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No lasting peace: Labor, Communism and the Cominform, Australia and Great Britain, 1945-50

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Introduction

When the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) held their national congresses in 1945 they were both in positions of unprecedented strength. World War 11 had given their members, trade union influence, and overall prestige a dramatic boost. In Australia, parliamentary representation was achieved in April 1944 when a communist barrister, Fred Paterson, won the seat of Bowen in the Queensland state election.[1] In Britain, Willie Gallacher, the Party's sole Member of Parliament (MP) since 1935, was joined by Phil Piratin, returned for Stepney in the General Election of July 1945. Both Party's membership soared: the Australian from 3,569 in 1938 to 22,052 in 1944;[2] the British from 15, 781 in 1938 to 45,435 in 1945.[3] Electoral support and membership figures disguised the extent of trade union influence. The Australian Party had majorities or near-majorities on numerous state and provincial Trades and Labour Councils, had its resolutions adopted at the 1945 Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and was able to dictate the policies of trade unions which covered every basic industry at the federal level except the AWU.[4] The British Party did not enjoy this level of influence, but the election of Bert Papworth to the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) demonstrated its growing importance in the trade unions. Both parties' prospects for future growth seemed bright and their places as major political forces never looked more looked assured.

By 1950, the two Communist Parties were diminished, isolated and on the defensive. The reservoir of public sympathy consolidated during the 'Red Army' days had evaporated. Membership levels had plummeted. In Australia, the anti-communist Industrial Groups would soon defeat communists in leadership ballots in nearly all key trade unions. The newly elected Menzies government was preparing legislation to outlaw the Communist Party and implementing contingency plans to place communists in internment camps. In Britain, the Labour Government had purged communists from the civil service and the government scientific positions, the TUC

had banned communists from holding office and the Labour Party had expelled from its parliamentary party several 'crypto-communist' MPs.

Explaining such a sharp slide in the two parties' fortunes is a central aim of this paper. It will argue that pivotal to understanding why the parties were so besieged was the fracturing of the war-time alliance between Soviet Union and its war-time allies, and the changing dynamics within the Labor movement, especially the relationship between the communist parties and the labour parties of the two countries. This paper will therefore focus on that domestic relationship against the international backdrop of escalating suspicions and hostilities between East and West that were associated with the onset of the Cold War and, in particular, with the role of the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform. This approach has not previously been attempted in the relevant literature.[5]

The Cold War and the Cominform

When the term 'Cold War' was first used by Bernard Baruch on 16 April 1947, relations between the Soviet Union and the West were in a state of transition. Differences had been papered over at the three allied conferences - Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam - held in 1943-45, but the formation of the NATO alliance in 1949 was testimony to the polarisation of the world into irreconcilable blocs. For many in the West the fight against Nazi Germany had been displaced by a more protracted though no less vital fight against Soviet communism. For the international communist movement the United States had replaced Nazi Germany as the headquarters of international reaction. It was not merely about territorial aggression and expansionist desires; it was also a clash between ideologies, a battle for moral superiority, and a quest to win the allegiance of entire populations.

The inaugural conference of the Cominform at Szklarska Poreba in Poland in October 1947 was a benchmark in post-war Soviet policy.[6] Its division of the world into two camps, imperialist and anti-imperialist, and its strategy to polarise allegiances within social democratic labour movements, meant that accommodation and cooperation with the non-communist world - the official line from 1941 to 1947 – was jettisoned. Antagonism between blocs was to be the order of the day.

For the Soviet Union, these new perspectives merely reflected reality. In the previous six months the United States Congress had breathed new life into the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the Truman Doctrine proclaimed America's new role as the policeman of the 'free world', communists had been expelled from the French and Italian governments, and the Marshall Plan – a barely disguised attempt to split the eastern European countries away from the Soviet Union – had been announced. For the West, the Cominform symbolised Soviet leadership of the international communist movement, an attempt to resurrect the disbanded Comintern, and the imposition of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. The bolts of the Iron Curtain were slamming shut. By the end of 1947, many in the West were convinced that Stalin sought to dominate Western Europe as well as entrench Soviet control east of the Elbe.[7]

At the time there appeared to be substance to this. Cominform minutes and uncensored delegates' reports suggest that the promoters of the Cominform, especially Andrei Zhdanov, *did* conceive the Cominform as a sort of European Comintern which implied 'the subordination of all members to the security interests of the USSR'.[8] And in addition to guaranteeing communist unity in an Eastern Europe now occupied by the Red Army, and mobilising communist parties against the Marshall Plan and Western policy in Europe, the Cominform also provided slogans, directives and overall political guidance for foreign Communists. As Spriano has noted, with the Cominform, 'the various Communist parties [in the West] could be constantly influenced, both collectively and singly, without any orders appearing to come from the Kremlin'.[9]

Events in 1948 did not allay Western fears. They included the communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia, the sharpening of Soviet attacks on the Marshall Plan; the dramatic expulsion of Tito from the Cominform; the possibility of communist electoral victory in France and Italy; and, most dangerously - since it was perceived as an act of incipient war - the beginning of an eleven month Soviet blockade of Berlin. Of these events perhaps the most decisive occurred in Prague. The British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, told the American Ambassador on 25 February: 'We are now in a crucial period of six to eight weeks which will decide the future of Europe'.[10] Prague

entrenched Bevin into a more intransigent position. He drew up a benchmark Cabinet document which was entitled, pointedly, *The Threat to Western Civilisation*.[11] Even the so-called 'Red Flag' elements within the Labour Party found the Czech crisis to be a defining event: According to Michael Foot, effectively the editor of the highly influential left-wing *Tribune*, it meant the 'bridge between the East and the West [was] shattered'.[12] Thus, a powerful anti-Soviet consensus was forged, and it centred on a belief that Stalin's USSR was a menacing and implacable ideology in arms. Indicative of that perception was this telegram sent in 'strictest secrecy' from the British Prime Minister to the Australian Prime Minister in early 1948. Expressing sentiments reminiscent of Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech two years previously but now overlaid by the Cominform's entrenchment of Soviet control, Clement Atlee gave Chifley a gloomy diagnosis of the European problem:

> Soviet Government have formed a solid block behind the line from the Baltic along the Oder through Trieste to the Black Sea. Countries behind that line are dominated by Communists and there is no prospect in immediate future of our re-establishing normal relations with them. In Germany, France, Trieste, Italy and Greece Soviet policy is exerting a constantly increasing pressure…
> The countries of Western Europe already sense some Communist peril and are seeking some assurance of salvation.[13]

The alarm of 1948 became the paranoia of 1949 – that 'year of shocks'. The biggest shock was the Soviet Union's successful detonation of an atom bomb. This banished any lingering sense of omnipotence that the American atomic monopoly previously provided. In the event of World War 111, which now seemed imminent and inevitable, In London, leaders may have believed in their ideological righteousness. But they knew the West no longer had technological superiority. With this realisation, polarisation became complete and anti-communism, abroad and at home, became extreme. In Canberra, the Chifley administration was profoundly influenced by this environment and this, in turn, shaped its stand on communism in Australia.[14]

Australia: Labor and the Communist Party

For the Australian Labor Party, opposition to the Communist Party as a political body, and Communism as an ideology, was long-standing and unequivocal. In the years immediately following the formation of the CPA in 1920, the faction which received official Comintern recognition in late 1922 had been pursuing a united front approach: it sought, and in many cases achieved, entry into the ALP. From June to October 1923 the CPA and the ALP were affiliated in NSW. This brief honeymoon ended in a quick and final divorce. At the ALP's triennial Federal Conference in October 1924, a resolution was passed that denied the CPA the right to affiliate with, and its members the right to membership of, the ALP. As far as the Labor Party was concerned, the ruling of 1924 governed all future consideration of its relationship with the Communist Party. Thus, declarations on communism passed at innumerable subsequent conferences confirmed the inherent incompatibility between the platform and constitution of the ALP and the policies and structures of the CPA. The CPA's conduct during the counter-productive 'Class Against Class' period in the early 1930s and its zig-zagging during the late 1930s - for which, according to a contemporary ALP publication, it was 'impossible to find fit language to describe'[15] – sealed the fate of the Communist Party insofar as political unity with the ALP was concerned. The spirit of flexibility and co-operation that entered communists' activities after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 did little to dent Labor's persistent memories of CPGBA malevolence.

By 1947, there were three important new elements in the ALP's anti-communism. The first was Labor's awareness of unprecedented communist strength and its perception of how this might be used. The second was the onset of the Cold War; the conviction that Australians were 'living in a world in which there is a daily – an hourly – clash of political ideologies between moderate forces and world-ambitious Communism'.[16] The formation of the Cominform highlighted and exacerbated this clash. Third, and this should not be under-estimated, was the influence was the British Labour Party, which sent a thousand copies of Harold Laski's authoritative 1946 booklet, *The Secret Battalion: An Examination of the Communist Attitude to the Labour*

Party. The state secretary of the Victorian branch of the ALP sent copies to all metropolitan branches and Industrial Groups and recommended, in an accompanying letter, that Laski's book should be read closely since it 'gives a very lucid explanation of the underhand methods of the Communist Party'.[17] As a result, Labor's antagonism to the Communist Party after World War 11 became more active, more strident and more encompassing than ever before.

Thus, the ALP insulated itself against the possibility of communists wielding political influence in the Party through affiliation, unity agreements or even cooperation around particular issues. By the mid-1940s, its rules had been tightened to such an extent that nearly all bridges between the two parties – over which party members could have walked, and in both directions – had been swept away. The perennial concern that communists would seek to influence the Labor Party was, after 1947, less pronounced than the immediate fear that communists would seek to undermine or even destroy the Labor Party. As we shall see, the Communist Party had moved, for the second time in less than twenty years, to a position of implacable antagonism to the ALP leadership. As that leadership noted, correctly, in1948: 'Communist attempts to discredit Labor leaders have been both multiplied and intensified.'[18] This, plus the development of the Cold War, which had virulent anti-communism as its most typical feature, made it easy for the ALP to believe that ' the philosophy of the Communists is that the Labor Party must be eradicated before they can advance towards the seizure of political power'.[19] By the late 1940s, this belief was widely held within the ALP as a description of the CPA's attitude and an explanation for its behaviour.

This escalation of hostility was mirrored by the Communist Party. Reciprocal hatred between the two parties made direct conflict almost inevitable as each vied, in the late 1940s, for hegemony over the Labor movement. This was not apparent, however, in the afterglow of victorious war. At the 14th national congress of the CPA in August 1945, its general president, J.B. Miles, assured the Chifley Labor government of its continued support and cooperation. He urged delegates to organise mass support around the Labor Party's 'liberal and progressive' postwar policies.[20] This, after all, was the hey-day of Browderism and the associated acceptance that 'Socialism will

not be the immediate issue in the post-war period'.[21] The conciliatory and benevolent attitude towards the ALP was highlighted by a resolution adopted on 12 August. It reaffirmed belief in the united front, the desire to affiliate with the ALP, and the belief that in regard to post-war reconstruction policies, the parties had 'much in common'. The resolution also declared that 'the vital interests' of Australia demanded the return of Labor at the next election.[22]

In the lead-up to the 1946 federal election, the Central Committee of the CPA sought to reach an agreement with the Federal Executive of the ALP to 'ensure the defeat of Menzies' and to open the way to 'wider unity and a brighter future for all'.[23] There was no hint of sectarian sentiment here. Although the Federal Executive curtly and categorically rejected the CPA 'offer' in 'this or in any other election', [24] the perceived efficacy of a united front with the Labor Party was not dented. Except, that is, for some discordant voices in Victoria. Jack Blake, the Victorian state secretary since 1934, was the most articulate spokesperson for a tougher approach to the ALP.[25] Conflict crystallised at a meeting of the CPA's Political Committee on 14-16 March 1946. The debate on relations with the Labor Party, which dominated the meeting, are worth examining since Blake's minority line foreshadowed the position the Party adopted after the formation of the Cominform.[26]

Blake argued that the only basis for earlier Communist Party support of the Labor government had been the common pursuit of war aims determined by the threat of fascism and that this was removed when fascism was defeated. The prevailing policy of support for the Labor Party modified only by 'constructive criticism', he stated, should be revoked. Instead of seeking *rapprochement* with the ALP, the Party should 'begin now to mobilise the masses for revolutionary struggle'. The Party should be loosening the adherence to social democracy and winning the workers to its side: 'we must set ourselves the objective of exposing the true role of the Labor Party and social democratic leaders; we must set ourselves the objective of teaching the masses…the worthlessness of their leaders'. What Blake advocated was tantamount to a fundamental policy shift: the abandonment of united front with the ALP and the pursuit of mass support 'from below' for the Communist Party. Furthermore, the Chifley Labor government, as a government of compromise with

the bourgeoisie (and in a period of 'imminent' class struggle such compromise meant 'betrayal of the workers'), should be subjected to intense criticism. [27]

Of those Political Committee members who spoke on this issue at the meeting, all repudiated Blake's analyses. Typical was this comment from Ted Rowe, an official of the Amalgamated Engineering Union:

> In Comrade Blake's approach, he would go back to 1930 where we would say to the workers that [support for the ALP] is not even a question of the lesser evils, they are both evil. I do not think we have reached the stage where we have to sharply dissociate ourselves from social democracy.[28]

In two years, that stage was reached; in three years the Party's approach *was* similar to 1930. The epithets may have altered but not their substance nor the vitriol with which they were hurled.

For his oppositionist line, Blake incurred the wrath of Party leaders, who accused him of narrowness and 'Left sectarianism'. Dixon's lengthy denunciation – the stenogram is seven pages long – drew on the writings of Lenin, Stalin and Dimitrov, urged the intensification of the struggle against 'Left sectarianism' and applauded the present united front strategy – and 'I speak of a united front with the Labor Party which includes the top as well as the rank and file of the Labor Party'. After all, Dixon continued, 'Our policy is a continuation of support for the Labor Governments'. [29] Although Blake did step back in the face of such pressure, his retreat was only partial and perfunctory. As the general secretary, J.B. Miles, remarked: 'It is quite clear from Comrade Blake's concluding remarks that he does not understand, he is not convinced…'.[30] This advice was forgotten when Blake's deviant, discredited line of 1946 became the accepted, official line of 1948.

At the next top-level meeting of the CPA, a Central Committee plenum in June 1946, Blake retreated further and engaged in customary self-criticism. Yet a close reading of Party documents and the tone of his recantation suggests that he never lost – at least until the 'consolidation' crisis of 1953-45[31] - conviction in the veracity of his views. It was ironic that this very meeting, at which Blake publicly

withdrew from his 'left sectarian' position, saw the rationale emerge for a new, tougher policy on relations with the Labor Party. The justification was the perception of widespread working class disenchantment with the Labor government. One of the many communist trade union leaders who testified to the growing militancy of the workers was Jack Hughes, federal vice-president of the Federated Clerks Union. According to Hughes, 'we are witnessing the left swing of the masses in this country, the surge of discontent throughout industry, a lack of faith in the Labor Government'.[32] It is important to underscore this since the argument here is that the source of the Communist Party's intransigent (and, ultimately, self-defeating) outlook in the late 1940s was not simply the Cominform perspectives that it slavishly adopted, but also domestic developments, especially on the industrial front. These developments preceded the establishment of the Cominform but, subsequently, were slotted into the framework first enunciated by Zhdanov. Thus, after 1947 the domestic and the international forces – or, at least, how they were interpreted – worked in tandem to produce the new hard line. Therefore to see, as many did and do, the 'real setting' of the communist-supported general coal strike of 1949, for example, lying in the 'wider contemporary efforts of the Cominform to hamper the post-war economic recovery in many Western countries',[33] is to see only part of the picture.

In February 1947, Central Committee members heard Dixon confirm that the chief new feature of the present situation in Australia was the growing mass criticism in the ranks of the working class of the economic policies of the Labor Party. He felt this hostility, this leftward shift of the workers was of 'the utmost importance for us'. Party aims should be shaped accordingly: 'we must present the Party as the alternative and draw the masses over to the side of the Communist Party'. Nevertheless he drew back from a sweeping, un-variegated attack on Labor: 'In developing our campaign what we must see is that we don't just develop it into anti-Labor Party, anti-Labor Government, anti-Chifley, but…more sharply to the position that Menzies is occupying'.[34] The relationships in this period between the unions' campaign for the 40-hour week and their deteriorating relationship with the Chifley government; between the Communist Party functionaries and communist trade

union officials; and between the strike wave of 1946-47 and the exaggerated conclusions the CPA leadership extracted, have been discussed elsewhere and will not be revisited here.[35] Suffice it to say that, in its relations with the Labor Party, from mid 1947 the CPA commenced the shift from critical support to outright hostility, from conciliation to sectarianism. This trajectory was both accelerated and confirmed by the pronouncements of the Cominform.

As we have seen the inaugural conference of the Cominform in October 1947 enunciated a world irrevocably split into two camps: one warmongering and imperialist led by the United States, the other peaceful and progressive led by the Soviet Union. This dichotomy was adopted by the CPA and impinged on its policy towards the Labor Party. Davidson has argued that Communist Party policies 'emanated from Moscow' from early1946. This may be correct in a broad sense, but it was only from late 1947 that the Communist Party, shaped by Cominform perspectives, adopted policies and pursued strategies that were ultra-leftist: inflexible, aggressive and deluded. Communist leaders lost touch with reality and slipped into self-confirming dogmas.[36] As a result, the Chifley Labor government was slotted into the same pigeonhole as the reactionaries. Reminiscent of the 'social fascist' typology during the 'class against class' period initiated by the 6th Comintern Congress in 1928, all social democrats became actual or potential traitors to the working class. Dr Evatt became, in the words of Sharkey, the 'errand boy of the dollar' and his foreign policy the tool of the 'war plans' of American imperialism.[37] But it was not Evatt who was sycophantic but the Australian communist leaders. Their unquestioning subservience to the Soviet world view meant that slogans and doctrines – appropriate, perhaps, to Eastern Europe – were fastened, with little adaptation, onto the Australian political landscape. Stalin used the Cominform not merely to pull the French and Italian Communist Parties into line and enforce Moscow's hegemony over the emerging 'Iron Curtain' countries but also to establish a new international framework, designed to serve Soviet national interest, to which *all* communist parties must adhere. That the CPA and its Moscow-trained leaders readily acquiesced is evidenced by their enthusiastic embrace of Yugoslavia as the model for a 'People's Democracy' and the quest for a 'People's Front' in Australia,

and their equally passionate denunciation of Tito after his expulsion from the Cominform.[38] Scholars familiar with the hierarchical decision-making model of 'democratic centralism' will need no reminder that the views handed down from the Central Committee Secretariat were akin to Holy Writ; they were policy statements, not guidelines for discussion. It was therefore with almost complete confidence that Sharkey could state: 'I do not doubt that the Central Committee will endorse the stand already taken by the Political Committee and the Secretariat in support of the Information Bureau against Tito'.[39]

In contrast to the publicly accessible opinions of the Communist Party (via *Communist Review*, *Tribune* and the various weekly newspapers published by State CPA branches), the internal records of the Party reveal clearly the influence of the Cominform. We have seen that, Blake notwithstanding, the official position of the CPA leadership in 1947 prior to the establishment of the Cominform was to delineate between the Labor and Liberal parties, to attack the economic policies of the Chifley government but not the government itself, and to refrain from positioning itself for challenging Labor's leadership of the working class movement. Less than three months after the Cominform's inaugural meeting, Sharkey addressed a full meeting of the Political Committee. He had previously noted that the formation of the Cominform was 'of great importance'.[40] But now, his eleven page report was saturated with the new analytical and strategic framework: 'the essential thing for us from the recent meeting of the nine parties in Europe [ie. Cominform] was that the world has become divided into two camps…That is the <u>starting point</u> for our perspectives and tactics in the period to come'. He quoted at length from the initial Cominform publication, *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, to reinforce the 'correctness of the line put forward, of unremitting struggle, not backing away before the enemy, but taking the offensive'. Consistent with the 'two camp' thesis, the 'enemy' was now evident. It included the Australian Labor Party - 'a party of betrayal' – and, specifically, the Chifley government, which was 'in the camp of the most reactionary section of the bourgeoisie', and was 'as rotten as that of Blum or Bevin at their worst'. In this context, Sharkey advised Political Committee members to 'recall the declaration of the Nine Parties [at the Cominform meeting] that branded

people like Bevin, Blum and others as traitors to the working class'. The way forward was to follow the model of the 'People's Democracies', especially that of the favoured Yugoslav Communist Party (Tito's ex-communication was still several months away), which was the apotheosis of the 'People's Front'. Sharkey concluded with 'we must leave this meeting convinced in our minds that the People's Front is the line of advance for our Party…there can be no doubt that it is the way of the European parties, [so] the way we might fight is the People's Front'.[41]

The first Central Committee meeting after the formation of the Cominform was held in February 1948. At precisely the time rank and file discontent was being assuaged by the granting of the 40-hour week, the relaxation of wage-pegging regulations and the breakthrough on the margins case, Communist Party leaders proclaimed that 'the class struggle is sharpening' and that 'all the conditions are maturing for a very big break with reformism on the part of the workers'.[42] This belief, that workers were on the brink of severing their allegiance with the Labor Party, informed much of the discussion at the 15th national congress held three months later, in May 1948. This congress represented the final stage in the movement towards the 'formal' adoption of both the Cominform line and an intransigent and aggressive policy toward Labor. The process commenced with Blake's iconoclastic position in early 1946, was given apparent credence by developments on the industrial front, and was concretized by the Cominform's 'two camp' thesis. The content of congress reports given by Secretariat members echoed their derivation: they reflected international imperatives more than local *realpolitik.*

In deciding to go on the offensive, communist leaders had concluded that the time for a showdown had arrived: the decisive contest for the leadership of the Labor movement must now be fought. As Dixon said, 'the Labor Party and reformist betrayers must be isolated and the Communist Party brought forward as the organiser of the people's struggle against reaction'.[43] The Labor Party must be attacked because it collaborated with the capitalists instead of fighting them; its leaders were 'identifying themselves completely with the ruling class'; it had moved into the camp of imperialism; and it had embraced the 'sabotaging role' of social democracy'.[44]

The last 'internal' Communist Party meeting for which records are extant, and the last before the fateful general coal strike in the winter of 1949, was the Central Committee meeting of February 1949. Here, the Communist Party's grip on reality was not merely tenuous. Its myopia made it susceptible to political hallucinations. Notwithstanding Chifley and Evatt's determination to nationalise the private banking system, Sharkey argued that 'in no iota do they differ from Menzies except in words', since all promoted 'monopoly and imperialist polices'. Labor leaders were in 'complete alliance' with 'United States imperialists, with Churchill and his echo, Bevin, for war upon the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies'.[45] These leaders were not 'milk and water sentimental reformists'; they represented the 'poisonous plant' of social democracy that must be exterminated. Sharkey's customary hesitancy in 1947 – 'we have to watch very carefully any overstepping of the mark, not to go ahead with such propaganda and tactics that we will be the driving force for the Government's defeat'[46] – was absent in 1949. Instead, the 'immediate and decisive' policy in the working class movement was 'to liquidate reformism'.[47] The verb, 'liquidate', was telling: it not only mimicked Stalinist rhetoric, it also exemplified the Party leadership's (or at least Sharkey's) capacity in this period for mixing arrogance, naivety and self-delusion.

Gone were the qualms about presenting the Communist Party as an alternative to the Labor Party at federal elections. Gone, too, was the theory that a Labor government was a lesser evil – previously the barrier to challenging the Labor Party at election time. In the December 1949 election the CPA fielded the largest team in its history (seventy six candidates) who were instructed by Sharkey to 'go out and tell the working class that we are the Party of the working class'.[48] Thus, the February 1949 Central Committee meeting removed all doubts that the CPA did not intend to challenge openly the Labor Party for the allegiance of its supporters. Guided by Cominform perspectives, the Communist Party had moved, almost inexorably, to a position that made confrontation with the Labor government inescapable. The leadership's vision of what lay ahead prevented any retreat. That vision consisted of four closely interwoven features: imminent economic depression, a sharpened class struggle, the treacherous role of reformism, and the movement of the working class

to a revolutionary position.[49] The correlation between economic crisis and mass radicalisation was especially axiomatic: 'The depression is well on the way', Stan Moran told a meeting of Wollongong workers, 'and it will make the last one look like an afternoon tea party…the working class will move to the left, to communism; there is nowhere else for them to go'.[50] It was a measure of the CPA's overriding ultra-leftism that the savage attacks to which it was increasingly subjected prompted neither modification nor re-evaluation of its intransigent praxis.[51] On the contrary, they confirmed the Party in the absolute righteousness of its judgement and led it to adopt even more aggressive policies. After all, these attacks represented the last gasps of the capitalist system and 'there [was] no fury like the lash of dying capitalism'.[52] Thus, this was an historic moment, pregnant with immense revolutionary opportunity. Dixon had reminded delegates to the 1948 congress of the 'urgency of the moment we are living in'[53] so this was not a time to take one step back but at least two steps forward. It was not a time to weaken or to show weakness. Nor was this a time to make subtle distinctions about political differences within the Labor Party. All 'reformists' were lumped together in one reactionary mass. All were lieutenants of capitalism. All must be exposed, challenged and liquidated.

Britain: Labour and the Communist Party

In 1941-45 the CPGB had vigorously supported the allied war effort. Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam convinced it that the war-time international united front between liberal democracy and communism could be continued into the peace. It developed its own, more nuanced version of 'Browderism', the openly class-collaborationist policies followed by the CPUSA in the wake of the Teheran Conference.[54] Assuming a lasting peace and progressive post-war reconstruction, it supported Britain's reconquest of its Empire. The election of a Labour Government in 1945 was hailed as a giant step on the road to peace, prosperity and socialism.[55] Though Labour's foreign policy was a grievous disappointment, its domestic programme of nationalisation, national reconstruction and welfarism was critically supported. In a 'productionist' industrial policy, the working class was enjoined to work hard and to eschew strikes.

As late as the Spring and Summer of 1947 the CPGB was still promoting the politics of Teheran. Two examples will suffice. In early 1947 the leadership instructed the membership to urge the working class during the 'fuel crisis'[56] to 'rally in solidarity with the Government and against the Tories to solve the present crisis…the whole of the people and particularly the organised labour movement must work to help the Government to solve the crisis.'[57] As it had since Teheran, the CPGB believed that the great powers, not revolutionary movements, should end colonialism. A declaration adopted by a March conference of Empire communist parties stated that they would oppose Anglo-American foreign policy and fight for the 'restoration of the Three Great Powers' and for 'full support for the United Nations [and]…acceptance of the principles of democratic self-determination [and] international economic co-operation.'[58] Prior to the conference, Harry Pollitt, the CPGB's leader had – while seeking approval from the Colonial Secretary for delegates from Singapore to attend – obligingly provided the authorities with a full list of the names of these delegates.[59]

Though such policies were independently developed by the CPGB, they were externally conditioned by Soviet foreign policy – aimed at building a peaceful international environment - and were essentially a rationalisation of it. Smart footwork was required by the left-turn in Soviet foreign policy in 1947-48, particularly with the formation of the Cominform. But the Cominform made no fundamental change to the CPGB's outlook, which remained thoroughly reformist. If the new line was a revival of anything, it was a revival of the Popular Front of 1935-39.

Though Atlee was right in his belief that the aim of Soviet foreign policy was to 'establish communism', it did so in a national form. The Soviet Union used the Red Army to advance the cause of socialism. As is well-known, Stalin told Milovan Djilas that 'whoever occupies a territory, also imposes his social system…It cannot be otherwise.'[60] For the non-Soviet parties, just as in the Popular Front, the fundamental issue addressed was nation, not class. The Cominform was established as but one element of the Soviet Union's attempts to build an international united front against the United States. Zhdanov, the Soviet delegate, had made this quite clear at the founding Congress of the Cominform. US imperialism, he argued, was threatening the national independence of the other capitalist countries and therefore 'a special task'

fell to the Communist Parties of France, Italy, Britain and other countries. They must 'take up the banner of defence of the national independence and sovereignty of their countries.'[61] Just as the CPGB had once had the task of enrolling Britain in a front against Nazi Germany it now had the task enrolling Britain in a front against the USA. But Attlee and Bevin were now held to be reprising the roles once played by Chamberlain and Halifax.

Obviously, this necessitated a sharp adjustment to the CPGB's hitherto supportive and reformist attitude to the Labour Government. But the Party seems to have been unsure how to respond to the formation of the Cominform. It was not invited to the initial Congress and seems to have had no forewarning of the meeting. Though the French Party was charged with briefing the British Party,[62] 'a Party member was sent to Belgrade to find out what it was all about', according to the communist renegade Douglas Hyde, On his return he gave to the *Daily Worker* editorial team 'a confidential report to the effect that, although the Cominform line was not yet known in full detail…it would mean the gradual reversal of the Party's previous line in industry'.[63] Hyde's claim is consistent with the CPGB's shift from generally supporting to generally opposing the Labour Government, notably on the industrial front.

The CPGB's first public response to the formation of the Cominform was extremely terse. Circumspectly, it commented that 'the steps initiated by the nine Communist Parties are of great international significance and will of course, receive the close attention of the militant workers of Britain.'[64] Though we can sure that urgent, probably frantic, discussions took place at the highest levels of the Party, there is no record of a discussion on the Party's leading bodies[65] and no significant comment in the Party press until June 1948. Presumably, the inner leadership were struggling to formulate a united response. The stern criticisms by the Yugoslav delegate Kardelj of the French, Italian and 'other' parties that they had slipped 'down into the positions of Social-Democratism and bourgeois nationalism'[66] were clearly applicable to the CPGB. Procrastination may also have been involved. The new line would have been extremely disagreeable to most of the CPGB's leaders; certainly to the Party's Secretary, Harry Pollitt, who more than anyone was associated with the post-1941

policy. They would have been only too aware of the certain consequences of the new policy – a return to the wilderness inhabited until 1941.

A desire not to provide ammunition to the Party's small but militant left might also have been involved. These people, notably Eric Heffer, later to become a prominent left-wing Labour MP, were already criticising Party policy. During the Party's pre-19th Congress debate (held in February 47) they had argued that the EC's Congress resolution could 'only be described as Left Social-Democratic, i.e., opportunist.'[67] The congruity of this criticism with Kardelj's strictures was striking. Later in 1947, shortly before the formation of the Cominform, a small number of CPGB members was expelled for 'infantile leftism'.[68] In 1948 Edward Upward and Michael Shapiro, prominent members of the London Party, invoked Kardelj's critique in a dispute with the EC regarding its handling of a row with Australian Party[69] (the latter party had sent to the CPGB a Yugoslav-style critique of their post-war policy). [70] Clearly, the CPGB's leaders had reason to be wary of a wide discussion of the significance of the formation of the Cominform. But they were saved by the Cominform's denunciation of the Yugoslav Party for 'Titoism', for 'deviations from Marxism-Leninism'[71], in June 1948. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the disgrace of the Yugoslavs more-or-less coincided with the first major discussion in the CPGB's press of the Cominform[72]: thereafter, Party leftists could be denounced as 'Titoites'.

Reluctantly or not, the CPGB gradually adopted the new line. The crass reformism manifested since 1941 disappeared, but the CPGB's fundamental outlook remained thoroughly reformist. It continued to develop the strategy that culminated in the adoption of the *British Road to Socialism* in 1951. There was to be no return to 'class against class'. The British Government's post-Cominform attacks on the CPGB were due much more to its perceived role as an agent of a foreign power than to any essential change in its policy.

The first major public statement based on the new orientation came in December, when the influence of the Cominform (which was referred to only in passing) was clearly detectable in Pollitt's report to that month's EC, where he claimed, in accordance with Zhdanov's speech to the Cominform, that 'the world is divided into an imperialist and an anti-imperialist camp, with a Labour Government

an active partner in the imperialist camp'.[73] Practical manifestation of the new policy quickly followed. Whereas in September Arthur Horner, the Party's influential member in the National Union of Mineworkers, had accused miners at Grimethorpe Colliery on strike in opposition to a new pay and productivity deal of holding the rest of the NUM (who supported the deal) 'to ransom'[74], miners on strike in the Scottish coalfields in November were not criticised. Over next few months 'productionism' was discreetly abandoned. But a close reading of CPGB statements in this period strongly suggests that the underlying rationale of the CPGB's left-turn was not a renewed commitment to class struggle but opposition to the government's alliance with the USA.

At the CPGB's 20th Congress in February 1948 Pollitt argued in his report, entitled *For Britain Free and Independent*, that 'The British ruling class, and its spokesman the Labour Government…are selling out to Wall St. the national independence of their country in order to preserve their own class position and privileges.' He pledged 'full support to all those Trade Unions which have already tabled their claims for wage advances.'[75] Shortly afterwards J. R. Campbell claimed that 'without a decisive change in government policy no solution of the crisis is possible, however hard the workers strive.'[76] But however militant the CPGB's industrial policy over the succeeding period, its strategy remained thoroughly reformist and resembled 'class against class' not at all. Again, two examples will suffice. In a report to an extended CC meeting in February 1949 Pollitt severely criticised the 'class collaboration' of social-democracy, yet could advance only the most reformist programme ('fight to improve living standards…cut prices, limit profits') in opposition to Labour.[77] Similarly, in 1950, in opposition to Labour's colonial war in Malaya, the CPGB could only tamely call for support for 'a massive peace petition, launched by the [Party's front organisation] British Peace Committee'.[78]

How did Labour (Party and Government) respond to these developments? The dominant right expected nothing else. Morgan Phillips, Labour's fiercely anti-communist General Secretary argued in June 1947, in the wake of the expulsion of communists from the French and Italian governments, that 'in Britain, the Communist Party is more a conspiracy than a Party'.[79] Unsurprisingly then, Labour's response to

the formation of the Cominform was robust and signalled that relations with the CPGB could only get even more frosty. In an editorial clearly inspired by Phillips, the *Daily Herald*, voice of the right-wing dominated TUC, thundered:

The communist parties of Europe are to concentrate their energies upon a war against the socialist parties – except in those countries where the socialists are willing to obey Communist leadership…All pretence of desire for co-operation between working class parties is dropped. The socialist parties of western Europe and the British Labour Party are to be regarded as enemies…In the British Labour Party the warning is only for those who have believed in the past few years in the fair words of communists and in the possibility of their honest co-operation with our Party. The mask is off. It is as well.[80]

In December, Morgan Phillips fulminated against Pollitt's report to his Central Committee:

The British Communist Party has come to heel. After some weeks of indecision, it has now pledged full support for the Cominform's "cold" war against democratic socialism. We can therefore expect that a campaign of sabotage against the Labour Government and all it stands for will be carried out by the Communists and their fellow travellers during the coming months…Now is the time for all Labour people to go out on a great campaign against Communist intrigue and infiltration inside the Labour Movement.[81]

CPGB-LP relations were soon to sharply deteriorate. The conclusion of the CPGB's 20th Congress more-or-less coincided with the Communist 'coup' in Czechoslovakia. Attlee cited the 'coup' as a justification for a of purge of communists from the civil service started in March 48, though this almost certainly a pretext for an already decided policy.[82] Later, in a ploy reminiscent of Churchill's 'Gestapo' smear against Labour during the 1945 General Election, he claimed that communists were 'like those other totalitarian fanatics, the Hitlerites…This great fight is on and we are all enlisted in it.'[83]

Herbert Morrison argued that the events in Czechoslovakia showed that communists were 'Fifth Columnists', 'men who owe loyalty not to their country but to a foreign power'.[84]

Not an enormous but a significant number of civil servants, government scientists and Trade Unionists and Labour MPs were purged over the next two years or so.[85] Though Pollitt claimed with some justification that the civil service purge (most were transferred to non-sensitive work, not dismissed) was 'a political measure carried out for political ends, to win the approval of the Tory Press and Wall Street,'[86] the Government did have more to deal with than the CPGB's open opposition. Though the CPGB seems to have ceased its spying activities after the apparent expulsion for spying of Dave Springhall in 1943[87], it had by then, according to MI5, infiltrated members and sympathisers into various arms of the state, including people with access to information on the Anglo-US atomic project. These were still largely *in situ* in 1948.[88] The CPGB's continued relaxed attitude to such people is evidenced by Springhall's correspondence with the CPGB from China in 1950. Presumably he was no longer paying dues, but he was demonstrably a member in good standing.[89]

The purges were also part of a process of creating anti-Communist public opinion. A year or so after Phillips's circular, the TUC issued two anti-communist circulars. It was claimed that the CPGB 'in servile obedience to…the Cominform' was 'attempting to wreck economic recovery in the interests of a foreign power'.[90] In 1948, during continuing troubles on the London docks, George Isaacs, the Minister of Labour, alleged in correspondence with Attlee that communists were responsible.[91] Such arguments were, for instance, enough to convince a substantial majority of the delegates at the annual conference of the TGWU in July 1949, who voted by 426 to 208 to back the call of their General Secretary, Arthur Deakin, to ban communists from office. Following this decision 9 full-time officials were dismissed.[92] No doubt delegates were also motivated by the Berlin blockade that had started the previous month.

Finally, three Labour MPs - L. Hutchinson, J. Platts-Mills and L.J. Solley – were expelled from the Labour Party in 1948-49.[93] These were alleged to be 'crypto-communist' (communists trading as labour) MPs. The evidence that these were

'cryptos' is persuasive, but not conclusive.[94] They were the only Labour MPs to vote with the two Communist MPs Gallacher and Piratin and D.N. Pritt (a Labour MP expelled in 1940[95]) against the acceptance of Marshall Aid.[96] They and Pritt took the CPGB line on the Soviet-Yugoslav breach and stood as 'Independent Labour' candidates in the General Election of 1950, issuing a common manifesto that 'did not differ observably'[97] from the CPGB's manifesto.

But what was the attitude of the Labour left to the deteriorating international situation? Space does not permit a full discussion: here we will consider mainly those left-wing MPs loosely grouped around *Tribune*. Between 1945 and 1949 these were nearly all corralled into the Anglo-American cold-war pen. But in 1945 they had been more in the Soviet than the American camp. In 1945 *Tribune* declared 'friendship with the Soviet Union is the keystone of world peace.'[98] It was 'appalled' that Bevin was relying 'for advice on the same Foreign Office experts who used to advise Eden and Halifax'.[99] 'American capitalism', it declared on hearing of the loan secured by the government from the US after the cessation of lend-lease, 'is arrogant, self-confident, merciless and convinced of its capacity to dictate the destinies of the world'[100]

What changed between 1945 and 1949? It is hard to plumb motives, but the evidence suggests that for these democratic-socialists western liberal democracy and capitalism weighed more in the balance than Soviet socialism: as Henry Pelling argued, they found Truman's policy compatible with 'the principles of Democratic Socialism'[101]. It is hard to disagree. *Tribune* hailed Truman's presidential election victory of 1948 as 'a great victory for common people all over the world.'[102]

The key figures in *Tribune* were Foot and Anuerin Bevan, the Minister of Health. Foot still had one foot in the liberalism that had nurtured him. In 1946 he became one of the first of the left to denounce Soviet activities in eastern Europe: in Poland, for instance, the Communists had 'successfully blackmailed the Socialists into agreeing to joint electoral lists' while in East Germany they had 'by a mixture of intimidation, terror, censored propaganda and despicable tricks…achieved control of all life in the Russian zone.'[103] Bevan of course was bound by Cabinet collective responsibility, but as we have seen, he supported government policy towards the Soviet Union.

The Marshall Plan played a major role in *Tribune's* increasing hostility to the Soviet Union. *Tribune* naively hoped for Soviet acceptance of Marshall Aid: it would 'provide greater security for the Soviet Union than all the present crude political construction of Hungary, Poland and Rumania; more than all the 'friendship and fellow-traveller societies in Britain and America.'[104] But Marshall Aid was rejected by the Soviet Union because it was conditional on opening up the economies of Eastern Europe to US capital and goods. Foot used the *Herald* for a disingenuous criticism of Soviet rejection: it implied 'a centrally organised plan in which the claims of national sovereignty would be abated. That is what socialists have long prayed and worked for. Does a Soviet veto and the rigid Soviet insistence on the rights of national sovereignty transform this ideal into an imperialist plot?'[105]

The formation of the Cominform served to convince the Tribunites that they had been wise to embrace George Marshall. In a piece perceptively entitled 'The Exhumation of the Comintern', Paul Sering was quite clear that the Cominform did not signal a return to Leninism – it was 'Belgrade 1947 rather than Moscow 1917' – but 'Communist intransigence' would nevertheless 'compel socialists to confine their work more and more to the 'Marshall sphere', to act as a progressive force within the Western World'.[106] A few months later *Tribune* hailed George Marshall for saving Europe: had it not been for Marshall Aid 'western Europe would face despair and civil war and widespread starvation. Since the inroads of Communism would be more far-reaching, the prospect of war between the Soviet Union and the United States would be much closer.'[107]

Foot saw in the Prague *coup d'état* only communist conspiracies: 'For socialists the final proof is provided: that co-operation with the Communists leads only to one end. They are ready to intrigue, to negotiate, but their aim is total victory and the total subservience of their allies.'[108] According to *Tribune* the 'coup' was 'one of the great Rubicons of history' which clearly had implications for Britain 'all that applies in Czechoslovakia applies equally to Britain. If force and dictatorship are necessary for socialist construction in Czechoslovakia they are equally necessary in Britain.'[109] Consequentially, the Tribunites supported the purge of the civil service – the communists owed 'allegiance to another state…they do no accept the premises of

democracy…to ask that Ministers should be prepared to trust Communist Party members with security secrets seems absurd.'[110]

The Tribunites were now firmly enrolled among the cold-war warriors. But some elements on the Labour left swam against the tide. Ian Mikardo, for instance, resigned from the editorial board of Tribune in 1949 in protest at its anti-Soviet line[111], whilst Konni Zilliacus opposed both western imperialism and, when he thought it wrong, the Soviet Union[112] Forty-three Labour MPs tabled a motion opposing the purge of the civil service in March 1948. There were more such people among constituency activists. J. Schneer's investigation of Morgan Phillips's constituency files led him to conclude that pro-Soviet sentiments among constituency activists gradually declined, which, if true, is hardly surprising. But he presents some evidence that such sentiments persisted. In Finsbury, twenty-seven Labour councillors protested against Platts-Mills' expulsion in a letter to the local press while in Coventry East members 'maintained friendly relations with the British-Soviet Society'[113], whilst members of the Coventry Trades Council – some of whom were undoubtedly communists and fellow-travellers - invited Phillips to speak at a peace conference.[114]

Between 1945 and 1947 the CPGB had sought with increasing difficulty to maintain its war-time policy but by 1948 the war-time alliance had been irreparably fractured. A casualty of Anglo-American determination to assert capitalist power and the left turn in Soviet foreign policy, the CPGB struggled to find a new course. Despite fierce denunciations of the 'imperialist' Labour Government and an accompanying industrial militancy, nothing fundamental in communist strategy changed. The CPGB remained committed to a peaceful road to socialism. It still, as it had since 1935, regarded itself as the best defender of the British national interest, now deemed to be in peril from US imperialism rather than Nazi Germany. Its return to the wilderness was the result not of revolutionary objectives but of being perceived by the British ruling class as the agent of a foreign hostile power, the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

Our comparative analysis of the relationship between the Labo(u)r and Communist parties during the early Cold War years, especially in response to the formation of the Cominform in late 1947, reveals some crucial similarities and differences.

Although the impact of the Cominform and, subsequently, the Prague *coup d'état*, was more oblique on the Australia Labor Party than on its more geographically proximate British counterpart, both parties escalated their anti-communist posture between 1945 and 1950 from the ambivalent to the visceral. This echoed the collapse of the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and the resumption of long-standing, entrenched antagonism towards the Bolshevik project. Both the Chifley and Attlee governments saw the Communist Party as an actual or potential destabilising agent of their post-war reconstruction programmes. On the industrial front those programmes, with their tight labour market controls, generated increasing hostility from the working class. The CPA and CPGB were the spearheads and mobilisers – but not the initiators – of this discontent and this, in turn, helped propel both parties towards sharper attacks upon the governments' economic policies.

By 1950 both communist parties were staggering from the assaults by the state. But the paths each took to this common besieged, weakened position were different. In essence, the British party adhered to the peaceful road to socialism and stepped back from wholesale repudiation of the Labour Party. In Australia the CPA adopted a less reformist stance, believing that war, economic crisis and capitalist collapse, and revolutionary potential were all around the corner. Consequently, it went on the offensive against the Labor Party and the Chifley government. The time was ripe, it mistakenly believed, to challenge Labor for the leadership of the working class movement. Social democracy was allying itself with Wall Street and warmongers and must– and indeed, could – be exposed and defeated.

The influence of the Cominform on both parties' orientations starkly differed. The leadership of the Australian Communist Party embraced the 'two-camp' thesis with speed and determination. The new line enunciated by the Cominform confirmed and accelerated the adoption, foreshadowed by J.D. Blake eighteen months earlier, of a more militant posture. This militancy shaped its strategies in the trade union movement and permeated its doctrinal standpoint on reformism. In contrast, the CPGB found the new line disagreeable and accepted it reluctantly, belatedly and perfunctorily. The criticisms, irrespective of their correctness or motivation, of the 'collaborationism' and 'bourgeois nationalism' of the French and

Italian communist parties made by the Yugoslavs at the inaugural Cominform conference applied to the British but not to the Australian Communist Party. In fact, the frostiness in relations between the two parties, evidenced by the sharp exchange of letters between Party leaders in 1948, was a symptom of the extent to which Cominform perspectives were being pursued.

The fact remains, however, that this was the period of the Cold War and such differences and disagreements and contrasts, whilst seemingly crucial at the time, were at the mercy of other, bigger forces. Doctrinal purity, however defined or implemented, was no bulwark against the hammer-blows of the anti-communist crusade. That crusade, influenced by the Cominform's 'two-camp' thesis and featuring both labour parties, was therefore a profound determinant of the fortunes of the Australian and British communist parties during the early Cold War. This paper has emphasised the *similar* destinations reached by both parties by 1950, despite the *different* paths and policies being pursued by each, especially in relation to the Cominform. The comparative approach used in this paper was invaluable since it helped isolate and highlight the common thread: the centrality of Cold War anti-communism.

Phillip Deery and Neil Redfern

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[1] See Ross Fitzgerald, *The People's Champion, Fred Paterson: Australia's Only Communist Party MP,* St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1997, ch. 3.

[2] Len Donald, *Organising the Second Round of the Victory Campaign*, Sydney, 1945, [p.2]; Communist Party of Australia Central Committee, *Report of the Work of the Central Committee from the 13th to the 14th National Congress,* Sydney, 1945, pp.15-18.

[3] Andy Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow 1920-1943*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 284.

[4] Herbert Weiner, 'The Reduction of Communist Power in the Australian Trade Unions', *Political Science Quarterly,* Vol. 69, No. 3, September 1954, p. 396. J.E. Henry, who incorrectly stated that the Communist Party actually 'captured' the ACTU in 1945, inflates this figure to 400,000 unionists under communist control. J.E. Henry, 'Communist Strategy in Australia', *Quadrant* , vol. 1, Spring 1957, p. 59. A more sober judgement, referring to 'fairly effective [communist] control of 275,000 trade unionists' is contained, interestingly, in a lengthy Central Intelligence Agency classified publication, *Communist Influence in Australia* [Washington], 1949, p.1. President's Secretary Files, Box 159, Harry S Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. (My thanks to historian John Prados, Washington, for this reference.)

[5] See J.D. Playford, Doctrinal and Strategic Problems of the Communist Party of Australia, 1945-62, unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1962; Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia. A Short History*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1969; Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists. Communism and the Australian Labour Movement*, Canberra, Australian University Press, 1975; Tom O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream: The Decline of Australian Communism,* Sydney; Stained Wattle Press, 1985; Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within: The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party,* London, John

Murray, 1995; Willie Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, London, Pluto, 1992; Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1997; John Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict: The History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1951-68*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2003.

[6] The best accounts of the formation of the Cominform are those that draw on recently released Soviet archives; see, especially, Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Krushchev*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 125-137; Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, London, Macmillan, 1996, chs. 13-18.

[7] Between mid 1945 and late 1947 British estimates of Soviet policy, concluded D. Cameron Watt, 'passed from considering the Soviets to be 'difficult' to considering them 'impossible' and then finally to a deep belief in their fundamental hostility to all that British government and society comprised'. See 'Britain, the United States and the Opening of the Cold War' in Ritchie Ovendale (ed), *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments, 1945-1951*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1984, p.59 and Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany and the Origins of the Cold War*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, chs.7-8.

[8] Anna Di Biagio, 'The Marshall Plan and the Founding of the Cominform, June-September 1947', in Gori and Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, p. 218.

[9] Paolo Spriano, *Stalin and the European Communists* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 296. For a sketchy discussion of this influence on the CPGB, see Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951*, pp.157-8. The Cominform's newspaper, *For a Lasting Peace, for People's Democracy!*, was one transmission belt for Moscow's line. It was published in 14 languages and distributed in 57 countries, including Australia. See Nataliia I. Egorova, 'Stalin's Foreign Policy and the Cominform, 1947-53', in Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, London, Macmillan, 1996, p.203. The clumsy title was designed by Stalin himself, 'a fact which silenced the objections of some [Cominform] delegates that…it departed from the usual brisk nomenclature of Communist journals'. Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence. The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1916-67*, New York, Praeger, 1971, p.460. One of these objecting delegates, Eugenio Reale, told Zhdanov: 'I cannot visualise', I said, 'an Italian worker saying to the [newspaper] vendor: "For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy". Let's pick a shorter title'. Zhdanov then told him that 'it was Stalin who thought up this name and communicated it to me over the telephone this morning'. Cited in Eugenio Reale, 'The Founding of the Cominform', in Milorad M. Dreachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, (eds.), *The Comintern: Historical Highlights. Essays, Recollection, Documents*, New York, Praeger, 1966, p. 259.

[10] Cited in Peter Hennessy, *Never Again. Britain 1945-51*, London, Cape, 1992, p.350.

[11] Memorandum by Bevin, 3 March 1948, Public Record Office, Kew [henceforth PRO]: CAB 129/25 (CPGB 48/72) For a discussion of this crucial paper, see Nicholas Owen, 'Facing Facts? The Labour government and defence policy, 1945-50', in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.), *The Attlee Years*, London, Pinter, 1991, pp.198-9. There appears to be a direct line running from the coup in Prague in February 1948 to the signing in Washington in April 1949 of the North Atlantic Pact (later NATO) which solidified East-West divisions and congealed the Cold War.

[12] *Daily Herald*, 27 February 1948.

[13] Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 13 January 1948, PRO: PREM 8/787.

[14] L.F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, Melbourne, Longmans, 1963, pp. 358-9; Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995, p.140; Meredith Burgmann, 'Hot and Cold: Dr Evatt and the Russians, 1945-1949' in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War.Volume 1: Society, Communism and Culture*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1984, p.104.

[15] *Communism Against Labor*, Melbourne, Trades Unions Research Group, n.d., [p.3]. The context for this statement was the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in September 1939.

[16] *Standard Weekly*, 19 August 1947, p.7.

[17] Records, Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party, NLA MS 4846, Box 12, Industrial Groups file [nd 1948?].

[18] Australian Labor Party, Victorian Branch, *Report of 1948 Conference Decisions*, [p.1], Records, Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party, NLA MS 4846, Box 12, Miscellaneous 1949.

[19] *CPD*, Vol. 196, 7 April 1948, p.617.

[20] J.B. Miles, *Jobs, Freedom, Progress* (Communists in Congress, No. 3, Sydney: 1945), pp. 13-14.

[21] Richard Dixon to Central Committee plenum, 18 February 1945, p.5, Mitchell Library, Sydney [henceforth ML], 5021 ADD-ON 1936 5(76). Unless otherwise indicated all subsequent citations to Political Committee and Central Committee statements and Congress reports are located at this source.

[22] *Draft Resolution for 14th National Congress, Australian Communist Party* (Sydney: 1945), [p. 10].

[23] Ralph Gibson, *Communists Are Changing The World,* Melbourne, 1946, p.20.

[24] Correspondence dated 1 August 1946 from P.J. Kennelly, P.J Clarey papers, NLA MS 2186, Series 2, Folder 4.

[25] J.D. Blake remained state secretary until July 1949 when he was elevated to the Central Committee secretariat. For biographical details, see J.D. Blake, *Revolution From Within,* Sydney: Outlook, 1971, pp.8-9; Stuart Macintrye, 'Critical communist cultivated the cause', *Australian*, 11 December 2000.

[26] For an 'inside' account of this, see Bernie Taft, *Crossing the Party Line. Memoirs of Bernie Taft,* Melbourne, Scribe, 1994, pp. 55-58.

[27] J.D. Blake to Political Committee meeting, 15 March 1946, pp. 3-6.

[28] E.J.Rowe to Political Committee meeting, 15 March 1946, p. 4.

[29] R. Dixon to Political Committee meeting, 14 March 1946, p. 6.

[30] J.B Miles to Political Committee meeting, 16 March 1946, p. 9.

[31] Phillip Deery 'The Sickle and the Scythe: Jack Blake and Communist Party "Consolidation", 1949-56', *Labour History,* No.80, May 2000, pp. 215-24.

[32] J.R. Hughes to Central Committee plenum, 2 June 1946, p.1.

[33] Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p.361.

[34] R. Dixon to Central Committee plenum, 15 February 1947, pp.3-5, 6.

[35] See Tom Sheridan, *Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years, 1945-48,* Melbourne, OUP, 1989, chs. 7, 9 and 10.

[36] As Sheridan (p.226) has metaphorically noted, by 1949, communists ceased being 'eager surfies' riding favourable industrial waves, and became instead 'latter-day Canutes, imagining themselves able to direct the changing sea at will'.

[37] L.L. Sharkey, 'The Meaning of Dr. Evatt's Policy', *Communist Review*, December 1947, pp.752-7.

[38] See, for example, *Communist Review,* January 1948, pp. 5-7; August 1948, pp. 234-7; September 1948, pp.270-83. For a comprehensive discussion of Stalin's ousting of Tito from the Cominform, see Heather Williams, 'Between East and West? Yugoslavia and the Tito-Stalin Split, 1948', in Willie Thompson *et al*, *The Cold War. Socialist History 11*, London, Pluto Press, 1997, pp. 30-57. For the 79-page text of the correspondence between the Cominform and Yugoslav and Soviet Communist parties, see Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute*, London, 1948.

[39] L.L. Sharkey to Central Committee plenum, September 1948, p. 7 in ML MSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936 5(76), folder, 'ALP affiliation, 1946'.

[40] L.L. Sharkey to Political Committee meeting, 7 October 1947 [p.1]

[41] L.L. Sharkey to Political Committee meeting, 10 January 1948, pp. 1, 2, 4, 9, 11. Emphasis added.

[42] R. Dixon to Central Committee plenum, 20 February 1948; J.C Henry to Central Committee plenum, 22 February 1948, p. 8.

[43] R. Dixon to 15th National Congress, 8 May 1948, p.7.

[44] L.L. Sharkey, *For Australia Prosperous and Independent,* Sydney: May 1948, p. 25; L. L. Sharkey, *The Way Forward*, Sydney, May 1948, p. 14.

[45] L.L. Sharkey to Central Committee plenum, 14 February 1949, p. 4. In his opening remarks (p. 1) Sharkey confirmed the correctness of the Cominform's two-camp thesis.

[46] Ibid, pp. 6-7.

[47] L.L. Sharkey to Central Committee plenum, 15 February 1949, reprinted in *Communist Review,* April 1949, pp.112-3. The fact that this speech was reprinted – where it could be, and was, invoked by the enemies of the CPA – was a further indication of the Party's naïve self-confidence.

[48] Ibid. Taft (*Crossing the Party Line*, p. 61) described this decision to run in 76 electorates, a sufficient number to form an alternative government if it won those seats, as 'an incredible delusion'.

[49] As a communist union official and later an anti-communist apostate, Geoff McDonald, commented, 'the Party was going through a period of extreme leftism based on the false premise that the economy was doomed and that the dawn of Socialism was near….I too had made exaggerated estimates of how far the workers were prepared to go'. Geoff McDonald, *Australia at Stake*, Melbourne, Geoff McDonald, 1997, p.53. For a Trotskyist assessment of this leftism see O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp.64-66.

[50] *Illawarra Mercury*, 14 July 1949, p.1; *South Coast Times*, 14 July 1949, p.7. Moran was treasurer of the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers Federation.

[51] That some CPA leaders subsequently, in late 1953, acknowledged and sought scapegoats for the 'left-sectarian' mistakes made during this period does not lessen the extent to which these views permeated the Party. See *Tribune*, 10 March 1954, pp. 10-11; ML MSS 5971/1/10: [J.D. Blake], 'Some Facts of History' [1960], p.4, ML MSS 5971/1/10, [Len Fox], 'Communist Party "Consolidation" 1953-54' [nd 1973?]; *Australian Left Review*, No.76, June 1981, p.17.

[52] *Illawarra Mercury*, 14 July 1949, p.1.

[53] R. Dixon to 15th National Congress, p.67.

[54] See Neil Redfern, 'A British Version of 'Browderism': British Communists and the Teheran Conference of 1943', *Science and Society*, Vol. 66, No. 3, Fall 2002, pp. 360-380.

[55] See Neil Redfern, 'Winning the Peace: British Communists, the Soviet Union and the General Election of 1945', *Contemporary British History*, Vol 16, No. 1, Spring 2002, pp. 29-50.

[56] In the winter of 1946-47 a shortage of fuel coincided with severe weather, leading to power-cuts and short-time working.

[57] EC Circular 10 February 1947 'The Party and the Fuel Crisis', Records of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Labour History and Archive Centre, Manchester [henceforth CPGB Archive], CP/CENT/CIRC/01/08.

[58] *World News and Views*, 15 March 1947.

[59] Pollitt to Creech-Jones, 22 November 1946, CPGB Archive: CP/CENT/INT/47/04.

[60] Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, London, R. Hart-Davis, 1962, p. 105.

[61] See Giuliano Procacci, (ed.), *The Cominform: Minutes of the Three Conferences 1947/1948/1949,* Milan: Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1994, pp. 217-251, for the verbatim speech.

[62] Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement from Comintern to Cominform,* New York, Monthly Review Press, 1975, p. 477.

[63] Douglas Hyde, *I Believed*, London, Reprint Society, 1950, p. 244-6.

[64] *Daily Worker*, 7 October 1947.

[65] See CPGB Archive: CP/CENT/EC/01/04-06; CP/CENT/PC/02/01-03.

[66] Procacci, *The Cominform: Minutes of the Three Conferences*, p. 291.

[67] *World News and Views*, 1 February 1947.

[68] Mark Jenkins, *Bevanism. Labour's High Tide. The Cold War and the Democratic Mass Movement*, Nottingham, Spokesman, 1979, p. 29.

[69] Various letters in CPGB Archive: CP/CENT/INT/34/02.

[70] For the published debate see *World News and Views*, 7 August 1948 and *Communist Review*, No. 85, September 1948, pp. 270-83. For the unedited correspondence see CPGB Archive: CP/IND/DUTT/17/10.

[71] The sin of the Yugoslavs was to assume that the formation of the Cominform signalled a revolutionary turn in communist policy rather than a manoeuvre in Soviet foreign policy. They fell out with the CPSU and hence the Cominform by supporting the Greek communists during their civil war at a time when Soviet policy was to assign Greece to the British sphere of influence.

[72] 'Harry Pollitt's Speech on the Situation in the Yugoslav Communist Party' [given to an aggregate meeting of London Communists], *World News and Views*, 17 July 1948.

[73] *World News and Views*, 20 December 1947.

[74] *Daily Worker*, 8 September 1947.

[75] *For Britain Free and Independent*, pp 7, 12.

[76] *Labour Monthly*, Feb. 1948, p. 49.

[77] 'The Third Labour Government', CPGB Archive: CP/CENT/EC/01/07.

[78] *Don't Let Them Send Our Sons to Malaya*, leaflet in CPGB Archive: CP/CENT/INT/36/04.

[79] *Daily Herald*, 28 June 1947.

[80] *Daily Herald*, 7 October 1947.

[81] 'The Communists: We have been Warned', Labour Party Archive, Labour History and Archive Centre, Manchester, 'CPGB' file, box 4.

[82] Peter Weiler, *Labour and the Cold War*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 219-221.

[83] *Daily Herald*, 3 May 1948.

[84] *Daily Herald*, 27 February 1948.

[85] See Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, pp. 160-168.

[86] *Daily Worker*, 16 March 1948.

[87] See Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, pp. 269-70 for a brief discussion of this issue.

[88] F.H Hinsley and. C.A.G. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War. Volume 4: Security and CounterIntelligence*, London, HMSO, 1990, p. 287.

[89] Dave and Janet Springhall and others to Willie Gallacher, CPGB Archive: CP/IND/GALL/01/06.

[90] *TUC Annual Report 1949*, p. 278.

[91] Isaacs to Attlee, 28 February 1949, PRO: PREM 8/1082

[92] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987, p. 218.

[93] See Jonathon Schneer, *Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left, 1945-51*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1988, for a full account of these expulsions.

[94] See Darren Lilleker, *Against the Cold War. The History and Political Traditions of Pro-Sovietism in the British Labour Party*, London, 2004, for an evaluation of the evidence.

[95] In 1940 Pritt was identified by the Soviet defector Walter Krivitsky as 'one of the chief recruiting agents for Soviet underground organisations in the UK.' PRO: KV 2/1064. Pritt claimed he was expelled for a breach of party discipline by writing a pro-Soviet anti-appeasement book in 1939. D.N. Pritt, *The Autobiography of D. N. Pritt. Part One. From Right to Left*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1965, pp.221-239.

[96] Various arch-imperialists like Max Aitkin also voted against. See *Hansard* (Commons), 5th Series 453, 6 July 1948, cols. 341-2.

[97] H.G. Nicholls, *The British General Election of 1950*, London, 1951, p. 251.

[98] *Tribune*, 3 August 1945.

[99] *Tribune*, 21 September 1945.

[100] *Tribune*, 14 December 1945.

[101] Henry Pelling, *America and the British Left from Bright to Bevin*, London, A. & C. Black, 1956, p. 151.

[102] *Tribune*, 14 January 1949.

[103] *Tribune*, 1 March 1946.

[104] *Tribune*, 20 March 1947.

[105] *Daily Herald*, 4 July 1947.

[106] *Tribune*, 10 October 1947.

[107] *Tribune*, 9 April 1948.

[108] *Daily Herald* 27 February 1948.

[109] *Tribune* 5 March 1948.

[110] *Tribune*, 19 March 1948.

[111] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945-1951*, London, Clarendon, 1985, p. 389

[112] In 1948, for instance, he supported the Yugoslav communists in their dispute with the Soviet Union. See Archie Potts, *Zilliacus. A Life for Peace and Socialism*, London, Merlin Press, 2002.

[113] Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, pp. 179, 185.

[114] British Labour Party Records, Labour History and Archive Centre, Manchester, 'CPGB' file, box 4.