

# **THE TROJAN DOVE?**

## **INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS PEACE ACTIVISM IN THE EARLY COLD WAR**

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Fourth Year Honours Thesis  
October 2004

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Jordan, Douglas  
The Trojan dove? :  
intellectual and religious  
peace activism in the early



## DISCLAIMER

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To the best of my knowledge and belief,  
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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Literature Review</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Formation of the Australian Peace Council</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 3: The Activists</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Chapter 4: The Media and the Australian Peace Council</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>68</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

The writing of this thesis has been made possible by the assistance and encouragement of many people. Without this support, it is unlikely that the writing of this thesis would have been completed. I wish to acknowledge the following people for the contribution they have made to this project:

To my supervisor, Professor Phillip Deery, whose encouragement and support during the long process of writing were invaluable.

To Kevin Healy, who proofread early drafts of each chapter and made useful suggestions about the ideas they contained.

To the staff of the University of Melbourne Archives who quickly supplied the requested items and at times went to extra lengths to arrange the requested photocopying.

To the staff of the State Library in the Newspaper Reading Room and La Trobe Room who offered continued assistance in locating and supplying requested items.

To Carol Pikes, of the Joint Theological Library, Ormond College Parkville, who located long out-of-print books, which helped to deepen my understanding of the basis of religious peace activism.

To Rev Dr Ian Breward of the Uniting Church Archives, the staff at Trinity College Parkville, and Rev Dr Wes Campbell, St John's Church Essendon, who all provided information or assistance in locating copies of church newspapers.

The above named people take no responsibility for the ideas contained in this thesis, which is entirely my own work.

## **Summary**

The formation of the Australian Peace Council (APC) in July 1949 was a direct challenge to the Cold War ideology that was dominant in Australia at this time. Its advocacy of peace and its support for international agreements between the major powers drew a hostile reaction from almost every sector of Australian society. This thesis will examine the political and historical context for the formation of the APC and the holding of its first National Peace Congress, in Melbourne, in 1950. In particular, it will focus on the involvement of the three key groups that were involved in the APC: the religious activists, the independent activists, and the communist intellectuals. It will argue that those involved in the APC were motivated by idealistic views, were not Stalin's 'stooges', and were genuinely committed to ending the very real threat of a nuclear war.

## Chapter One.

### Literature Review

There is a wide range of literature available on the history and politics of the peace movement in Australia. This chapter will draw on this literature to provide the conceptual framework for the key themes of this thesis.

#### Historical Roots of the Peace Movement

Despite its brevity, Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy's *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, is useful in helping to establish that there has been a continuous tradition of political opposition to Australia's involvement in war, or preparations for war, dating back to the Sudan War.<sup>1</sup> Their evidence confirms that the emergence of the APC and its explicit challenge to Australian Government policy was not unique in Australian history. This thesis will therefore place the APC within this broad continuum of political peace activity rather than as an isolated example of political activity created only by Cold War tensions.

The key point that Saunders and Summy make is that Australian peace movements have characteristically been alliances between middle class activists, often intellectuals or Christian pacifists and radical socialist or trade union groups. This ability to unify diverse and potentially hostile groups has on occasions given the peace movements the political strength to challenge Government policies. While the specific composition of the

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Saunders & Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, Canberra, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1986.

peace movement organizations has changed over the decades this feature has remained unchanged.

The role of trade unions and radical socialist groups in the peace movement organizations is well documented. The relevant literature permits this thesis to argue that the positions adopted by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in the 1950s can be traced back, in part, to the historical traditions of the Australian labour movement. Chris Healy, in *War Against War*, traces the involvement of the labor movement organizations in antiwar activity back to the Sudan War.<sup>2</sup> Joe Harris, in *The Bitter Fight*, while lacking a rigid academic framework, provides important additional information about the early labour movement's involvement in antiwar activity.<sup>3</sup> Brian McKinlay's *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1875* provides invaluable copies of original documents detailing the labor movement's involvement in antiwar activity over the last century.<sup>4</sup> Verity Burgmann's account of the Hughes Government's destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) during the First World War, because of its consistent antiwar and anticapitalist activity, parallels the attitudes that developed towards the CPA during the Cold War.<sup>5</sup>

The most immediate predecessor to the APC was the Movement Against War and Fascism (MAWF), established in 1933-34 to mobilize support for western democratic

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Healy, 'War Against War', in Verity Burgmann & Jenny Lee, *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, Fitzroy, McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1988, pp.208-227.

<sup>3</sup> Joe Harris, *The Bitter Fight*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Brian McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1975*, Richmond, Primary Education (Publishing), 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Trade Unionism The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 1995.



governments to resist the fascist powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. A number of Communist Party histories acknowledge the role played by the Comintern in directing the various national Communist Parties to establish similar movements in many countries.<sup>6</sup> However, the critical point is that in Australia as in many other countries, the MAWF was able to attract significant support from intellectuals, Christian peace activists, and other middle class individuals concerned about the rising menace of fascism. It became one of the most successful of the of the Popular Front organizations that the CPA attempted to establish in this period. It was this example that the CPA was attempting to emulate when it helped establish the APC in 1949. However, it faced constant accusations that it was building an organization committed to promoting the interests of the Soviet Union and not peace.

### **Labour Movement Traditions**

The pamphlet *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, by J.P. Forrester, a member of the NSW Australian Labor Party Central Executive was published in 1964.<sup>7</sup> Its intent was to undermine support for a peace congress to be held in Sydney in October 1964.<sup>8</sup> This pamphlet is useful in that it clearly indicates the views of the Catholic influenced section of the Labour movement and its extreme hostility towards the Communist Party. Forrester's central theme was that the APC was nothing more than a Communist Front organization promoting the interests of the Soviet Union and its non-Communist

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<sup>6</sup> Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia A Short History*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1969, pp.61, 85-87; Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists Communism and The Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975, pp.44-46, & 48; Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp.269-274, & 289.

<sup>7</sup> J.P. Forrester, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, Sydney, McHugh Printery, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> From the introduction to the pamphlet.

members were nothing more than ‘dupes’ of the Communists. The inspiration for Forrester’s views came from the founder of The Movement, B.A. Santamaria, who outlined his anticommunist views and the need for a strong anticommunist policy by the labour movement in *Santamaria: A Memoir*.<sup>9</sup> This thesis rejects this one-sided view of the Communist Party, and will argue that despite the often-crippling impact of Stalinism, the overall motives of the CPA in the peace movement were built on a commitment to achieving a peaceful world situation. However, the point made by John Murphy, in *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia’s Vietnam War*, that this hostility by a significant sector of the labour movement prevented the APC from becoming a broad based organization, and helps explain the difficulties faced by the APC in building a support base during the Cold War.<sup>10</sup>

The weakness of Forrester’s argument is that it not only ignores the radical traditions of sections of the Australian labour movement but also that of international social democracy. At one stage, opposition to what was called ‘capitalist wars’ was the central feature of all social-democratic or labour parties. Ernest Mandel describes some of these early traditions in *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*. At the 1907 Second International Congress (the worldwide organization of social-democratic or labour parties), a motion was passed calling on all the parties to oppose war and if one broke out, social-democratic parties were to use the subsequent political crisis to launch the final struggle

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<sup>9</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Santamaria: A Memoir*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp.57-63, & 89-101.

<sup>10</sup> John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia’s Vietnam War*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1993, pp.59-60.

for the abolition of capitalism.<sup>11</sup> Similar motions were passed at the 1910 and 1912 Congresses.<sup>12</sup> It was only with the outbreak of war in August 1914 that this position was reversed and that labour parties across Europe voted in support of their own governments. It was this tradition of international solidarity that helped shape the CPA's political activity in the peace movement during the Cold War and helps to provide part of the framework for the analysis in this thesis.

### **Communist Party and the Peace Movement**

Ian Turner<sup>13</sup> and Alec Robertson<sup>14</sup>, the first two secretaries of the APC, have made an important challenge to Forrester's claim that the APC was a Communist Front and that those who worked with the CPA were nothing more than dupes. While it is necessary at times to treat the memoirs of CPA members or former members with a degree of caution due either to attempts to eulogize the past, or an anticommunist bias, these two pieces have considerable merit. By the time they were written the CPA had moved away from its rigid hierarchal Stalinism and the worst of the Cold War tensions had eased, making it possible to discuss historical and political events in a more open way. Turner had also left the CPA after the events of 1956 but had not succumbed to crude anti-communism, which gives his account greater credibility.

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism: The Bitter Fruits of 'Socialism in One Country'*, London, NLB, 1978, p.9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Turner, 'My Long March', in Ian Turner, Room For Manoeuvre: *Writings on History, Politics, Ideas and Play*, Richmond, Drummond Publishing, 1982, pp.105-140.

<sup>14</sup> Alec Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-War Movement', *Australian Left Review*, no. 27 (October-November 1970), 29-49.

Both Turner and Robertson acknowledge that the CPA exercised considerable influence, and at times a heavy handed one within the APC. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, the majority of the APC executive wanted to adopt a neutral position, but Turner, acting on the CPA's instructions, denounced South Korean/American aggression at a APC public meeting. It almost caused a split in the organization but the majority of independents remained.<sup>15</sup> Robertson described the insistence of the CPA lasting until 1961, that no statements of the peace movement ever criticized the policies of the Communist states. While this would appear to confirm Forrester's claims, the position is more complex. For those independents committed to political activism, the APC even with this CPA influence was the only effective means of carrying out this work. The alternative was sterile abstention. This is confirmed by Marion Hartley's biography of her husband, Frank, one of the three 'peace parsons' committed to working with the Communist Party in the peace movement.<sup>16</sup> Frank Hartley, rejected the ideological divisions of the Cold War, and believed that people of good will could overcome these divisions.

### **Religious Traditions**

For those influenced by a religious theology, particularly Catholics, a war had to fulfill seven conditions before it could be supported.<sup>17</sup> In an essay detailing his opposition to nuclear war, E.I. Watkins explains that a nuclear war could not meet three of these seven conditions. Namely, that only right means may be employed in the conduct of the war; there must be a reasonable chance of victory; and the good that probably could be

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<sup>15</sup> Turner, 'My Long March', p. 129.

<sup>16</sup> Marion Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail*, Melbourne, Spectrum Publications, 1982.

<sup>17</sup> This is known as Just War.

achieved must outweigh even the probable, *a fortiori* the certain, evil effects of the war.<sup>18</sup> The fundamental difference between medieval wars and modern wars was that a modern war fought with nuclear weapons meant the possible destruction of all humanity and was a clear violation of these basic requirements. This was the core of the argument in Abbe Jean Boulrier's pamphlet circulated by the NSW APC, where he called on people to 'give testimony of your Christianity on the petition where men, all men, can offer evidence of their humanity'.<sup>19</sup> However, in only a few places did mainstream Catholic organizations accept this argument and it was mainly other religious groups that were more active in the peace movement, at least until the Vietnam War.

One exception was in France, which had a mass Communist Party and majority Catholic population. At the end of the Second World War the Catholic Church sent priests into the factories to counteract Communist influence.<sup>20</sup> Their experiences there of fighting social injustices convinced a number of them to adopt a Marxist analysis of society.<sup>21</sup> One, Fr. Montuclard, saw the Communist Party as a 'kind of temporal arm of the church'.<sup>22</sup> In Britain Alan Ecclestone, a Church of England priest, joined the Communist Party along with his wife in 1948.<sup>23</sup> For Ecclestone, it was a 'gesture one makes to affirm one's belief in the triumph of that movement of the whole human family to take its

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<sup>18</sup> E. I. Watkin, 'Unjustifiable War' in Canon Drinkwater et al, *Morals and Missiles. Catholic Essays on the Problem of War Today*, London, James Clarke, 1959, pp.51-52.

<sup>19</sup> Abbe Jean Boulrier, *Why I Signed the Stockholm Appeal*, Sydney, N.S. W. Peace Council, 1950 (?), p.7.

<sup>20</sup> 'Max Charlesworth, 'Conditions for Dialogue with Communists', in Paul Ormonde (ed.), *Catholics in Revolution. Challenging new views on Communism and War*, Melbourne, Lansdowne Press, 1968, p.24.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Ecclestone, 'Priest and Communist', in Paul Oestreicher (ed.), *The Christian Marxist Dialogue An International Symposium*, London, Macmillan, 1969, pp.55-67.

affairs into its own hands and to order its life in the ways which the Spirit requires'.<sup>24</sup> In Australia in 1947, *The Beacon*, the periodical of the Unitarian Church, called on trade unionists to refuse to build the Woomera Rocket Range.<sup>25</sup> This was two years before the formation of the APC, and indicates a long-standing commitment to peace issues. In August 1950 *The Beacon* specifically rejected prayer alone as a means of achieving world peace and insisted on the need of 'determined political action' to achieve this.<sup>26</sup> These examples indicate that many religious peace activists could draw on their own religious ideology to justify working on peace issues with communists. This thesis will use these and other writings to argue that the actions of religious peace activists were motivated by their religious views and that to describe them as 'fellow-travellers' is to underestimate the role played by these views in shaping their actions.

### **Communism and Intellectuals**

David Caute's two books, *Communism and the French Intellectuals*<sup>27</sup> and *The Fellow-Travellers*,<sup>28</sup> discuss the complex issue of the relationship between intellectuals and Communism. Their strength is that they are not marked by the crude anticommunism of the works of former communists but instead look at the actions of intellectual sympathizers of communism from a critical perspective that places their experiences in a political and social context. It is a point the Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm, a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> W. Bottomley, 'Dangerous Trends', *The Beacon*, no. 90 New Series, (April 1947), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> W. Bottomley, 'Praying for Peace', *The Beacon*, no. 130. New Series, (August 1950), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> David Caute, *Communism and the French Intellectuals*, London, Andre Deutsch, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers. A Postscript to the Enlightenment*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1973.

member of the British Communist Party for over fifty years until its final collapse, made when he favourably reviewed *Communism and the French Intellectuals*.<sup>29</sup>

Caute describes fellow-travelling as a postscript to the Enlightenment.<sup>30</sup> Caute accurately points out that the high point of intellectual attraction to the Soviet Union started in the 1930's with the introduction of the five year plans that were to transform the Soviet Union from a backward agricultural country into a modern industrial power.<sup>31</sup> However, it should also be stressed that this was a time when the capitalist world was shaken by the Great Depression which threw millions out of work and saw the rise of fascism, additional reasons why many intellectuals turned to communism. It was not surprising that many intellectuals committed to the use of reason looked to the Soviet Union, given the anarchy of capitalism at this time. Caute accurately describes the activities of many of these intellectuals, and their blindness to the realities of Stalinism. However, an important aspect of this thesis will be the argument that the role of intellectuals in the APC, both CPA members and independent activists, cannot be viewed only in terms of 'fellow-travelling' but can be explained by other, additional reasons.

A considerable part of the CPA work in the APC was carried out by the party's intellectuals. This thesis will draw on their writings and others to fully explore what this commitment meant and why CPA intellectuals were able to play this role. An important factor involved in this was that the party's intellectuals shared similar social experiences

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<sup>29</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'Intellectuals and Communism', in Eric Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries*, Great Britain, Abacus, 1999, pp.28-35.

<sup>30</sup> Caute, *Fellow-Travellers*, p.250.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.251.

or could discuss complex ideas with the peace movement's independent intellectuals, a crucial part of the movement. Alastair Davidson makes the point that this work was not as rigidly controlled as trade union work, and despite the memoirs of Turner and Robertson, there is some merit in this claim.<sup>32</sup> Robin Gollan explains how the CPA placed considerable emphasis on peace work and had not attempted to hide this.<sup>33</sup> Gollan also describes the battle that a party leader, J.D. Blake, had to convince party members to turn rhetoric into reality.<sup>34</sup> However in a situation where the party's support in the trade unions was under attack by the Industrial Groups it is not surprising that many trade union members may not have had the time for peace work.

Ralph Gibson, who gave up a career in academia to work full-time for the CPA during the Depression, gives some detail in his autobiography about the impact of the peace campaign.<sup>35</sup> Gibson was one of the central figures in the Victorian CPA, and one of the important links with the peace movement's independent intellectuals. Gibson provides some overall illumination about the size and scope of the first APC Congress and in particular acknowledges the role of the religious figures involved in both the peace movement and democratic rights movement.<sup>36</sup> In a memoir of his wife, also a party member, Gibson describes her fifteen-year commitment to the peace campaign where she was an executive member and had a similar ability to work with the movement's independent activists.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 104-106.

<sup>33</sup> Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 263.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, Melbourne, International Bookshop, 1966.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 161-165.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph Gibson, *One Women's Life. A memoir of Dorothy Gibson*, Sydney, Hale & Ironmonger, 1980, pp. 65-68.



At the end of the Second World War Cecil Holmes, a New Zealander, and a filmmaker, started working with the New Zealand Government National Film Unit but was dismissed due to his Communist Party membership.<sup>38</sup> After moving to Australia, he rejoined the Communist movement, and later became full-time secretary of the NSW APC.<sup>39</sup> Holmes contrasts the warm life of the party branch composed of individuals committed to progressive issues to the ‘work on various party committees, which were boring and stultifying, the aging men who dominated the party...would listen to the discussion then dispense the directives’.<sup>40</sup> In a similar way Bill Gollan, a CPA Central Committee member for many years, and the major CPA activist in the NSW peace movement, talks about the dilemma between a rigid and hierarchal party and a deep commitment to the peace movement.<sup>41</sup> Collectively these works by Communists, who were active in the peace movement at the height of the Cold War, are important because they challenge and largely refute the Cold War propaganda that CPA members were mindless individuals dedicated solely to advancing the interests of the Soviet Union. On the broader level Lawrence Wittner’s book on the international world nuclear movement in the 1950s is important because it stresses that the Australian movement was an integral part of a global movement for disarmament, however distorted at times by the policies of the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Cecil Holmes, *One Man’s Way*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1986, pp. 30-34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.39-40.

<sup>41</sup> John Murphy, ‘Loyalty and Communists: An Interview with Bill Gollan’, *Labour History*, no.66 (May 1994), pp.114-121.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Wittner, *One World or None. A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Through 1953*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993.

## Anti-Communism and the Cold War

A variety of books published in the early days of the Cold War help to establish the extreme anticommunist atmosphere with which the Communist Party and those who worked with it had to contend. Isaac Deutscher accurately described this process as one where 'it delivers us immediately to the moral holocaust; it aims immediately at the destruction and mutilation not of our bodies but of our minds; its weapons are the myths and the legends of propaganda'.<sup>43</sup> At the forefront of this campaign were former Communists or other revolutionary socialists who now wished to repudiate their radical past. These were the people that David Caute had described in his book *The Fellow-Travellers* and their experiences were used for a frontal assault on the Communist movement and those who worked with it.

One of the crucial books was *The God that Failed*, first published in 1950, the memoirs of six European and American intellectual former Communist Party members or sympathizers.<sup>44</sup> In Australia, a former Victorian CPA organizer, Cecil Sharpley, wrote a series of articles for the *Melbourne Herald*, which were later reprinted and sold as a widely circulated pamphlet.<sup>45</sup> From a different angle the former American Trotskyist, James Burnham, published a series of books calling for a pre-emptive war against the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> In Britain George Orwell moved from radical anti-Stalinism to anticommunism attacking what he called 'crypto-communists' for 'pursuing a policy

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<sup>43</sup> Isaac Deutscher, 'The Cold War in Perspective' in Isaac Deutscher, *Marxism, Wars and Revolutions: Essays from Four Decades*, London, Verso, 1984, p.73.

<sup>44</sup> The six were Andre Gide, Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler, and Louis Fischer. See, Richard Crossman, (ed.), *The God that Failed*, United States, Bantam Books, 1965.

<sup>45</sup> Cecil Sharpley, *I was a COMMUNIST Leader*, Melbourne, Melbourne Herald, 1949.

<sup>46</sup> James Burnham, *The Struggle for the World*, New York, Cornwall Press, 1947, & *The Coming Defeat of Communism*, London, Sydney, Australian Publishing Co., 1950. This edition had a foreword by Billy Hughes the former Labor Prime Minister turned conservative politician.

barely distinguishable from that of the CP, they are in effect the publicity agents of the U.S.S.R in this country...'<sup>47</sup> The theme of all these books was a virulent anticommunism and a strong identification with the political program of the western bourgeois democracies. Their charges of Communist Party duplicity and the manipulation of those who worked with it were crucial weapons used against the Communist Party as it attempted to build a broadly based peace movement.

The APC was established in a period of extreme political reaction and this literature help illustrate the hostility faced by those who attempted to challenge the dominant Cold War ideology. A particular target were those independent intellectuals who continued to collaborate with the Communist Party on peace issues. In contrast to industrial workers, whose experience of daily conflict with employers predisposed some of them to Communist politics, the threat of social isolation and possible loss of jobs made intellectuals particularly vulnerable to these attacks. Their support for these campaigns can be seen as a direct challenge to the attempts to impose a rigid orthodoxy on political activity in Australia during the Cold War. This implicit challenge to this rigid orthodoxy will be one of the themes explored in this thesis.

The critical point is that the formation of the APC was seen by those who took part as a justified response to the threat of a nuclear war and the possible destruction of human civilization. For its critics the APC was seen as nothing more than a 'fifth column' acting in the interests of the Soviet Union and a direct threat to the national unity that was

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<sup>47</sup> George Orwell, 'Two Letters to the Editor of Tribune', in Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus, (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume IV In Front of Your Nose 1945-50*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1968, p.228.

essential if Australia were to survive this perceived threat. This debate raised questions of the democratic right to express dissent against Government decisions and what constituted legitimate dissent at a time of high international tensions. These themes will be explored in the following chapters of this thesis.

## Chapter Two

### The formation of the Australian Peace Council

#### The post-war period

A key period in the development of the Australian Peace Council (APC) was between mid-1949 and mid-1950. It was also a time of intense political tensions both internationally and in Australia. In September 1949 the Communist Party supported the arrest, trial, and execution of veteran communist and former Hungarian Foreign Minister Laszlo Rajk and his supporters, in the first of the post-war East European purge trials. This fueled fears about the subservience of the Communist Party to the dictates of the Soviet Union and its total disregard for the norms of democracy.<sup>48</sup> The rise of Communism in Asia, the victory in the Civil War of the Chinese Communists in October 1949, and the anti-colonial struggles in Malaya and Vietnam which were led by Communists, linked Australia's traditional fear of an Asian invasion, with an alien ideology.<sup>49</sup>

These and other developments were behind Menzies', claim when introducing the Communist Party Dissolution Act in April 1950 just after the conclusion of the first APC Congress, that; 'We are not at peace today, except in a technical sense.'<sup>50</sup> Menzies went

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<sup>48</sup> For details of the Rajk trial see Francois Fejto, *A History of the People's Democracies Eastern Europe Since Stalin*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1974, pp. 16-17; Reg Gadney, *Cry Hungary! Uprising 1956*, Great Britain, George Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986, p.24. For details of the CPA position see L.J. Sharkey, 'Rajk Trial Shows Tito Gang Outright Fascists,' *The Guardian (Victoria)*, 7 October, 1949, p.2

<sup>49</sup> David Lowe, *Menzies and the Great World Struggle Australia's Cold War 1948-1954*, Sydney, University of New South Wales, 1999, p.67.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

on to define the actions of Communists in terms of their 'treason and fifth-columnism'<sup>51</sup>. This helps to explain the virulent hostility that greeted the activities of the APC. The existence of a peace movement and its insistence that there were alternative methods of solving international disputes was seen as a direct challenge to the national unity that was needed in the event of war breaking out.

The factors that led to the formation of the APC were diverse. These included concern by some individuals and organizations at the breakdown of the former alliance with the Soviet Union, the view that war with the Soviet Union was inevitable, and the increased threat to the civil rights of Communists. This challenges the conservative claim that the APC was nothing more than a 'Communist Front' committed to defending the political interests of the Soviet Union. Certainly, the role of the Communist Party was often dominant in a movement that due to the prevailing Cold War climate was restricted to Communists and those willing to work with them.<sup>52</sup> However, the pro-Soviet stance was at times more often implicit, than explicit.<sup>53</sup> A few years later, in 1956, the APC choose to remain silent, after the Russian invasion of Hungary, in contrast to the CPA which openly supported it, expelling its members such as Ian Turner who opposed it.<sup>54</sup> Yet, despite these these problems, the non-communist peace activists had a commitment to peace and civil liberties that was not primarily shaped by Communist Party manipulations.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-War Movement', p.41.

<sup>53</sup> Tom O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream The Decline of Australian Communism*, Sydney, Stained Wattle Press, 1985, p. 92.

<sup>54</sup> Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p.57; Turner, 'My Long March', p.139.

As the Cold War developed in Australia there were increasing attacks from governments at all levels, and from well established right-wing organizations, on the civil liberties of Communists, militant trade unionists, and other dissidents. This started to draw protests from individuals and organizations concerned about the erosion of traditional civil liberties. In June 1947, the Chifley Government passed the Approved Defence Projects Act, which imposed heavy fines and possible imprisonment for any individual who attempted 'by speech or writing advocates or encourages the prevention, hindrance, or obstruction of the carrying out of an approved defence project'.<sup>55</sup> When the proposed Woomera Rocket Range was declared an 'approved project', protests came from a diverse range of sources including Brian Fitzpatrick on behalf of the Australian Council of Civil Liberties,<sup>56</sup> the Unitarian Church,<sup>57</sup> and the Student Christian Movement which was concerned about the possible impact of the Rocket Range on Aborigines in Central Australia.<sup>58</sup>

The anti-Woomera campaign was one of the few times prior to the formation of the APC that the Communist Party actively involved itself in a peace related issue.<sup>59</sup> In a pamphlet, *Rocket Range Threatens Australia*, party leader Alf Watt, warned that the vast expenditure on the rocket range would decrease living standards and increase the risk of Australia's involvement in a nuclear war.<sup>60</sup> The range of forces involved in the campaign

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<sup>55</sup> Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick A radical life*, Sydney, Hale & Ironmonger, 1979, p.210.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> W. Bottomley, 'The Black Bill', *The Beacon*, no.92. New Series (July 1947), p.5.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Rocket Range and the Aborigines', *The Australian Intercollegian*, May 1 1947, pp.35-37.

<sup>59</sup> Ralph Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council and the Anti-Communist Milieu 1949-1965', in Charles Chatfield & Peter van den Dungen (eds.), *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1988, p.235.

<sup>60</sup> Jim Moss, *Sound of Trumpets History of the Labour Movement in South Australia*, Netley, Wakefield Press, 1985, p.367.

was a clear indication that it might have been possible to build a broad based united front campaign on the peace issue. However, at this stage each organization maintained its separate identity. The pacifists concerned about being associated with the Communists worked with other religious groups, while the Communist Party concentrated on mobilizing its trade union base to stop the project.<sup>61</sup> In 1947, the Victorian party leadership had rejected a proposal from the Melbourne University student branch to establish a broad-based anti-war movement on the model of the pre-war Movement against War and Fascism.<sup>62</sup> However within a few years as the Cold War atmosphere intensified there was a growing understanding that only a single organization that united all those committed to peace activity could mount an effective challenge to the growing threat of war.

From 1948, it became more difficult for the Communist Party or its members to conduct open political meetings. In November 1948, Ralph Gibson, a Victorian leader of the party, was convicted of obstruction for conducting a street campaign meeting in Geelong for a Communist Party election candidate.<sup>63</sup> The following January, the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) and the Liberal Party were able to convince the local council to deny the Communist Party the use of the Brunswick Town Hall for a Lenin Memorial meeting.<sup>64</sup> In March 1949, at Shepparton, the RSL mobilized 400 of its members to disrupt a meeting called to hear a report by John Rodgers, director of Australia-Soviet

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<sup>61</sup> Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council', p.235.

<sup>62</sup> Turner, 'My Long March', p.127.

<sup>63</sup> Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp.136-37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.



House on a recent trip he had made to the Soviet Union.<sup>65</sup> The other keynote speaker was the Rev Gwyn Miller, who was later to be a member of the APC executive.<sup>66</sup> Similar actions also took place in South Australia where Town Halls were denied to the Communist Party for meetings and its activists were frequently arrested for distributing leaflets.<sup>67</sup>

### **The Democratic Rights Council and the Australian Peace Council**

The denial of the Melbourne Town Hall, to John Rodgers for a meeting in February 1949 pushed some independent activists into greater co-operation with the Communist Party. Seventeen clergymen, including Alf Dickie and Frank Hartley, who were to play leading roles in the APC, protested to the Melbourne City Council about the exclusion.<sup>68</sup> In April, an all-day conference attended by clergymen, and delegates from trade unions, and other organizations voted to establish the Democratic Rights Council (DRC) to organize opposition to what they saw as the increasing threat to civil liberties.<sup>69</sup> The key figures, who were to establish the APC in July 1949, were members of the DRC.<sup>70</sup> This emphasizes the crucial point that the formation of the APC was result of a process in which independent activists and Communist party members came together to establish the organization. The link between democratic rights and peace became explicit with the

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<sup>65</sup> N.W. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton 1947-51*, Kilmore, Lowden Publishing, 1974, pp. 31-33.

<sup>66</sup> Ralph Gibson, *The Fight Goes On A Picture of Australia and the world in two post-war decades*, Australia, Red Rooster Press, 1987, p.87.

<sup>67</sup> Jim Moss, *Representatives of Discontent History of the Communist Party of South Australia 1921-1981*, Melbourne, Communist and Labour Movement History Group, 1983, pp.31-32.

<sup>68</sup> 'Clergymen in Conference', *Age*, February 22 1949, p.3.

<sup>69</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, pp.66-67; Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p.87. Hartley gives the figure of 'about sixty' clergymen, while Gibson claims eighty attended.

<sup>70</sup> Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council', p.239.

DRC chairperson, Doris Blackburn, coining the slogan that 'freedom and peace go hand in hand'.<sup>71</sup>

The Communist Party made no secret of its support for the APC and its aims, and its members who were active in the organization made no attempt to hide their identity.<sup>72</sup> This represented a dramatic shift from the previous enthusiastic support by Communist parties around the world for the use of the atomic bomb against Japan at the end of the Second World War.<sup>73</sup> However, as the Cold War heated up, the international Communist movement reversed its previous support and started to equate the use of the atomic bomb against Japan with Hitler's regime.<sup>74</sup> This sudden reversal of policy only heightened scepticism when the international Communist movement launched a peace movement at the end of the 1940s.

At its May 1948 National Congress, the Communist Party adopted a policy of establishing broad-based united fronts as a means of mobilizing support beyond its own ranks for its policies.<sup>75</sup> Over the next year, the party's theoretical journal, the *Communist Review*, carried numerous articles by party leaders, calling on all party members to make peace work a priority.<sup>76</sup> On the international front, conferences at Wroclaw in Poland in

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p.105; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.263.

<sup>73</sup> Wittner, *One World or None*, pp. 171-73.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.173.

<sup>75</sup> Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p.156.

<sup>76</sup> E.W.Campbell, 'We Must Fight For Peace', *Communist Review*, no. 92 (April 1949), pp. 114-15; J.B. Miles, 'For Action Against the War Danger', *Communist Review*, no.95 (July 1949), pp. 200-01; L.L. Sharkey, 'Campaigning for Peace!', *Communist Review*, no. 98 (October 1949), pp.291-92; R.Dixon, 'The People's Democracies and the Peace Movement', *Communist Review*, no. 99 (December 1949), pp. 323-31; Kath Bacon, 'Australian Youth Act for Peace', *Communist Review*, no. 100 (December 1949), pp. 361-63.

1948, and in Paris in 1949, led to the formation of the World Peace Congress (WPC).<sup>77</sup> It had a strong Communist presence but also included attracted significant religious support from individuals such as the French Catholic Jean Boulier and the Dean of Canterbury Hewlett Johnson.<sup>78</sup>

The APC was established on 1 July 1949 at the house of the Rev Victor James in East Melbourne. Also present were the other 'peace parsons' Alf Dickie and Frank Hartley.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the religious peace activists, and not the Communist Party, played the initial key role in the formal establishment of the major peace organization that was active during the Cold War. The founding Council of the organization had twenty-four members of whom eight were ministers or representatives of Christian organizations. Other members included trade unionists, intellectuals, and representatives from pacifist and women's groups.<sup>80</sup>

The Communist Party's influence within the APC was achieved in a number of different ways despite being in a minority on the leadership bodies. The first three national secretaries Ian Turner, Alex Robertson, and Stephen Murray-Smith were party members.<sup>81</sup> Its superior organization and high commitment meant that party members carried out much of the routine work of the organization. Keith McEwan recalled how he and other party members spent months attempting to obtain signatures for the Stockholm

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<sup>77</sup> Wittner, *One World or None*, pp.175-182.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Brian Fitzpatrick, 'Peace Movements in Australia', *The Bulletin*, (Letters), 7 July 1949, p.32; Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, p.251; Gibson, *One Woman's Life*, p.66.

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Carter, 'The Peace Movement in the 1950s' in Ann Curthoys & John Merritt, (eds.), *Better Dead Than Red Australia's First Cold War 1945-1959 Vol. 2*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1986, p.60.

<sup>81</sup> Saunders & Summy, *Australian Peace Movement*, p.32.

appeal.<sup>82</sup> One result of this commitment was the 2000 people who attended the formal public launch of the APC in September 1949.<sup>83</sup> This is a clear indication that the composition of the APC went beyond the ranks of the Communist Party and involved significant numbers of independent activists.

### **Was the Australian Peace Council Communist controlled?**

The notion that the APC was a Communist Front has not been the subject of scholarly analysis with the exception of Forrester and Santamaria the point has been ignored or overlooked. The international literature on Communist control has not been paralleled with the historiography of the Australian peace movement.<sup>84</sup> However, from its inception the APC had to face claims that it was a Communist Front committed to propagating the interests of the Soviet Union and was not committed to campaigning for peace. For example, in the first of three articles on the peace movement, the Melbourne *Sun* claimed that 'Australian Communists are plotting to dupe thousands of decent Australians by intervening in a campaign already in progress in Melbourne and Brisbane and about to be extended to Sydney'.<sup>85</sup> The *Catholic Advocate* described the APC as a 'Trojan Horse', which was 'fundamentally inspired by Marxist hate', behind which stood 'the brains, funds and organization of the Communist Party'.<sup>86</sup>

The APC repeatedly attempted to challenge these claims. At the 1950 Victorian ALP Easter State Conference attempts by APC supporters to distribute a APC leaflet drew a

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<sup>82</sup> Keith McEwan, *Once A Jolly Comrade*, Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1966, p.21.

<sup>83</sup> '2000 Cheer as AUS. Peace CCL Launched' *Tribune*, 10 September 1949, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Wittner, *One World or None*.

<sup>85</sup> 'Communists Plot To Exploit Movement For Peace', *Sun*, 18 October 1949, p.3.

<sup>86</sup> 'The Trojan Dove', *Catholic Advocate*, 23 February 1950, p.6.

hostile response and they were ordered to leave the conference venue.<sup>87</sup> The leaflet explained, 'We Swear that the Communist Party did not establish the Australian Peace Council, does not control its policy or activities, and cannot use it for ends other than advancing world peace'.<sup>88</sup> The commitment by the APC to 'welcome the support of members of all political parties, without exception, who sincerely want peace...' only fueled the hostility of its critics.<sup>89</sup> Cold War rhetoric, as expressed by the Melbourne *Sun* viewed the Soviet Union as an 'ominous shadow' standing in the way of world peace and that 'Communism's plan is to encourage ostensible "peace movements" among non-Communist nations so that they may be lulled into reducing their defence preparations'.<sup>90</sup>

The Communist Party was aware of the limitations imposed on its activity in the APC by the prevailing Cold War atmosphere and the need to maintain the alliance with non-Communist activists. It discouraged its members from selling party publications or distributing party propaganda at peace meetings.<sup>91</sup> The party rejected imposing a revolutionary analysis of the causes of war on the APC, and any militant methods of achieving the movement's aims.<sup>92</sup> This contrasts sharply with its previous political activity on peace issues. In 1938, Communist led unions in Port Kembla had imposed a ban on the export of pig-iron to Japan as a protest against the actions of the Japanese in China.<sup>93</sup> At the end of the Second World War, union bans on Dutch shipping contributed

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<sup>87</sup> Forrester, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*, p.8.

<sup>88</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, p.250.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> 'The Red Light For Peace-Lovers', *Sun*, 15 October 1949, p.3.

<sup>91</sup> Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-War Movement', p.42.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Rupert Lockwood, *War on the Waterfront. Menzies, Japan and the Pig-iron Dispute*, Marrickville, 1987.

to the victory of the Indonesian nationalists in their long and bitter struggle against Dutch colonialism.<sup>94</sup> The Communist Party maintained this new political position through the 1950s. At the 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress, it rejected calls for union strike action against French nuclear testing in the Sahara.<sup>95</sup>

Yet, despite these circumstances the APC faced persistent claims in the print media, as we shall see in Chapter Four that it was a Communist Front. Based on the above evidence the claim needs to be treated with considerable qualification. While, as Alec Robertson acknowledged, the Communist Party used its influence to prevent the APC from making any statement critical of the Communist bloc, it had to accept a movement that was limited to semi-regular peace congresses, local meetings, and petitioning campaigns rather than the more traditional methods of working class political struggle.<sup>96</sup> It also meant that at the various peace congresses the Communist Party had to reach an agreement that was acceptable to the non-Communist activists. As Ian Turner argued, alliances between groups and individuals of different ideological viewpoints is quite acceptable as long as the stronger partner did not abuse its position of power.<sup>97</sup> The Communist Party's support for multi-lateral agreements bans on nuclear testing, and limitations on arms spending was not inconsistent with the non-Communists' support for peace. This explains why they continued to remain within a movement which had a significant Communist influence but which was something more than a Communist Front.

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<sup>94</sup> Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp.151-52.

<sup>95</sup> Ralph Summy & Malcolm Saunders, 'The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress: culmination of anti-communism in Australia in the 1950s, in Curthoys & Merritt, pp.88-89.

<sup>96</sup> Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-war Movement', pp.42-43.

<sup>97</sup> Turner, 'My Long March', p.126.

## Chapter Three.

### The Activists

The APC was built on relationships between three key groups: the religious peace activists, the non-Communist activists, and the Communist intellectuals. Each group brought to the movement its own traditions and philosophy. The political character of the APC was determined how this relationship worked out in practice. A close examination of the philosophy and actions of each group helps to undermine the claim that the APC was nothing more than a propaganda vehicle for supporters of the Soviet Union. The available evidence indicates a high degree of idealism and a deeply entrenched belief that it was possible to build a peaceful world.

#### The Religious Peace Activists

The Cold War has been described as one of history's great religious wars.<sup>98</sup> In particular, the West's perceptions and responses to the Soviet Union were often shaped by profound religious beliefs.<sup>99</sup> The presence of committed religious activists in a peace movement sponsored by the Soviet Union offered an explicit challenge to the view that the Cold War was a fight between 'good and evil'.<sup>100</sup> When Menzies introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Act (CPDA) for the second time just after the Dean of Canterbury, Dr Hewlett Johnson's main meetings he said: 'Nothing nauseates me more than to discover the skill with which these Communists can put into their vanguard some deluded Minister

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<sup>98</sup> Dianne Kirby, 'An Introduction', in Dianne Kirby (ed.), *Religion and the Cold War*, Houndsmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

of the Christian religion'.<sup>101</sup> This view is too simplistic because it fails to explain fully the reasons why Hewlett Johnson and many other religious peace activists continued to work with Communists during the Cold War despite overwhelming hostility not only from the general public, but also sometimes from within their own churches.

One reason can be traced back to the roots of early Christianity. Friedrich Engels pointed out that early Christianity was a movement of the oppressed against the existing social order.<sup>102</sup> Some of the modern Christian activists traced their political views back to this tradition. The Rev C. M. Churchward believed that the Marxist aim of 'each according to his ability, to each according to his need' was nothing more than 'the social and economic aspect of the kingdom of God on earth'.<sup>103</sup> Churchward believed that the task of religious people was to 'Christianize Communism since the Christianizing of capitalism was impossible because it was a system based on 'selfishness'.<sup>104</sup> Soon after the end of the Second World War Rev David Garnsey, secretary of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) believed that Christians were involved in 'the struggle of a dying order'.<sup>105</sup> In a talk to the 1947 National SCM conference, Canon Maynard said that Christians who accepted the Marxist view of history could only regret that it was linked to an anti-religious philosophy.<sup>106</sup> These statements are evidence that the actions of many

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<sup>101</sup> Lowe, *Menzies and the Great World Struggle*, p. 105.

<sup>102</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'On the History of Early Christianity', in Lewis S. Feuer (ed.), *Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, Great Britain, Fontana, 1969, p.209.

<sup>103</sup> C.M. Churchward, *The Rising Tide of Communism: An Appeal to Christian People*, Paramatta, Argus Print, 1943, p. 18.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>105</sup> David Garnsey, 'Preface' in F.E. Maynard & K. Merz, *Religion and Revolution*, Prahran, Fraser & Morphet, nd. p.2.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.



religious activists were based on views that had their origins in traditional Christian theology.

Hewlett Johnson has been described as ‘one of the most perseverant fellow-travellers of his time.’<sup>107</sup> As we shall see there is some basis for this view. However, Johnson’s views need to be placed in a wider social and political framework to understand them fully. Johnson believed that the Russian purges had rid Russia of her potential quislings.<sup>108</sup> In the 1930s such views were not unusual. Dr H.V. Evatt was reported to have remarked after reading the evidence of one show trial, ‘They’re as guilty as hell’.<sup>109</sup> The crucial difference about Johnson is that unlike many other clergy or intellectuals he continued to support the views he had adopted in the 1930s when western capitalism seemed unable to deal with the twin crises of mass unemployment and the rise of fascism. It was at this time many people turned towards the Soviet Union and Communism to provide the answers to these problems. However, as the Cold War developed attitudes towards the Soviet Union started to change. The clergy in particular had witnessed a perceptible hardening of attitudes towards the Soviet Union from the late 1930s.<sup>110</sup> Yet, despite mounting evidence about the real nature of Stalin’s regime nothing could shake Johnson’s views that the Soviet Union was a symbol of progress and an example for the rest of the world.

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<sup>107</sup> Cate, *Fellow Travellers*, p.1.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>109</sup> Guido Baracchi to Jim McClelland in James McClelland, *Stirring the Possum – A Political Autobiography*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1989, pp.38-39.

<sup>110</sup> Ian Jones, ‘The Clergy, the Cold War, and the Mission of the Local Church: England in 1945-50’ in Kirby, *Religion and the Cold War*, p.189.

Hewlett Johnson's *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, a eulogy for the Soviet Union and Stalin, was published at the start of the Second World War and had convinced many people to join the Communist movement.<sup>111</sup> As a member of the editorial board of the *Daily Worker*, the British Communist newspaper, he contributed frequent articles one of which was reprinted in *Tribune* during his stay in Australia.<sup>112</sup> However, within his own church Hewlett Johnson was an isolated figure. During his stay in Australia, the Church of England *Messenger* published a statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury dissociating the Church from the Dean's views. It said in part: 'It is a matter of great regret that the Dean should advocate views which are so insensitive to the true facts of the situation.'<sup>113</sup>

Despite this condemnation, Hewlett Johnson commanded enormous respect and admiration from those who agreed with his position. It came not only from fellow religious peace activists but also from Communists despite their atheism. Bernie Taft, a Victorian party organizer remembers him as a 'great, charismatic clergyman, dressed in flowing clerical garb, addressing us in a strong, fiery, and penetrating voice, telling us what we wanted to believe.'<sup>114</sup> Amirah Inglis recalls 'the familiar beaming face framed in a tonsure of white hair', and cheering him 'like thunder' when he finished speaking.<sup>115</sup> For Ralph Gibson it was the lasting memory of 'a tall, powerfully built man...with a

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<sup>111</sup> Amirah Inglis, *The Hammer & Sickle and the Washing Up Memories of an Australian Woman Communist*, South Melbourne, Hyland House Publishing, 1995, pp. 90-91.

<sup>112</sup> Hewlett Johnson, 'Two Roads Before Us. War Or Peace', *Tribune*, 19 April 1950, p.4; Wittner, *One World or None*, p.198.

<sup>113</sup> Geoffrey Fisher, 'The Dean of Canterbury', *Messenger* (Church of England), 17 April 1950, p.127.

<sup>114</sup> Bernie Taft, *Crossing the Party Line Memoirs of Bernie Taft*, Newham, Scribe Publications, 1994, pp. 71-72.

<sup>115</sup> Inglis, *Hammer & Sickle*, p.91.

cultured face and very firm chin'.<sup>116</sup> Nearly all mention the gold cross that Johnson constantly wore which symbolized the core of his beliefs. At the end of the APC Congress Alf Dickie described him as a 'prophet' because 'men have reviled him and persecuted him and said all manner of evil against him falsely'.<sup>117</sup>

Alf Dickie was another clergyman who faced hostility from within his own church over his peace activism. In his retirement speech as Chairman of the Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament, in June 1973, Alf Dickie spoke of the difficulties he encountered from within the Presbyterian Church during the early part of the Cold War.<sup>118</sup> Dickie acknowledged that in the 'late 1940s and early 'fifties I must have been a terrible burden to my church' and goes on to added that 'it would not have surprised me if my pastoral tie with my congregation had been severed'.<sup>119</sup> The crucial point Dickie makes is that it was 'important' that his peace activity was carried out as 'an accredited minister of my church'.<sup>120</sup> During this time, Dickie fought strongly for the right to be both an ordained minister and a peace activist. There was for him a clear connection between his commitments to the peace movement, and his deeply held Christian views, and they could not be separated.

In June 1948, Dickie distributed the self-published pamphlet *Should Such a Faith Offend?* to the residents of North Essendon, where his church was located.<sup>121</sup> Dickie

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<sup>116</sup> Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.163.

<sup>117</sup> *Peace*, no.2, April 1950, p.

<sup>118</sup> 'The Peace Movement in Motion', *Meanjin*, vol. 32, no. 2 (June 1973), pp. 227-231.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Alf Dickie, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, in Rev Alf Dickie papers, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA), 83:81, Box 4, File 11.

stressed that, ‘This message I have given and will continue to give as if the Lord is my judge and not men; for if all who heard me were opposed to my message, I could give no other’.<sup>122</sup> This demonstrates Dickie’s commitment to his political activity even if it were to cost him his job as a minister. This faith was linked to his complaint that ‘the inactivity of the organized church in matters that affect the well-being of men has been an embarrassment to reformers of all ages’.<sup>123</sup> While rejecting Communism as a ‘false religion’, he believed ‘that the zeal of the Communists in the study, propaganda and practice of their faith is a standing rebuke to the apathy of Christians in relation to their own faith’.<sup>124</sup> Dickie’s political activity can therefore be placed within the radical stream that has often existed within Christianity.

Up to the outbreak of the Second World War Frank Hartley had been a convinced pacifist.<sup>125</sup> But the brutal nature of the Hitler regime and the need to ensure its defeat convinced him that this position was no longer viable, and he attempted to enlist as a private soldier.<sup>126</sup> Since he was already a Methodist Minister, the church refused permission and he enlisted as a military Chaplain.<sup>127</sup> Hartley served with great distinction and bravery in New Guinea, often risking his life to take letters and other comforts to the front line troops.<sup>128</sup> On his return trip home to Australia, he was alarmed to find his fellow officers warning about the dangers of a powerful Soviet Union and the

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>125</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, p. 40.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., pp.49-61.

growth of Communism, and the need to prepare for the next war.<sup>129</sup> As the propaganda offensive against the Soviet Union and Communism increased, Hartley threw himself into the peace and civil liberties campaigns. One of the motivating factors for his involvement was that he considered that he was defending the ideals that millions of people had died for during the war.<sup>130</sup>

At times Hartley came under attack from within his own church for his political activity. However like Dickie, Hartley believed that there was a clear connection between his political activity and his Christian beliefs. If at any time the Methodist Conference had directed him to cease his political activity Hartley would quit the church rather than accept any attempt to silence him.<sup>131</sup> On other occasions, Hartley was able to win at least some support for his views. At the February 1950 Methodist Conference a motion was passed on international affairs which denied war was inevitable and pledged support for the cause of world peace. It resolved 'to urge the Commonwealth Government our deep sense of the incompatibility with Christian principles of any preparation for atomic, hydrogen, or germ warfare...'<sup>132</sup> However due to the prevailing Cold War atmosphere and the fear of possible harsh consequences many church members were not prepared to undertake political activity to the same extent as Hartley to achieve the aims of such resolutions.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.79.

<sup>132</sup> 'This Goodly Fellowship', *The Spectator and Methodist Chronicle*, vol. LXXVI, no. 12 (24 March), p.179.

<sup>133</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, p. 80.

Religious organisations as well as individual clergyman also supported the peace movement. At its first post-war general committee meeting in 1946 the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) passed two key resolutions that were to chart its activity in the immediate post-war period.<sup>134</sup> One called on 'all its members to do the utmost in their power that the post-war period may not be built on hatred, but on the sure foundation of that forgiveness of God which alone can unite people...'<sup>135</sup> The second resolution was the first clear statement that the federation had adopted on imperialism since the federation had been established in 1895. It said that the 'economic enslavement of one nation by another is completely incompatible with the Christian understanding of the relations that should prevail among mankind'. It also called for the immediate independence for those colonies which had reached 'comparative political maturity' and in the case of other colonies that colonial rule should be 'temporary and during that period it should be exercised in the interests of the governed.'<sup>136</sup> As the Australian affiliate, the Student Christian Movement (SCM) was able to use these motions to chart its course.

Five hundred people attended the 1947 annual conference of the SCM at Corio. The members were disturbed about 'the injustice, disorder and tragedy in the world' and committed themselves to political action to resolve these problems.<sup>137</sup> Gordon Riley, who had just returned from missionary work in South Africa reported that the 'native population is terrorized by repressive legislation' and described, how he and others

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<sup>134</sup> Philip Potter & Thomas Wieser (eds.), *Seeking and Serving The Truth First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, pp.169-170.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p.170.

<sup>137</sup> 'Christian Faith in Action', *The Australian Intercollegian*, vol. L, no.1 (1 March 1947), p.2.

challenged segregation in the church.<sup>138</sup> A study book, *Christian Faith in Action*, issued by the conference, urged the SCM to 'co-operate with non-Christians in the pursuit of limited aims which seem to hold the greatest possibility of justice'.<sup>139</sup> Kurt Metz who attended the conference made a call for a joint conference with the Melbourne University Labour Club, because it was engaged 'in action against the worst of our social ills: Imperialism, fascism, racial and religious discrimination, and segregation...'<sup>140</sup>

Two SCM members, Heather Wakefield and Judith Lyell, were foundation members of the APC, with Heather Wakefield being elected to the interim national executive.<sup>141</sup> The Melbourne University SCM voted to send two delegates to the APC Congress and hear a report back which would determine its future support.<sup>142</sup> One reason was that the SCM wanted a direct say in the formulation of the APC policy, which was to be decided at the Congress.<sup>143</sup> It also stressed that in order to avoid the problems of total Communist control it was important that non-Communist organizations play an active role in the organization.<sup>144</sup> In July, the Melbourne University SCM voted 48 to 10 with 7 abstentions to oppose the bill to ban the Communist Party.<sup>145</sup> Yet, by August it had withdrawn from the APC.<sup>146</sup> Its concern was with the degree of Communist Party control of the APC.<sup>147</sup> Despite this withdrawal, the SCM had not succumbed to reactionary

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<sup>138</sup> Kurt Metz, 'Evangelism and the Class Struggle', *The Australian Intercollegian*, vol. L, no.2 (1 April 1947), pp. 25-26.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>141</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, pp.251-252.

<sup>142</sup> 'Movement News', *The Australian Intercollegian*, vol. LIII, no. 4 (1 June 1950), p. 63.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> 'Movement News', *The Australian Intercollegian*, vol. LIII, no. 5 (1 July 1950), p. 78.

<sup>146</sup> 'Forum', *The Australian Intercollegian*, vol. LIII, no.6 (1 August 1950), p.96.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

policies, as its resolution on the CDPA indicates, and it remained committed to progressive policies but unwilling to work with Communist influenced organizations.

The roots of the Unitarian Church roots lie in the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, which ushered in the modern world. Over successive centuries, it came to reject the orthodox Christian theistic view of the world.<sup>148</sup> In the early twentieth century, two leaders of the church, John Dietrich and Curtis Rose, adopted a religious humanism perspective and in 1933 signed a humanist manifesto.<sup>149</sup> While a wide variety of theological and philosophical views existed within the church, it has consistently supported liberal, social, and ethical issues.<sup>150</sup> Its involvement with the peace movement therefore represented a continuation of a long-standing tradition in the church to support such campaigns.

The Unitarian Minister, Victor James, who was to play an active role in the APC, arrived in Melbourne from England in June 1947. Previously he had been a Minister in Somerset and South Wales.<sup>151</sup> Just before he retired as Minister of Melbourne's Unitarian Church in June 1969, he described that his goal in life had been to 'seek the truth and serve humanity'.<sup>152</sup> James believed that humanity's progress to a more open and fulfilling society was blocked by the 'archaic beliefs of Christianity'.<sup>153</sup> James therefore stood within the humanist traditions of the Unitarian Church, and believed that this was 'a

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<sup>148</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith (ed.), *Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion*, London, Harper Collins, 1996, p. 109.

<sup>149</sup> Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion vols. 15-16*, New York, Simon Schuster Macmillan, 1995, p. 145.

<sup>150</sup> Smith, *Dictionary of Religion*, p. 110.

<sup>151</sup> *Beacon*, no. 92, New Series, (June 1947), p. 7

<sup>152</sup> Victor James, *This religion business*, Collingwood, Beacon Publications, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.



philosophy of action' which required an active participation in campaigns to change the world.<sup>154</sup> Apart from his involvement in the APC, James also addressed other issues. In a radio broadcast in June 1950 on 3XY, he condemned the sacking of Dr. Paul James from the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital because of his involvement in the DRC and APC.<sup>155</sup>

The key point about the religious figures involved in the peace movement is that they were activists. They were committed to doing more than issuing routine propaganda against the horrors of war. Once they made this decision, it brought them into contact with the Communist Party, which was the only other major organization that was prepared to be active on the issue during the early days of the Cold War. The other crucial element is that all the religious figures had a long-standing involvement in peace issues prior to the formation of the APC. Whatever illusions they may have harbored about the Soviet Union, they must be seen in conjunction with their religious views.

### **The Non-Communists**

Tasmanian Labor Senator William Morrow was the only Labor Party politician to remain committed to activity with the APC. This along with his other strong socialist views, helped to provide the reasons for his loss of re-endorsement for the 1953 elections, and his disappearance from mainstream parliamentary politics.<sup>156</sup> Morrow's political outlook

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Victor James, 'The Power of Public Opinion', *The Beacon*, no. 128 New Series, (July 1950), pp.4-5 & 7; Phillip Deery, 'A dangerous trend towards authoritarianism: Dr. James, the Menzies Government and Cold War Australia' in P. Griffiths & R. Webb (eds.), *Work, Organization, Struggle*, Canberra, ASSH, 2001, pp.120-26.

<sup>156</sup> Audrey Johnson, *Fly a Rebel Flag. Bill Morrow 1888-1990*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1986, pp.209-210.

can be traced back both to the radical traditions of the early Australian labour movement and to his support for the Soviet Union, and after 1949 the newly established Communist Government in China. These views were well known when he was first elected to the Senate in 1946, and during his long political life, Morrow never wavered or fundamentally changed his political views.

Morrow first joined the Labor Party in 1908 and combined this with support for the militant tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>157</sup> During the First World War, Morrow played an active role in the anti-conscription movement in Queensland thus establishing his first link with what was to be a long-lasting connection with the peace movement.<sup>158</sup> In the late 1930s both as secretary of the Tasmanian Australian Railways Union and as a supporter of the MAWF, Morrow was again active in the peace movement.<sup>159</sup> This led to his first expulsion from the Labor Party in 1938, when he challenged press reports that a motion supporting ‘universal physical training’ for home defense had passed the State Conference unanimously.<sup>160</sup> Morrow’s commitment to the peace movement and radical politics rather than a possible career in the Labor Party was expressed a few days later when he remarked at a public meeting: ‘If the price of staying in the Labor Party is my silence, than the Labor Party can go to Hell’.<sup>161</sup> By the time of the 1944 State Conference, Morrow was back in the ALP without having to recant his position and he was elected to the state executive.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-42.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-115.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p. 114.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

Like many pioneer socialists, Morrow hailed the Bolshevik Revolution and believed it would usher in a new society for the working class.<sup>163</sup> While many ALP members later abandoned this position, Morrow continued to support the Soviet Union. This made him a target for attack, not only from within the Labor Party, but also from the Liberal Party. In the 1951 double dissolution election, the Tasmanian Liberal campaign demanded that voters make a choice between 'a Liberal Government pledged to smash red sabotage or the Morrow-Evatt Party and the Communist wreckers'.<sup>164</sup> By this time, Morrow's support within the ALP was in decline. At the 1951 Federal Conference, his was the only vote in support of widespread nationalization.<sup>165</sup> Morrow's final departure from the ALP was made without regret and he devoted a large part of the rest of his life to the peace movement and other progressive issues.<sup>166</sup> Morrow's political outlook had been shaped by his involvement in the early history of the Australian labour movement, and the heroic period of the Russian Revolution. Such deeply entrenched views cannot be dismissed as fellow-travelling and need to be placed in the broader historical context.

Many Australians during the Cold War considered Jessie Street to be a traitor to her class and country.<sup>167</sup> With family roots that could be traced back via her father to Alfred the Great, and as the wife of a Judge of the Supreme Court, who later became NSW Chief Justice, Jessie Street was guaranteed a comfortable life.<sup>168</sup> However, her commitment to radical causes, which became more pronounced from the late 1930s onwards, alienated

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp.50-51.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.203.

<sup>165</sup> Robert Murray, *The Split. Australian Labor in the Fifties*, Melbourne, Cheshire Publishing, 1972, p.43.

<sup>166</sup> Johnson, *Fly a Rebel Flag*, p.217.

<sup>167</sup> Heather Radi (ed.), *Jessie Street. Documents and Essays*, Marrickville, Women's Redress, 1990, p.10.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., pp.10-12.

her from the vast majority of Australians. Just after the first APC Congress, her commitment to the international peace campaign took her overseas for six years and away from family and friends.<sup>169</sup> In common with many other peace activists of this era, Street's commitment to the peace movement came at considerable personal cost.

While Street, due to her inherited wealth, did not suffer personally during the Great Depression, her observation of the hardships imposed on tens of thousands of Australians convinced her of the necessity of a socialist society replacing a capitalist one.<sup>170</sup> In fact prior to this Street had often voted for the conservative parties.<sup>171</sup> From an early age, Street expressed strong support for feminism supporting issues such as equal pay and job opportunities. In March 1931, on behalf of the United Associations, she issued a circular opposing the dismissal of married women teachers.<sup>172</sup> When Street made a trip to the Soviet Union in 1938, and discovered that the train driver was a woman she became convinced of the link between feminism and socialism.<sup>173</sup> In a similar way to Hewlett Johnson, Street never lost her faith in the Soviet Union and the conviction that it was building a just and humane society.<sup>174</sup>

At the end of the war Jessie Street seemed set for a career in Labor politics. John Curtin appointed her as the sole woman on the Australian delegation to the founding conference

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>170</sup> Peter Sekules, *Jessie Street. A Rewarding but Unrewarded Life*, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p. 48.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Jessie Street, 'Married Women Teachers May be Dismissed' in Radi, p.67.

<sup>173</sup> Sekules, *Jessie Street*, p.49.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

of the United Nations to be held in San Francisco in April and June 1945.<sup>175</sup> There she spoke with passion in support of Clause 8, which guaranteed full equality between men and women.<sup>176</sup> Street returned to Sydney confident that she would win pre-selection for a parliamentary seat and make a lasting contribution to the well-being of the majority of Australians.<sup>177</sup>

However, by 1946 the NSW ALP was strongly influenced by committed anti-Communist forces. At its June Conference, a strongly worded eight-point resolution was passed denouncing the Communist Party.<sup>178</sup> Street's support for the Soviet Union, her ardent feminism, and espousal of the United Nations as a forum for solving international disputes made her unacceptable to the new leadership. When it demanded that she resign from organizations, which it considered 'Communist Fronts', in a welter of confusion she either resigned or was expelled from the ALP.<sup>179</sup> When Street stood as an independent Labor candidate in the 1949 elections her election leaflet pointed out the ALP had failed to endorse a single woman candidate, denied that she was a Communist or the organizations to which she belonged to were Communist fronts, and called for a mass peace campaign.<sup>180</sup> With absolutely no chance of winning, Street departed from the ALP, like Bill Morrow would a few years later, with few regrets and remained committed to campaigning on peace and feminist issues for the rest of her political life.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>176</sup> Radi (ed.), *Jessie Street Documents*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>177</sup> Sekules, *Jessie Street*, pp. 103-105.

<sup>178</sup> F.K. Crowley (ed.), *Modern Australia in Documents vol. 2 1939-1970*, Melbourne, Wren Publishing, 1973, pp.144-145.

<sup>179</sup> Sekules, *Jessie Street*, pp.105-110.

<sup>180</sup> Radi, *Jessie Street Documents*, pp.159-62.

Brian Fitzpatrick was a foundation member of the APC.<sup>181</sup> This represented a continuation of his support for radical and causes his defense of civil liberties and socialist ideals. From September 1947, Fitzpatrick presented his views in an erratically published monthly newspaper *The Australian Democrat*. In an article in the first issue Fitzpatrick explained the aim of the paper was to 'address readers who believe in toleration which is the essence of democracy, and who are prepared to lend themselves to a stiffening of the democratic spirit...'<sup>182</sup> It was an attempt to challenge the increasing threats to curb the civil rights of Communists and other dissidents.

Fitzpatrick's consistent defense of the civil rights of Communists made him a target of bitter attacks from anti-Communist forces. On 15 April 1948, Larry Anthony made the false claim that Fitzpatrick had been expelled from the ALP because he was a Communist.<sup>183</sup> This dominant climate of anti-Communism made it more difficult for radical liberals to offer any criticism of the Soviet Union. It would have meant for such individuals giving the appearance of joining forces with political groups they detested.<sup>184</sup> At the Lowe Royal Commission when asked, Fitzpatrick could not recall having ever writing anything critical of the Soviet Union.<sup>185</sup> This situation made it more difficult for the APC to avoid the charge that it was nothing more than a Communist Front.

Jim Cairns, at this stage a Melbourne University lecturer, was also a foundation member

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<sup>181</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, p.251.

<sup>182</sup> Brian Fitzpatrick, 'This is my opinion', *The Australian Democrat*, vol.1, no. 1 (September 1947), p.1.

<sup>183</sup> Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick*, p.214.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p.219.

of the APC.<sup>186</sup> Cairns had shown his support for civil liberties by chairing public meetings for John Rodgers, and was chosen by the Communist Party fraction to be their candidate for foundation chair of the APC.<sup>187</sup> His membership was to last less than twelve months before he resigned due to concerns over the often heavy-handed control displayed by the Communist Party.<sup>188</sup> Cairns' political views were complex and still evolving. During the war when he was in the army, he had met two Communists, Bob Laurie and Bill Brown, who suggested that he join the Communist Party.<sup>189</sup> After the war, the State executive rejected any consideration Cairns' membership because of his previous role as a Special Branch policeman, and party members were warned to be careful when dealing with him.<sup>190</sup> In any case, Cairns' questioning and critical outlook and his rejection of dogma made him unsuitable for membership, a fact that Cairns well understood.<sup>191</sup>

Despite the reasons for Cairns' resignation from the APC, he did not become an anti-Communist. Within a few years, in the December 1955 Federal election, Cairns was prepared to accept covert help from Communists, in the seat of Yarra, to defeat Stan Keon, the leader of the breakaway anti-Communist forces.<sup>192</sup> At the 1959 Peace Congress, Cairns refused to support dissidents including former Communists and

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<sup>186</sup> Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, p.251.

<sup>187</sup> Paul Ormonde, *A Foolish Passionate Man. A Biography of Jim Cairns*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1981, p.39; Paul Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith. A Biography of Jim Cairns*, Carlton South, Melbourne University Press, 2002, p.65.

<sup>188</sup> Ormonde, *A Foolish Passionate Man*, p.40; Strangio, p.64; Turner, p.128.

<sup>189</sup> Ormonde, *A Foolish Passionate Man*, p.33.

<sup>190</sup> John McLaren, *Free Radicals*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2003, p.281; Ormonde, *Foolish Passionate Man*, p.32; Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith*, p.52.

<sup>191</sup> Ormonde, *Foolish Passionate Man*, p.33; Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith*, p.52.

<sup>192</sup> Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900-1965*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1984, p.240; Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith*, p.93.

secretaries of the APC, who wanted to condemn Soviet as well as American aggression.<sup>193</sup> Cairns' reasons were based on his idealized concept of the need for a united movement and a refusal to support those who would risk this in the pursuit of higher ideals.<sup>194</sup>

It is easy to dismiss the religious and non-Communist peace activists as dupes or fellow-travellers. Yet, as the above discussion demonstrates, these activists were motivated by a high degree of idealism on peace issues that existed before the Communist Party made the turn towards the united front in 1948. When the ALP Federal Executive proscribed the APC in 1950, it isolated the emerging movement from significant sections of the labour movement, which in the past had played an important role in the peace movement.<sup>195</sup> In addition, many pacifist organizations and individuals who were fully aware of the erratic nature of Communist Party policies also withheld their support.<sup>196</sup> These measures restricted the size and scope of the movement and prevented it from reaching wider numbers of Australians. Those independent individuals who remained in the peace movement found themselves trapped in a bi-polar world, in which a decision had to be made regarding 'which side are you on?' With little room for shades of opinion, the APC saw its prime task was challenging the policies of their own Government, and remaining silent about the actions of the Soviet Union.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> McLaren, *Free Radicals*, p.281.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Saunders & Summy, *Australian Peace Movement*, p.32.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 92-93.



## The Communist Intellectuals

The Communist Party intellectuals carried the main burden of the political work for the Communist Party in the peace movement.<sup>198</sup> In a party that was still overwhelmingly proletarian, and whose prime orientation was towards the trade unions, the united front organizations, particularly the peace movement, were an area where the intellectuals felt they could make a significant contribution to the party's growth and influence. An important additional factor was that despite repeated calls by some party leaders about the importance of peace work, many party members did not think the work was sufficiently important enough to divert them from trade union work.<sup>199</sup>

The APC was the most important of the united front organizations that the Communist Party was able to establish in the immediate post war period.<sup>200</sup> Yet, despite the significant contribution made to its growth and success by the communist intellectuals within the party, they were often treated with suspicion.<sup>201</sup> Many of these who joined during the war were accused of 'having an advanced liberal-democratic rather than a revolutionary outlook'.<sup>202</sup> Lance Sharkey, the party's General Secretary, pointed out that many had joined the party not only for reasons such as poverty and unemployment, but also because they were deeply angered at the failure of capitalism to deal with problems in education, science and culture.<sup>203</sup> This made them prone to 'revisionist' ideas, or ideas that challenged the basic tenets of Marxism as determined by the Communist Party

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<sup>198</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, pp.104-105.

<sup>199</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, Ibid; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.263.

<sup>200</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p.104.

<sup>201</sup> Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.248.

<sup>202</sup> Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p.130.

<sup>203</sup> Lance Sharkey, 'Communism and the Intellectuals'. In L. Harry Gould (ed.), *The Sharkey Writings. Theory Politics Polemics*, Forest Lodge, nd, p.162.

leadership. When, in the aftermath of the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, intellectual members challenged the party's support for the Soviet Union's actions, and later left the party, the party leadership's views were seemingly confirmed.<sup>204</sup>

The party imposed on all its members a hierarchal and rigid ideological straightjacket. For Communist intellectuals this caused enormous problems. It isolated them from other intellectuals, and undermined the honesty that should have been central to intellectual activity.<sup>205</sup> It was a burden that many Communist intellectuals committed to radical reform were prepared to accept. In 1948, Amirah Inglis wrote to a friend in England, about two former Melbourne University Labor Club members who were now questioning the Soviet Union policy in Eastern Europe. Inglis wrote: 'There are two sides, and it's come to the "either you're with us or against us" stage'.<sup>206</sup> In a similar way, Jack Hughes, a Communist Party leader in this period, later wrote: 'We had fanatical faith, there's no other word for it, in anything that came from Moscow and the Comintern'.<sup>207</sup>

Yet, despite this appearance of uniformity and compliance, many party intellectuals including those working in the peace movement maintained private doubts about party policy. Amirah Inglis recounts the long discussions that occurred at her home and at party headquarters when the Korean War broke out. Ian Turner, as secretary of the Australian Student Labour Federation, was willing to argue the party position that the war was a result of American aggression. However, as secretary of the APC, Turner felt it

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<sup>204</sup> Lance Sharkey, 'Intellectuals and Revisionism' in L. Harry Gould (ed.), *The Sharkey Writings*, pp.164-65.

<sup>205</sup> Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.248.

<sup>206</sup> Inglis, *Hammer & Sickle*, p.64.

<sup>207</sup> Nancy Wills, *Shades of Red*, Lota, Communist Arts Group, 1980, p.105.

was important that the peace movement seek an end to the conflict without taking sides.<sup>208</sup> The party leadership demanded that he put the party position.<sup>209</sup> At a Melbourne Town Hall meeting called by the APC to discuss the Korean War, Turner 'did what he had to do', abided by party discipline, and put the party line.<sup>210</sup> After Stalin died, the party leadership directed Bill Gollan, the party's main activist in the NSW peace movement, to give a talk to a meeting of schoolteachers about Stalin's 'greatness'.<sup>211</sup> Despite having doubts 'for many years' about Stalin, particularly after reading about the purges, Gollan complied.<sup>212</sup>

The intellectuals that remained in the Communist Party were not the heartless and mindless Stalinist bureaucrats as portrayed by anti-Communist rhetoric. As we have seen, they were often consumed by self-doubt about party policy, but lacked the confidence to challenge it. As Bill Gollan explains, '...to raise questions like the truth we found out later would have been fatal...we would have been out of the party like a shot'.<sup>213</sup> The Communist intellectuals were still committed to fundamental social change and saw the Communist Party, despite all its limitations, as the only organization that was capable of achieving this. The solution, as Robin Gollan, Bill's brother explained was 'to close ranks against the strong growth of anti-socialism in any of its forms'.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, they remained active in the peace movement committed to building a world free from the threat of a war.

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<sup>208</sup> Inglis, *Hammer & Sickle*, p.95; Turner, 'My Long March', p.129.

<sup>209</sup> Inglis, *Hammer & Sickle*, Ibid., Turner, 'My Long March', Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Inglis, *Hammer & Sickle*, Ibid., Turner, 'My Long March', Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> John Murphy, 'Loyalty and the Communists', p.114.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., pp.114-115.

<sup>214</sup> Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.248.

## **Conclusions**

The key activists in the APC shared some common characteristics. They had been shaped by their experiences in the Great Depression and the Second World War. It had turned them into committed anti-capitalist activists convinced of the need for radical changes in Australian society. The key role that the Soviet Union played in the defeat of German fascism appeared to confirm the superiority of socialism. They could not understand the sudden change in international relations that turned a former friend into a permanent and deadly enemy. The promise of a better and fairer world appeared to evaporate under a welter of harsh rhetoric. It made them more determined than ever to continue the struggle to achieve this world free from the threat of a nuclear war, which could destroy humanity.

Their refusal to denounce the Soviet Union and join the anti-Communist crusade led to persistent charges that the peace activists were fellow-travellers committed to promoting the interests of the Soviet Union. Yet, as the evidence in this chapter has indicated the basis of intellectual and religious peace activism was idealism that existed independently of any illusions in the Soviet Union. While it is possible to criticise these illusions, the fight for peace at the height of the Cold War was both an understandable and justifiable campaign.

## Chapter Four.

### **The Media and the Australian Peace Council**

The last two chapters have examined the events that led to the formation of the APC and the ideological aspects of intellectual and religious peace activism. The emergence of the APC and its announcement that it planned to hold a peace Congress in Melbourne in April 1950 attracted widespread comment from the printed media. This chapter will analyse this media coverage, which will thereby place peace activism within the wider political context of the early Cold War.

#### **The Catholic Press**

The Catholic Church's attitude towards the APC was shaped by its fervent anti-communism. This anti-communism dated back to 1846 when Pope Pius IX referred to Communism as 'that infamous doctrine of so-called Communism...which...if once adopted, would utterly destroy the rights, property and possessions of all men, and even society itself'.<sup>215</sup> Once the APC had been designated as a Communist Front, the Catholic Church and its Melbourne newspaper, *The Advocate*, was consistent and unrelenting in its opposition to the activities of the APC.

For most of its existence in Australia, the Catholic Church had generally been treated with hostility and suspicion. The Cold War provided the opportunity for the Church to demonstrate its loyalty to Australia and move towards the mainstream of Australian society. At the same time, it was able to draw a sharp distinction between the Catholic

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<sup>215</sup> Ormonde, *The Movement*, p.1.

Church that was united in its opposition to Communism and its activities, and the actions of the Protestant clergymen who were active in the peace movement.

In June 1949, *The Advocate* criticized the presence of Methodist and Presbyterian youth groups on a 'communist' organized student March on Canberra.<sup>216</sup> It contrasted their behaviour with that of the Catholic youth who had formed the largest group on the Empire Youth March that had been held around the same time.<sup>217</sup> This situation had occurred because young people had been set a bad example by Protestant peace activists such as the '... "Red Dean" of Canterbury, as well as numerous other reverend guiding lights, [who] proclaim their support of a philosophy and organized world movement dedicated determinedly to the extinction of Christianity and all that it stands for and yet remain undisciplined in their responsible offices of Christian clergymen'.<sup>218</sup> Just before the April 1950 Peace Congress opened, *The Advocate* attacked 'a clergyman on the Yarra Bank for supporting a 'movement inspired, devised and sponsored by the Cominform'.<sup>219</sup> The article also reported the criticism of Hewlett Johnson by Lord Vansittart, former Permanent Under-Secretary of the British Foreign office who said 'it is pretty hard on us Protestants to be saddled with that evil charlatan and his acolytes'.<sup>220</sup>

Other Catholic-influenced newspapers adopted views similar to *The Advocate*. In an

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<sup>216</sup> 'Youthful Dupes of the Reds', *The Advocate*, 2 June 1949, p.6.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> ' "Red Dean" Not Wanted', *The Advocate*, 6 April 1950, p.6. This is almost certainly a reference to Frank Hartley who spoke at the Yarra Bank on behalf of the Methodist Church. For details, see Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail*, pp. 75-80. Also reports on the 'Yarra Bank Platform' in *The Spectator*, 8 February p.71 & 3 May 1950 where there are short reports on Frank Hartley speaking on peace related issues.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

editorial, *The Tribune* (Catholic) described the 'Peace Campaign' as part of the Soviet Union's 'softening up those nations whose leaders are beginning to organize defence against Communist revolutionary aggression'.<sup>221</sup> The article also attacked Hewlett Johnson whose attendance at the Peace Congress 'was a deep embarrassment to the leaders of his own church, whose authority he has treated with persistent defiance'.<sup>222</sup> *News-Weekly*, the paper of The Movement that was leading the fight against the Communist influence in the trade unions, was equally vocal in its condemnation of the APC. It claimed that the APC would provide a front for the Communist Party if the Menzies Government banned the party.<sup>223</sup> It went on to comment that the role of the APC was to 'push the 'Moscow Peace line''.<sup>224</sup> In another article, it described students who were involved in the peace campaign as being 'no longer students but political activists'.<sup>225</sup> In his column, John C. Calhoun said that those churches that wanted to remain free of State interference must in return impose 'effective Christian discipline ... in regard to the teaching and conduct of its personnel'.<sup>226</sup> This was a clear reference to Hewlett Johnson and the other Protestant peace activists who remained ministers and committed peace activists and yet faced no sanctions from their churches.

### **The non-daily papers**

The non-daily media coverage of the APC Congress was focused primarily on Hewlett Johnson. This coverage varied between the uses of ridicule, sarcasm, and crude red

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<sup>221</sup> 'Peace, Freedom and U.S.S.R', *The Tribune*, 20 April 1950, p.4.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> 'Australian Peace Council Exposed', *News-Weekly*, 1 February 1950, p.1.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> 'They Heard the Party Line, But Didn't Bite', *News-Weekly*, 1 February 1950, p.2.

<sup>226</sup> John C. Calhoun, 'The Columnists Who Work For Uncle Joe', *News-Weekly*, 19 April 1950, p.5.

baiting. The aim was to undermine the potential appeal of Hewlett Johnson to wider layers of Australian society beyond that of the Communist Party and its close sympathisers. As a high official within the Anglican Church, Hewlett Johnson's active participation in the peace movement offered a direct challenge to the prevailing Cold War ideology, which had to be blunted

A fascinating portrayal of Hewlett Johnson's personality and ideology was published in the *Australian's Women's Weekly*, on 29 April 1950.<sup>227</sup> The emphasis was often on his eccentricities rather than his support for Communism and the peace movement. Hewlett Johnson hated telephones, television, crossword puzzles, and quizzes.<sup>228</sup> As well as his support for the peace movement Hewlett Johnson was involved in other campaigns. He had spoken to over two hundred meetings about the need for a state sponsored communal dishwashing service, a theory he had developed after he had to wash-up each week on the maid's day off.<sup>229</sup> Hewlett Johnson had also supported campaigns for wider seats in third-class train compartments and open-necked shirts for deans.<sup>230</sup>

There was, however, also a more negative picture presented of Hewlett Johnson in the paper. Despite his support for socialism, he enjoyed the trappings of office with its rich ceremonial and gorgeous vestments.<sup>231</sup> Hewlett Johnson could greet Princess Elizabeth with great enthusiasm one day, and a few days later shake hands with Stalin with the

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<sup>227</sup> 'Controversial cleric is expert on washing up: "Red Dean" here for conference talks of his home and family', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 29 April 1950, p.33.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.



same degree of enthusiasm.<sup>232</sup> The implication was that Hewlett Johnson was either naïve, or wanted to keep a foot in both of the two Cold War camps. This view was reinforced when Hewlett Johnson said he believed that the Royal Family would not be harmed if the Communists took power in Britain.<sup>233</sup>

*Smith's Weekly* was one of the most vocal critics of Communism and the APC. The tones of its articles were bitter, irreverent, and aimed at generating the maximum public hostility towards the Communist Party and its activities. It claimed that the growth of the APC was due to the Communist Party and Communist dominated organizations such as the League of ex-Servicemen that had mobilized their forces behind the APC.<sup>234</sup> It reported that Frank Hartley had joined Australia-Soviet House at the time others were leaving it due to its support for the Soviet Union.<sup>235</sup> While the paper acknowledged Hartley's war record, it claimed he knew nothing 'about the type of war the Communists fight'.<sup>236</sup>

In *Smith's Weekly* coverage of Hewlett Johnson's visit, the vitriol reached new heights. It described the 'Red Dean as a 'notorious friend of Soviet Russia' who had come to Australia to 'plug' the Communist controlled 'World Peace Movement'.<sup>237</sup> A secret Cominform resolution, which claimed 'For the first time in mankind's history there has been formed an organized peace front and it is led by the Soviet Union', was cited as

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> 'Comrades Hop on the Peace Band Wagon', *Smith's Weekly*, 22 October 1949, p.3.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> 'This is the Peace That Passeth Understanding: Deluded Dean and his Dupes', *Smith's Weekly*, 15 April 1950, p.8.

evidence.<sup>238</sup> Russia and its agents in the West were in reality supporting ‘the kind of bloody peace that China has known; the peace of terrorism in Malaya...the peace of death that opponents of Communism know in the countries of the Iron Curtain’.<sup>239</sup> The real situation was as the paper explained that those ‘who decline to bow before the Hammer and Sickle, the Kremlin offers the peace-of the grave’.<sup>240</sup>

*Smith's Weekly* also criticized the Peace Congress using the similar language. The Congress was one of the ‘most fantastic and intensive “Praise Uncle Joe” propaganda campaign in memory’.<sup>241</sup> After attending the Congress, *Smith's Weekly* had no doubts about calling it ‘a colossal publicity stunt for Russia’.<sup>242</sup> Almost every speaker had attacked the Allies, and had heaped lavish praise on Russia, without seriously addressing the issue of peace and how it could be achieved.<sup>243</sup> The Communist Party had ‘collared the Congress by the scruff of the neck and held it firmly until the last of the 800 delegates from all States had left for home’.<sup>244</sup> The party had manipulated the emotions of the conference by pacing its members through the audience to orchestrate the cheering of the speakers.<sup>245</sup>

### **The Communist Press**

In contrast to other newspapers, the support of the communist press for the peace

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>241</sup> ‘Behind the Scenes at Melbourne’s Peace Congress: “Praise Uncle Joe” they Chorused’, *Smith's Weekly*, 29 April 1950, p.3.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

movement was, not surprisingly, extensive and unqualified. As early as February 1949 *Tribune* reported on a declaration by Stalin calling on America to sign a statement outlawing war.<sup>246</sup> In May 1949, *The Guardian* covered the Paris Peace Congress one of the events that led to the formation of the APC in July 1949.<sup>247</sup> In October 1949, *Tribune* publicised Senator William Morrow's speech in the Senate supporting the holding of peace conferences across Australia.<sup>248</sup> It also urged its readers to establish hundreds of peace auxiliaries based on special interest groups such as students, workers, scientists, and artists as an effective way of building the movement.<sup>249</sup> When a Brisbane group was formed, it received front-page coverage in the *Tribune*.<sup>250</sup>

In the weeks before the Peace Congress *The Guardian* increased its coverage of the peace movement. It reported on the denial of visas by the United States Government to a peace delegation that included Hewlett Johnson, Pablo Picasso, and others.<sup>251</sup> The paper also outlined the plans of the APC to distribute 250,000 leaflets to ALP supporters denying that it was a Communist Front.<sup>252</sup> Just before the Congress, an article said that between fifteen to twenty thousand people were expected for the opening rally.<sup>253</sup> The issues after the Congress each gave several pages to describing the Congress and its decisions.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Rupert Lockwood, 'Stalin's Statement Points Way to Peace', *Tribune*, 4 February 1949, p.1.

<sup>247</sup> 'Australian on World Peace Committee' *The Guardian*, 6 May 1949, p.2; Rupert Lockwood, 'World's Leading Intellectuals Appeal to Australians: "Unite For Peace"', *The Guardian*, p.3.

<sup>248</sup> 'Senator Calls for Peace Conferences, Condemns Yankee Press Warmongers', *Tribune*, 26 October 1949, p.3.

<sup>249</sup> 'Help Form a Peace Auxiliary', *Tribune*, 26 October 1949, p.3.

<sup>250</sup> 'Great Rally In Unanimous Pledge to Impose Peace on the Warmongers', *Tribune*, 5 October 1949, p.1.

<sup>251</sup> 'U.S. Ban on Peace Speakers', *The Guardian*, 17 March 1950, p.6.

<sup>252</sup> 'Peace Council Reply to ALP', *The Guardian*, 31 March 1950, p.7.

<sup>253</sup> 'Thousands Will Hear Dean as Peace Congress Opens Here on April 16', *The Guardian*, 6 April 1950, p.3.

<sup>254</sup> *The Guardian*, 21 April 1950, pp. 4-6 & 28 April 1950, pp. 5-7.

## The mainstream press

One of the most interesting features of the daily media coverage of the APC Congress was that it was often free of the crude redbaiting that was prevalent in other sections of the media. One reason may have been by reporting Hewlett Johnson's opinions without embellishment the majority of Australians would have found them to be extreme and unacceptable. In such a situation the use of crude redbaiting reporting would have been unnecessary and may have alienated a readership that was more politically aware than the readers of other sections of the printed media.

The opening session of the Congress at the Exhibition Building was reported extensively in the *Age*.<sup>255</sup> A detailed account of Hewlett Johnson's speech was given including his call for people to join with Russia and other countries 'and speak with a mighty voice to rock war mongers from their thrones and introduce world peace'.<sup>256</sup> Other newspapers carried similar but less extensive reports.<sup>257</sup> After his arrival in Sydney following the Congress, Hewlett Johnson's press conference received wide coverage in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>258</sup> Hewlett Johnson said that the turmoil in Malaya was due to 'colonial policy', supported the right for the Chinese to settle in the empty spaces of Australia, and denied there were millions of prisoners in concentration camps in Russia.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> 'Peace Council Conference: Russia Against War Dean Tells Meeting', *Age*, 17 April 1950, p.3.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> 'Red Dean Says Russia Actuated By Motives of Peace', *The Examiner* (Launceston), 17 April 1950, p.8; 'Russia, Paragon of Peace: "Red Dean" Opens Australian Peace Conference', *Geelong Advertiser*, 17 April 1950, p.1; 'Russia Not Planning War-"Red" Dean', *Mercury* (Hobart), 17 April 1950, p.2; 'Thousands Cheer Red Dean's Speech', *Sydney Morning Herald*, p.4. All the newspapers agreed that 10,000 people were present.

<sup>258</sup> 'Let Chinese Fill Your Empty Spaces, Says Dean', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April 1950, p.4.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

It was, however, in the editorial columns that the Cold War themes of dupes, fellow-travellers and Communist manipulation reappeared. For the Adelaide *Advertiser* the APC Congress 'falls into this pattern of concealed infiltration and subversion'.<sup>260</sup> While 'not all the delegates to the congress are avowed Reds', they are 'fellow-travellers in the sense that wittingly or not, they are being mobilised for Communist purposes'.<sup>261</sup> Similarly, for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Congress was 'an outcrop of the current Soviet "peace offensive" and as such cannot be too clearly exposed'.<sup>262</sup> It was a Congress in which 'Reds and Pinks in a score of countries will send messages and supreme cachet-the Dean of Canterbury, Dr Hewlett Johnson will be there'.<sup>263</sup> The Brisbane *Courier-Mail* claimed that most of Australia's leading Communists were attending and the purpose of the Congress was 'to promote Communism'.<sup>264</sup>

In a similar way to papers previously cited many of the editorials focused on the personality and view of Hewlett Johnson. The language used was often direct and pointed. The Melbourne *Sun* said there was 'no reason to question Dr Johnson's sincerity, there is every reason for questioning his ability to form a realistic estimate of Bolshevism'.<sup>265</sup> In a second editorial the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that the 'Dean's views were well known' but the 'public will have at least expected that these views would be put forward in a critical and intelligent way'.<sup>266</sup> The Launceston *Examiner* commented that most English-speaking countries were 'almost unanimous in regarding as

<sup>260</sup> 'Peace Congress', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 17 April 1950, p.2.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> 'Australian Peace Congress is Communist Device', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 April 1950, p.2.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> 'The Red Dean', *Courier-Mail*, 18 April 1950, p.2.

<sup>265</sup> 'The Rosy Dean', *Sun* (Melbourne), 19 April 1950, p.14.

<sup>266</sup> 'The red Dean's Rosy Spectacles', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 April 1950, p.2.

a menace to our freedom the Red credo to which Dr Johnson is devoted'.<sup>267</sup> The daily media had joined the other sections of the media in opposing the APC and its activities. The language used may have been at times less extreme but it was steeped in the Cold War ideology of the times.

In the pre-television era, the print media played a crucial role in providing information and shaping political attitudes. Its near-virtual unanimous opposition to the APC and the visit of Hewlett Johnson muzzled the possibility of alternative views being heard. Only the Communist press was fully in support of the Congress and provided support and coverage. However, this support was used by other sections of the media and conservative politicians to support its claims that the APC was a Communist Front. This meant that the APC faced the almost insurmountable difficulties of explaining its ideas and building its organization amid a wave of hostility and the lack of an opportunity to present its views to a wider audience.

The themes of the media coverage echoed the Cold War rhetoric. Those individuals who questioned government policy were deemed to be fellow-travellers, dupes, or just naïve. This language allowed the media to avoid discussion of the substantive issues involved and reinforced the isolation of the peace movement from the majority of Australians. This was most pronounced in the Catholic media which helped prevent any significant section of the Catholic population from joining the peace movement. The experience of the First World War in which large numbers of Catholics joined with radicals to oppose the Hughes Government over conscription was not to be repeated in the early Cold War.

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<sup>267</sup> 'The Views of Dean Johnson', *Examiner*, 18 April 1950.

There was however, a small number of supporters in Melbourne of the American radical Catholic pacifist and social justice campaigner Dorothy Day that attempted to articulate an alternative Catholic theology to the dominant view presented by the Catholic hierarchy. But it was not until the emergence of the mass protests against the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s that they were able to achieve any significant level of support within the Catholic community.<sup>268</sup>

The other sections of the print media also played a similar role in insulating the majority of Australians from considering the views of the APC. The juxtaposition of Hewlett Johnson arriving in Australia on the same plane as a badly injured British policeman from the Malayan campaign reinforced views that the peace movement was disloyal and a threat to traditional Australian values. At a time when the White Australia policy was deeply ingrained in Australian society, Hewlett Johnson's suggestion that the Chinese be allowed to settle in Australia would have confirmed this perception of incipient treason.

Yet, despite these prevailing attitudes 10,000 people attended the peace Congress. It was an indication that beneath the climate of fear and intimidation there were many Australians believed that there were alternative ways of solving international disputes. The very size of the Congress meant that there were many non-Communists present. The fear of the recently elected Menzies Government was that in the event of a war breaking out there would be significant numbers of Australians opposed to Government policy. The precedent of Australians voting twice in referenda against attempts to introduce

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<sup>268</sup> Val Noone, *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam*, Richmond, Spectrum Publications, 1993, p. 53.

conscription in 1916-17 was not lost on the Menzies Government. Shortly after the Congress ended, the Menzies Government introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Act which sought *inter alia* to undermine any potential opposition to its plans.



## Chapter Five.

### Conclusion

On Remembrance Day, 11 November 1951, a statement entitled the 'Call to the People of Australia' received widespread publicity including being read out by the chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission straight after the 7pm news.<sup>269</sup> The leaders of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches, as well as the Australian Council of the World Council of Churches, and all the state Chief Justices or their representatives signed the statement.<sup>270</sup> Its central message was that Australia was in danger at home and abroad 'from moral and intellectual apathy, from the mortal enemies of mankind which sap the will and weaken the understanding and breed evil dissensions'.<sup>271</sup> The statement exemplified the political climate of the time. It leads directly to this: question why, in the face of such hostility did some Australians, including ministers in some of these churches, persist with their support for the peace movement?

For conservative critics the APC was nothing more than a Communist Front with the non-communist activists either dupes or fellow-travellers. Yet, this answer is both unconvincing and unsatisfactory. It fails to adequately explain the long history of religious activism in Australia around peace issues that stretched back to the Sudan War. This, obviously, was well before the establishment of the Soviet Union. There were clearly other factors involved in religious peace movement activism beside; what at times was either an implicit or explicit support for the Soviet Union.

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<sup>269</sup> Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand. Religion in Australian History*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1987, p.1.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., pp.1-2.

A critical factor that shaped this involvement was the nature of modern warfare. While it may have been possible in the past for Christian theologians to support some wars under the 'Just War' principles, this was no longer the situation for many Christians. Modern wars not only involved the deaths of those engaged directly in the fighting, but also threatened to kill millions of innocent civilians. The development of nuclear weapons and their possible use in the next war could have meant the end of human civilization. These developments led the Student Christian Movement and the Unitarian Church into peace movement activity at the end of the Second World War. Frank Hartley had returned from the war, which he had supported convinced that humans had to find an alternative way to solve international disputes. This activity predated the Communist Party support for the peace movement and is convincing evidence that religious activists' support for the peace movement was deep-seated and derived primarily from their religious outlooks.

The Cold War forced politics into a rigid ideological framework in which there was little, if any, middle ground. The world was divided into two camps in which the anti-imperialist bloc led by the Soviet Union opposed the western capitalist democracies. In practice, this meant that those non-communists who questioned western government policies went into an alliance with the Communist Party- the only other significant force prepared to challenge these policies. The hostility of the Labor Party then strongly influenced by anticommunist forces, isolated the peace movement from the majority of the trade unions, which in the past had been an integral part of the movement. The impact of this was to emphasize the role of the Communist Party which, because of its

superior organizational skills and commitment of its members, was able to achieve a greater influence than might otherwise have been expected.

The first half of the twentieth century saw the radical left attract considerably more support than the conservative right.<sup>272</sup> However, by 1950 the retreat by many intellectuals from any association with radical politics was in full swing. It was therefore an act of considerable political courage to challenge this dominant political consensus and argue in favour a position that the majority of Australians found abhorrent. Both Alf Dickie and Frank Hartley came under frequent pressure at times from within their churches over their peace movement activity. Other non-communist intellectuals also had to face possible adverse consequences such as loss of jobs and social isolation as a direct result of their involvement with the APC. Yet, despite this some non-communists persisted with their involvement. This undermines the presumption that the non-communists were dupes as this implies a lack of awareness about the consequences of working with the Communist Party, which was clearly not the situation.

Communists, particularly intellectuals, also came under sustained attack from conservative politicians, the media, and many churches for their perceived disloyalty to Australia and their support for the Soviet Union. This support was undeniable. The important point is that this was not the only factor involved that helped shape their political activity. Those individuals who remained in the Communist Party during the Cold War anti-Communist offensive had been profoundly affected by the terrible impact

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<sup>272</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life*, London, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2002, p.130.

of the Great Depression and the Second World War. These events had convinced them of the need for radical changes in Australian society and they became committed communists. For these individuals, the Soviet Union and its leadership, continued to represent the promise of a new and better society.

Despite this commitment, the position of intellectuals in the Communist Party was at times a difficult one. Their continued membership of the Communist Party is one indication of their determination to struggle for a better world. In a party that was composed overwhelmingly of trade union activists, the precise role of intellectuals remained uncertain. Many of the party intellectuals had disapproved of what they considered sectarian trends in party policies that had developed at the end of the war and reduced their party activity.<sup>273</sup> The development of the peace movement in 1949 provided an area of political activity in which communist intellectuals could find an outlet and maintain their idealism. It had taken the party leadership two years to accept the need for a broad-based peace movement since it was first suggested by the Communist Party branch at Melbourne University in 1947.<sup>274</sup> Despite the apparent support of the party leadership for the APC, it remained predominantly an area of activity for the party intellectuals and not the party as a whole.<sup>275</sup>

The Communist Party demanded from its members a high level of political activity. In return, the party established a circle of like-minded people, which could close ranks against a hostile world. For communist intellectuals this was particularly important.

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<sup>273</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p.104.

<sup>274</sup> Turner, 'My Long March', p.127.

<sup>275</sup> Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p.105

They were far more isolated than their working class comrades and needed to surround themselves with people who shared their outlook. To leave the party meant cutting ties permanently with friends of many years and struggling to establish a new life with new friends. It also often meant a retreat to political inactivity or perhaps joining the anti-Communist crusade as other former communists had done. It was not a course that a great many communist intellectuals committed to fundamental social changes were prepared to take at this stage.

This stance was reinforced by the crucial fact that outside the ranks of the Communist Party, there were no other significant radical alternatives. By 1950, the ALP was strongly influenced by 'The Movement', a fervent anti-Communist organization that had helped to strip the party of any semblance of its earlier radical traditions. In Sydney, a handful of Trotskyists fought to uphold the revolutionary democratic traditions of Marxism against both Stalinism and Cold War ideology.<sup>276</sup> However, for more than twenty years, Communists had regarded Trotskyism as a counter-revolutionary force and it was unthinkable that Communist Party members could join the Trotskyist movement.

Those intellectuals who remained members of the Communist Party faced these dilemmas in different ways. Bill Gollan suppressed his doubts about aspects of party policy, was active in the peace movement, and retained the view that the party could make a significant impact on Australian politics.<sup>277</sup> Others in the bipolar world of the Cold War found it easier to dismiss western claims about the Soviet Union as enemy

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<sup>276</sup> Hall Greenland, *Red Hot: The Life and Times of Nick Origlass 1908-1996*, Neutral Bay, Wellington Lane Press, 1998, pp.165-192.

<sup>277</sup> Murphy, 'Loyalty and the Communists', pp.114-15.

propaganda. Their membership of the party attracted public hostility, which they had to endure for the sake of a better world. There was also, for some, the impact of the witch-hunt which while it did not reach the same levels as McCarthyism in America, did have an impact on their working lives.

The real confirmation of the idealism that was often at the core of communist intellectuals' peace movement activity came in the aftermath of Khrushchev's 1956 speech and the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. This finally removed most illusions about the nature of the Soviet Union and the possibilities of its reform. It also opened up new avenues to radical reform of Australian society. For those not totally disillusioned with politics these new avenues included the post-split ALP, the trade unions, labour movement history writing, academia, the development of a new Australian culture, and eventually the emerging anti-Vietnam war movement and the new social movements. In these new movements, the former Communist intellectuals displayed the same kind of idealism that had taken them into the Communist Party and the peace movement in the first place.

The first APC Congress was held against a backdrop of virulent Cold War tensions. It was the first of a number of Peace Congresses that were to be held during the 1950s. Those who were involved had to face persistent claims that they were acting in the interests of the Soviet Union and undermining national unity. These claims helped to isolate the peace movement from achieving any significant levels of support at least in the first decade of the Cold War. These claims also constantly misrepresent the motives

of those who were involved in the peace movement. This thesis has shown that this involvement was primarily motivated by idealism and a desire to prevent the outbreak of a war that could destroy human civilization.

On Saturday morning 18 September 2004, around 50 people gathered for a peace breakfast at the Keilor Road Uniting Church, the former church of Alf Dickie.<sup>278</sup> The church has declared itself a ‘church for peace and non-violence’.<sup>279</sup> Its aim was to establish ‘peace and non-violence for our community and the world’.<sup>280</sup> Those present included local government, state, and federal parliamentary representatives. This was indicative of how far the present peace movement has achieved a breadth and depth of support. It is also an indication of the extent to which the debate over peace in the 1950s was distorted by Cold War tensions. That debate was part of the long continuum of peace movement activity that has challenged Australian involvement in war.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> The writer was present.

<sup>279</sup> ‘*Yes, we have a New Vision and Mission*’, Keilor Road Uniting Church, 2004.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

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