Bob Bolger was a vigilance officer, Tom Supple he was no good he was a vigilance officer. They all came over. Maddy Monroe! And so the majority of the leadership, you see this is one of the things that happened, EV Elliot and Tom Nelson were talking one day. They were joining the party due to loyalty to the seamen's union officials, because all of them, Pat Geraghty was the then national secretary, EV Eliot was the past secretary, Cathy Switherson one of the most loved and liked officials of the Seamen's Union ever, there was Billy Langwoods another part-time official, there was Alan, I can't think of his name. They were all well-liked seaman, and so the seaman flocked to the Socialist Party. But then as Elliot said "don't think there's too many Marxist-Leninists amongst them." You know and he was right. They were coming there because of the loyalty to the union officials, the union movement led by members of the Socialist Party. And he was right as within a short period of time a lot of them left. The ones that stayed became very loyal.

Then it happened in the Maritime branch between the seaman and the wharfies, that was disastrous. It came about by the work of Jack. At one particular meeting Donny Henderson, a lovely bloke, a good bloke, Trade unionist, he was the secretary of the fireman and deckhands' union. They were about 600-800 strong, you know, a lot of people. Donny Henderson became the secretary of that and the next minute, Jack's trying to move in and give Don some assistance and help. Don was the type of bloke that didn't need any assistance. That's his thinking, and Jack, the next minute they're blueing, and the next minute Don Henderson is leaving the party. I will never forget; we were meeting at the Royal George Hotel. Underneath the hotel, this was funny, underneath the hotel there was this room and it was a wonderful space for party meetings.

So we knew the bloke that owned the pub, we said "can we hire that downstairs," he knew we were the Socialist Party then, he said "yeah by all means." So we hired it off him, we ripped up all the lino, put a new floor down, we knocked off the flood boards from the waterfront, they were the plyboard the 7 ply, and we laid them. Mick and myself and a couple of the other boys, I'm pretty sure JG was there as well, he helped too. Anyway, we got that and that's where the branch used to meet. So getting back to the point, I remember Don Henderson storming out of there one night after an argument with Jack, no. We knew there was a contentious issue, and that the seaman and the fireman and deckhands' union were on the brink of leaving and forming MUSAA. And so, there was an argument down in the meeting room, anyway I remember Donny



Henderson coming fuming out of the room, I had been out and I was coming back in, and he said “I will never ever go to another fucking meeting with old Jack McPhillips, I’ve had enough, get fucked!” Him and Jack had had another blue. And next minute they’re gone. They went to form MUSAA. It was a bad time, and it was bad timing yes because we were just starting to really get on top of things. But anyway, did you ever know Jack?

**AMR:** I never had the chance to meet Jack McPhillips unfortunately.

**JD:** Yeah you are right, it is unfortunate really. He had a bad side to him. It wasn’t all scones and butter and jam, there was another side to Jack. But anyway, I loved the man. He was an intellect. There is no doubt in the world. He could sum up and pick up things, and do things, and of course he had that intellectual capacity which I’ve never had. I’ve never had. I never pretended to have it and will never pretend to have it.

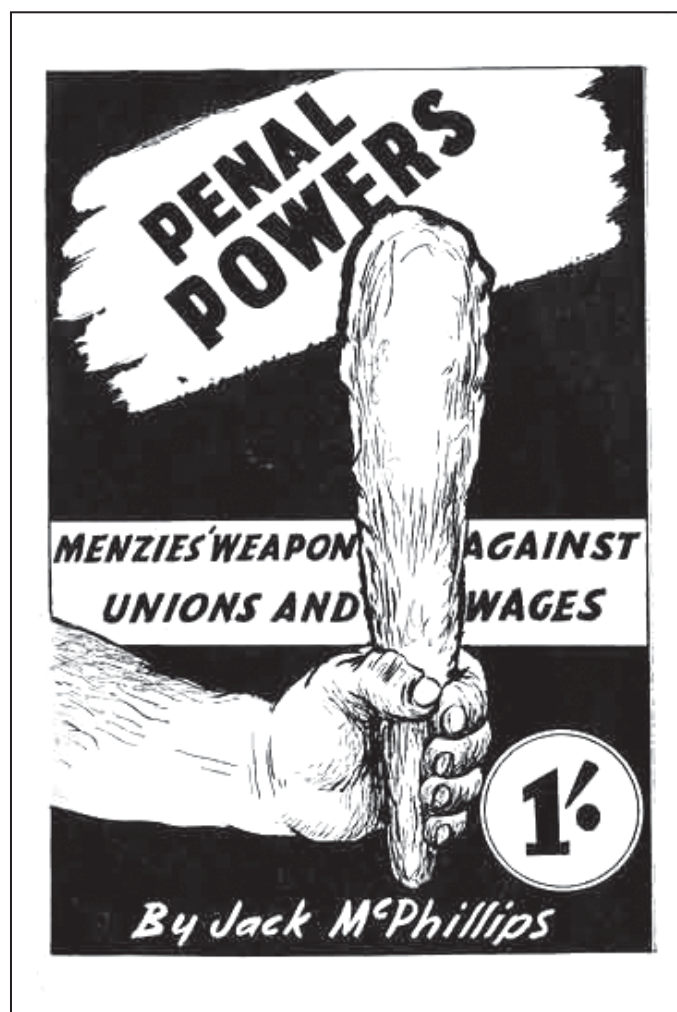
**AMR:** The SPA in 1983 had a serious split which formed the Association for Communist Unity (ACU) and MUSAA (Maritime Union Socialist Activities Association) and one of the central points of that was that of the Accord.

**JD:** In 83 was it?

**AMR:** Yes it was.

**JD:** Ah, I thought it was earlier.

Of all the other questions you have asked this is the hardest. Yes it is starting to come back. There were a number of trade union officials, including communists that disagreed with Jack McPhillips’ writing on the Accord. I’m just trying to think. What was happening then was that there was a softening of the right. The right was softening their position to a lot of things including the party. A majority of the people who had opposed the party and opposed the formation of the party (SPA) were going or gone. I say there was no reason to be “anti” really. All it was probably going to do was bring further disunity. Now in a period of time where the right was getting on top, Bob Hawke had become the president of the ACTU, and there were a number of the communists saying “well he’s better than what we had before so let’s not try and upset him, let’s try and bring him onside. We don’t have to be ‘anti’.” So there were a number, especially in the Maritime branch who, people like Jack, said “but that’s not the issue, the issue is that if they are going to continue to adopt this line, it’s the workers who are going to be the ones who miss out.” The working class will miss out because the leadership of the unions who are going to go along with this handsy pansy sought of thing are going to, there will be no increases in wages or conditions because they are going to go hand in hand, that you can sit down with the boss, and of course this is what the accord was all about,



Booklet cover.

and in fact the employer especially on the waterfront, they became more cocky.

They sought of knew that if we were to take action against a particular company or a particular issue, that Hawke and Keating and these people had agreed to, they knew they had them on side and they would have us offside. It was a period of unsettlement; it was very unsettled. I can remember Jack McPhillips and Peter Symon, and some of the other leaders of the party, they were absolutely scathing of anyone who saw this as a way forward. Cause what it was, it was capitulation! The fucking accord. I mean Jack’s book, some people got crook at Jack in the manner he had written that little book on the accord, the pamphlet, have you ever read it?

**AMR:** Is this the one on the trade unions?

**JD:** No, not the trade unions, on the accord.

**AMR:** I don’t believe that I have.

**JD:** Ok, and Jack exposed it in a little 20 pages, I’ve got one at home as a matter of fact, he exposed it for what it was. It was a sell-out! We were capitulating to the employing class that we were not going to take any more action

in defence of or in furthering wages and conditions. We were giving them carte blanche to attack us knowing full well we were not going to fight back. I reckon that any person with any decent mentality or reading ability could see that this was the greatest sell-out of the working class in Australia than ever before. I would even go so far to say that the sell-out was worse than the depression, because at least during the depression they were still able to fight and to win some things, here this was the depression 100 times over and no, we are going to give in, we're going to let them kill us!

**AMR:** With the accord, people who had been known as communists like Laurie Carmichael were key parts in the implementation of the accord.

**JD:** Yeah, and they knew. I mean Hawke must have blessed himself, he must have gone, I don't know if he was a church going person but if the pope had been here he would have gone and kissed his feet. Aarons onside! We've got fucking Aarons, were home. Because the influence that Aarons still had, he didn't have it in the maritime branch, but the influence that he did have, it was absolute capitulation! You know, blind Freddy! Even if you couldn't read you could see that this was the greatest sell-out that had ever come before the workers in this country, ever! There was a couple in the Maritime branch (of the SPA), they said "oh let's not get people offside, Hawke's going to be the leader, he'll go one day and be the Prime Minister of Australia, let's not get him offside." Oh, so that means you are going to capitulate! Those people were absolutely right, he went on to lead Australia, you know, and of course out of that came Keating, fucking jeez. How they couldn't see the writing on the wall I'll never know. Never ever, ever know! It was so stark, that this was the greatest sell-out of workers in this country.

**AMR:** What influence do you think that the divisions in the communist movement had on the successful implementation of the accord?

**JD:** No doubt, when the Aarons came out in support, and people in the maritime branch and Jack McPhillips and Peter Symon opposed to it, I think that they would have known that the fledgling party (the SPA) would have been outflanked as it was going to be formed, wouldn't have the power or the sway in which the previous party (old CPA) had. There's no doubt that the party even though it had lost its influence in a lot of the unions, it still had communists still there and around that could sway people. And when they (Aarons) came out, it was a disaster, it was one of the most disastrous periods of the communist movement in this country. Without a shadow of a doubt.

**AMR:** It's notable that after all of this, the Association for Communist Unity and MUSAA no longer exist, they largely folded into the ALP, at least from what I understand.

**JD:** Yes, yeah. That would be an interesting question for JG. Because JG went with MUSAA, and I would be interested to see what his answer would be to that. Yeah it would be very interesting. The seaman went, you see, but then JG, that's why I don't like JG; I love him, he worked it out! There was fucking nothing there. Nothing whatsoever going with MUSAA, and of course then he come back, he was one of the first to come back and join the party. Yeah and that's why I admire him. Yeah, we go back a long way JG, and he, when I talk about him its honest in what I'm saying, and he does the same thing. I remember when we were at a function or something I will speak and then JG will speak, or he'll speak and then I'll speak. We're both on the same wavelength, it's a great comradeship and a great friendship we have together.

**AMR:** I have heard of some others.

**JD:** Yes, I know some people were scathing about the branch allowing George Gotsis back. George took a bit of time assimilating back into the party, but it was made easier by people like myself and even Harry and Jack. We didn't rush to him with open arms. We went to him and said "well mate, welcome back," we weren't castigating him, we welcomed him back. He settled in but it took a time for him to settle in, but then the old George came out, and even though he was hard to understand he was a communist.

I did his eulogy, one of the people to do it. And I was so appreciative of his brother Dimitry coming over and saying because he was castigated by another group of people when he came back to the party and in my eulogy I said "George was castigated by people, that he came back to the movement that he should never have left, which was the Communist Party. And those people are now scathing about him now that he's no longer alive." And his brother came over after the funeral and he said "thanks for saying that," he was very appreciative. I loved George, I loved him very much, and when he came back, I was so pleased, so pleased. He was genuine, he, if George could speak better English he could have gone a long way. He would have been an official of the union without a doubt. Even with his liability of not speaking English well, you know, a lot of Greeks were good at it, but George just didn't have that. You could imagine well I don't know much Greek, but I would love to hear, I would love to be able to speak Greek because I wanted to know at all the functions and meetings I went to where George would speak, I would love to have known Greek language so I would have understood more of what he was saying. A wonderful man. I've got a tear in my eyes; I'm not joking. I was so pleased when he came back.

# The struggle for Continuity in revolutionary change

David Matters

The decision to construct a thesis on Continuity came about as a response to the study of Marxism-Leninism in the context of the working class struggles in Australia. It is a response to the liquidation and misrepresentation of Marxism and the presentation of errors as Marxism. It became apparent that this struggle was at the centre of the renewal and renovation that is necessary to reverse the decline in the working-class struggle and the creation of a force capable of changing the order of society from Capitalism to Socialism; the ending of all forms of slavery, in particular wage slavery. This thesis traces the development of our movement back to Marx and shows how the struggle to maintain Continuity is of great importance.

## Continuity from Marx and Engels to Lenin

When Marx set forth his critique of capitalist political economy in his epic work *Capital* (1867), he showed that it was a relationship of people, developed through the capitalist mode of production. In this review of political economy, he showed the development of labour power as a commodity, that when purchased places the seller of that commodity into a relationship of subordination to the purchaser, developing a contradiction of interest between the purchaser and the seller. The purchaser makes this exchange to gather the value producing aspect of this commodity; the seller does so in order to live. The application of labour power to the process of production created an additional value which is retained in the form of the commodities produced. These commodities, produced by the labour of others, became the property of the capitalist. Marx also showed that the development of Capitalism brought into existence and developed a class of people, the proletariat. This mode of existence would force that class to assert its interests, to liberate itself and thereby the whole of human society, from the transitional system of Capitalism. In the criticism of Capitalism, a system of thought and a view of the application of this science, the exploited and enslaved class could overthrow the exploiting class and through its own rule move to abolish classes. The study of the struggle of the working class and the revolutions of his lifetime involved Marx in laying out some blueprints for these developments.

By using material gathered by factory inspector Horner and inquiries into the application of legislation to the



Author David Matters at the 1988 Congress of the Socialist Party of Australia. Photo: CPA

factory system, Marx examined the actual rather than perceived benefit. He shows in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Marx 1967) that the absolute hunger for surplus value and the need for capital not only renewed but drove revolutionary changes in relations within production and in society. Marx analyses the working day and the relationship between, what he terms, socially necessary labour and exploitation, seen in the manufacturing system after the introduction of water, then steam power. He also analyses its relationship to the previous handicrafts and the division of labour that first comes from the manufacturing system and is then present in the form of the simplification and separation of tasks in the manufacturing process.

These revolutionary changes led to the dissolution of social relations, with the old feudal structures torn asunder. In Britain these were represented in legislative forms such as the corn laws and the enclosure acts. These laws were enacted and brought into being a mass of people who had no alternative but starvation or the sale of their labour.



This process dragged the old feudal-based family structure to where they were forced to sell their labour power to live. The basic price paid by the capitalist was what it cost to reproduce the labourer. The source of additional value was what was extracted in time or the commodities produced, above the value paid to the seller of labour power. Without restriction, the owners of capital would sacrifice the labourer to extract as much additional labour from the labourer. This was done by extending the working day, or by intensifying the labour in the day (that is, by producing more of a particular commodity in less time), and through technological improvements, and the addition of machinery to improve the production process. They operated in relation to each other through competition. The intensity of labour led to a lengthening of the working day, in those manufacturing centres not yet applying the new industrial methods, and to the extinction of those who could not meet the new socially necessary labour time.

This process leads to a greater concentration of capital in fewer hands and to more and more people forced into the position of labourer. The attempts by the proletariat to resist the destructive aspects of this process open this new form of the class struggle. The only way to put an end to this cycle is for the new class to take power and to bring this process to service the needs of humanity. A new Communist society will still produce surplus value, but this social surplus forms an accumulation fund to meet the needs of all society.

Marx saw the new capitalist system as separating humans, in a negative way, from nature. Firstly, in the destructive effects it has on the labourer, and secondly, it interrupts the exchange of matter with the natural cycles. The transformation of society through a political revolution would open the reunification of the producer with their product and humans with the natural cycles of matter. It was not in the interest of the labouring class to perpetuate this new form of slavery, which gives the appearance of liberation from previous forms of slavery, but in fact separates the actual producer of wealth from not only the product of that labour but also from the actual tools of production. This creates a contradiction between the labourer, dispossessed of the means of producing their life, and being reduced to a wage slave, in this system of production and the class that had taken possession of the productive processes. This was a new turn in the class struggle. Marx saw the duality of capitalism: on the one hand it created new miseries, but it also created the means of liberating humanity. As economic development continues, it not only creates the possibility, but actually places the survival of human society on a precipice. Capitalism continually drives us towards war and the destruction of nature, now threatening the sustainability of life on the planet. The arrival of Socialism boldly turned human beings towards space exploration and the harnessing of science and freed humans from the

contradiction of nature. The creation of the Soviet Union opened up new possibilities, including the eradication of diseases. It was the Soviet Union that led the campaign to successfully eradicate smallpox. It was in the Soviet Union that the natural environment became a central focus of the people. The new China has now turned massive resources towards green development, reforestation and restoring the natural environment.

Engels demonstrated through his theoretical works the absolute connection of human society to nature. The laws of development of a Socialist revolution were in accord with the laws of nature. The development of society is leading towards these developments, with the class struggle as an engine for the development of quantitative changes towards the qualitative leap that is the Socialist revolution.

During their lifetimes, both Marx and Engels found themselves in defence of the science that they developed, with powerful works such as *Anti-Dühring* (Engels 1894) and the *Poverty of Philosophy* (Marx 1847). Marx's understanding of the needs of the proletariat and its relations to the State are made clear in his study of the Paris Commune (Marx 1871). His "Critique of the Gotha Program" (Marx 1875) and other works challenged the opportunism of the Social-Democratic Party and its twin the Anarchist movement for their tendency towards a reform of Capital.

Lenin, as a leader within the Second International, in his writings on the state, challenged the suppression by "Orthodox" Marxists of sections of Marx and Engels's work that dealt with class struggle of the proletariat that raised the proletariat to state power: a Dictatorship of the Proletariat as a new form of state (Lenin 1917).

This can be seen in works such as *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* and the *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, along with *What is to be Done?* and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (Lenin 1902; 1904; 1905; 1918). Leninism is Marxism continued and developed, so that it forms the basis of why we must study Lenin with his rich analysis and practical applications.

In restoring and developing Marxism in the 20th century, Lenin through his *State and Revolution* and *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* shows how a separation occurred between banking capital and industrial capital (Lenin 1916; 1917). He then goes on to show that this new form of the bourgeois class had developed in such a way that it subordinated productive capital to its own interests. Finance Capital was a particularly parasitic form of capital separated and dominant over industrial capital; it led to a deepening of reactionary content. That the progressive (in the sense of historical progress) features of Capital had evolved to the most extreme and in terms of social development the final stage that must give way to



Socialism. That the era of the proletarian revolution had arrived. That Capitalism was now at its Imperialist stage.

By 1870, capitalists had divided the world into colonies and semi-colonies (Lenin 1916). He showed that a world war was an inevitable consequence of this division as newly emerging Imperialist (capitalist) powers were locked out by the old powers. This was a source of inter-imperialist rivalries, which would be settled temporarily by war, such as the Japanese-Russian War of 1904. Lenin correctly anticipated that we were entering the era of the proletarian revolution (Lenin 1917), that the big bourgeoisie had become a reactionary class, that this class would resist the proletarian revolution, and that a layer of opportunist revisionism had developed based on an identification with and bribery within the proletariat. The financial oligarchy lived better, finding its source of additional income through the subjection of colonial or semi-colonial nations (Lenin 1918).

The struggle against this group of renegades formed the basis of the emergence of the Bolsheviks (Lenin 1920). It was the rejection of these forms of opportunism, which are the transmission through petty-bourgeois influences, that steered the Bolsheviks and the proletariat in Russia to lead and advance the class struggle. The reason why Communists have studied these developments and the revolution in Russia is because so many forms of the struggle are concentrated in such a short period of time (Stalin 1938).

## International: bourgeois reaction, left sectarians, and right opportunists

It is a mistake to see the class struggle as one sided, the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Without the interceding world war, the imperialists as a class would not have been divided and thus scramble to deal with the emergence of the proletarian revolt, which had world-wide significance.

The bourgeoisie began to engage in counter-measures, first in seeking allies within the revolutionary classes. The first alliances were with the petty-bourgeois opportunists of the Second International. In Russia (Martov and the Mensheviks, Kerensky and the Socialist-Revolutionaries) and in Britain, the Labour Party. In Australia, the Hughes Labour government later evolved into the Hughes National Party government. In Germany, the forces around Kautsky and the revisionist pro-war Social-Democrats. In Italy, the most extreme form was the creation of the Socialists of the Fascist movement around Mussolini. The more extreme the situation faced by the bourgeoisie the more extreme their reactions against their own proletarians.

The infantile actions by left sectarians, aided and abetted by the bourgeois Anarchists, devolved into groups that

took political action to the extreme, or abstained from the necessary development of the revolutionary proletariat.

In Germany during the revolution that opened the end of WW1 the emerging vanguard engaged in premature putsches such as the formation of Soviets. Whilst heroic, against a well-steered bourgeoisie assisted by the opportunists from German Social-Democracy, it enabled the tragic destruction of the vanguard. German Social-Democracy beat Liebknecht by proclaiming the Weimar Republic ahead of the Proclamation by Liebknecht of the Soviet Republic. This placed power in the hands of the militarists and divided the forces of the working class.

One of the batons that the Trotskyists tend to beat us with is their interpretations of events around 1918-1923 in Germany. The theory of permanent revolution, as promoted by Trotsky, distorts and promotes the Menshevik excuses for their betrayals. Trotsky gave valuable support to the opponents of the revolution through his "Left" opposition. This distortion attributes to Stalin what the opposition characterised as "Socialism in One Country." They promote an ignorant understanding of Marxism and in reality support the Menshevik opposition to the proletarian revolution. The CPSU (B) developed the revolution throughout the former Tsarist Empire, giving support to the development of the world revolution, in many countries including Germany and Britain.

The white knight myth of Trotsky as the leader of the revolution is in fact the myth of a cult figure, who appears as the mythical character Snowball in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). The real story actually befuddles the myth. Trotsky was brought to task for his non-Bolshevik methods of work on more than one occasion. His factionalism caused no end of problems at critical junctures. There was a joint working group assisting the German proletariat on which both Trotsky and Stalin sat with German comrades. It was a critical moment in the struggle for the proletariat of Germany to defeat rising German militarism. The situation demanded organs of power and Soviets to be created. It was Trotsky who influenced the German comrades to adopt instead a tactic of shop committees, thus reducing the whole struggle back towards economism.

It is the quantitative development of the Communist Party, and its fusion within the revolutionary class, that prepares the development of the class struggle to the level of state power. The actions of left sectarians and right opportunists hinder this development.

The reactionary class that has developed, the finance Capitalists, set aside their own sectional interests to create reactions to disrupt and negate the development of these quantitative changes. The arsenal in the hands of these forces are developments within the progressive class, which diverts and slows the qualitative changes. Since the class struggle has risen to state level this is also manifest

in struggles between the states that reflect the rise of workers' power to the state level.

Nineteen foreign armies intervened in the civil war against the Bolsheviks and the newly emerging proletarian state. The revolution advanced eastwards into the former colonies of the Russian Imperial empire. This resulted in the emergence, from this extension of the socialist revolution of separate Soviet republics, of nationalities that had been formerly oppressed. The Soviet Union was surrounded by the rightist governments of the Baltic states, Finland and Sweden, which tried to isolate and prevent trade with the newly emerged Soviet republics. The national question was high on the agenda and the assistance provided, including to China, was enormous.

The pressures on the new republics, along with the class interests of wavering petty bourgeois elements within the Soviet Union, gave rise to petty bourgeois oppositions that expressed hostility to the proletariat within the Party. Anti-party activity from the Workers Opposition, the Left Opposition, and the opposition to the collectivisation of the farms, spawned anti-Soviet forces and created a myth. This, and the encirclement, had a deep effect on the Party and narrowed some aspects of Party democracy. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union emerged and strengthened its position, forcing the bourgeoisie to find new tactics.

The world working class in its struggle with the bourgeoisie found that the struggle against colonialism and feudal survivals impelled by the reactionary nature of finance capital meant that the liberation of not just itself but whole nations had fallen on the proletariat and had become an acceleration and assistance of the proletarian revolution.

The bourgeoisie, alarmed at the successes of Soviet Power, saw the suppression of proletarian and national liberation struggles as its urgent task, so as to defend the imperialist system and capitalist exploitation from these forces. In Italy and Germany, along with Eastern Europe, more extreme – even terrorist – methods of struggle became the response, and an open terrorist dictatorship was combined with bourgeois democratic forms to subordinate the seeming democratic institutions to these criminal forces. In China it expressed its form in an open civil war where the blue shirts of Chang Kai Shek seized control of the Kuomintang, launching a war against the revolutionary forces with the assistance of imperialist reactionaries. The anticipated conflict between Imperial Japan and the USA was developing. The Japanese, pushing the other imperial powers out of Asia and the Pacific, saw Imperial Japan with its militarism and fascist rule as an alternative to the European powers. A new inter-imperialist struggle was developing between Germany and Britain, in terms of a political struggle over the leadership of Germany or Britain in this struggle (see Hitler's open debate with Churchill). This struggle that led to the abdication of the king of

England and the Battle of Britain, which was principally aimed at subduing the British working class and their opposition to the fascists. The struggle played out in Europe, with the conservatives under Chamberlain steering the Germans into direct conflict with the Soviet Union and being at least neutral in relation to the German acquisition of industrial resources in Czechoslovakia and – later – territory in Poland. In Spain, the playing out of the struggle allowed the use of military intervention to suppress the Spanish Republic. Incidentally, the negative developments of the opportunist Trotskyist and Anarchist forces undermined the Spanish Republic from within (Ibarruri 1966).

Through this period the Comintern applied the Popular Front, a United Front strategy, to oppose fascism. This activity, inspired and led by the Workers and Communist Parties, delayed and slowed the progress of the fascist bourgeoisie, giving time for the inter-imperialist rivalries to mature.

Many see the major war in Europe beginning with the D-Day invasion, or with the battle of Stalingrad. Forgotten is the phony war and the second capitulation of the French bourgeoisie, who created the puppet Vichy government against their own working class. The role of the Trotskyists in opposing, with the extreme right of social democracy, the United Front was the second betrayal of the working class by the German Social-Democrats and the French Socialists, who fell back under the assault of fascism. This is again overlooked in the post-war involvement of these forces against emerging people's democracies.

This reflects the historic betrayal that took the Social-Democratic parties away from Socialist parties of the working class to parties of bourgeois opportunism among the working class. Social-Democratic parties have become the main saviour of the bourgeoisie. None of this overcomes the need to develop working class unity, but it raises the question of the role of the Communist Party in combating these forms of opportunism.

At this level the bourgeoisie have developed a need to incorporate these opportunisms into state monopoly formations and exercise control over them through organisations linked to the state but operating in NGO forms. Different forms of power are exercised by finance capitalism, and these are manifested in different bourgeois forms, ranging from Social-Democratic opportunism to left opportunism, bourgeois-democratic liberal governments, and a range of openly dictatorial governments. The most savage of these is the open terrorist dictatorship of the major bourgeoisie, ie, fascism, and the various forms of corporatism. Capitalism, as it approaches the development of state monopoly, has assumed weaker and more militarist forms. The range of governments that are engendered, as crisis has become general and permanent, means that quantitative features of

all forms are interchangeable. What this means is that Social-Democratic governments resort to suppressive methods alongside some more traditional reforms. The sum of this activity in blurring the groups has a unifying core in Anti-Communism. These groups are interchangeable and operate with varying degrees of influence from the superstructure. These degrees include state agencies and intelligence services, sometimes connected through organised religion. The universities provide a breeding ground for such groups and their ideology, especially among the younger generation of workers and intellectuals.

Opportunism is brought into the working-class movement from petty-bourgeois elements. It travels with sectarianism and has been a feature plaguing the struggle from its inception. The First International fell into a furious struggle with the Anarchist forces, which spread through the Latin world (southern Europe and Latin America), and the deviation increased in its level of sophistication in proportion to the narrowing of the capitalist class (de Laforcade 2015). To hold onto power, the capitalists have to resort to these distortions within their ideological struggle in order to sow division and discord amongst the progressive class. The vehicle for this is a petty-bourgeois layer within the class, a parasitic layer, that sits on top of the class. This opportunism infects the Communist and Workers parties and spreads a paralysis within the class organisations. The distortions and even the so-called anti-revisionism are part of this complex that holds back the development of class consciousness. It was the leap towards continuity, established and developed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, that overcame the distortions introduced by the opportunists in the Second International. This opened the road towards the Russian Revolution, successfully taking the leap towards a consistent development of consciousness. Leninism became the form in which the revolutionary continuity of Marxism re-emerged in the proletarian party.

Upon the arrival of this renewed Marxism all the previous forms of opportunism had to find ways of competing and began to adapt their approach to combat the rise of Leninism. Scientific leaps forward were attacked in new ways. The development of the class position, that the bourgeoisie had ceased to be a progressive class in historical terms, was adapted in the two opportunist trends of rejecting the need to develop society. This is manifested in all forms of Anarchism, including those using the Trotskyist label or the Maoist label. It was also reflected in the rejection of the United Front's popular tactic. The second trend is also reflected in the right opportunists and left opportunists arguing for the need for bourgeois development to take place, under the leadership of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces. This muddling included trends bouncing between the two forms of the same opportunism. Whether of the right or left, both opportunisms have one guaranteed outcome: capitulation to the bourgeoisie. These ideological

trends can be found in different mixtures within society and all have one source, the reflection of bourgeois ideology within the class.

Within society, the left forms of opportunism are embraced by the bourgeoisie, who sometimes dress their reaction in left camouflage. Trotskyism, Anarchism, Maoism and their leftist errors, are embraced as covers for rightist and even fascist ideology. The revolutionary individual, rather than collective activity, becomes the resort to undermine and divide the forces for change. Under pressure from this reaction, fractures and splinters have multiplied within the Communist and workers movement. These fractures and splinters take time to reveal their bourgeois appearance, and are hence of an opportunist character within the struggle for unity and a continuity of the revolutionary forces that is rising to new levels.

Often not fully embraced in the role that Lenin played, coming from the desertion of the forces of the Second International, was the restoration of revolutionary Continuity. Lenin not only restored Marxism; he extended and developed it. Centrist forces, such as Trotskyism, attempted to divert this process back towards the opportunist position, with its overemphasis on the role of the individual. Trotsky was an anti-Leninist, and therefore an anti-Marxist closely related to Anarchism, and through this petty-bourgeois relationship, acted as all the petty-bourgeois do, wavering first towards the proletariat and then towards the bourgeoisie. In this form he practised the process of trying to drag back the struggle towards previously rejected forms. His theory of world revolution rejected the Soviet Union as a base of the world revolution. In his opposition to Lenin's thesis of developing the Soviet Union as a base, he presented the ossified previous theory that the revolution would break out in the advanced capitalist countries. Trotsky rejected the theory that Imperialism would break at the weakest link (Lenin 1916). He rejected Lenin's, and in fact Marx's view, that the development of Socialism was to be carried out over a prolonged period, wresting capital from the capitalists over time. Trotsky also rejected Lenin's views on a revolutionary party (Trotsky 1931). He developed an anti-Leninist concept of "Left Opposition," an extreme form of petty-bourgeois factionalism, within the Party. He opposed Party unity and Party democracy through his promotion of factionalism, thereby damaging the party. The factionalism that developed in the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in the period under the successors to Stalin opened the way against Party democracy.

Trotsky attempted to create a false continuity between his petty-bourgeois anarchist theories, combined with Menshevik errors, as the continuation of the revolution, as the development of Leninism. This theory was assisted in its development by the capitalists in New York and even in Hitler's Germany, where his works were not banned. In the



universities of the Western nations these theories, along with Anarchism, were developed into the institutions of the state, which were charged with slowing and disrupting the workers' struggle and the Communist movement. Schools of thought developed that subverted Marxism from within, challenged the Continuity of the Communist movement, gave a left cover to anti-Communism and attacked the Soviet Union from the left.

Understanding this is essential to the theoretical and practical development of the Communist and workers movement, and towards overcoming left Anti-Communism which is an effective disrupter of the development of the revolutionary movement. The wave of left opportunism, which swept the world in the 1950s and 1960s, was in response to and coupled with, right opportunist errors. Anarchist and utopian concepts were introduced not only in western Communist Parties, but found reflections in all Communist Parties. The combination of left and right errors added to the divisions which were fundamental in the development of divisions between Socialist countries. It is incorrect to blame only one side in the Sino-Soviet split, or the Yugoslav-Soviet split. At no time can we justify what became a development of counter-revolution. The loss of Continuity with Marxism, and the promotion of alien class ideology, were the result of errors based on dogmatic approaches. The left opportunist position undermines a correct approach to the revolutionary class and reflects petty-bourgeois tendencies within the class. The right opportunist gives ground to the bourgeois forces and feeds the extreme leftist tendencies. Both trends must be combatted, as they threaten revolutionary Continuity.

In the Soviet Union there was an overestimation of the development of society and the abolition of the law of value. This meant that leftist errors, such as the proclamations on the need to surrender the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, fed the rightist forces. Believing that Communism was around the corner, while the productive forces were coming up against internal contradictions, introduced economic and imperialist pressure on the development of the world economy and the development of the Socialist state. The result was a failure to understand the Continuity of Socialism from Capitalism.

A fundamental mistake was placing economics outside of the development of class rule, along with strengthening the Party and the rule of the Soviets. Corrections and reforms under Socialism, during the transition of the proletariat, form the basis of making and holding class rule. At no time did the bourgeoisie as a class stop their attempts at the restoration of their rule. All efforts were made to restore bourgeois class rule. At the centres of the Imperialist powers were developments of the ideological struggle so as to form a basis of the bourgeois struggle to maintain and extend its class interests. Universities have been turned towards this with an infusion of bourgeois ideological

thinking. The creation of so-called schools of Marxism in western universities, funded by the US Imperialists through Harvard University and think tanks, invented and then dispersed these ideological manipulations into workers movements, as has been shown with the release of CIA files (Gearon 2019: 742-761). The Harvard Trade Union Schools have graduates in positions of influence. The promotion of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist literature and the seizing on dissident writers deepen anti-Communism within society. Within the Socialist countries education has played a role in promoting antagonistic views, made to recruit individuals and foster bourgeois views. Thus, the underground movements and trends towards the development of ways of living, not dependent on the prevailing society, create black markets that convert state capital to individual capital. This employment of individuals in the informal sector provides a counter to the development of society along socialist lines. Huge sums were offered by the CIA to 'defectors' and dissidents. These methods are not new to workers, who when they have engaged in strikes have had to deal with strike breakers, scabs and traitors within the class. As and when the class has resorted to dealing with these individuals, the bourgeoisie then attacks the working class, calling them thugs and dictators. Religion, racism and many other forms of bigotry, become a means to undermine the unity of the class. At the state level this becomes a force raised against the proletarian state and builds up the support for these forces, working against the class rule of the workers and gaining support for the restoration of the slavery of capitalist rule.

The successful restoration of the rule of the bourgeois class in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was a part of the ability of this class to restore its position, adapt and loot the economy built under Socialism, in order to re-establish slavery in all its forms, including wage slavery. The petty-bourgeois forces that operated under the labels of "anti-Stalinism" and "anti-Soviet" borrowed the revolutionary iconography and mixed bourgeois liberalism, Trotskyism, Anarchism and Maoism to cloak and deceive the progressive class as to their real aim. They wanted to restore the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie in state form and to re-establish wage slavery, thereby destroying all the organs of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in alliance with the peasantry. These organs included Soviet rule, the Communist Party, and the trade unions, which were a part of this rule by the class. Collective farms were abolished and all the property of the people was restored to capitalist ownership and to state monopoly ownership under the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie. This was not possible without an alliance of the anti-Communists with petty-bourgeois layers within society. It is also not possible without the super profits being generated out of the restoration of capitalism being shared with a layer of the working classes in the dominant imperialist nations. This

layer then becomes a vehicle for introducing opportunist trends within the working-class movement.

In China, petty bourgeois egalitarianism was interpreted as Socialism. Some aspects of this treatment meant a form of development, that emphasised the “Iron Rice Bowl,” the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, motivated by the desperation to advance. This has now given way to a more gradual accumulation of capital, recognising that the sheer force of will cannot overcome capitalism and that only the economic development under the proletarian dictatorship can open the road to Socialism, which is a qualitative leap from Capitalism. The required leap, from quantitative change to qualitative change, requires constant attention to ensure quantitative changes do not contradict the development of the qualitative leap.

It is this struggle for Continuity that the Communist Party of China exercises. The Party has maintained its links with the continuous development through an application of the process of dialectics: a series of quantitative changes, or reforms, lead to a qualitative leap. A correct understanding is required, of what each qualitative leap is and when to apply the concepts of reform: quantitative change or qualitative leap to revolution. Thus, the qualitative leap that was the creation of the People’s Republic of China, followed by quantitative changes, either led or subtracted from the movement, led to the next qualitative leap, advanced Socialism. The identification of mistakes in the development, such as utopian concepts of egalitarianism and forced marches as attempts at making leaps, without developing the necessary quantitative changes, placed China at the same point the Soviet Union had reached in the 1950s. It is a major step from basic Socialism to advanced Socialism. This struggle involves an enormous and difficult leap, resisting external pressure, coupled with appeals to the class forces by the interests aligned with the external capitalist forces. In the Soviet Union many gains were made but the enormous economic set-back after the invasion by the Nazi alliance, centred around Germany, cost the resources that could have been used to advance Socialism.

The post-war reconstruction of the Soviet Union also bought with it a considerable attack by Western Imperialism, which sought to reverse the gains made by Socialist forces in the ensuing revolutionary upswing accompanying the liberation of Europe. The encouragement of nationalism and the revitalisation of the Second International formed a method of diluting the struggle, with the encouragement of Social-Democratic forces in the Baltics and Northern Europe, as a Cold War strategy. The partial introduction of welfare reforms throughout Europe was combined with the subversion of the differences within the Communist movement. In the metropole of Capitalism, Communists in the USA and West Germany were suppressed and their Parties outlawed, along with the

restoration and the utilisation of anti-Communist forces. Funding “schools” of Marxism such as the Frankfurt School in Europe and the anti-Communist trends in Japan were also useful. The most alarming trend were the mistakes made in sections of the Communist movement in allowing opportunism to gain a foothold. The reliance on the differences in the bourgeoisie between the two divergent camps of imperialists spread the myth that the USA-British camp was a reliable ally of the progressive and democratic movement. It led to a lack of understanding internationally of the reactionary nature of this so-called “democratic camp,” which turned towards active hostility and the development of nuclear weapons. This shifted the balance of forces, with the US able to use its war profits to corrupt and intervene in countries throughout the world.

Active hostilities resumed and anti-Communist activities increased with the opening of the anti-colonial revolutions on the back of the defeat of fascism and European Imperialist powers, such as Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal. National liberation assumed a revolutionary character giving increased power to the working classes of Eastern Europe and China. These were established through alliances that crossed class forces with the Communist Parties and the working class as the leading force in society.

In the Soviet Union this process was not consciously applied so that reforms or quantitative changes were made that subtracted from the development of the leap. These reforms subtracted so much from revolutionary Continuity that a leap back to a regressive society restored capitalism as a backward slave system. The development of Socialism is a conscious act and requires a strong understanding of the natural science of Marxism-Leninism. The picking up of non-scientific views meant that leaders such as Gorbachev, with his alien “science” made reforms that restored wage slavery in the Soviet Union.

## **Australia: Communist Continuity and the Struggle against Anti-Communism**

In Western Communist parties we need to pay attention to Continuity. In Australia, as in other countries, the struggle has been to deny Continuity to our Party. The struggle to destroy this Continuity was successful when forces, working against the revolutionary Continuity, gained an ascendancy. The fact that our Party saw this Continuity as important is enshrined in our Constitution, with the understanding that the forces that grabbed control of the former Communist Party were going to liquidate the party to destroy the connection of the Party to the struggle of our class. Our Party put forward that we were the party of revolutionary Continuity and therefore we reclaimed the name of the Communist Party.

For communists in this country, the restoration of our Continuity rests with the struggles of our class for the restoration of our unity. To achieve this, we must make a part of our culture the recognition and continuance of the contributions made by previous generations of revolutionaries. We must take the best, the most positive, that is, those aspects of the struggle that contribute to the development of a revolutionary leap to the development of the class struggle in our Party.

This struggle is of great importance and the denial of our Continuity is recognised by the anti-Communists in different forms. The Trotskyists seek to grab parts of our history to turn it against us. The liquidators of the Search Foundation seek to bury the revolutionary parts and present the struggles in their quantitative form, as mere reforms of capitalism, or unseemly aspects of capitalism. The liquidators gather in the Search Foundation and have united with a wide variety of anti-Communist bourgeois liberals to prevent the return of and development of the Continuity of the revolutionary forces. They hide their position under a range of anti-Communist slogans, while directing change to reform capital. The role of this organisation is to deny the working-class Continuity in our revolutionary struggle.

It is our responsibility therefore to restore through practice our Continuity, to develop the best from the history of our class to generalise the experiences. When the militant trade unionists and revolutionary Socialists took the leap forward to found the Communist Party, they sought to gather the best of our Continuity. The heroism of our class struggle, the great fighters for democracy, brings with it revolutionary and fighting traditions.

The struggle that emerged in the Soviet Union over the Continuity of the revolution saw a break occur with the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry. The state was central to this question and the Party formed the highest expression of the system of connections that allowed the continuation of the class rule. The disruptive effects of this approach, which was centred on the personality of Stalin, raised both negative and positive consequences above the actual class struggle. This created a division in the forces of the working class. The concentration on a personality, either negative or positive, was used to undermine Marxism-Leninism. The fundamentals of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat were challenged under the slogan of anti-Stalinism. Fundamental tenets were undermined. Other personalities were raised above the Party, so that instead of abolishing a cult of personality, bourgeois liberalism crept in and elevated new leaders who weakened the Party. Party democracy was weakened, with those who dissented from this attack being labelled as Stalinists. Previous struggles were degraded and the resulting confusion allowed anti-Party forces to develop their attacks.

In the Communist Party of Australia these petty bourgeois tendencies were strengthened, leaving the tried and tested leaders facing persecution by a new idealist trend, coupled with dogmatic defences. The attack on Stalin as a personality raised him above the Party and stopped an objective assessment of his mistakes and correct practises. It aided and assisted the international bourgeoisie.

In Australia, factionalism between the leading figures of the party deepened and a struggle ensued for Continuity amongst the ideological confusion. In the 1960s, a challenge began in the organisation of the Party, with the left sectarians liquidating the party's industrial branches. The right opportunists raised the leaders above the Party and led attempts to subordinate the Party to the unions. Nationalist tendencies emerged, challenging the development of our Socialist consciousness.

The 1984 SPA Congress documents summarise what was happening:

During the 1960's the CPA leaders advanced views that the working class was no longer a revolutionary force and had been integrated into the capitalist system and that the leadership of the revolutionary movement had been taken over by the students, the academics, and professional and technologically trained strata of society. These views led to neglect of industrial organisations. The base among the rank and file of the working class was weakened. This in turn undermined the position of Communists in some trade unions.

During 1983 the Party had lost significant forces, due to the actions of some leading trade union officials. The document goes on to analyse these developments: "We made an analysis of the formation of the Australian Marxist Forum and the formation of Maritime Unionists Socialist Activities Association and some other similar groups." (Socialist Party of Australia 1984)

In a resolution adopted shortly after the formation of the Australian Marxist Forum the CC expressed the opinion that it would divert forces and energies from the task of building and strengthening the SPA (the name chosen to distinguish our party from the Liquidators), particularly the Party's educational and ideological work, and that its formation has already created confusion and misgivings. "Far from bringing unity of understanding and purpose it may well add to ideological confusion and disunity." The congress resolution went on, "ideological unity is not achieved by making a principle out of diversity but by upholding, propagating and fighting for the proven truths of Marxism-Leninism."

In a further discussion of the disunity that characterised this period:

The disintegrating effects of the revisionist line



adopted by the CPA [referring to the now Liquidated CPA] over 15 years ago have continued to erode it. This was entirely predictable. The same consequences have overtaken other parties which set out on the Euro-communist path, although when this course was first adopted by the CPA in 1967 the party was promised a "renewal."

The Statement goes on to describe the attempts of the Old CPA to try to reverse the decline with a "Prospects for Socialism" debate.

In the ferment Bernie Taft resigned from the Communist Party and formed the Socialist Forum, not dissimilar to his previous ill-fated Australian Marxist Forum, which dissolved without a trace. In 1992, a forerunner of the liquidation of the old Communist Party, which liquidated into the New Left Party, it handed over assets to the Search Foundation as the New Left Party foundered and collapsed.

In a reflection of the direction then being adopted, the document quotes B Aarons, calling for "a new Socialist party which can unite significant sections of the left ... What the support would be for our existing policies unencumbered by the communist tag." It goes on to ask two questions:

If 15 years of Euro-communism which was supposed to lead to "renewal," has in fact led to continued decline and more disunity, may it not be that this policy course is wrong? Is it not a fact that the CPA was much stronger and more influential when it followed a militant class struggle course, proclaimed its solidarity and participation in the international communist movement and based its work on Marxist-Leninist positions?

In dealing with the fracturing of the Communist movement the document deals with the formation of the Association of Communist Unity, which came into existence from the ex-members of the SPA, under the names of P. Clancy, R Clarke, and W Brown. The outcome of this organisation trying to create ad hoc organisations is that they have not created unity but have contributed to disunity and the dissolution of their forces. They operated as liquidators.

The victory of the anti-fascist coalitions against fascism and war signalled a new high point in the struggle. It stimulated the struggle for national liberation and the position of the working class. In the late 1940s new forms of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat came into existence with successful revolutions in countries that previously had been colonies, or under right-wing and feudal dictatorships. The emergence of these people's democracies formed a new form of government and offered the promise of advances.

At the same time, changes in the balance of power relations between the imperialist powers placed US capitalism

in the leading role. War profits were massive and had been stored in the banks of Switzerland. The devastation of Europe and the Soviet Union's losses were massive. At the end of the Second World War the USA became a nuclear armed state and quickly shared technology with its European allies. For the first time all of humanity faced the risk of nuclear annihilation and the US sought to increase its influence in all spheres. Japan, Western Europe, and large parts of the world were under US occupation. This continues today with 800 military bases situated around the world. The funding of counter-insurgency and the adoption of previous fascist forces was used to destabilise left movements.

Rightist and reactionary forces were funded and linked to a strategy to undermine the people's republics and the Soviet Union. The activity extended into the Socialist world. In the Middle East the US took over the British campaign against Arab republics, funded the creation of a military force in Israel, propped up reactionary regimes, and overthrew progressive governments in Iran and Iraq. The CIA backed coups in Indonesia, Brazil, and Chile (Blum 1986). The competition with the Socialist world was intensified into an arms race.

In Australia, the attack on the Communist Party was stepped up. Leading into World War II the Party was made illegal, in June 1940. This illegality only ended when the Soviet Union became the West's ally. The fight against war and fascism that was led by the Party resulted in a de facto united front with the Labor government and Communists were having electoral success.

Post-war, the struggle began to assume new dimensions and the Party was challenging for a leading role in the working class. The Cold War began to push back the gains that had been made, and this was heavily dependent on the US's nuclear arsenal. On top of the coal dispute, the General Secretary of the Party, Lance Sharkey, was jailed in 1949 for six months on the trumped-up charge of sedition. Australia militarily intervened in Korea, Malaysia, Borneo, and then in Vietnam and Indochina. Australia's shift to the USA had occurred during the Pacific War and then a shift in US foreign policy led to attacks to destabilise the Socialist world. The establishment of US spy bases and the creation of the anti-Communist "Groupers" openly attacked the trade unions, and through the creation of rightist groups, sought to unite the openly fascist migrants then being bought into Australia.

The Communist Party, in unity with militant trade unionists, defeated attempts to make the Party illegal in the 1950s. International events weighed heavily when Hungary, the GDR (German Democratic Republic), and other areas were compounded by an attack launched at the 20th Congress of the CPSU(B), held on 14th-25th February 1956. First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev delivered his

infamous “Secret Speech,” which denounced the personality cult and “dictatorship” of Joseph Stalin. This speech set back Party unity and caused a number of problems, which were aimed at separating the Party from the people. It was a blow against revolutionary Continuity. The incorrect approach to these developments encouraged anti-Party forces and relied on finding support in the intermediary classes travelling with the Party and the working class.

Despite all this, the Communist Party of Australia remained influential. The departure of the Ted Hill group under this attack split the Party significantly for the first time. The pressure of left opportunism gaining ground led to a shift to the right by sections of the Communist movement. The departures from the foundations of Leninism had their genesis in the changes occurring in the class struggle.

Consistently, a channel has had to be found to continue the struggle for revolutionary change, based on Marxism-Leninism. The formation of the Socialist Party of Australia, and its subsequent reclaiming the title of Communist Party of Australia in 1996, represents a struggle by militant workers and Communist to continue along that path. The rejection of Euro-communism and the theories of two superpowers, morphed into the CPA (ML) and other groups. They proclaimed that the Peoples Republic of China was “social imperialism,” even when the Communist Party of China corrected their ultra-left errors associated with Maoism. This has opened up new roads to our Party.

The development of Communist unity remains a challenge for all of us. In 1984 our Party set about trying to find the basis of unity in the class struggle and the scientific application of Marxism-Leninism to our realities in Australia. This requires us to find ways to promote unity in the interests of the working class and work tirelessly for this.

Recent struggles have led to splinters, fragments of the party built around the cult of individuals. They cannot be called “splits” as they have no principled basis within the class struggle, but form groups allied around particular individuals. Those who have been misled by these petty bourgeois deviations should step back and resume life in the struggle for revolutionary change. Internationally all parties have been plagued by groups that seek to mimic the Party. This confuses the youth and other comrades trying to build a Marxist-Leninist party. They all have a commonality in that they present their hatreds and sect-like adherences as Marxism-Leninism.

There is another group that presents itself as a continuation of the revolutionary traditions of the Communist Party and that is the Search Foundation. We must find a way to take out of this organisation any who seek a genuine path to change the order of society from capitalism to Socialism. Negatively, these forces promote opposition to

Marxism-Leninism as a fight against what they call “Stalinism.” They present a constructed history that is supposed to demonstrate the forlorn hopes of previous generations of workers and Communists. No matter how they present this it places them in opposition to revolutionary change and instead favours the system of wage slavery. They see our society as the end of the historical development of human society, making them inherent defenders of capital.

## Conclusion: our Continuity

Our Continuity must be with those who struggled to end the slavery of the convict system, to seek alliance with the First Nations people against the slave-owners, who established and set forth this regime. To oppose the monarchy as the state representative of the colonial empire of the slave owning class, we do not just seek a bourgeois republic, we seek a republic based on the working people in full support of the First Nations with their sovereign rights as the basis of that unity. We seek Continuity with that struggle and for the full development of all our cultures and languages. Such a republic cannot be a republic of settlers and must have a house to empower the rights of First Nations people. It must be a republic based on the people.

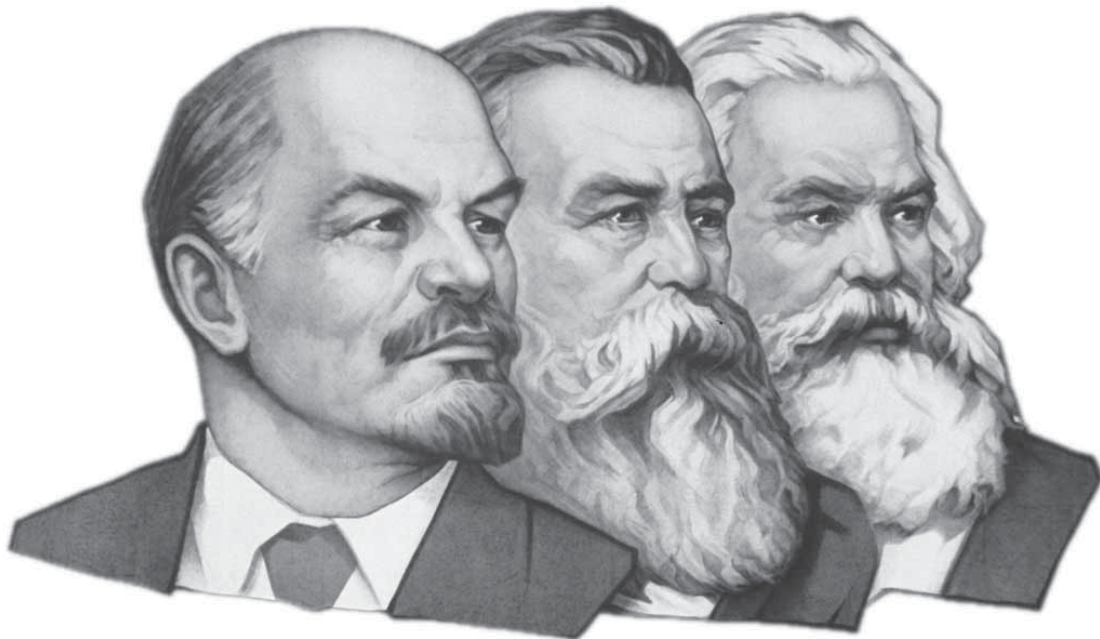
Most importantly the continuation of a revolutionary party and its connection to the working class are of fundamental importance. The narrative that the working class is no longer a revolutionary class is false. A Dictatorship of the Proletariat, in whatever form, is a necessity for revolutionary change. The narratives that have been presented as new “old ideas” lead to the liquidation of the forces for revolutionary change and restore the bourgeois order. That opportunism present in the left and right leads to the subordination of the workers back to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and subjects the mass of the people to wage slavery.

It has been the restoration of Marxism as a science, with its fundamental discoveries through practice, that has advanced society towards a new era. It is these laws of science and not individuals that warrant our study and informs our practice. Bourgeois thinking and opportunism are the advance guard of the restorationists. The move away from the central role of the Party in unity with the working class, through opportunist thinking such as Eurocommunism or its ultra-left cousins under various false red banners, are the petty influences that undermine Democratic Centralism and Socialist democracy. Bourgeois democracy, while an advance over the naked dictatorship of fascist, militarist, and feudal forces, still hides slavery in all its forms.

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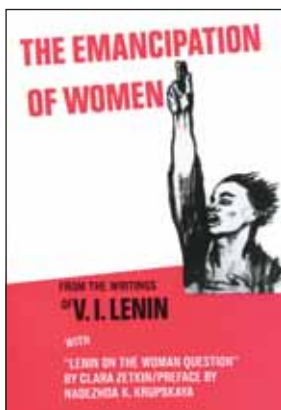


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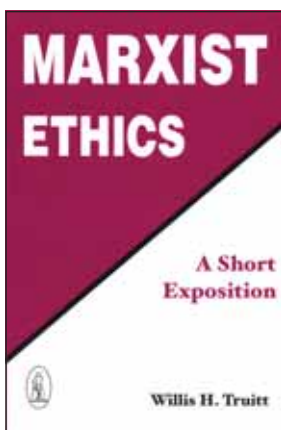
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