

Chapter Five

Calwell's 'Baltic Fascists' Are Not Welcome: The CPA and East European Migrants

Introduction

There was near unanimity in the Australian labour movement's racist attitude towards migration before World War Two. Almost alone in the working class movement at this time the CPA stressed the common interests of *all* workers in uniting against the common enemies of capitalism, mass unemployment and the rise of fascism. In this period it recruited many foreign born workers who shared its idealism and its absolute support for the Soviet Union. In contrast, the ALP was fervent in its support of the White Australia Policy, and deeply hostile towards non-Australian born workers. Similarly, unions such as the AWU barred many foreign born workers from its ranks. The introduction of the mass migration scheme following World War Two and the subsequent arrival of large numbers non-British migrants, posed a significant challenge for the CPA to maintain its internationalist traditions.

Australia's experiences during World War Two helped to convince the Labor Government that new policies were needed that would both guarantee Australia's post war security and develop Australia's relatively low industrial infrastructure. The government endorsed a policy of rapid population growth, with half of the projected annual increase in population to come from a programme of mass immigration. The original intention was that the overwhelming majority of these migrants would come from Britain. Arthur Calwell, Australia's first Minister of Immigration, argued that the common heritage between Australia and Britain would mean that British migrants could be rapidly assimilated into Australian society without causing social tensions or bitter conflicts. However, when the government failed to attract sufficient numbers of British migrants it was forced to turn to new and non-traditional sources in order to fulfil its ambitious targets.

The war had created an enormous flood of refugees. Many had fled the advancing Soviet armies and made their way towards Western Europe and what they considered to be safety. Some had been active collaborators with the German occupation forces, whilst others had been unwillingly forced into some form of service with the governments that were established by the Germans in Eastern Europe. Both groups feared possible reprisals from the new regimes that would be established by the Soviet forces. Still others had already witnessed the brutal reality of Stalinist rule and were determined not to repeat the experience. When the war ended there were also large numbers of prisoners of war and conscripted labourers in Western Europe who resisted being returned to their homelands which were now under Soviet occupation. As the new regimes in Eastern Europe consolidated themselves they forcibly expelled millions of ethnic Germans. What the majority of the people from these groups had in common was a hardened and persistent anti-Communist outlook. Many of Australia's earliest post-war migrants came from the ranks of these refugees.

The issue of mass migration posed a particular dilemma for the CPA. Its internationalist outlook should have made it more receptive to the arrival of workers from other countries. However, it was well aware that many Australian workers, despite the recent war, continued to hold racist attitudes towards potential migrants. There was also a widespread fear that mass migration would be used to drive down wages and working conditions. In the end the Party remained formally opposed to mass migration throughout the 1950s and in resolutions repeatedly called for its cessation or a reduction in the annual intake. However, in sharp contrast to many of the historical traditions of the labour movement, the CPA argued that once migrants arrived in Australia they should be fully accepted by the trade unions with the same rights and responsibilities as other Australian workers.

This chapter focuses on the CPA's response and the unions they influenced to the arrival of around 220,000 East European and German refugees from 1948 onwards. It will examine the response to the arrival of migrants from countries such as Greece, Italy and Malta. The East European refugees (or Displaced Persons) were a significant proportion of Australia's initial migrant intake and they arrived just as the former alliance with the Soviet Union was finally breaking down. German migrants started to arrive in 1952 when Cold War tensions

were at their peak and war with the Soviet Union seemed imminent. For the CPA, the Cold War and Australia's mass migration programme were linked, and Australia's acceptance of these refugees was its contribution to the western alliance against the Soviet Union.

Despite its call that migrants should have equality with Australian-born workers, the CPA reacted differently when East European refugees started to arrive. It waged a prolonged and bitter campaign against their arrival. Communist-led unions either attempted to prevent their entry into the workforce or ensured that they were placed into jobs with the lowest pay and worse conditions. Entire groups of people were condemned either as 'fascist collaborators', or people who had consciously abandoned the building of socialist societies in their homelands. They were also seen as a potential strikebreakers or an anti-union workforce. The Communist Party's objection to their arrival was clearly based on political grounds, and not on traditional labour movement racism. However it moved considerably in this direction. Its campaign against these migrants consciously drew on the racist traditions of the Australian labour movement to boost support for its campaign. For a period, the CPA press and many trade union journals (not just Communist) used the offensive epithet 'Balts' to describe all East European migrants before the term was quietly dropped after the Party started to shift its political position. Similarly, when Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavs still resident in Australia were described as 'fascist agents' before once again the term was abandoned when the political position was changed after 1953.

The mass migration programme commenced at a time when Australia faced an acute housing shortage that continued into the mid 1950s. Refugees were accused of receiving favourable housing treatment and living in luxury, while large numbers of Australians were forced to live in crowded and rundown accommodation. The BWIU waged a long-standing public campaign against the construction of migrant hostels claiming that it was diverting resources away from other Australians. Once again the campaign was designed to appeal to the racist traditions of the labour movement. This campaign was to fade away by the 1950s as the housing crisis started to ease and the campaign no longer had a focus.

Pre-World War Two Migration and the Labour Movement

In the period before World War One, the IWW was the most consistent opponent of the widespread racism that dominated the Australian labour movement. At a time when many trade unions excluded workers on the basis of their ethnic origin, the Sydney IWW club declared in 1911: 'The I.W.W. knows no distinction of race, creed, or colour. Its policy is one of international working-class solidarity'.¹ Within the IWW there were ethnic networks of Russians, Bulgarians and Italians.² The IWW criticised the AWU for its racist policies and their refusal to recruit Asian workers.³ In short, the IWW attempted to show that it was theoretically possible to build a unified labour movement that would encompass both the Australian-born and migrant worker. Many of the internationalist concepts of the IWW would be taken up by the newly formed CPA in the 1920s.

During the 1920s it was not uncommon for the labour movement to organise campaigns or voice their opposition to migrants, particularly those from a non-Anglo Saxon background. As a result of a World War One agreement between the British and Italian Governments, Italians were able to emigrate to Australia.⁴ The agreement saw a steady increase in the number of Italians arriving in Australia which rose from 631 in 1920 to a peak of 7884 in 1927.⁵ There was widespread opposition from the vast majority of the labour movement to their arrival. In 1925 the *Queensland Worker* claimed that 'Mediterranean scum' were overrunning the country.⁶ Their views were repeated by ALP leaders. For example, both Scullin and Chifley criticised the Federal Government for allowing high levels of migration of Italians which threatened the living standards of Anglo-Saxon Australians.⁷ Their comments were supported by Evatt who argued in *Labor Daily* that current scientific knowledge clearly showed that 'certain racial groups' could not be assimilated and were therefore a threat to Australian trade unionists.⁸ In the post World War Two period Chifley

¹ Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p.80.

² *Ibid.*, p.70.

³ *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁴ Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia Since 1901*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2008, p.82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.107.

⁶ Hearn & Knowles, *One Big Union*, p.184.

⁷ Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p.35; Day, *Chifley*, p.231.

⁸ Tennant, *Evatt*, p.60.

and Evatt were key members of the Labor government that developed the mass immigration programme that was to transform Australia.

The CPA and Migrants before World War Two

In contrast to the dominant chauvinism of the 1920s labour movement, the CPA almost from its inception was internationalist in outlook and as far as possible in practice. In 1926 the Comintern had called upon the Party to establish strong links with foreign-speaking migrants and recruit them to the Party.⁹ By the late 1920s the Comintern had been successful in imposing a common programme on national Communist parties. Thus, when migrant Communists arrived in Australia they found in the CPA a Party with similar ideals and outlook.¹⁰ During the 1920s and 1930s the internationalist stance of the CPA and its strong anti-fascist policies resonated with many migrants and led them to join the CPA.

In the 1920s Federal Governments developed a programme to bring to Australia large numbers of British migrants. It had many similar features to the more extensive programme that was to be introduced after the end of World War Two.¹¹ It saw 212,000 out of a total 282,000 British migrants arriving in Australia with government assistance.¹² Among them were Scottish industrial migrants who brought with them strong traditions of socialist ideas and trade unionism. A few were even Communists.¹³ They joined Scottish Communists already in Australia. Tom Wright, an early Communist leader, as well as J. B. Miles, who was to replace him as Party secretary, came from a Scottish background.¹⁴ Many of the early Communist coalminers such as Charlie Nelson, Bill Orr, Jock Lindop, and Jock Jamieson in Lithgow carried strong roots to the Scottish labour movement.¹⁵ At the time there was often opposition from ALP and trade union leaders to the arrival of British migrants. For example, in 1922 Scullin claimed that immigration led to unemployment and immigrants were forced to live in poor conditions.¹⁶ The ready

⁹ Macintyre, *Reds*, p.131.

¹⁰ Charles A Price, *South Europeans in Australia*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1963, p.303.

¹¹ Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp.80-100.

¹² R.T. Applegard, *British Emigration to Australia*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1984, p.31; A. J. Hammerton & Alistair Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p.29.

¹³ Malcolm Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2008, p.72.

¹⁴ Macintyre, *Reds*, pp. 69, 117.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.114-115.

¹⁶ Richards, *Destination Australian*, p.106.

acceptance by the CPA of British migrants into its ranks was therefore against the prevailing trend in the labour movement. Yet, as we shall see, in the post World War Two period, the Party would use the anti-British chauvinism of the 1920s as a justification for opposing migration.

Other migrant groups also found close affinity with the CPA. The emergence of fascist or reactionary governments in many countries in Europe from the 1920s onwards forced many left-wing activists into exile. When some of these political refugees arrived in Australia they formed their own organisations that were often linked to the CPA. For example, Croatian migrants established the *Borbeni Radnicki Pokiet* (Militant Workers Organisation) with branches including Broken Hill, Boulder-Kalgoorlie, Perth, Sydney Melbourne, and in a number of centres in far North Queensland.¹⁷ In Fremantle Paddy Troy established strong links with the Yugoslav community which contained many Communists.¹⁸ During World War Two the strongly pro-Tito stance of the Yugoslav community further strengthened the ties with the CPA.¹⁹ Thus, the majority of Yugoslav migrants before World War Two were left-wing in outlook and supported a unified Yugoslavia. In sharp contrast, those arriving after the war, as we shall see, were often virulently anti-Communist and opposed to a unified Yugoslavia. When they arrived in Australia they encountered widespread opposition from the CPA and Communist-led unions.

In North Queensland the CPA was able to form strong links with Italian migrants during the six month strike by sugarcane industry workers in 1935. The hostility of the AWU to migrant workers provided the opening for the Party to emerge as the real representative of the workers in the industry.²⁰ In Kalgoorlie, CPA members took the lead in defending Italian and Yugoslav miners during race riots in 1934.²¹ The Western Australian CPA was

¹⁷ Menghetti, *The Red North*, p.71; Charles Price, 'Post-War Migration to Australia' in Henry Mayer(ed.), *Australian Politics: A Second Reader with Revisions*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1971, p.41; Mato Tkalcevic, *Croats in Australia: An Information and Resources Guide*, Burwood (Vic.), Victoria College Press, 1988, p.23.

¹⁸ Macintyre, *Militant*, p.102.

¹⁹ Ilija Sutalo, *Croatians in Australia: Pioneers, Settlers and their Descendants*, Kent Town (South Australia), Wakefield Press, 2004, p.207; Tkalcevic, *Croats in Australia*, p.27.

²⁰ Macintyre, *Reds*, pp.258-259; Diane Menghetti, 'The Weil's Disease Strike, 1935' in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*, St Lucia (Qld.), University of Queensland Press, 1983, pp.202-216.

²¹ Justina Williams, *The First Farrow*, Willagee (WA), Lone Hand Press, 1976, pp.143-147.

able to recruit migrant workers such as Lou Nardi who had been a Communist Party member in Italy from 1922 before arriving in Australia in 1928.²² The CPA's strong opposition to the growth of fascism led to some Jewish migrants establishing Jewish branches of the CPA in Sydney and Melbourne in the 1930s.²³ In 1945 Bernie Taft, a German Jewish migrant, was appointed Victorian director of the Marx School and shortly afterwards was elected to the Victorian state committee of the CPA.²⁴ His appointment to such prominent positions a few years after arriving in Australia, is an indication that migrants faced no insurmountable problems in rising to the higher levels in the Party's organisation.

The CPA in the 1930s became an ethnically diverse organisation.²⁵ Its ranks were open to anyone who shared their political goals irrespective of their ethnic origin. At a time when there was often widespread chauvinism in the labour movement the CPA actions offered an alternative course that workers could follow. For example, a Greek branch of the CPA was formed in 1933. This was approximately thirty years before the ALP responded to the post-war migration by establishing ethnically-based branches.²⁶ Its message was that working class unity was the only way through which capitalism could be overthrown. However, the CPA was not totally immune from displays of chauvinism. In 1934 the *Workers' Weekly* condemned 'Comrades [who] still use the still use the terms "Pommie", "Dago", "Nigger" and so forth'.²⁷ The strength of the CPA was that it recognised that such racist language was unacceptable and often took steps to eliminate it from the everyday language of Communists. Overt displays of chauvinism were therefore clearly unacceptable to the majority of Communists and this was undoubtedly one factor that convinced some migrants to join the CPA. The key to understanding the CPA attitude to migrants in this period was that it was often based on the presumed political orientation of the migrant. Many of the migrants entering Australia from the mid 1920s onwards were fleeing from repressive or fascist regimes and were therefore more receptive to the CPA

²² Ibid., p.171.

²³ Philip Mendes, 'Jews and the Left' in Geoffrey Brahm Levey & Philip Mendes (eds.), *Jews and Australian Politics*, Great Britain, Sussex Academic Press, 2004, p.75.

²⁴ Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp.44-46.

²⁵ Macintyre, *Reds*, p.267.

²⁶ George Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities: Their Struggles For Social Justice and Cultural Rights – The Role of Greek Australians*, Altona (Vic.), Common Ground Publishing, 2009, p.161.

²⁷ Ibid.

and its policies. In contrast, many of those arriving after World War Two were fleeing from Soviet imposed regimes. This, as we shall see, helped determine the Party's attitudes towards them.

The Mass Migration Programme

As early as 1943 Prime Minister John Curtin had indicated the necessity of a planned immigration programme at the end of the war.²⁸ The mass migration programme introduced by the Chifley Government was to have a major impact in transforming Australia's social and industrial structures from the late 1940s onwards. By 1960 over a million migrants had arrived in Australia including 742,000 British, 116,295 Dutch, 204,000 Italians, over 90,000 Germans and Austrians, and 68,000 Greeks.²⁹ When Calwell had announced that the programme was about to proceed he pledged that there would be ten British migrants for every non-British migrant.³⁰ His intention was to maintain Australia's 'racial purity' and in the process undermine any opposition to the policy from the trade unions which had a long history of opposing non-British migration.³¹

When the CPA opposed the continuation of the White Australia Policy Calwell saw it as a threat to the government's policy.³² As Millar points out, the CPA's opposition to the White Australia Policy was regarded by the ALP as a sign of its 'un-Australian' character.³³ The Federal ALP Secretary, Joe Chamberlain, warned ALP members in 1961 that membership of Immigration Reform Associations was incompatible with ALP membership.³⁴ The contrast between the two class parties was clear. It was not until 1965 that the Federal ALP finally removed its support for the White Australia Policy from its platform.³⁵ The difference between the ALP and CPA became apparent in June 1945. After

²⁸ Fred Alexander, *From Curtin to Menzies and After: Continuity or Confrontation?*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson (Australia), 1973, p.25; Applegard, *British Emigration to Australia*, p.34.

²⁹ Alexander Downer, 'The Influence of Migration on Australia's Foreign Policy', Roy Milne Lecture 1960.

³⁰ CPD, House of Representatives, Vol. 189, 22 November 1946, pp.502-11.

³¹ Alexander, *From Curtin to Menzies* p.57; Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-War Immigration*, Leichhardt (NSW), Pluto Press, 1988, pp.21-22.

³² Arthur A. Calwell, *Danger For Australia*, Carlton (Vic.). Industrial Printing and Publicity, 1949, p.6.

³³ J.D.B. Miller, 'Communism and Australian Foreign Policy' in J. D. B. Miller & T. H. Rigby (eds.), *The Disintegrating Monolith: Pluralist Trends in the Communist World*, Canberra, Australian National University, 1965, p.220.

³⁴ H. I. London, *Non-White Immigration and the "White Australia" Policy*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1970, p.86.

³⁵ McMullin, *Light on the Hill*, p.310; Rawson, *Labor in Vain?*, pp.115-116.

Ernie Thornton, the FIA National Secretary, supported the CPA's opposition to the White Australia Policy, the Balmain FIA branch, the centre of growing dissent to the Communist-led union leadership, supported Jack Beasley's opposition to Thornton's declaration.³⁶ Beasley was the local Federal Member of Parliament. At this time the CPA was the only significant Australian party that opposed the White Australia Policy.³⁷ The opposition from Communist-led unions was one of the factors that led to the erosion of wider union support for the policy from the late 1940s onwards.³⁸ The dominant position of the ALP in the working class has often tended to underestimate the fact that there was consistent opposition from other working class organisations to working class chauvinism as displayed by the ALP.³⁹

When Calwell could not honour his pledge that the vast majority of migrants would be of British origin he was forced to consider other alternative non-traditional sources so that the programme could be implemented. At the end of the war there were around eight to twelve million refugees in Europe and after many had returned to their homelands there were still 1.6 million refugees remaining in camps in Western Europe in 1947.⁴⁰ It was from these refugees that the majority of Australia's first post-war migrants came. In June 1947 Calwell signed an agreement with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) to accept an annual minimum intake of 12,000 people whose fares to Australia would be subsidised by the IRO.⁴¹ Australia's intake of 180,000 Displaced Persons after the war was second only to that of the United States.⁴² They included approximately 70,000 from Poland, 35,000 from the Baltic States, 25,000 from Yugoslavia with the rest coming mainly from Russia

³⁶ Greenland, *Red Hot*, p.169; Constance Lever-Tracy & Michael Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class: Ethnic Segmentation and Industrial Conflict in Australia*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988, p.171.

³⁷ Margaret Ann Franklin, *Black and White Australians: An Inter-Racial History 1788-1975*, South Yarra (Vic.), Heinemann Educational Australia, 1976, p.134; Jupp, *Australian Party Politics*, p.94.

³⁸ James Jupp, *Immigration*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 82, 112.

³⁹ Humphrey McQueen, *Gallipoli to Petrov: Arguing With Australian History*, North Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1984, p.148.

⁴⁰ Haebich, *Spinning the dream*, p.165; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration', p.76; Richards, *Destination Australia*, p.185

⁴¹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.165; Kiernan, *Calwell*, p.127; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration', p.78.

⁴² Mark Aarons, *Sanctuary: Nazi Fugitives in Australia*, Port Melbourne, William Heinemann Australia, 1989, p.xxi; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.165; Catherine Murphy (ed.), *Boatload of Dreams: Journeys by European Immigrant Workers 1947-1994*, Adelaide, United Trades and Labor Council (South Australia), 1994, p.1.

and Hungry.⁴³ From its inception the mass immigration programme was shaped by the tensions generated by the Cold War and the conflict with the Soviet Union.

For the Chifley Government the arrival of large numbers of virulent anti-Communist refugees was an attractive proposition.⁴⁴ It relied heavily on the advice from the IRO about the political reliability of refugees.⁴⁵ In Australia, the head of the IRO was Major C. E. M. Lloyd whose conservative politics would have assisted the immigration of anti-Communist migrants.⁴⁶ Australia's role in accepting such large numbers of anti-Communist refugees was recognised by the Western Powers as an important contribution to the struggle against the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ In 1947, H.E. Strakosch, a pre-war Austrian refugee and a Sydney manufacturer, argued that the Eastern European refugees were 'potential soldiers of democracy' and the Western Powers could not abandon them, otherwise it would be a repeat of pre-war appeasement policies.⁴⁸ Strakosch continued that while it was not possible to prevent the establishment of Soviet style regimes in Eastern Europe, by providing a home to the millions of refugees the Western Powers could send a powerful message of hope to the people resisting the expansion of Soviet power.⁴⁹

Their arrival in Australia coincided with an escalation of the conflict in the trade unions between the CPA and its opponents. Since the overwhelming majority of East European refugees were both Catholic and anti-Communist they actively supported the Catholic-influenced Industrial Groups and their campaign to eradicate Communist influence in the trade unions.⁵⁰ The foreign language newspapers for the Italian, Polish and Russian communities urged their readers to join their respective trade unions and support the anti-

⁴³ Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, p.35; Paul R. Wilson, *Immigrants and Politics*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1973, p.10.

⁴⁴ Aarons, *Sanctuary!*, p.110; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.165.

⁴⁵ Andrew Moore, *The Right Road? A History of Right-Wing Politics in Australia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.113; Egon F. Kunz, *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians*, Sydney, Australian National University Press, 1988, p.51.

⁴⁶ Moore, *The Right Road?*, p.113.

⁴⁷ Janis Wilton & Richard Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australians: The Post-War Migrant Experience*, Ringwood (Vic.), Penguin Books, 1984, p.20.

⁴⁸ H.E. Strakosch, 'National and International Significance of Immigration', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XIX no. 3, September 1947, p.52.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, p.59, 140; Holt, *A Veritable Dynamo*, p.126; Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, pp.187-188; Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p.31; Short, *Laurie Short*, p.98; Tennant, *Evatt*, pp.190-191.

Communist fight.⁵¹ After the 1955 ALP split East European migrants were more likely than any other migrant group to vote for the Democratic Labor Party.⁵² For example during the Warren by-election in Western Australia in 1958 Tony McGillick, a former Communist, helped to mobilise East European refugees to vote against the ALP candidate.⁵³ This entrenched and persistent anti-Communism was the most important factor in the CPA's enduring hostility to the presence of the East European migrants in the workplace.

Calwell understood the need for caution before he proceeded and the necessity of not alienating trade unionists who would be the group most affected by the introduction of tens of thousands of new workers into industry.⁵⁴ To achieve this he made a number of crucial concessions which helped to undermine their potential opposition. First, Calwell assured the trade union movement that migrants would not be used to worsen award conditions or be used in industrial disputes, which were the concerns of the majority of trade unionists, not just of the CPA.⁵⁵ Other conditions required migrants to work as directed for two years', work in jobs that were often unattractive to Australians particularly those in remote areas: were to be the first to be laid off irrespective of their length of service; and were not to engage in industrial action.⁵⁶ Australia was the only country that imposed a two-year indentured work requirement on IRO refugees.⁵⁷ If migrants breached any of the conditions they faced possible sanctions such as being sent to worse jobs or, in some circumstances, deported.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Miriam Gilson & Jerzy Zubrzycki, *The Foreign Language Press in Australia*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1967, pp.88-89.

⁵² Charles Price, 'Post-War Migration to Australia', in Mayer (ed.), *Australian Politics*, p.40; Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p.63.

⁵³ Tony McGillick, *Comrade No More*, West Perth, Tony McGillick, 1980, p.275.

⁵⁴ Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, p.13.

⁵⁵ Arthur A. Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not*, Hawthorn (Vic.), Lloyd O'Neil, 1972, p.104; Stephen Castles, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, & Michael Morrissey, *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Semise of Nationalism in Australia*, Sydney, Pluto Press Australia, 1992, p.48.

⁵⁶ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.165; Andrew Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9: The Displaced Persons Program', *Labour History*, no.47 (November 1984), pp.87-89; Richards, *Destination Australia*, p.185.

⁵⁷ Catherine Panich, *Sanctuary? Remembering Post-war Immigration*, North Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp. 13, 117.

⁵⁸ Betty & Antanas Birkskys, 'The Lithuanians in Australia', in Betty & Antanas Birkskys, Aldis L. Putnins, Inno Salasoo, *The Baltic Peoples: Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians in Australia*, Blackburn (Vic.), Collins, Migrant Hands, pp.54-55, Australasian Educa Press, 1986, p.21; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration', p.88; Nicholls, *Deported*, p.99; Panich, *Sanctuary?*, p.134; ,

Migrants did not start to arrive until all servicemen had returned and full employment had been achieved.⁵⁹ In 1945, with uncertainty about economic conditions and possible widespread unemployment, Calwell had rejected a demand from the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the immigration programme start immediately.⁶⁰ By 1947, there was a severe shortage of labour and this allowed the government to pursue its policy confident that the expanding economy would provide the necessary jobs.⁶¹ With the fear of unemployment clearly a non-issue, potential trade union opposition was undermined. For most of the 1950s, except during the recession in 1952, the majority of Australians supported the immigration policy. However, opposition was highest among unskilled and semi-skilled workers, a feature which would have assisted the CPA when it started to campaign against the arrival of the Displaced Persons.⁶²

In the immediate post-war period the Australian economy's demand was for young and unskilled workers. The mass immigration programme was designed to ensure a constant supply of the workers required to meet this demand. Migrants were to play a crucial role in the building of the great industrial infrastructures of the 1950s which underpinned Australia's economic expansion.⁶³ For example, migrants played a major role in the construction of the Snowy Mountains Scheme.⁶⁴ They were employed as railway fettlers often in remote parts of the country.⁶⁵ They also entered basic industry in large numbers. The 1961 census showed that fifty percent of post-war migrants were industrial workers, a rate well above that of the general Australian population.⁶⁶ By about 1965, twenty-five to thirty percent of workers at Ford and General Motors were Italian.⁶⁷ In 1953 two-thirds of

⁵⁹ Diane Kirkby, *Of People and Place: Debates Over Australia's Immigration Program From 1939*, Bundoora (Vic.), La Trobe University Department of History, 1997, p.11; Andrew Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', pp.73-74.

⁶⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 1945, p.2.

⁶¹ Andrew Markus, 'Labor and Immigration: Policy Formation 1943-5', *Labour History*, no.46 (May 1984), p.33; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', pp.73-74.

⁶² Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p.158.

⁶³ Alastair Davidson, *From Subject to Citizen: Australian Citizenship in the Twentieth Century*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.85.

⁶⁴ John Collins, 'The Political Economy of Post-War Immigration', in E.L. Wheelwright & Ken Buckley (eds.), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Sydney, Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1975, p.110; R.W. Connell & J.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History: Documents, Narrative and Argument*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1980, p.293; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.173.

⁶⁵ Panich, *Sanctuary*, p.22; Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p.126.

⁶⁶ Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p.118.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

the workforce at the new aluminium plant in Bell Bay, Tasmania were migrant workers.⁶⁸ Between 1945 and 1955 three-quarters of the increase in the workforce at Broken Hill Proprietary's (BHP) steelworks in Newcastle and Port Kembla came from migrant workers.⁶⁹ The company actively sought to employ migrant workers almost certainly acting on an assumption that many of them would have little knowledge about trade unionism.⁷⁰ By 1956, forty-one percent of the workers at Port Kembla were migrant workers.⁷¹

The Displaced Persons arrived in Australia as a result of their fears of political oppression if they returned to their homelands. They were joined by around 15,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956 after the Soviet Union crushed the reform movement led by Imre Nagy.⁷² Pope Pius XII at Christmas that year called for a crusade to meet the threats posed by the expansion of Communism.⁷³ A statement by Australia's Catholic Bishops condemned the opposition by Communist trade union leaders to the arrival of the Hungarian refugees.⁷⁴ For the CPA such calls would have reinforced the connections between Eastern European migrants, the Catholic Church and anti-Communism. However, after the arrival of the Displaced Persons other migrant groups started to arrive to a far less hostile reaction from the CPA. This was despite the fact that many of them, such as the Italians and the Maltese were Catholics. For some of these migrants there was no contradiction between their being Catholic and supporting Communist-led union leaderships.

⁶⁸ Aldis L. Putnins, 'The Latvians in Australia', in Birskys et al, *The Baltic Peoples in Australia*, p.77.

⁶⁹ Connell & Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*. p.293.

⁷⁰ Craig Clothier & Ben Maddison, 'Unions and Community', in Hagan & Lee, *A History of Work & Community*, p.116; Helen Hughes, *The Australian Iron and Steel Industry*, Parkville (Vic.), Melbourne University Press, 1964, pp.168-169; Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p.126.

⁷¹ Robert Castle, 'The Economy 1940-1980', in Hagan & Lee, *History of Work and Community*, p.102.

⁷² Glenda Sluga, 'Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre 1947-1971', MA (Arts), University of Melbourne, 1985, p.131; Ian Burnley 'The Post-war Transformation of Sydney and Melbourne' in Jim Davidson, *The Sydney-Melbourne Book*, North Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1986, p.120; Tom Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, Crows Nest (NSW), Allen & Unwin, 2005, p.71; Richards, *Destination Australia*, p. 186; Wilton & Richard Boswell, *Old Worlds and New Australia*, p.56.

⁷³ Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy?*, pp.327-328.

⁷⁴ Catholic Bishops of Australia, *Social Justice Sunday: Australia's Bold Advantage*, Pastoral Statement on Immigration by the Catholic Bishops of Australia, Melbourne, Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1957, p.3.

In Italy there was a surplus of three million workers to economic requirements and this provided compelling reasons for many Italians to emigrate.⁷⁵ After Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi urged Italians to learn a foreign language and emigrate, 20,000 Italians left for Australia between 1947 and 1951.⁷⁶ An agreement between the two countries saw the introduction of assisted passages and opened the door to further increases in migration numbers.⁷⁷ An important factor in helping to convince the Maltese to emigrate was persistent unemployment; Australia became the favoured destination.⁷⁸ Australia had signed an agreement in 1947 that allowed 12,000 Maltese to enter Australia and they were among the first to receive Australian government assistance.⁷⁹ By 1961 there were almost 40,000 Maltese migrants in Australia.⁸⁰ Around sixty percent of the migrants were unskilled or semi-skilled workers and about one-third were skilled tradesmen.⁸¹ Some of these migrants brought left-wing politics with them and were therefore more receptive to approaches from Communist union activists.⁸²

The legacy of the Greek Civil War and the bitter divisions it created in Greek society shaped the decisions of many Greeks to leave their homeland.⁸³ Many of the Greek migrants who had fought for or supported the Communist-led forces during the civil war and were forced to leave Greece considered that they were political refugees.⁸⁴ On this issue they had some similarities with the East European migrants, the critical difference being that they were the victims of a reactionary government, the East Europeans being the victims of “left-wing” governments. This tended to make many Greek migrants supporters

⁷⁵ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, Ringwood (Vic.), Penguin Books, 1990, p.211; Rosario Lampugnani, ‘Post-War Migration Policies with Particular Reference to Italian Migration to Australia’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 33, no.3, 1987, pp. 202, 204; Murphy, *The Other Australia*, pp. 202, 204.

⁷⁶ Gianfranco Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia*, Port Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.225.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Barry York, *Empire and Race: The Maltese in Australia 1881-1949*, Kensington (NSW), New South Wales University Press, p.149.

⁷⁹ Lampugnani, ‘Post-War Migration Policies’, p.200; Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p.128.

⁸⁰ Michael Dugan, *The Maltese Connection: Australia and Malta-A Bond of People*, South Melbourne, MacMillan Company of Australia, 1988, p.104.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.105-106.

⁸² Price, ‘Post-War Immigration’, p.40.

⁸³ John Koliopoulos & Thanos M. Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel From 1831 to the Present*, London, C. Hurst & Co (Publishers), 2002, p.206; Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p.81.

⁸⁴ Murphy, *The Other Australia*, pp.81-82.

of the left which led to their active involvement with the worker's movement.⁸⁵ Before they left Greece some migrants already had experiences of activity in trade unions and people's cooperatives.⁸⁶ Similarly, many Greek Cypriots had previous contact with British-type trade unionism and they brought this knowledge with them to Australia.⁸⁷ Others, such as Demetrius ('Jimmy') Anastassiou, had served with the British forces during World War Two. On his arrival in Australia he was drawn into wide-ranging political activity over the following decades, including with the CPA, trade union movement, Greek community and the peace movement.⁸⁸

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 the British and Soviet Governments signed an alliance on 13 July 1941.⁸⁹ As a result, Polish prisoners-of-war in the Soviet Union were released and they formed a Polish Army of 70,000 men under the command of General Wladyslaw Anders. The majority of this army refused to fight under Soviet command and were eventually transferred in the summer of 1942 via Iran to the Middle East. In the next three years Polish forces were to play an important role in the battles of Tobruk (1943), Monte Casino (1944), Arnhem (1944), Falaise (1944) and Bologna (1945). At the end of the war around half-a-million million Poles in Western Europe, including around half of those who had served in the armed forces refused to return to Poland and chose to be resettled primarily in Britain, North America or Australia.⁹⁰

Among the Polish migrants were survivors of the 1944 Warsaw uprising against the German occupation forces. The uprising, which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Polish citizens, was led by the Polish Social Democrats rather than bourgeois nationalists, or supporters of the Soviet Union. There is strong historical evidence that the Soviet Army deliberately halted their advance towards Warsaw so that the Germans would

⁸⁵ Price, 'Post-War Immigration', p.40; Josef Vondra, *Hellas Australia*, Camberwell (Vic.), Widescope International Publishers, 1979, p.152.

⁸⁶ Zangalis, Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, p.119.

⁸⁷ Mick Tsounis, 'The Greek Left in Australia', *Australian Left Review*, March 1971, p.56.

⁸⁸ Phillip Deery, 'Dear Mr. Brown: Migrants, Security and the Cold War', *History Australia*, vol.2, no.2, 2005, pp.40.1.-40.12; Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, pp. 146, 148, 161, 197, 206, 220, 259, 272-273, 286, 288, 311, 363-364, 366-367, 372-373, 382, 437, 451-452.

⁸⁹ Jerzy Lukowski & Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.236; Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, p.76.

⁹⁰ Lukowski & Zawadzki, *Concise History of Poland*, p.249; Davies, *Past in Poland's Present*, pp. 76, 86.

undertake the task of destroying one of the major potential working class opponents of the Communist Party in post-war Poland.⁹¹ Khrushchev later claimed that the Soviet advance had been delayed because of problems of military strategy and that the uprising had been staged in order to have a pro-western government in place before Soviet troops arrived.⁹²

The end result was that when survivors of the uprising arrived in Australia they brought with them an implacable hatred of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, General Bor-Komorowski, one of the leaders of the uprising emerged as a fierce critic of the new socialist regimes in Eastern Europe.⁹³ For the Soviet Union and the CPA, his actions would have helped to strengthen their deep seated suspicions of all signs of independent political thought in Eastern Europe. By 1951 almost 69,000 Polish migrants had arrived in Australia, making them the largest group of refugees from Eastern Europe.⁹⁴ Despite their role during World War Two, when they arrived in Australia the CPA accused them of being 'fascist agents' and sought to limit their entry into many workplaces.

While the majority of Poles left the Soviet Union with General Anders' army, some remained behind due to their sympathy with the Soviet Union. In Poland in August 1945, there were 13,000 Polish Jews who had fought in the Polish pro-Soviet armed forces and had helped liberate their country from the German occupation.⁹⁵ Blanka Aiderbaum and her husband Zygmunt Klajnewaig fled to the Soviet Union after the German invasion of Poland. They enlisted in the Soviet Army in 1943 and returned to Warsaw at the end of the war. Their disillusionment with Soviet-style socialism, which they feared would be shortly imposed in Poland, plus widespread anti-Semitism, brought them to Australia.⁹⁶ Similarly,

⁹¹ Ian Birchall, *Workers Against the Monolith: The Communist Parties Since 1943*, London, Pluto Press, 1974, p.34; Jonathan Fenby, *Alliance : The Inside Story of How Roosevelt, Stalin & Churchill Won One War and Began Another*, Sydney, Pocket Books, 2006, pp.297-301; Chris Harman, *Class Struggles in Eastern Europe 1945-1983*, Leichhardt (NSW), Pluto Press Australia, 1983, pp.26-27; Malcolm MacEwen, *The Greening of a Red*, London, Pluto Press, 1991, pp.122-125; Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, p.144; Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume III As I Please 1943-1945*, Ringwood (Vic.) , 1970, pp.260-263.

⁹² N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers Vol. 2: The Last Testament*, Ringwood (Vic.), Penguin Books, 1977, pp.207-208.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.208.

⁹⁴ Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, p.53.

⁹⁵ Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War*, London, Bodley Head, 2010, p.186.

⁹⁶ Murphy, *The Other Australia*, pp.117-118; For a similar story see of anti-Semitism in post-war Poland see Lucy Gould, *Empty Corners: A memoir, Caulfield South* (Vic.), Lucy Gould, 2000, pp.71-80.

after Mendel Factor returned to Poland from the Soviet Union he also experienced instances of virulent anti-Semitism and he emigrated to Australia in March 1947.⁹⁷ The impetus to the flight of almost 90,000 Polish Jews leaving Poland for Western Europe by the end of 1946 was the massacre of forty-four Jews in Kielce on 4 July 1946.⁹⁸ It was a clear indication that that anti-Semitism had not ended with the defeat of fascism. Mendel's brother Saul, who had arrived in Australia before the war, joined the CPA around 1940 and remained a committed and active member of the Party.⁹⁹ Like many Communists, Saul Factor was unwilling or unable to accept the personal stories of anti-Semitism from those who had direct experience of it in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁰

The refusal of the CPA to acknowledge the deep-seated anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was to place an unbreakable barrier between it and East European Jewish migrants. In March 1953 *Communist Review* reprinted a *Pravda* article on the alleged plot by Jewish Doctors to murder Stalin and other Soviet leaders.¹⁰¹ In addition, Party functionary Jack Blake, campaigned actively inside the Party in support of the purge trials in Eastern Europe, which had strong anti-Semitic elements.¹⁰² It was not until 1964 that the CPA first started to make a few timid criticisms of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.¹⁰³

A Politically Biased Programme

From the inception of the mass immigration programme Calwell was determined to exclude any migrant with left-wing views.¹⁰⁴ With the CPA still in a strong position in the trade unions, the Chifley government had no desire to add potential new forces that would strengthen this influence. When he was in Europe in 1947 to arrange the first intake of refugees, Calwell specifically rejected Australia accepting any of the Spanish refugees then

⁹⁷ Mendel Matthew Factor, *When War Came*, Canada Bay (NSW), LhR Press, 2005, pp.134-143.

⁹⁸ Tad Szulc, *The Secret Alliance: The Extraordinary Story of the Rescue of Jews Since World War II*, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991, pp.127-128.

⁹⁹ Factor, *When War Came*, pp.166-170; Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p.188.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.170.

¹⁰¹ "Despicable Spies And Murders Masked As Medical Professors And Doctors", *Communist Review*, March 1953, pp. 67-68.

¹⁰² J. D. Blake, 'Zionism and Anti-Semitism', *Communist Review*, April 1953, pp.119-124.

¹⁰³ Philip Mendes, 'A Convergence of Political Interests: Isi Leilbler, the Communist Party of Australia and Soviet Anti-Semitism, 1964-66', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol.55, no.2, 2009, pp.157-159; Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp.148-149.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, p.70.

living in France. Calwell's justification was that that Australia did not want any individual who had fought in a civil war.¹⁰⁵ The presumed anti-Catholic nature of many Spanish Republicans would have also been a factor in Calwell's decision. Yet, as Hobsbawm points out, World War Two was both an international war between nation states and in many countries a civil war between contending political forces.¹⁰⁶ If the same criteria had been applied consistently it is clear that many, if not all, of the Displaced Persons would not have been accepted as migrants. The Spanish refugees can only have been rejected on the basis of their perceived left-wing political outlook. The CPA protested at the exclusion of the Spanish refugees and the government's ready acceptance of 'fascist Balts'.¹⁰⁷ The protest had no impact on government policy. Calwell's policy was continued by the Menzies government that signed an immigration agreement with the Franco regime which did nothing to ease the plight of the Spanish refugees in France.¹⁰⁸ By 1960 only two thousand Spanish migrants had settled in Australia clearly indicating the continued bias against the Spanish refugees.¹⁰⁹

This bias against possible left-wing migrants was continued after the defeat of the Chifley government. During a tour of Europe in 1951, R.G. Casey, the Minister for External Affairs, met with Francisco Dominedo, the Italian Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs to discuss the Migration Agreement between the two countries.¹¹⁰ Dominedo pointed out the difficulties his government faced in sponsoring Italians who wished to emigrate to Australia given the stringent medical and political conditions required by Australia. Of the 8,191 men who were proposed by the Italian Government, 1,918 remained after the medical examination, and only 62 after political checks were made.¹¹¹ The extremely high rejection rate of potential migrants on political grounds shows the determination of the Menzies Government to prevent the entry into Australia of any person with known communist links.¹¹² A similar process was followed in other countries with ASIO working closely with domestic security services in Germany, Greece and Spain to screen out active

¹⁰⁵ *Canberra Times*, 17 July 1947, p.1.

¹⁰⁶ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p.144.

¹⁰⁷ *Guardian*, 9 January 1948.

¹⁰⁸ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.166.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Downer, 'The Influence of Immigration on Australian Foreign Policy', p.9.

¹¹⁰ T. B. Millar (ed.), *Australia's Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey 1951-1960*, Sydney, William Collins Sons, 1972, p.51.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Wilson, *Immigrants and Politics*, p.24.

communists.¹¹³ In Malta the rejection rate of potential migrants was much lower than in Italy, with 148 out of 30,161 applications being rejected on political grounds.¹¹⁴

The Communist Outlook

Almost as soon as the Federal Labor government announced its mass immigration policy the CPA declared its opposition to the government's plan. In July 1945, as a contribution to the CPA's pre-National Congress discussion Richard Dixon stated that the Party was opposed to 'free and unrestricted' immigration. Dixon went on to demand that immigration be 'vigorously controlled' and that it be based on a system of non-discriminatory quotas whose numbers would be determined by the need to maintain living standards of workers and the capacity of the economy to supply jobs and housing for all those wanting to work.¹¹⁵ Earlier, as the war drew to a close, Dixon had repeated the CPA's total opposition to the continuation of the White Australia Policy and called on the labour movement to abandon its 'imperialist and chauvinistic' outlook.¹¹⁶ These arguments were later combined in Dixon's pamphlet *Immigration and the 'White Australia' Policy*.¹¹⁷ At the August 1945 Congress, J.B. Miles, then General Secretary, declared: 'We want no flood of migrants from any country to provide a reserve labour army for the exploiters'. Miles maintained that with industrial expansion a planned immigration programme was possible only as long as workers' living conditions were protected.¹¹⁸ The Congress resolution called for 'Jobs For All' and a non-discriminatory immigration programme based on the capacity of the economy to provide employment. It also labelled the White Australia Policy as another version of Hitler's racial theories.¹¹⁹

The CPA's policy on mass immigration echoed many of the traditional fears of the Australian labour movement that unemployment was linked to immigration levels and was

¹¹³ David McKnight, *Australia's Spies and Their Secrets*, St Leonards (NSW), Allen & Unwin, 1994, p.134.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.136.

¹¹⁵ R.Dixon, 'Post-War Policy and the National Congress', *Communist Review*, July 1945, p.540.

¹¹⁶ R. Dixon, 'Immigration and the "White Australia" Policy', *Communist Review*, July 1944, pp.278-281

¹¹⁷ R Dixon, *Immigration and the 'White Australia' Policy*, Sydney, Current Books Distributors, 1945.

¹¹⁸ J.B. Miles, *Jobs Freedom, Progress*, Sydney, Central Committee Australian Communist Party, 1945, p.10.

¹¹⁹ Australian Communist Party, 'Resolutions of the 14th Congress of the Australian Communist Party, Sydney', Central Committee, Australian Communist Party, 1945, pp.10-13.

a threat to the living standards of Australian workers.¹²⁰ Dixon's pamphlet described the experiences of British migrants who arrived in Australia on the eve of the Great Depression and their subsequent bitter disillusionment and resentment at the conditions they found on their arrival. Dixon demanded that all migrants be correctly informed about the real economic conditions in Australia.¹²¹ It was a task that CPA unionists sometimes performed when they visited other countries. In 1952, on his way to the Vienna Peace Congress, Charles D'Aprano addressed meetings of Italian workers and informed them of the economic recession in Australia and that some Italian migrants had committed suicide when promised employment did not eventuate.¹²² Over the next decade the CPA continued to oppose the mass immigration policies of successive federal governments. However, as we shall see, the CPA's approach towards migrants once they had arrived in Australia was different from many of the traditional chauvinistic attitudes prevalent within the labour movement.

At the fifteenth national Congress held in May 1948, one resolution supported immigration as long as the economy could provide housing and jobs.¹²³ A year later, after Australia had criticised the jailing of the Hungarian Cardinal Josef Mindszenty at the UN General Assembly, the Soviet Union responded by condemning Australia's immigration policy.¹²⁴ There is every reason to assume that the attack would have been based on information supplied by the CPA. In 1951, the Congress resolution declared that while the CPA was not in principle opposed to people from other countries coming to Australia it could not support mass immigration. It saw the immigration programme both as a threat to the living standards of Australian workers and as part of the capitalist drive towards a new world war.¹²⁵ In mid-1952, amid signs of increased unemployment the Victorian CPA functionary Ralph Gibson condemned the policy as a 'crime'.¹²⁶ A few months later, the

¹²⁰ Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p.122. Gibson concedes that the relationship between the unemployment rate and immigration numbers was more complex than the CPA was arguing at the time.

¹²¹ Dixon, *Immigration and the "White Australia" Policy*, p.3.

¹²² Caroline Moore, 'Interview with Charles D'Aprano: Italo-Left Activist', *Hummer*, Vol 2 No 6, pp.1-2; See also Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda: The Becoming of a Woman*, Camberwell (Vic), Widescope International Publishers, 1978, p.52. For fear of possible libel actions the book constantly uses pseudonyms instead of the real names of people.

¹²³ Communist Party of Australia, *The Way Forward*, p.23.

¹²⁴ Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy?*, p.136.

¹²⁵ Communist Party of Australia, *Australia's Path to Socialism: Program of the Communist Party of Australia, Sixteenth Congress, 1951*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1952, pp.9-10.

¹²⁶ Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p.122.

campaign against immigration was strengthened when the Central Committee endorsed a report by Dixon calling for an immediate end to all immigration due to increasing unemployment and the housing shortage.¹²⁷ In an address to Communist migrant workers Sharkey again restated the CPA's view that mass migration would be used to depress Australian working conditions and demanded an end to immigration.¹²⁸ By 1955 the CPA started to shift from its outright opposition to mass immigration after unemployment levels had fallen. The resolution 'welcomed' migrants from overseas but again linked the migration programme with the threat to Australian living standards and preparations for a new world war.¹²⁹

In 1957 the Victorian State CPA Conference declared its opposition to the mass immigration programme, while at the same time it stressed the necessity of building strong links between Australian-born and migrant workers.¹³⁰ The following year, at its eighteenth national Congress held in April 1958, the CPA claimed that Australian economy was entering a period of economic crisis which would see growing unemployment and declining living standards.¹³¹ The CPA therefore called for a significant reduction in migration.¹³² At the same time it called on the labour movement to build a united campaign of Australian and migrant workers that would challenge the chauvinism and racial discrimination attitudes that existed in both groups.¹³³ In 1961 unemployment started to increase due to the impact of a recession. This became an important issue in the federal election held that year. Laurie Aarons delivered the Party's Federal election policy speech at a public meeting in Sydney on 3 November. He rejected the demand that migrant workers be laid off first but then called for migration to be restricted to fiancées and near relatives of migrants already in Australia.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ R. Dixon, 'Report of R. Dixon', *Communist Review*, October 1952, p.299.

¹²⁸ L. Sharkey, 'A Talk to Migrant Workers', *Communist Review*, January 1954, p.9.

¹²⁹ Communist Party of Australia, *Australia's Path of Socialism: Programme of the Communist Party of Australia, 17th Congress 1955*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1955, p.11.

¹³⁰ Victorian State Conference Draft Resolution, Melbourne, Communist Party of Australia, 1957, np.

¹³¹ Communist Party of Australia, *A land of Plenty Free From War*, Sydney, Current Book Distributors, 1958, pp.52-53.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹³⁴ L. Aarons, *The People Against Menzies and Monopoly: Communist Party Policy Speech (Abridged)*, Sydney, Communist Party of Australia, 1961, p.4.

Thus, for the entire period of the 1950s the CPA remained formally opposed to mass migration. Its views were shaped by a fear of an impending economic crisis and a return to the mass unemployment and sharp decline in living standards of the 1930s. Yet for most of this period Australia, like much of the western world, enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth and full employment. The spectre of mass unemployment had largely disappeared from the Australian economy. There was to be no return to the widespread unemployment that Australian workers had experienced in the Great Depression. Only in 1952 and 1961 did it seem possible that unemployment would return in significant numbers. In response, the CPA sharpened its opposition to immigration and called for a temporary halt to all immigration. However, these recessions were of short duration and the economy quickly recovered and the threat of unemployment receded.

Instead of calling for an end to immigration there were other possible alternatives open to the CPA. In his address to the 1948 Congress Sharkey had raised the prospect of unions calling for a six-hour day. There was already an annual demonstration in Sydney on the issue.¹³⁵ In the face of growing unemployment the CPA could have resurrected this demand and organised a campaign by Communist-led unions to support it. Such a campaign could have united Australian workers and migrants in a struggle around common interests. Instead, calling for a cessation in immigration opened up the possibility of migrants being blamed for the economic crisis and thus becoming the target of working class chauvinism. On this issue, given this danger it was not the CPA's finest hour.

Migrants and the Housing Crisis

The mass immigration programme was introduced at a time when Australia was experiencing a severe housing shortage. At the start of the war there was already a shortage of 120,000 dwellings. This housing crisis deepened during the war as materials and manpower were redirected to the war effort and few houses were built for over six years.¹³⁶ By 1945 fifteen years of depression and war had led to a situation where the housing shortage had increased to at least 300,000 houses.¹³⁷ If the planned immigration

¹³⁵ Sharkey, *For Australia Prosperous and Independent*, p.24.

¹³⁶ Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1990, p.81.

¹³⁷ Alan Stoller, *New Faces: Immigration and Family Life in Australia*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1966, p.32; Panich, *Sanctuary?*, p.41; Darian-Smith. *On the Home Front*, p.83.

programme went ahead there was clearly going to be a major problem in ensuring that there would be sufficient housing to meet the increased demand.

Even before the end of the war there were protests against the housing shortage. In early 1944 several public meetings were held in Melbourne which demanded that to assist the war effort resources be redirected to ensure that there was sufficient housing for war industry workers. The Federal Government failed to respond and resentment continued to fester for a long period.¹³⁸ The end result was that for many years Australians were forced to live in substandard or crowded accommodation. For example, three thousand people lived in former army huts in Melbourne's Camp Pell. The CPA was particularly active in supporting the residents' demands for improvements in their living conditions.¹³⁹ In 1949 the shortage of housing meant that many families were forced to share accommodation with one in five households containing more than one family.¹⁴⁰ In working class families the ratio was even higher with one in three families sharing a house.¹⁴¹ The housing shortage continued to at least 1956 when nine per cent of families were still sharing accommodation.¹⁴²

Arthur Calwell's first statement as Minister of Immigration pledged that the immigration programme would not proceed until there was sufficient housing for all Australians.¹⁴³ In 1947, he stated that the acute housing shortage meant that Australia would only accept migrants who already had relatives in Australia to look after them on their arrival.¹⁴⁴ A few months before Calwell had been criticised over an Immigration Department booklet for intending migrants that claimed there was cheap and readily available housing in all major cities.¹⁴⁵ Despite the obvious problems of insufficient housing and Calwell's commitment that migrants needed relatives in Australia, the mass immigration programme went ahead without adequate planning to supply the housing necessary to meet the increased demand. The situation led to widespread fears that the sudden arrival of large numbers of migrants

¹³⁸ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, p.83.

¹³⁹ Wills, *Shades of Red*, pp.55-62.

¹⁴⁰ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p.17.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *CPD*, House of Representatives, Vol. 184, 2 August 1945, p.4911.

¹⁴⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 1947, p.4.

¹⁴⁵ Castles et al, *Mistaken Identity*, p.47.

would only deepen the housing crisis.¹⁴⁶ The acute housing shortage provided the opportunity for unions such as the BWIU to attempt to organise an anti-migrant campaign based on the claim that the construction of migrant hostels was diverting limited resources away from other Australians. Despite its strong anti-Communist outlook, the RSL on occasions gave credence to the anti-migrant campaign by demanding that returned soldiers be given priority in housing over ‘Balt’ migrants.¹⁴⁷

Geoff McDonald, who was then a young CPA and BWIU member at the Williamstown Migrant Hostel site in late 1948, later claimed that workers had rejected a call by union officials for strike action and an overtime ban as a way in which the construction of the hostel could be delayed and life made more difficult for migrants.¹⁴⁸ His claims appear to have some validity: after visiting the site in June 1949 John Arrowsmith, the organiser of the Footscray-Williamstown CPA branch, and Party candidate for the Federal seat of Gellibrand, claimed that workers were working nine hours a day, six days a week.¹⁴⁹ During the 1949 coal strike forty-two building workers walked off the site after Clements Langford, the contractor, attempted to undermine a general industry wide overtime ban that was imposed to overcome a shortage of building materials.¹⁵⁰ Over the course of 1949 the CPA and the BWIU intensified the campaign against the construction of migrant hostels escalated with frequent claims that it was diverting resources away from housing working class Australians. For example, *Tribune* condemned the construction of what it claimed were twelve luxury migrant hostels in Wollongong.¹⁵¹ After a visit by Pat Clancy, the NSW BWIU Assistant Secretary, union members at Broughton House, Burwood which was being converted into a migrant hostel carried a resolution opposing the use of building materials for migrant hostels. A similar resolution was later passed by union members at the Meadowbank site.¹⁵²

In March 1949 the Victorian Building Trades’ Federation placed a ban on the construction of accommodation at factories that were to hire migrant workers. Union members were

¹⁴⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 1947; Murphy, *Imaging the Fifties*, p.158.

¹⁴⁷ *Tribune*, 18 May 1949, p.3.

¹⁴⁸ Geoff McDonald, *Red over Black*, Western Australia, Vertias, 1982, p.100.

¹⁴⁹ *Guardian*, 24 June 1949, p.8.

¹⁵⁰ *Guardian*, 26 August 1949, p.8.

¹⁵¹ *Tribune*, 26 January 1949, p.6.

¹⁵² *Guardian*, 13 May 1949, p.7; *Tribune*, 7 May, 1949, p.3.

withdrawn from Appleton Docks where it was planned to build migrant barracks. Don Thomson, the Federation's secretary explained that it was a long standing union principle that workers should live away from their workplace. However, he also repeated the claim that the construction of migrant hostels was channelling resources away from other Australians.¹⁵³ In May 1949 the BWIU Federal Executive declared its opposition to the Federal Government's immigration policy claiming that migrants were being housed in luxury accommodation whilst hundreds of thousands of Australians were living in substandard housing.¹⁵⁴ After the distribution of two thousand leaflets by the Newcastle CPA branch, seven homeless families were moved into what was planned to be a migrant hostel. Among those involved were Laurie Aarons, Secretary of the District Committee of the CPA, R.C. Morgan, FIA Branch secretary and Alex Dowling, Secretary of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council.¹⁵⁵ Support for the action was given by building workers employed at migrant hostel sites, who earlier had given the Government fourteen days to redirect resources from the hostels to building houses for Australians. A similar resolution was passed by the Newcastle Building Trades Group.¹⁵⁶ The dispute was settled when the Newcastle Council found alternative accommodation for the Australian families.¹⁵⁷ In August 1949 the union again opposed the construction of migrant hostels and condemned the Labor Government's mass immigration programme as anti-working class.¹⁵⁸

The BWIU claim that migrant hostels were luxury accommodation is undermined by the testimony of migrants who were forced to live in them, sometimes for prolonged periods. Conditions in the hostels were often harsh, isolated and expensive. Frank Tonon, an Italian migrant, who arrived in Australia in 1951 as a young boy, recalls living at Bonegilla in Nissen huts which were hot in summer and cold in winter. His father found it impossible to eat the meals of lamb which was always on the menu.¹⁵⁹ Giovanni Sgro, who spent three months at Bonegilla in 1952, described his experience as a tragedy and the worst three

¹⁵³ *Guardian*, 25 March 1949, p.8.

¹⁵⁴ *Guardian*, 13 May 1949, p.7.

¹⁵⁵ *Guardian*, 28 June 1949, p.3; *Labor News*, 6 July 1949, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ *Guardian*, 28 June 1949, p.3.

¹⁵⁷ Hughes, *Australian Iron and Steel Industry*, p.170.

¹⁵⁸ *Guardian*, 11 August 1949; *Tribune*, 20 August, 1949.

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Lindsay & Ari Hatzis, *When Fish Had Feathers: Portraits of Collingwood's Older Men*, Collingwood, North Yarra Community Health, 2002, pp.126-128.

months of his life.¹⁶⁰ Bonegilla was a former prisoner-of-war camp and there was a forced separation of married couples in the single sex accommodation that was supplied.¹⁶¹ Many migrants found the isolation, the forced communal living in poor quality huts, and the inedible food a difficult and painful introduction to their new life in Australia.¹⁶² On their arrival at the Woodside Camp, South Australia, migrants found themselves living in barracks under conditions similar, or worse than they left behind in Germany.¹⁶³ After living in the unlined huts with no ceilings, with hanging blankets to divide families from each other and furnished only with camp beds, they petitioned the Federal Government for improvements in their living conditions.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, in Western Australia, both the metropolitan and rural migrant hostels were ex-military camps, often crowded, in poor condition and expensive.¹⁶⁵ Les Haylen conceded that migrants were living in conditions that no Australians would accept – a sharp contrast to the BWIU's claims that migrants were living in luxury conditions.¹⁶⁶ Thus, the BWIU justification for its ban on the construction of migrant hostels had no basis in reality.

While the hostel campaign was often the main focus of the BWIU anti-migrant campaign there were other expressions of its opposition to the arrival of the East European migrants. As early as August 1946 the NSW BWIU State Conference demanded that adequate housing and jobs were available to all intending migrants. It also called on the Federal Government to discuss with the union the immigration programme so that its introduction could take place without disrupting the industry.¹⁶⁷ It was a prelude to what was often an aggressive hostility towards the arrival of East European migrants. The BWIU leadership supported carpenters at a State Rivers and Supply worksite after they demanded that (Baltic) migrants be removed from the site following an onsite confrontation between the two groups of workers.¹⁶⁸ The Building Trades Federation in August 1949 maintained that

¹⁶⁰ Giovanni Sgro, *Mediterranean Son: Memoirs of a Calabrian Migrant*, Coburg (Vic.), Scoprire il Sud, 2000, p.30.

¹⁶¹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.171; Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp.196-197.

¹⁶² Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia*, p.128. Brad Norington, *Jenny George*, St Leonards (NSW), Allen & Unwin, 1998, p.23.

¹⁶³ Murphy (ed.), *Boatload of Dreams*, p.5.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Nonja Peters, *Milk and Honey – But No Gold: Post-war Migration to Western Australia 1945-1984*, Crawley (Western Australia), University Press, 2001. pp.117, 118, 121, 123, 128, 164.

¹⁶⁶ *CPD*, HOR, Vol.202, 31 May 1949, pp.306, 310.

¹⁶⁷ *Tribune*, 23 August 1946, p.7.

¹⁶⁸ *Guardian*, 25 March 1949, p.8.

while it was not opposed to workers from other countries coming to Australia, it was opposed to 'Balts' coming because they were 'anti-union and pro-Nazi in outlook'.¹⁶⁹ It was an outlook that other Communist-led unions used to justify their opposition to the arrival of the East European migrants. At its Federal Conference in 1950 the union called for an end to mass immigration and demanded that any future immigration programme had to be based on the capacity of the economy to supply full employment and had to be on a non-racial basis – a clear rejection of the continuation of the White Australia Policy.¹⁷⁰

In February 1950 the BWIU rejected claims that the union, together with the FIA and the Miners' Federation, had acted to prevent the entry of Displaced Persons into the industry. E. W. Bulmer, the BWIU President, explained that the union position was that once migrants claiming trade qualifications had satisfactorily passed testing by Technical Colleges, the union would accept them as members.¹⁷¹ The difficulty that faced many migrants, particularly those from Eastern Europe, was that apart from the difficulties of learning a new language, many arrived without proper identification making it impossible for them to verify their qualifications. In 1952 the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was re-established by conservative unionists as an alternative to the militantly left-wing BWIU.¹⁷² Its formation would have given the strongly anti-Communist East European migrants an avenue through which they could support trade unionism as well as pursue their opposition to communism. While the campaign against the East European migrants had strong elements of racism the BWIU, as we shall see, responded in a positive way when other migrants engaged in militant struggles against the conditions they encountered on arrival in Australia.

Migrants and Woomera

For many CPA union activists, the argument against the East European migrants appeared to be strengthened when many were assigned to the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range.¹⁷³ Despite Government offers of high wages and free board and lodging it still

¹⁶⁹ *Guardian*, 11 August 1949, p.3.

¹⁷⁰ *Tribune*, 25 January 1950.

¹⁷¹ *Tribune*, 18, 22 February 1950, p.8.

¹⁷² McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, p.69.

¹⁷³ Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p.126.

found it difficult to attract sufficient workers to the site.¹⁷⁴ The arrival of East European migrants provided a large pool of potential workers. The fact that many refugee migrants appeared to be willing to help in its construction simply confirmed for the CPA what it considered to be the political outlook of the migrants involved. Among those to work there from 1947 onwards were many from the Baltic countries.¹⁷⁵ The demand for workers was often heavy and constant. In July 1948 for example, one hundred and twenty refugees were directed to work at the range.¹⁷⁶ The vast majority of migrants who worked at Woomera would have been bound by their two year work-as-directed contract and could not have refused, even if they desired to, to work at Woomera. From the Government's perspective, the presence of an obviously committed anti-Communist workforce would have been an important bonus.

It was the CPA's position that the Woomera Rocket Range was part of the preparations for an attack on the Soviet Union. As a result it must be opposed by the labour movement. A four-state conference of CPA women claimed that the Chifley Government was diverting resources to preparations for World War Three instead of building urgently needed housing and schools.¹⁷⁷ After the refusal of the United States to share military technology with the Australian Government, the CPA claimed that the proposed range could now become a rest home for pro-fascist Balts.¹⁷⁸ An attempt by the CPA to prevent its construction was blocked by strong action by the Chifley government.¹⁷⁹ However, since a significant proportion of the workforce were anti-Communist refugees it is doubtful that the CPA was in a position to challenge effectively Evatt's ADPPA. Party newspapers on occasions linked the issue of the refugees' politics to the Woomera Rocket Range. *Tribune* claimed that some of the workers at the site were wearing Nazi uniforms and had boasted about serving in the German forces during the war.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ *Canberra Times*, 13 May 1948, p.5.

¹⁷⁵ Birskys et al, *The Baltic Peoples*, pp. 76 & 128; *Tribune*, 3 July 1948..

¹⁷⁶ Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p.126.

¹⁷⁷ *Tribune*, 6 April 1947, p.7.

¹⁷⁸ *Tribune*, 15 September 1947.

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter Four.

¹⁸⁰ *Tribune*, 3 & 31 July 1948.

In August 1948 C. B. McCarthy, chief scientific officer of the Department of Works and Housing, agreed that a delegation of twenty union officials could visit the site.¹⁸¹ However Senator Nick McKenna, the Acting Attorney-General, declined to comment on the possible impact of the ADPPA would have on the proposed visit.¹⁸² When only six out of the thirteen union officials nominated by the South Australian Building Trades Federation were given permission to visit the site, it cancelled the visit.¹⁸³ Bill Riordan, the Acting Minister for Supply and Development, explained they had been rejected because of their links to subversive organisations. Among those excluded was Don Thomson.¹⁸⁴ The *Guardian* pointed out that while trade union leaders were banned ‘migrants who had fought for Hitler’ were welcomed at the range.¹⁸⁵ The refusal of the Federal Government to allow trade union officials to visit the site was condemned by the National Council of the FIA.¹⁸⁶ This propaganda had little impact and the construction work went ahead unhindered by the CPA opposition.

Unions Campaign Against East European Migrants

Shortly after arriving in Adelaide in September 1951 Robert Vilks, a Latvian migrant, started work as a tram conductor for the Metropolitan Tramways Trust.¹⁸⁷ Within a short period of commencing work, Vilks was approached by a number of workers to join the anti-Catholic (anti-Grouper) Group in the union.¹⁸⁸ Some of those who approached him would have been CPA members or supporters as the Party had been active in the union since the 1930s.¹⁸⁹ Vilks rejected the approach explaining that because of their experiences migrants rejected any politics that suggested socialism or Marxism.¹⁹⁰ In other workplace discussions Vilks and other migrants, when challenged about their wartime activities, would explain that they at first welcomed the Germans as liberators because they drove out the Russian forces while at the same time they rejected the Nazi Party and the Gestapo.¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ *Argus*, 3 August 1948, p.1.

¹⁸² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 August 1948, p.2.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 25 August 1948, p.1.

¹⁸⁴ *Argus*, 26 August 1948, p.1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 August 1948, p.1.

¹⁸⁵ *Guardian*, 10 & 17 September 1948.

¹⁸⁶ *Tribune*, 11 September 1948, p.7.

¹⁸⁷ Henry Gelsen, *Fares Please! Reminiscences of an Adelaide Tram Conductor*, Hawthorndene (South Australia). Investigation Press, 1983, p.6. Vilks wrote the book using a pseudonym.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17. The majority of Latvians are Lutherans and he was approached on this basis.

¹⁸⁹ Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p.27.

¹⁹⁰ Gelsen, *Fares Please!*, p.19.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.32-33.

In 1943 Vilks was forced to join the German Army before eventually fleeing westwards as the Russian Army advanced.¹⁹² After some years in a transit camp Vilks joined the wave of Displaced Persons coming to Australia.

There were similar experiences with other East European migrants. In two short autobiographical books D. Chub, a Ukraine migrant, describes with considerable accuracy the negative impact of the Soviet Union on the Ukraine the 1930s and also some of his experiences during World War Two.¹⁹³ However, his wartime history ends with his quick release from a prisoner-of-war camp shortly after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. His silence on what happened afterwards suggests the possibility of collaboration with the German occupation forces. On his arrival in Australia Chub worked in the La Trobe Valley power industry where he would have encountered some Communist union activists as the industry was a significant area of Communist activity. His open hostility to the Soviet Union and his silence on his activities during the war would have provoked deep hostility from any Communists he did encounter. Similarly, in 1944 'Josip' willingly enlisted in the Croatian army to fight against Tito's partisans. He was driven by his support for Croatian independence and a total rejection of a united Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁴ On his arrival in Fremantle in 1951 he encountered opposition from many of the pre-war migrants who were both supporters of a unified Yugoslavia and quite often, Communist supporters.¹⁹⁵

It was encounters such as these that did much to shape the attitudes of Communist union activists towards the new arrivals. While these examples may not be fully typical of the range of the political views that migrants brought with them to this country they were common enough to convince the CPA that its characterisation of the Displaced Persons as all being fascists was correct. On his way to Australia in 1949 Michael Cigler, a Czech migrant and a committed anti-Communist, discovered that some of the Baltic migrants had served in the German Secret Service during the war.¹⁹⁶ In 1950 Les Haylen, the ALP

¹⁹² Ibid., p.34.

¹⁹³ D. Chub, *West of Moscow*, Newport (Vic.), Lustivka Press, 1983; D Chub, *How Moscow Russifies Ukraine*, Newport (Vic.), Lustivka Press, 1983.

¹⁹⁴ Val Colic-Peisker, *Split Lives: Croatian Australian Stories*, Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2004, pp.46-51.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp.61-63.

¹⁹⁶ Barry York, *Michael Cigler: A Czech-Australian Story, From Displacement to Diversity*, ACT, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, 1996, p.66.

Parliamentarian, claimed that ten per cent of the IRO refugees were or had been Nazis.¹⁹⁷ Even if this figure was an underestimation of the political outlook of the refugees it is clear that the majority were not committed fascists and that the CPA's campaign was misdirected.

The migrants were entering workplaces where it was not uncommon to find either Communist activists or an entrenched Communist-led union leadership. Once they started to move into the major cities they lived in working class suburbs where they would have witnessed the public campaigning of the local CPA branch. In 1953 the *Hlas Domova* printed a letter about an encounter between a Czech migrant and a Communist newspaper seller in Melbourne. The migrant was offered a bundle of English language newspapers about life in Czechoslovakia and was then offered assistance if he wanted to take advantage of a recent amnesty declared by the Czech Government.¹⁹⁸ The refusal of the majority of migrants to accept such offers would have only confirmed for Communists their views that the East European migrants were unyielding anti-Communists. Vladimir Petrov, the Third Secretary at the Soviet Embassy, later explained that the amnesty offers were made for propaganda reasons and to reduce potential political opposition from Russian exiles.¹⁹⁹ Many exiles clearly understood this and it is hardly surprising that only a handful responded to the amnesty offers.

The harsh judgements that the CPA made about some of the Eastern European groups was occasionally shared by others. The 1945 British Trade Union Congress declared its opposition to Polish refugees working in the agricultural and mining industries.²⁰⁰ At the time the influence of the CPGB within the trade union movement was less than that of the CPA on the Australian trade unions.²⁰¹ The decision was supported by the CPGB.²⁰² This indicates a common approach by the two Communist parties on the issue and that appeals to chauvinism could, on occasions, gain wider support. At the 1957 Federal ALP

¹⁹⁷ CPD, House of Representatives, Vol. 211, 6 December, 1950, p.3788.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Cigler, *The Czechs in Australia*, Croydon (Vic.), Australian Educa Press, 1983, p.65.

¹⁹⁹ Vladimir & Evdokia Petrov, *Empire of Fear*, London, Andre Deutsch, 1956, p.263.

²⁰⁰ Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume IV In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950*, Ringwood (Vic.), Penguin Books, 1970, p.276.

²⁰¹ Deery, Phillip, & Redfern, Neil, 'No Lasting Peace? Labor, Communism and the Cominform: Australia and Great Britain', *Labour History*, no.88, (May 2005), p.63.

²⁰² Orwell & Angus (eds.), *Collected Essays*, p.277.

Conference, Evatt criticised the increased numbers of non-British migrants and the Federal ALP Executive claimed that the majority of New Australians were anti-Labor and their organisations were ultra-rightist.²⁰³ This generality can be explained in part, by Jean Martin's comment that there was 'an ethnic group which is so reactionary that it is damaging to the people belong to it'. It was reference mainly to the activities of the Croatians who were at the time carrying out an aggressive anti-Yugoslav campaign.²⁰⁴

The CPA's initial response to the arrival of the East European refugees was a case of history repeating itself. It had many of the features that characterised the CPA's attitudes towards the Japanese during World War Two. The language used was often xenophobic and clearly undermined the internationalist ethos that had been a feature of the CPA for most of its existence.²⁰⁵ The Greek Communist activist, George Zangalis, also conceded that the CPA was not immune, as have seen, to working class fears that linked migration with unemployment.²⁰⁶ This outlook resonated at times in sections of the Australian working class. In 1956, the Aboriginal newspaper the *Westralian Aborigine* claimed that the recent arrival of large numbers of migrants who were willing to work for less than award wages, meant that Aborigines were now unemployed. The paper went on to repeat an earlier call for a reduction in migrant numbers and for an improvement in the 'type' of migrants allowed to enter Australia.²⁰⁷ The comments are a direct reflection of similar comments made by the CPA in its prolonged campaign against the arrival of the East European migrants.

Zangalis also pointed out that the CPA campaigned against discrimination and (genuinely) called for working class unity.²⁰⁸ Whilst the original purpose of the campaign against the East European migrants was derived from the presumed political outlook of the refugees,

²⁰³ Murray, *The Split*, p.334.

²⁰⁴ Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*, Carlton South (Vic.), Melbourne University Press, 2000, p.158.

²⁰⁵ McQueen, *Gallipoli to Petrov*, p.149.

²⁰⁶ Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, p.134.

²⁰⁷ *Westralian Aborigine*, June-July 1956, in Michael Rose (ed.), *For the Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism*, St Leonards (NSW), Allen & Unwin, 1996, p.37

²⁰⁸ Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, p.134.

the terms used often appealed to the racist sentiments in the working class.²⁰⁹ The racist term 'Balts' was widely used, and not just by the CPA to describe Displaced Persons. This was despite the fact that refugees from the Baltic States constituted only a small proportion of the refugee intake.²¹⁰ The campaign distorted the political positions of many of the refugees who were mostly innocent victims of World War Two.²¹¹ Many of the Croatian immigrants for example were closer to the social democratic ideas of the ALP than they were to the reactionary Ustashi of their home country.²¹² Despite leaving their homelands at least some of the refugees were sympathetic to the post-war governments that emerged in the late 1940s.²¹³ Sophie Maj left Poland in 1958 due to the growth of anti-Semitism but remained a supporter of some aspects of Marxism, was an active trade unionist after arriving in Australia, deeply suspicious of the right-wing nature of Western social democratic parties and a lifelong opponent of Australian involvement in overseas wars.²¹⁴

Communist-led unions were often at the forefront in the campaign against the introduction of East European migrants into the workplace. At the Bendigo Trades Hall Council meeting on 25 August 1948, Albert Richardson, the Communist secretary, supported by George Bryenton from the AEU, called for the deportation of Baltic States migrants on the basis that they were pro-fascist and had attacked a Communist-supported peace meeting at Wonthaggi.²¹⁵ Communist influence within the Council is confirmed by its condemnation of the ALP Industrial Groups after an address by Bert Flanagan, State Secretary of the FIA,²¹⁶ and a donation that was made to the Eureka Youth League, the Communist-led youth organisation.²¹⁷

²⁰⁹ Andrew Markus, 'Everybody Become a Job: Twentieth Century Migrants', in Verity Burgmann & Jenny Lee (eds.), *A Most Valuable Acquisition: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, McPhee Gribble, 1988, p.101.

²¹⁰ Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, p.57.

²¹¹ Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p.xxxiii.

²¹² Andrew Moore, *The Right Road: A History of Right-Wing Politics in Australia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.112.

²¹³ Cain, *The Australian Security Intelligence Service*, pp.105-106.

²¹⁴ Sophie Maj, *Living in Interesting Times: A Multicultural Life*, Victoria, Research Publications, 2006, pp.129-130.

²¹⁵ Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo*, p 44. Bryenton had been a delegate to the Council since 1920 and it remains unclear if he was a CPA member or an individual who was willing to work with them on certain issues. See Cleary, *Bendigo Labor*, p.149.

²¹⁶ Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo*, p.40.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.42.

The NAWU Darwin branch vowed to ‘resist by every means possible any attempt to employ displaced persons in the mining industry’.²¹⁸ For the first time the union was actively supporting the struggle by Aboriginal workers for equality with their white counterparts.²¹⁹ *Maritime Worker*, the journal of the WWF, also joined the campaign against the arrival of the Eastern European migrants with a number of articles often couched in vitriolic and chauvinistic language attacking the ‘fascist Balts’.²²⁰ At the same time the journal could report the condemnation by Jack Hooke, a NSW Labor Council official, and by a general meeting of the Clothing Trades Union of anti-Semitic remarks by Henry Gullet, a Liberal Member of Parliament.²²¹ The NAWU and the WWF were both Communist-led and their support for the campaign against the East European migrants, indicates their willingness to accept CPA policy on the issue.

The first response of the AEU to the arrival of the East European migrants was for the National Council to demand that ‘no Balts [are] to be employed on work covered by engineering awards’.²²² While the union could claim that it was acting to maintain craft standards, the decision ignored the fact that East European migrants, unlike their British counterparts, could seldom produce convincing evidence of their training. However, within six months the ban was dropped when the National Council instructed the Innisfail Branch to admit Europeans to the union ‘where found on a job’.²²³ At the Midland Railway Workshops in Western Australia in 1959, Jack Marks worked with two migrants from Italy and Yugoslavia to convince other migrants to resign from the anti-Communist WAASRE and join the AEU.²²⁴ However, some of the fears of the National Council of the AEU about the political orientation of the East European migrants were confirmed when Polish workers in Hobart were organised to challenge Communist delegates.²²⁵

²¹⁸ *Maritime Worker*, 14 January 1950, p.7.

²¹⁹ See following Chapter for details of the NAWU involvement.

²²⁰ *Maritime Worker*, 9 April 1948, p.8, 23 October 1948, p.8, 12 February 1949, p.6, 25 June 1949, p.5, 27 August 1949, p.5,

²²¹ *Maritime Worker*, 12 April 1947, p.2. For background on Gullet’s comments see Richards, *Destination Australia*, p.175.

²²² T. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants: The Amalgamated Engineering Union in Australia 1920-1972*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.165.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Reed, *Marksy*, p.208.

²²⁵ John Cotter, ‘A Rank and File View’ in *50 years of the Santamaria Movement*, Richmond (Vic.), Jesuit Publications, 1992, p.30.

The Miners' Federation and East European Migrants

Despite their significant contribution in the defeat of fascism, the CPA regarded the veterans of General Anders Army as 'fascist collaborators' when they arrived in Australia. This echoed charges that the Soviet Union had made during the war. In April 1943, after the bodies of thousands of missing Polish army officers were found in mass graves at Katyn in western Russia, the London based Polish government-in exile called for an international inquiry in order to discover who was responsible for the massacre. The Soviet Union rejected the call and went on to accuse the exiled government of being pro-Nazi and that they were playing Berlin's game.²²⁶ When it appeared likely that veterans of Anders' army would be allowed to emigrate to Australia the CPA accused them of attacking union offices, intimidating trade unionists and carrying out acts of terrorism in Italy where many veterans of them were then resided.²²⁷ As they started to arrive in 1947 they faced a fresh barrage of criticisms from Communist union activists. In *Tribune* the Communist union journalist, Rupert Lockwood, repeated many of the old Soviet claims.²²⁸ Lockwood also claimed that the 1944 Warsaw uprising by the Polish underground army had been staged with the agreement of the German occupation forces.²²⁹ This repeated Stalin's view that the uprising was a 'criminal act of anti-Soviet policy'.²³⁰

In a series of articles *Common Cause*, the Miners' Federation newspaper, edited by Edgar Ross, also condemned their arrival. The paper claimed that they were receiving preferential treatment over British ex-servicemen, were a potential threat to miners' conditions and that any Pole leaving Poland was either a fascist or a fascist sympathiser.²³¹ In 1948 the union's National Convention unanimously adopted a resolution that declared its opposition to the entry of 'any national group of workers known to have an outlook and training foreign to the democratic ideals of the Australian working class movement'.²³² The paper reported the concerns of several delegates that the introduction of ex-members of General Anders' army into the mines and who were living in segregated barracks was against the interests of the

²²⁶ Fenby, *Alliance*, p.184.

²²⁷ *Tribune*, 9 July 1946, p.7.

²²⁸ *Tribune*, 17 July 1947, p.5; See also Rowe, 'New and Old Australians', *Communist Review*, November 1952, p.339.

²²⁹ *Tribune*, 17 July 1947, p.5.

²³⁰ Antony Beevor, *Berlin: The Downfall 1945*, London Penguin Books, 2007, p.99.

²³¹ *Common Cause*, 10 April, p.10, 15 May, p.4, 11 September, p.2, 1948.

²³² *Common Cause*, 11 September, 1948, p.1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1948.

Federation.²³³ In May 1949, the Federation restated its position that no overseas migrant would enter the industry until there was an extensive discussion with the union and that firm guarantees are given about maintenance of working conditions.²³⁴

The proposed ban on Displaced Persons drew a strong wave of protest from opponents of the Miners' Federation leadership. *News-Weekly* claimed that the union was carrying out Stalin's vengeance and included a point-by-point rebuttal by Arthur Calwell of the Federation's claims about the Poles being fascists, about receiving preferential treatment and about the housing arrangements of the migrant workers. Interestingly, the paper also drew attention to the CPA's campaign to end the White Australia Policy with the claim that it wanted to give preference to immigration from Asia.²³⁵ For the union, these and other similar attacks only confirmed that the entry of 'Balt' and Polish workers constituted a direct threat to the future of the Federation. It denied charges that the union was xenophobic with the claim that the mining industry's workforce was the most 'international' of any industry in Australia.²³⁶ It repeated claims that members of the Anders Army were fascists and that there had already been conflicts where these migrant workers had attempted to undermine Australian working class traditions.²³⁷ In January 1950 the paper linked the appearance of anti-Semitic fascist leaflets with the arrival of the East European migrants.²³⁸

The campaign against the arrival of Displaced Persons continued and was extended to include other nationalities. Again, the CPA's opposition to the arrival of these migrants was based on their presumed political outlook. In March 1950 an editorial attacked the intention of the Immigration Minister Harold Holt to extend the immigration programme to Dutch servicemen from newly independent Indonesia.²³⁹ The first Dutch from Indonesia had left Indonesia in 1947 and continued to arrive in Australia until 1956.²⁴⁰ Since many Communist-led unions had given active support to Indonesian independence, the arrival in

²³³ *Common Cause*, 11 September 1948, p.1.

²³⁴ *Common Cause*, 14 May 1949, p.4.

²³⁵ *News-Weekly*, 8 September 1948, p.1

²³⁶ *Common Cause*, 11 September 1948, p.2. Emphasis in original article.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Common Cause*, 28 January 1950, p.2.

²³⁹ *Common Cause*, 18 March 1950, p.8.

²⁴⁰ Richards, *Destination Australia*, p.183.

Australia of some of those who had tried to suppress Indonesian independence would have confirmed for the CPA the reactionary nature of the mass immigration programme.²⁴¹ The same also editorial claimed that among the ‘hundreds of thousands’ of ‘Balts’ there were large numbers of ‘ardent fascists’.²⁴² The editorial’s claims were part of a campaign that often used exaggerated claims about the number of Displaced Persons arriving in Australia and on the political outlook of the majority of the Displaced Persons. By 1951 when the programme ended about 180,000 refugees from Eastern Europe had arrived in Australia.²⁴³ Ross’s claims were clearly designed to appeal to working class fears that the arrival of large numbers of migrants posed a real threat to their living conditions. However, the union’s campaign received a boost when an editorial in *Common Cause* was able to draw on the comments of Professor Julius Stone warning about the possible adverse affects of the mass immigration programme.²⁴⁴

The long and sustained campaign against the introduction of Displaced Persons achieved most of its aims. The Chifley Government abandoned all attempts to introduce Displaced Persons into the black coal mines of NSW.²⁴⁵ This was despite Calwell saying in June 1949 that he hoped to enter discussions with the Miners’ Federation about the employment of the migrants as a means of easing the acute coal shortage.²⁴⁶ Quite clearly, in the face of a looming coal strike, the Government was not prepared to confront the union on any issue that may have gained the Miners’ Federation considerable support from the wider labour movement. As late as March 1950 *Common Cause* was able to claim that there were no Displaced Persons working in the industry.²⁴⁷ However, this claim did not reflect the real situation. Calwell had endorsed an agreement that saw migrants confined to surface jobs, the lowest paid jobs in the industry.²⁴⁸ At the time there was a severe shortage of labour with the NSW coalfields in mid-1948 being short of twelve hundred underground miners, and faced a constant drift of miners away from the industry to jobs with better working

²⁴¹ See Chapter Two for the CPA role.

²⁴² *Common Cause*, 18 March 1950, p.8.

²⁴³ Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distinct Land*, pp. 23,57; Kirkby, *Of People and Place*, p.13; Wilson, *Immigration and Politics*, p.10.

²⁴⁴ *Common Cause*, 9 December 1950, p.4.

²⁴⁵ Markus, ‘Labour and Immigration’, p.90.

²⁴⁶ *News-Weekly*, 3 June 1949, p.3; *Common Cause*, 11 June 1949, p.4.

²⁴⁷ *Common Cause*, 18 March 1950, p.8.

²⁴⁸ Castles et al, *Mistaken Identity*, p.40.

conditions.²⁴⁹ The success of the Miners' Federation in preventing the employment of significant numbers of East Europeans in the industry against a background of labour shortages bears witness to its determination to pursue the issue despite its adverse impact on workers in the industry.

The Miners' Federation claim, along with other Communist-led unions, that the anti-Communism of the Displaced Persons made them inherently anti-union became difficult to sustain. Yet, it was a view that was shared by other non-Communist unions. Charlie Oliver, the NSW Branch secretary of the AWU believed that many migrants, such as those working on the Snowy Mountain scheme only joined the union because they were required to and were not particularly good unionists.²⁵⁰ Thus, the CPA position on the East European migrants opened up the possibility of establishing common ground with one of Australia's most conservative unions. The inherent danger of such a position became clear in 1950 when the AWU Annual Convention opposed a Federal Government plan to bring 40,000 British migrants to Australia, thus repeating the experiences of the 1920s. The CPA's objection to the arrival of East European migrants was based on political grounds, and not chauvinism, but it reinforced traditional Australian trade union objections to *all* migrants.

After a difficult period of adjustment to their new country, migrants showed that were prepared, on occasions, to adopt the strike weapon to pursue their economic claims. Against the general tide of anti-Displaced Persons articles, *Tribune* reported on a strike by 'Balt' workers at Glebe Island and cited it as an example for all migrants to follow.²⁵¹ The first significant strike that involved large numbers of migrant workers including many East European migrants occurred in August 1964. For six months a united workforce confronted the Queensland government and the owners of Mount Isa mines in an ultimately unsuccessful six months dispute over contract rates.²⁵² It was the precursor to a

²⁴⁹ Ross, *History of the Miners' Federation*, p.409; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p.206.

²⁵⁰ Hearn & Knowles, *One Big Union*, p.227.

²⁵¹ *Tribune*, 8 October 1949.

²⁵² Margaret Bridson Cribb, 'The Mount Isa Strikes, 1961,1964,' in Murphy (ed.), *The Big Strikes*, pp.270-297; Brian Fitzpatrick & E.L. Wheelwright, *The Highest Bidder*, Melbourne, Lansdowne Press, 1965, p.162; Hearn & Knowles, *One Big Union*, pp.270-277; Pat Mackie with Elizabeth Vassilieff, *Mount Isa: The Story of a Dispute*, Hawthorn (Vic.), Hudson Publishing, 1989; McKinlay, *Documentary History*, pp.488-490.

wave of migrant involvement in strikes that was to transform the trade union movement from the 1960s onwards.

The ARU and East European Migrants

The Victorian ARU endorsed the ACTU support for the mass migration programme provided that all migrants would be guaranteed employment and adequate housing.²⁵³ However, when the East European refugees started to enter the Victorian Railways they received a hostile reception from J. J. Brown, the State Secretary of the ARU, who shared the CPA's outlook that they had fled from the task of building the new Communist societies.²⁵⁴ This hostility only deepened when they started to play an active role in the union supporting the Grouper opposition to the union leadership.²⁵⁵ At the time many conservative trade union leaders saw the arrival of the Displaced Persons as adding new forces in the struggle to remove Communist union officials.²⁵⁶ Some of these tensions started to ease after the 1955 ALP split, when refugee migrants in many unions, including the ARU, felt they had been manipulated by the Grouper forces.²⁵⁷

Unlike the situation where non-British migrants had to wait five years to gain citizenship and the vote, once migrants joined the union they had an immediate vote and could start to have an impact if they chose.²⁵⁸ The percentage of migrant workers in the railway workforce started to increase rapidly as the mass immigration programme proceeded. By 1956 one in five Victorian railway workers came from a non-British background.²⁵⁹ In NSW in April 1950 there were around four thousand migrant workers out of a total workforce of 60,000.²⁶⁰ In 1951, Perth's Midland Railway Workshop management

²⁵³ *Railways Union Gazette*, December 1948, p.8.

²⁵⁴ Butler-Bowden, *In The Service?*, p.143.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; Lyn Richards, 'Displaced Politics: Refugee Migrants in the Australian Political Context' in James Jupp (ed.), *Ethnic Politics in Australia*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1984, p.150.

²⁵⁶ John Lack & Jacqueline Templeton (eds.), *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australia's Immigration Since 1945*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.11; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration', pp.89-90.

²⁵⁷ Butler-Bowden, *In The Service?*, p.143; Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, pp.188-189.

²⁵⁸ Lyn Richards, 'Displaced Politics: Refugee Migrants in the Australian Political Context', in Jupp (ed.), *Ethnic Politics in Australia*, p.149.

²⁵⁹ Wilton & Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australians*, 1984, p.85.

²⁶⁰ Hearn, *Working Lives*, p. 146.

attempted to recruit three hundred and fifty-five migrant workers but were generally unsuccessful and the workforce remained predominately of Australian background.²⁶¹

In Victoria the increasing numbers of migrants from countries such as Italy and Greece, who were often left-wing in outlook and consequently supported the union leadership, tended to counter the right-wing attitudes of the East European migrants.²⁶² However, this did not prevent an often vocal and vehement opposition to the presence of East European migrants. In December 1947 at its monthly meeting the Wireless, Signals & Telegraph division repeated calls that had been made by other Communist-led unions that the 'Baltic' migrants be investigated from a 'workers' point of view'.²⁶³ The *Gazette* reported the claims of Mr Stern, the former head of the Jewish Repatriation and Rehabilitation Department in Frankfurt-on-Main, that there was overwhelming evidence that the 'Balts' had worked for the Germans and had also betrayed Jewish people to the Germans.²⁶⁴ Alf Leno, a Communist ARU organiser, reported that, while some alien members of the union were being harassed and threatened with deportation, the Federal Government was allowing some 'very doubtful types' into the country.²⁶⁵ The State Branch Executive also endorsed a motion from the Rolling Stock Division calling on the officers of the Australian Council to lodge a protest against the proposed deportations.²⁶⁶ Once again CPA union activists had demonstrated their contradictory attitudes towards migrants. They were prepared to actively support those migrants they considered politically reliable, but to oppose those whose political outlook differed markedly from theirs.

A clear indication of the Communist activists attitude towards the Displaced Persons came on 23 March 1948 when the State Branch Executive congratulated the Czech workers for

²⁶¹ Bertola & Oliver (eds.), *The Workshops*, p.84.

²⁶² Butler-Bowden, *In The Service?*, p.144.

²⁶³ *Railways Union Gazette*, January 1948, p.12.

²⁶⁴ *Railways Union Gazette*, February 1949, p.4.

²⁶⁵ *Railways Union Gazette*, February 1948, p.12. One of those deported in 1946 despite the fact that he had an Australian wife and children was ARU member Lorenzo Gamboa, a former US Army Sargent who was born in the Philippines. He was able to return to Australia on a limited number of times to visit his family. He waged a prolonged campaign with union support to win the right to permanent residence in Australia. See Kiernan, *Calwell*, pp.143-4, 147-8 & 153; Klaus Neumann, 'Guarding the Floodgates: the Removal of the Non-Europeans', in Martin Crotty & David Andrew Roberts (eds.), *The Great Mistakes of Australian History*, Sydney, University of New South Wales, 2006, pp.187, 189-190, & 193; Richards, *Destination Australia*, p.193.

²⁶⁶ Australian Railways Union State Branch Executive 10 February 1948, Australian Railways Union, UMA, 88/131, Box 9 1/3/18.

the destruction of capitalist power.²⁶⁷ The Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia was one of the turning points in the unfolding Cold War and it saw a considerable erosion of support for the Soviet Union in the West.²⁶⁸ The motion can be seen as a clear indication of support for the new regimes of Eastern Europe and a rejection of all those who did not share their views. In March 1949 the ARU declared that it would welcome 'good sons of the English working class in preference to pro-fascist displaced persons who are being brought to this country'.²⁶⁹

A few months later Brown supported a call for the ending of all 'Balt' migration and a demand that no further 'Balts be employed by the Railways Department.²⁷⁰ The campaign continued. Brown claimed in December 1949 for example, that Displaced Persons were receiving better treatment than other workers.²⁷¹ Despite these pressures the Department continued to hire refugee migrants. The union changed its tactics and opened negotiations with the Department to establish the conditions under which refugee migrants could enter the industry. When agreement was reached in January 1950, it included provisions for the removal from the workplace of any Displaced Person who upset any other worker and that no union member be forced to share sleeping accommodation with a Displaced Person at worksites if they had reasonable grounds for doing so.²⁷² Under any circumstances the agreement was a display of blatant chauvinism and clearly shows the deep-seated hostility of the union leadership to the arrival of the East European migrants. There was no suggestion that the agreement be extended to cover other migrant groups, such as the British who were arriving at the same time. The agreement also required migrants to join the union within a month of starting work.²⁷³ However, the agreement clearly established two classes of membership – one in which one member could decline to work/share accommodation with another worker simply on the basis of their ethnic origin. It thus established two classes of membership.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, London, HarperCollins Publishers, 1989, p.469.

²⁶⁹ *Railways Union Gazette*, March 1949, p.3.

²⁷⁰ Australian Railways Union State Branch Executive, UMA 88/131 Box 9 1/3/18.

²⁷¹ *Railways Union Gazette*, December 1949, p.8.

²⁷² *Railways Union Gazette*, January 1950, p.14.

²⁷³ Ibid.

The FIA and East European Migrants

The *Maritime Worker* reported the FIA National Council's call for all Displaced Persons arriving in Australia to have 'clean union and anti-fascist records'.²⁷⁴ It was the same demand that other Communist-led unions had made and indicates the determination of the CPA to implement an anti-Displaced Persons policy wherever possible. The leadership of the FIA was dominated by the CPA with all but two officials being members of the CPA. This gave the CPA its biggest opportunity to carry out its aim of limiting the entry of the new migrants into the steelworks.²⁷⁵ This situation continued until the end of 1952 by which time every CPA union official had been removed from office.²⁷⁶

At its National Conference in 1947 the FIA had given support to the mass immigration programme as long as the living standards of Australian workers were maintained.²⁷⁷ However, in common with other Communist-led unions such as the Miners' Federation and the Victorian ARU, once the Chifley Government proposed to introduce Displaced Persons into the steelworks it met mounting opposition from the union. In a letter to Arthur Calwell, Thornton outlined what the union policy was in regard to the entry of the Displaced Persons into the steelworks. These included that migrants were not to be housed in hostels, they integrate into the Australian community and that must have anti-fascist and pro union views.²⁷⁸ After an alleged assault by seven East European migrants on a former prisoner-of-war, Bert Flanagan at the Yallourn Power Station called for the removal of all 'Balts' from the workplace. Flanagan also claimed that their arrogant behaviour at local dances was provoking brawls and that British-born workers were planning to 'clean-up' the "Balts" if they remained in the area.²⁷⁹

The CPA campaign against the arrival of Displaced Persons carried the danger of triggering a virulent chauvinistic campaign that went beyond the ranks of the CPA. This became increasingly clear as the migrants started to enter the workforce. In February 1948 a meeting of North Queensland canecutters called on the Federal Government to cease

²⁷⁴ *Maritime Worker*, 17 March 1948, p.2.

²⁷⁵ Thornton, 'Unions and the Party', pp.207-208.

²⁷⁶ Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, pp.198-229.

²⁷⁷ Lever-Tracy & Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, p.170.

²⁷⁸ *Guardian*, 23 April 1948.

²⁷⁹ *Tribune*, 10 July 1948, p.1.

allocating migrant workers to the industry as there was already an oversupply of labour and wages and conditions would be threatened.²⁸⁰ A few months later it was claimed that the vast majority of migrants were pro-fascist and were being used to undermine long-standing conditions.²⁸¹ In February 1950, a meeting of eighty workers at Metal Manufactures in Port Kembla voted unanimously against the Menzies Government's immigration policy.²⁸²

While there is need for some caution in accepting such reports, six months earlier there had been an intense debate in the FIA over an agreement reached between the union leadership and Arthur Calwell. In June 1949 the BHP FIA sub-branch rejected the agreement citing the lack of housing for workers' families and went on to demand that BHP improve wages and working conditions as a means of overcoming the labour shortage.²⁸³ Two additional meetings of Newcastle FIA members endorsed similar motions.²⁸⁴ Within the Newcastle FIA branch CPA supporters were a minority and it is clear that the CPA anti-Displaced Persons campaign had appealed to the latent racism of Australian workers.

Under pressure from Calwell, BHP agreed to make further concessions in order to weaken the opposition to the entry of Displaced Person into the steelworks. These included Displaced Persons being employed in the least attractive jobs, compulsory union membership being enforced, barring promotion to non-naturalised migrants and to establishing a tripartite committee to discuss any issues associated with the introduction of migrant labour.²⁸⁵ It replicated many of the features of the Victorian ARU agreement that confined Displaced Persons to jobs that Australian workers had rejected and then placed barriers to their future advancement. In November 1950 the union broke off discussions with the Federal Government over the entry of migrant workers into the metal industry claiming that it was not honouring the agreement. It stated that in future individual workshops would regulate how and when migrants would enter their workplaces.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁰ *Tribune*, 8 February 1948, p.6.

²⁸¹ *Tribune*, 29 September, 1948, p.6.

²⁸² *Tribune*, 22 February 1950, p.8.

²⁸³ *Labor News*, 8 June 1949, p.3.

²⁸⁴ Lever-Tracy & Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, p.172.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Tribune*, 16 November 1950, p.8.

Already in Victoria some workplaces insisted that no new migrants be hired until all existing workers could speak English.²⁸⁷

The hostility of the FIA towards the entry of the East Europeans into the workplace was based on its realisation that they would join with the existing anti-Communist forces in the struggle to remove all Communists from their union positions. The revolt against the almost total CPA domination of the union commenced in 1944 and was well under way before the new migrants started to enter the steel industry.²⁸⁸ In the end the new migrants were an important, but not decisive factor, in the defeat of the Communist leadership. However, as their weight increased in the union they became an integral part of the support base of the new anti-Communist union leadership.²⁸⁹ Between 1947 and 1953 almost ten thousand Lithuanian refugees arrived in Australia; with the peak year being 1949 when 5,972 arrived.²⁹⁰ Four hundred of these migrants were sent to work in the Port Kembla and Newcastle steelworks where there was a severe labour shortage. Some BHP workers claimed that senior staff were saying to them, 'wait until the Balts come here, we will fix you', which can only be understood as a reference to their anti-Communist outlook.²⁹¹ In common with other refugees, they were threatened with deportation if they failed to honour their two year work contracts.²⁹²

The new anti-Communist leadership under Laurie Short saw the East European migrants as potential allies in the fight against Communism and encouraged them to participate in the union.²⁹³ In the 1951 union elections the anti-Communist candidates issued campaign material in German in a successful attempt to win the support of migrant workers.²⁹⁴ However, a number of the migrants were not only anti-Communist but they were also anti-union. For example, out of the 774 migrants employed at the Newcastle steelworks 221

²⁸⁷ *Labor News*, 9 November 1949.

²⁸⁸ Greenland, *Red Hot*, pp.122-176; Gollan, 'Balmain ironworker battles' in Curthoys & Merrit (eds.), *Better Dead Than Red*, pp.18-57; Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, pp. 129-155; Short, *Laurie Short*, pp.66-89.

²⁸⁹ Murray, *The Split*, p.21; Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, p.184; Lyn Richards, 'Displaced Politics: Refugee Migrants in The Australian Political Context', p.149; Short, *Laurie Short*, pp.98-99.

²⁹⁰ Betty & Antanas Birskys, 'The Lithuanians in Australia' in Birskys, Putnins, & Salsoo, *The Baltic People*, p.17.

²⁹¹ Lever-Tracy, & Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, p.172.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.21.

²⁹³ Hughes, *The Australian Iron and Steel Industry*, p.170; Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, p.210.

²⁹⁴ Hughes, *Australian Iron and Steel Industry*, p.170.

were non-union and 301 were unfinancial.²⁹⁵ Such an outlook would have alienated the East European migrants not only from the Communist union activists, but the majority of other Australian workers who were supportive of trade unions.

In 1959 attempts by mainly East European migrants to establish the New Citizens' Council to represent migrant workers was rejected by the NSW Railways Department. The organisation was banned by the NSW Labour Council and condemned by the FIA.²⁹⁶ At the time, both the Labour Council and the FIA were under the control of conservative union leaders. On this issue there was common ground between the CPA and its union opponents. The union movement as a whole was completely opposed to any attempts by migrants to organise outside the existing union structures. After gaining registration as a trade union in NSW the organisation collapsed after five months almost certainly due to the opposition from a unified union movement.²⁹⁷ If migrants wanted representation they had to achieve it by conducting their campaigns within existing unions.

Communists Rethink the anti-East European Migrant Campaign

A number of Communist union activists later acknowledged that the campaign against the East European migrants was misdirected. An early challenge to the blanket condemnation to the presence East European migrants in the workplace came in the Victorian Painters' Union in early 1950 when Don Thomson, the Federal Secretary, attempted to modify the harsh approach. His attempt was rejected at a Special General meeting where the opposition was led by other Communist activists in the union. The union maintained its hardline stance through the early 1950s.²⁹⁸ Don Thomson's action was part of a pattern which saw the Victorian State Executive, led by Ted Hill, organise a sustained campaign to drive him out of the Party by 1951.²⁹⁹ Ken Mooney recalled his father, Mal, a BWIU country organiser, being instructed by the CPA hierarchy in the early 1950s not to recruit any more migrants, a demand he refused to act on.³⁰⁰ Jack Munday's role as a union delegate in the SMWU and his active support for the peace movement, led him to reject his

²⁹⁵ Lever-Tracy & Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, 1988, p.174.

²⁹⁶ *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 7 November 1959, p.3.

²⁹⁷ Ross M. Martin, *Trade Unions in Australia*, Ringwood (Vic.), Penguin Books, 1976, p.65.

²⁹⁸ Spierings, *A Brush With History*, pp.37-38,

²⁹⁹ McDonald, *Australia At Stake*, pp.106-108.

³⁰⁰ Personal conversation with Ken Mooney 10 March 2008.

Catholicism and ALP roots and join the CPA in 1955.³⁰¹ At one stage working in a factory alongside East European migrants, he came to understand that the CPA claim they were all ‘fascists’ was wrong, as some of them had suffered badly without justification under the regimes that had been imposed by the Soviet Union at the end of the war.³⁰²

Similarly, in 1950 Audrey Blake was conducting a factory-gate meeting outside *Radio Manco*, a Richmond factory where many migrants worked. When challenged by an angry crowd about her claim that only fascist collaborators were imprisoned, Blake simply denied reality. It was not until more than a decade later that Blake conceded that one of her most persistent questioners, a woman who had spent three years in a Stalinist camp, was correct in her denials of being a fascist collaborator.³⁰³ In the Midlands railway workshops John Gandini, a Communist activist in the Electrical Trades Union, agreed with the characterisation of the Eastern European migrants as ‘people who have escaped justice at the hands of the socialist countries’. Despite this hostility towards East European migrants, Gandini convinced Western Australian Communists to support the campaign against the hanging of Karol Tapci, a Czech migrant.³⁰⁴ It was not until he left the CPA that he was prepared to concede that many of the migrants had legitimate grounds to complain at their treatment by Soviet authorities.³⁰⁵

When Geoff McDonald joined the Eureka Youth League in August 1948 he attended a series of lectures on why the East European ‘fascists’ should never be allowed into Australia.³⁰⁶ At the time, McDonald was working as a carpenter helping to build temporary hostels at Williamstown for the expected arrival of the refugees.³⁰⁷ When they arrived on a bus McDonald stood and watched a group of people who were ‘clearly workers like ourselves’. When McDonald tried to raise the issue with a Party functionary his views were ignored.³⁰⁸ From 1948 onwards almost every building site in Melbourne employed a number of East European refugees. As a BWIU organiser from 1950 onwards, McDonald

³⁰¹ Ibid., pp.20-21.

³⁰² Jack Munday, *Green Bans and Beyond*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, p.21.

³⁰³ Blake, *A Proletarian Life*, pp. 52-57.

³⁰⁴ Williams, *Anger & Love*, p.145. Despite public protests Tapci was hanged in June 1952. See *Mercury*, 7 June 1952, p.3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1952, p.1.

³⁰⁵ *Marksy*, p.102.

³⁰⁶ Geoff McDonald, *Red over Black*, Western Australia, Veritas, 1982, p.100.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p.99.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., pp.100-101.

witnessed their hostile reaction when delegations who had been to Eastern Europe presented favourable reports about conditions there at workplace meetings.³⁰⁹ McDonald was on a political trajectory that was to take him out of the CPA and into the ranks of anti-Communist trade union officialdom.

Barrie Blears, an EYL member in 1953, later conceded that the anti-migrant campaign had the inherent danger of being misunderstood as anti-migrant, thus perpetuating the long historically labour movement tradition of hostility towards migrants.³¹⁰ As a result of his experiences during the Depression and his admiration of the resistance of the Soviet Army to the German invasion, Arthur Pauly joined the CPA in South Australia in 1942.³¹¹ As an activist in the AWU just after the war he rejected the offer from Clyde Cameron of a union job and later, a seat in Parliament if he resigned from the CPA.³¹² After he started work in a boiler shop and became a shop steward in the FIA he recruited East European migrants to the union.

Despite the contrast in political outlook between the Communist leadership of the union and its new members, the union addressed the problems faced by the migrants, and was able over time to win significant improvements in their conditions.³¹³ Many of the Polish migrants explained that, as a result of their experiences with the Soviet Union they were anti-Stalin, not anti-Russian. This attitude had a strong historical basis. For example, during the Stalinist terror of the 1930s, 144,000 Poles in the Soviet Union had been arrested, and of these 111,000 had been executed.³¹⁴ These murders virtually wiped out the Polish Communist Party.³¹⁵ Those who survived the experience became committed anti-Stalinists. However, in common with other Communist union activists it was not until

³⁰⁹ McDonald, *Australia at Stake*, p.111.

³¹⁰ Blears, *Together With Us*, p.120.

³¹¹ Roy Kriegler & Grant Stendal, *At Work: Australian Experiences*, North Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1984, p.60.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p.61.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.61-62.

³¹⁴ Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken, From the Great Depression to the Gulags: Hope and Betrayal in Stalin's Russia*, Great Britain, Abacus, 2008, p.91.

³¹⁵ Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators: Prisoner of Stalin and Hitler*, London, Pimlico, 2008, p.8.

years afterwards, that Pauly finally understood that what the Polish migrants had said their experiences was correct.³¹⁶

Yugoslav Migrants and the CPA

In 1947 *Tribune* reported that between fifty and sixty Yugoslavs had returned home to assist in the construction of the new socialist society. Their return was also prompted by a growing 'hate aliens' campaign being driven by politicians and newspapers.³¹⁷ The following January *Tribune* reported that Australia had lost eight hundred of its finest migrant citizens who were returning home to Yugoslavia to help rebuild its shattered economy. The article included many of the returning migrants' favourable comments about the Tito leadership and their rejection of Cold War propaganda about an alleged dictatorship that was supposed to exist in Yugoslavia. Also included in the group were about a hundred young people going to work on the Youth Railway project.³¹⁸ One Australian who had worked on the railway in 1947 was Chas Bresland, the Western Australian President of the EYL. He had raised the necessary money through his strong links to the Yugoslav community.³¹⁹ Also of assistance would have been Paddy Troy, secretary of the CDRHWU, who had his own links to the Yugoslav community and was also a strong supporter of the EYL.³²⁰ The Yugoslav community both in Western Australia and in Melbourne had supported other Communist-led campaigns including raising substantial funds to send the Graeme Bell Jazz Band to the 1947 Youth Festival in Prague.³²¹

For the CPA, East European migrants who returned to their various homelands could be contrasted with those migrants who had consciously abandoned the task of building the new socialist societies that were starting to emerge in Eastern Europe. On occasions the CPA would publicise the stories of migrants who had chosen to reject life in capitalist Australia and return home.³²² In 1954 the Soviet-backed regimes of Eastern Europe offered

³¹⁶ Krielger & Stendal, *At Work*, p.62.

³¹⁷ *Tribune*, 21 March 1947, p7.

³¹⁸ *Tribune*, 17 January 1948, p.6.

³¹⁹ Blears, *Together With Us*, p.158.

³²⁰ Macintyre, *Militant*, pp.100, 112, & 193.

³²¹ Blears, *Together With Us*, p.158; Harry Stein, *A Glance Over an Old Left Shoulder*, Marrickville (NSW), Hale & Iremonger, 1994, p.87.

³²² *Tribune*, 2 April 1952, p.7; 9 April 1952, p.9; 3 December 1952, p.4.

an amnesty to the refugees and called on them to return home to help build socialism in their home countries. The campaign relied on statements from those who had already returned about their harrowing experiences in the capitalist countries and how much better life was now they had returned home.³²³

Yet few migrants responded to the call to return to their homelands. Out of the more than 12,000 Czech migrants in Australia only forty-three accepted the invitation to return.³²⁴ This almost total rejection of the amnesty would have confirmed the CPA's view that the migrants were incorrigible anti-Communists. Among those to return were the Russian émigré parents of Boris Frankel who had been working class Communist activists between 1937 and 1956. When the family arrived in the Soviet Union it was not the socialist utopia of their dreams and within four years had returned to Australia. Despite this experience they remained opponents of conservatism, but critical of the CPA for its failure to understand the nature of Stalinism.³²⁵ Their experience was mirrored by many of the Yugoslav migrants who also quickly returned to Australia disillusioned at what they found in Yugoslavia.³²⁶ Their disillusionment with not just Tito's Communism but Communism in general, would have opened up a deep divide between them and the CPA.

In June 1948, after differences between the Tito regime and the Soviet Union intensified, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform.³²⁷ It was the first of the post-war splits in the international Communist movement, a harbinger of the split between China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Its impact was quickly felt in Australia where the CPA leadership adopted the Soviet position. In comments to the July 1950 Central Committee meeting Dixon argued that the Tito Government had become a 'war base of American imperialism' and was now 'a grave menace to the peace of the world'.³²⁸ At the time the

³²³ Jean Martin, *Community and Identity: Refugee Groups in Adelaide*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1970, p.16.

³²⁴ Cigler, *The Czechs in Australia*, p.67.

³²⁵ Boris Frankel, *From the Prophets Deserts Come: The Struggle to Reshape Australian Political Culture*, Melbourne, Boris Frankel and Arena Publishing, 1992, pp.22-23. While the majority of the family was allowed to return to Australia Frankel's father had to fight a three year campaign against the Menzies government's refusal to grant him a visa.

³²⁶ Sutalso, *Croatians in Australia*, p.207; Tkalcevic, *Croats in Australia*, p.27

³²⁷ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p.238; George W.Hoffman & Fred Warner Neal, *Yugoslavia and the New Communism*, New York, Twentieth Century Fund, 1962, pp.113-151; Birchall, *Workers Against the Monolith*, pp.47-52.

³²⁸ *Communist Review*, September 1950, p.653.

peace movement was a priority for the CPA and Dixon's comments are an indication of the extent to which the CPA was prepared to tailor its policies in accordance with those of the Soviet Union.³²⁹ Dixon went on to demand that the CPA 'destroy every nest of Titoism, expose every Tito spy' and that a failure to do this would 'weaken the fight for peace'.³³⁰ In October 1949, at a meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Partisans For Peace, Yugoslavia was expelled from the organisation after Alexander Fadeyev, the leader of the Soviet delegation, claimed that 'Tito and all his clique are hirelings in the hands of the warmongers'.³³¹ It was a clear signal that the Soviet leadership expected other Communist parties to follow its leadership.

In July 1948 the Political Committee endorsed the Cominform expulsion of Yugoslavia and condemned the opportunist errors of the Yugoslav leadership.³³² It was not until years later that some CPA leaders conceded that the Soviet charges against the Yugoslav leadership were baseless.³³³ The dispute had a particular resonance in Australia due to the relatively high numbers of pre-war Yugoslav migrants and the often close contacts between them and the CPA. As tensions in the international Communist movement escalated, many European Communist parties expelled members who were considered to be Tito supporters.³³⁴ In Australia, the previous close connection between Communists and the Yugoslav community started to break down as Communist activists sought to take their distance from their previous support of the Yugoslav regime. In June 1950, members of the EYL returned the medals they had been awarded for their help in the construction of the Youth Railway project in Yugoslavia in 1948.³³⁵ The construction of the railway was part of an international campaign of solidarity with Yugoslavia which saw volunteers from many countries, including hundreds of young Britains work on the project.³³⁶ The return of the medals was a clear sign of the enmity that Communists were now expected to show to their former comrades.

³²⁹ See Chapter Three for an overall analysis for the CPA's role in the peace movement.

³³⁰ *Communist Review*, September 1950, p.653.

³³¹ Lawrence S. Wittner, *One World Or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953*, Stanford (California), Stanford University Press, 1993, p.180.

³³² 'Declaration on Yugoslavia', *Communist Review*, August 1948, p.234.

³³³ Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p.203.

³³⁴ Birchall, *Workers Against the Monolith*, p.50.

³³⁵ Blears, *Together with Us*, p.52.

³³⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life*, Great Britain, Abacus, 2002, p.192.

The Campaign against German Migrants

The campaign against the East European migrants helped to establish the precedent for a similar campaign against the arrival of German refugees from 1952 onwards. However, the campaign was one of rhetoric, which meant it was often based on public meetings and distribution of anti-German migration propaganda, and not union action aimed at preventing their entry into the workplace.³³⁷ The election of the Menzies government, which was determined to suppress the CPA, also made it more difficult for Communist-led unions to pursue political issues as they had under the previous Labor government. Moreover, the numbers of German migrants involved was considerably fewer than those from Eastern Europe. Between 1952 and 1957 37,071 German migrants arrived in Australia.³³⁸ The government assured ex-servicemen's organisations that German migrants would be carefully screened to exclude former Nazis, which helped to eliminate a major source of potential opposition to its policy.³³⁹ This became clear when the Federal Executive of the Returned Soldiers' League (RSL) overruled a decision of the 1950 NSW State RSL Congress to oppose the government's plans.³⁴⁰ In 1953, as German migrants started to arrive, sixty-five per cent of those polled were in favour of German migration, a rate considerably higher than the support for other migrants.³⁴¹ The campaign was also undermined when the Jewish Returned Servicemen opposed any attempt to prevent the entry of German migrants.³⁴² Some of these veterans would have been former members the Anders Army, which helps to explain the CPA's repeated false claims that they were pro-fascist.

The main vehicle through which the CPA pursued the anti-German migrant campaign was the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JCCFAS). The Council had been established in May 1942 to contribute to Australia's war effort and to oppose any

³³⁷ Michael Blakenay, 'The Australian Jewish Community and Post-War Mass Immigration From Europe' in W.D. Rubinstein (ed.), *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, North Sydney, Allan & Unwin, 1987, p.332.

³³⁸ W.D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History, Volume Two 1945 to the Present*, Port Melbourne, William Heinemann, 1991, p.411.

³³⁹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p.167.

³⁴⁰ Julius Stone, 'Mass German Immigration and Australia's Future', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, no.2, June 1951, p. 18; Angelika Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis? The Australian Debate about Admitting German Migrants', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 45, Number 3, 1999, p.428.

³⁴¹ Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp.190-191.

³⁴² *Jewish Herald*, 13 October 1950.

expression of anti-Semitism in the Australian community.³⁴³ It was established as a broad-left wing organisation whose wide support continued into the immediate post-war period.³⁴⁴ Such support was largely based on the role the Soviet Union had played in the defeat of German fascism, but it started to erode rapidly as the Cold War atmosphere intensified. The process was assisted by the arrival of large numbers of Polish Jewish refugees, supporters of the Polish Bund, a social democratic organisation, who as virulent anti-Communists worked actively to destroy the CPA's influence in the Jewish community.³⁴⁵ Their actions would have fuelled the already deep seated hostility of the CPA to their arrival.

At the end of the war eleven million ethnic Germans were expelled from centuries old colonies in Eastern Europe. It included five million Germans from the Polish-occupied areas and three million Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia.³⁴⁶ The expulsions took place despite an agreement at the Potsdam Conference that any removal of the long-established German populations be carried out 'in an orderly and humane manner' – which was ignored by the Soviet imposed regimes in Eastern Europe.³⁴⁷ The expulsion was a savage response to the widespread support that many German communities in Eastern Europe had given to reunification with Germany in the 1930s. It was also the direct product of the new Oder-Neisse frontier for Poland which had the support of the Allied powers.³⁴⁸ It was from this large pool of ethnic Germans that Australia recruited many of its migrants. In 1950 the Menzies Government announced its intention of allowing 20,000 Germans to migrate to Australia.³⁴⁹ The Menzies Government was responding to pressure from the United States to accept significant numbers of German and Italian migrants as a way of reducing unemployment in these countries, which could have led to increased

³⁴³ Norman Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace: The Political Memoirs of Norman Rothfield*, Melbourne, Yarraford Publications, 1997, p.15; W.D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, pp.12, 402.

³⁴⁴ Gust, *Such was Life*, pp.210; Philip Mendes, 'Jews and the Left' in Geoffrey Brahm Levey & Philip Mendes (eds.), *Jews and Australian Politics*, Great Britain, Sussex Academic Press, 2004, p.72; W.D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p.12.

³⁴⁵ Mendes, 'Jews and the Left', pp.74-75.

³⁴⁶ Shephard, *The Long Road Home*, pp.118-125.

³⁴⁷ Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989*, New York, HarperCollins, 2006, p.45.

³⁴⁸ Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, pp.163-164.

³⁴⁹ Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p.32.

support for communist parties.³⁵⁰ Again, it is possible to place Australia's mass immigration policy in the context of Australian support for the Western alliance against the Soviet Union.

The CPA viewed the German migrants as unrepentant fascists, particularly those who had fought in the German Army during the war. The reality was somewhat different from these claims. The anti-Communist Isi Leibler acknowledges that the majority of war criminals and former Nazis who were able to emigrate to Australia were not German, but were from Eastern Europe.³⁵¹ Helen Rubinstein, the historian of the Victorian Jewish community, also rejects the view that the majority of German migrants were anti-Semitic.³⁵² The CPA's blanket condemnation of the German migrants as fascists ignored many aspects of German history. In the November 1932 election, the last before Hitler assumed total power and crushed all opposition, the combined vote of the Social Democrats and the Communist Party was greater than that of the National Socialists.³⁵³ Since Communists were excluded from migrating to Australia, it is almost certain that at least some of Australia's post-war migrants came from former Social Democrat voters and were therefore, anti-fascist.

Some Germans later came to regret their support for Hitler. As a young boy growing up in a small German town in the 1920s and 1930s, Rick Holz joined the Hitler Youth aged ten and saw Hitler as the saviour of the German people. Holz willingly joined the German Army aged seventeen in 1941 to help defeat those whom he believed threatened Germany's existence. However, his experiences in the war destroyed his faith in Hitler and Nazism and at the end of the war he committed to live the rest of his life without hatred and prejudice.³⁵⁴ In the prisoner-of-war camps Holz conceded that there were many Germans who were willing to fight another war.³⁵⁵ Holz was to emigrate to Australia in the 1950s.³⁵⁶ Similarly, as a young teenager, Fred Frese survived the Allied bombing of Hamburg. After his arrival in Australia in the 1950s, he eventually became an active

³⁵⁰ Rosario Lampugnani, 'Post-war Migration Policies With Particular Reference to Italian Migration to Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.33, no.3, 1987, p.203; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p.427.

³⁵¹ Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p.xiv.

³⁵² Helen Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985*, North Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1986, p.200.

³⁵³ J. R. P. McKenzie, *Weimar Germany*, London, Blandford Press, 1971, p.239.

³⁵⁴ Rick Holz, *Too Young To Be A Hero: A Memoir*, Sydney, Flamingo, 2000.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.226.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.230.

member of the Seamen's Union after coming into contact with many of the Communists who were active in the union.³⁵⁷ His acceptance shows that many Communist union activists were not necessarily bound by the CPA's rigid definition of German migrants as pro-fascist. However, such characterisations would have created many barriers to the CPA reaching large numbers of German migrants.

During his visit to Europe in 1947 Calwell rejected an approach from the French government to include German refugees as part of the mass immigration programme. At a time when public support for the policy was uncertain, the Labor government was not willing to risk the success of the policy by including former enemy aliens.³⁵⁸ However, there was support for German migration. As early as 1948 H. H. Gullett, a Liberal Member of Parliament, called for the mass immigration programme to include Germans and Austrians.³⁵⁹ Gullett had a history of anti-Semitic views and his call would have helped convince the CPA that its assessment of the German migrants was correct.³⁶⁰ In February 1949 General Callaghan, the head of the Australian military mission in Berlin, also called for German migration to Australia.³⁶¹ After the defeat of the Chifley government, the new Prime Minister Robert Menzies and Harold Holt, the Minister of Immigration, spoke strongly in favour of German migration.³⁶² Not surprisingly Holt denounced the anti-German migration campaign as Communist inspired.³⁶³

Despite Holt's assurances that there would be screening of German migrants to exclude former members of the Nazi Party, there was considerable doubt about the effectiveness of the process.³⁶⁴ However, a challenge by *Guardian* for him to deny that the Menzies government intended to use German migrants as a potential military force appears not to have been answered.³⁶⁵ During the 1930s Dr Johannes Becker established branches of the Nazi Party in the Barossa Valley and Adelaide, areas where many ethnic Germans lived. At the end of the war the Chifley government deported back to Germany many of those

³⁵⁷ Borke, *In and Out of Port*, pp. 206-224.

³⁵⁸ Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p.32; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p.427.

³⁵⁹ Michael Blakenay, 'Australian Jewish Community and Post-War Immigration', p.327.

³⁶⁰ Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p.159.

³⁶¹ Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p.411.

³⁶² Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp.192-193; Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p.126.

³⁶³ Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria*, p.200.

³⁶⁴ Aarons, *Sanctuary*, pp.124-127; Stone, 'Mass German Immigration', pp.23-25.

³⁶⁵ *Guardian*, 15 May 1952, p.1.

who had been interned during the war.³⁶⁶ While the numbers involved were only a small proportion of the ethnic German population, the situation allowed opponents of German migration to argue that, just as they had been in Eastern Europe, ethnic Germans were an inherent threat to national unity.³⁶⁷ It was for this reason that during the May 1951 Federal election Calwell pledged that a Labor government would not permit any large scale German migration.³⁶⁸ Opponents of German migration also argued that since the majority of proposed migrants had grown up during fascism, the relentless indoctrination they had received had permanently turned them into virulent enemies of democracy.³⁶⁹

In Victoria, the campaign committee produced a 100,000 pamphlets explaining why German immigration should be opposed. One of the ways in which they were distributed was through the trade union movement.³⁷⁰ In November 1950, three thousand people attended a protest meeting against the proposed the Menzies government's policy.³⁷¹ One of the key note speakers was the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett.³⁷² As well as opposition to German migration, Burchett shared several other political positions with the CPA. In particular, Burchett wrote articles in support of the new regimes in Eastern Europe and later was to support the jailing of the Hungarian, Cardinal Mindszenty, who was a vocal critic of communism.³⁷³ His articles would have provided invaluable propaganda for the CPA and its attempts to convince East European migrants to return to their homelands. Burchett also had direct links to Communist-led unions through his brother, Clive, who was both a CPA member and an activist in the BWIU.³⁷⁴ Burchett had returned to Australia in September 1950 after receiving an invitation from the APC and the DRC, to speak on peace-related issues and the threats to civil liberties by the Cold War hysteria that was rapidly escalating. Over the next four months he addressed many meetings, including

³⁶⁶ Glenn Nicholls, *Deported: A History of Forced Departures From Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales, 2007, pp. 74-75.

³⁶⁷ Philip Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under: The Jewish Council's Controversial Campaign Against German Immigration', *Australian Historical Studies*, Number 119, 2002, p.84.

³⁶⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 1951.

³⁶⁹ Stone, 'Mass German Immigration', pp.25-26.

³⁷⁰ Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', p.84.

³⁷¹ McGillick, *Comrade No More*, p.240; Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p.411.

³⁷² Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p.411.

³⁷³ George Burchett & Nick Shimmin (eds.), *Rebel Journalism: The Writings of Wilfred Burchett*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.31-50; Heenan, *From Traveller to Traitor*, pp.83-86; Roland Perry, *The Exile Burchett Reporter of Conflict*, Richmond (Vic.), William Heinemann Australia, 1988, pp.99-100.

³⁷⁴ Heenan, *From Traveller to Traitor*, pp.93, 257.

many outside factory-gates.³⁷⁵ Given his prominent role in the Melbourne public meeting opposing German migration, it is certain that Burchett would have raised the issue at many of these meetings and sought support for the campaign.

At the Sydney anti-German migration meeting on 26 February 1951 Margaret Kent-Hughes, an activist in the NSW Teachers' Federation, was one of the speakers.³⁷⁶ She remarked that the smearing of the meeting as a Communist front was similar to the events she had witnessed in Germany when she had worked there in 1936-37.³⁷⁷ Her comments certainly indicate sympathy or support for the CPA and its policies. At the time the Teachers' Federation leadership had a strong Communist presence, with Sam Lewis being elected President at the head of a Communist aligned ticket in 1945.³⁷⁸ However, the majority of the union membership started to voice their opposition to Lewis and the union's active support for political issues that had no direct connection with teachers' conditions.³⁷⁹ This was to lead to the defeat of Lewis, but not all of his supporters, in the Federation's 1952 elections.³⁸⁰ While the active support of the Federation leadership support for the 'No' case in the 1951 referendum to ban the CPA was the prime factor in the Lewis defeat, the Federation's de facto involvement in the anti-German migration campaign would have formed part of the background.³⁸¹

An important feature of the anti-German migration campaign was its endorsement by leading ALP activists. Around the country ALP politicians either spoke at public meetings in opposition to the Menzies government's plans or otherwise indicated their opposition. Their involvement broadened the appeal of the campaign beyond the ranks of the CPA and the Jewish community. Kim Beasley, the Member for Fremantle, spoke at the meeting of eighteen hundred in Perth in January 1951.³⁸² At the Sydney meeting of six thousand at the

³⁷⁵ Burchett, *Passport*, pp.181-183; Heenan, *From Traveller to Traitor*, pp.93-94.

³⁷⁶ McGillick, *Comrade No More*, p.240; Sauer, 432.

³⁷⁷ *Tribune*, 2 March 1951.

³⁷⁸ Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p.90; Bruce Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics: A History of Organization of Public School Teachers in New South Wales*, St. Lucia (Qld.), University of Queensland Press, 1975, p.145.

³⁷⁹ John O'Brien, *A Divided Unity! Politics of NSW Teacher Militancy Since 1945*, North Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987, p.6; Mitchell, *Teachers, Education, and Politics*, pp. 163-175.

³⁸⁰ O'Brien, *A Divided Unity!*, p.6. Mitchell, *Teachers, Education, and Politics*, p.175.

³⁸¹ Mitchell, *Teachers, Education, Politics*, pp.170-171.

³⁸² Blakeney, 'The Australian Jewish Community', p.331; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', pp.83, 84.

Sydney Town Hall, Dr. H.V. Evatt was one of the key speakers.³⁸³ Evatt would later claim that German migrants would establish 'anti-democratic and subversive colonies' as well as introduce the ideas of 'racial superiority'.³⁸⁴ Evatt's views were consistent with the chauvinistic views he had expressed in the 1920s when he spoke out against Southern European migrants.³⁸⁵ His comments showed the inherent danger that the CPA campaign against both German and East European migration could exacerbate working class racist sentiments, which was not their intention.

The presence of leading ALP figures at the public meetings limited the ability of leading CPA union activists to take a leading role in the campaign. The period was marked by the intense battles between the CPA and the ALP-sponsored Industrial Groups for leadership positions in the trade unions. This made it very difficult for ALP leaders and major CPA union officials to speak from the same platform, despite the apparent common ground. The battle between the two parties was often intense and bitter that often went beyond the initial battleground of the trade unions. For example, Paddy Troy, the Communist secretary of the CDRHWU, constantly attempted to use his influence in Fremantle's trade unions to defeat Kim Beazley in pre-selection ballots.³⁸⁶ Under these circumstances the two political opponents could not speak from a shared platform.

However, there were signs that some of the enmity between the two organisations was starting to fade. In his role as the legal representative of Communist-led unions in the legal challenge to the Menzies Act to ban the CPA, Evatt was in frequent contact with many Communist union officials, including Jim Healy from the WWF and Jack McPhillips from the FIA.³⁸⁷ At the same time it can be presumed that Evatt was also often in contact with Ted Hill, the Victorian State secretary of the CPA, as well as being a leading barrister. It seems highly plausible that at some of their meetings broader political questions, such as the campaign against German migration, may have been discussed. Within the ALP there was also the first sign of concern at the growing strength of the Industrial Groups,

³⁸³ McGillick, *Comrade No More*, p.240; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis, and Communists Down Under', p.83.

³⁸⁴ Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p.433.

³⁸⁵ See page 6.

³⁸⁶ Kim Beazley, *Father of the House*, Fremantle Press, 2009, p.121; Macintyre, *Militant*, p.128.

³⁸⁷ Tennant, *Evatt*, p.262.

particularly those based in Victoria, and their possible political intentions.³⁸⁸ The divisions in the ALP were increased when Evatt took a leading role in arguing the 'No' case in the September 1951 referendum to ban the CPA.³⁸⁹ The Party was also slowly starting to change its position of unrelenting hostility towards the ALP. It noted that the apparent unity between the ALP and CPA in opposition to German migration could be the start of 'a united movement that can rapidly oust the Menzies government from office'.³⁹⁰ Thus, the campaign against German migration was one of the issues that was to take the CPA back towards the mainstream, and cooperation with sections of the ALP.

Despite the presence of many ALP politicians at the public meetings called to oppose German migration, the leading role of the JCCFAS ensured that the anti-German migration campaign had limited appeal. For many non-Communist Jews the close connection between the CPA and the JCCFAS meant whatever chance the campaign had of succeeding was now non-existent.³⁹¹ The Liberal government was determined to implement its policy and reacted harshly to criticisms and placed the Jewish community under enormous pressure to end the campaign.³⁹² Under this pressure the majority of Jewish activists and organisations withdrew their support from the campaign.³⁹³ When the JCCFAS persisted with the campaign and refused to cancel a protest meeting against the visit of the German pianist Waller Giesecking, it was expelled from the Jewish Board of Deputies, the umbrella organisation of the Jewish community.³⁹⁴ The Victorian ALP, then firmly under the control of Grouper-aligned supporters, proscribed the Council for its role in the anti-German migration campaign.³⁹⁵ These twin steps, as well as the prevailing Cold

³⁸⁸ Cathy Brigden, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall and the Split', in Brian Coster, Peter Love and Paul Strangio (eds.), *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective*, Carlton North (Vic.), Scribe Publications, 2005, pp.140-161; McKinlay, *The ALP*, pp.108-109.

³⁸⁹ Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp.267-268; McKinlay, *The ALP*, pp.109-110; Tennant, *Evatt*, pp.282-286.

³⁹⁰ *Tribune*, 2 March 1951.

³⁹¹ Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p.411.

³⁹² Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p.15; Gust, *Such Was Life*, p.215; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', pp.86-88; Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p.38; Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p.411; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?' pp.430-431.

³⁹³ Blakenay, 'Australian Jewish Community', p.331; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists', pp. 88-90.

³⁹⁴ Gust, *Such Was Life*, pp.215-216; McGillick, *Comrade No More*, pp.241-242; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis Communists Down Under', p.91. Mendes gives the reason for the expulsion as a demonstration against the new West German Ambassador so it is likely that the two events occurred at the same time.

³⁹⁵ Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', p.89.

War tensions, effectively isolated the Council until there was a limited revival in the late 1950s.³⁹⁶

Itzhak Gust, one of the leading Communist supporters in the JCCFAS, later drew similar conclusions to those drawn by some Communist union activists about the campaign against the East European migrants. Gust emphasised that the campaign against German migration was sectarian and marked by a determination by the Communist activists involved to impose their political outlook no matter what the consequences.³⁹⁷ It also failed to take into account the international political aspects including the ties between Israel and West Germany and the impact this had on the local Jewish community who were now unwilling to disagree with this policy.³⁹⁸ The campaign also occurred at the height of the Cold War and this effectively destroyed the potential of the campaign to succeed. In the end the economic recession of 1952 sharply reduced the number of planned German migrants and consequently the opposition to German migration ebbed away.³⁹⁹

Conclusion

The CPA expressed strident and prolonged opposition to the arrival of East European and German refugees/migrants in the first phase of Australia's mass immigration programme. Across Australia many Communist-led unions attempted to prevent the entry of the East European migrants into the workplace. When they could not achieve this, they signed agreements with employers that attempted to confine them to jobs with the lowest pay and worst conditions. The campaign against the German migrants was less strident but had many similar features.

From its inception the CPA broke openly and decisively with the racism that dominated the Australian labour movement. This was not imposed from the Soviet Union. Overwhelmingly, the majority of its membership had a genuine commitment to internationalism and believed in complete equality between all races. However the CPA was not totally immune to displays of chauvinism. With the majority of its membership

³⁹⁶ Mendes, 'Jews and the Left', p.74.

³⁹⁷ Gust, *Such Was Life*, pp.214-216.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.214; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', pp.90-91.

³⁹⁹ Blakenay, 'The Australian Jewish Community' p.331.

concentrated in the working class, who were often racist, it would be unrealistic to expect this would not have had an impact on Party members. But the CPA's public policy of opposition to racism was real and it campaigned strongly for them. At the same time it was seeking to exclude East European and German refugees/migrants from workplaces it had influence in, it called for the ending of the White Australia Policy.

The campaign against the East European and German migrants was therefore an aberration from the entire thrust of the CPA's strong stance against Australian working class racism. While it had legitimate concerns about the indentured labour that was required of these migrants, it chose not to confine itself to these concerns. Its opposition to the arrival of these migrants was political – but it lacked the confidence that it could convince their co-workers of their policies on this issue. Instead it resorted to building a campaign that appealed to the racist traditions of the Australian working class. These included false claims of threats to the conditions of other Australian workers and allegations of preferential treatment in housing. The entire campaign was the product of the close ties between the CPA and the Soviet Union. Since these migrants had consciously rejected the new 'socialist' societies of their homelands they were condemned by the CPA as anti-working class. To their credit a number of Communist trade union activists later acknowledged that the campaigns against these migrants had been mistaken.

On this issue Communist union activists had less difficulty in following CPA policy than was the case with the peace movement. This support was often based on encounters in the workplace between the East European refugees and Communist union activists. There is little doubt that the majority of the East European refugees were anti-Communist and many of them were willingly drawn into the battle to defeat Communist union officials. Their experiences with the brutal reality of the Stalinist Soviet Union convinced them of the need to engage in a political struggle against Communism. The East European refugees were a significant proportion of Australia's first migrant intake and this further deepened the hostility of the CPA towards them. These political and racial tensions started to ease with the arrival of other ethnic groups such as the Greeks, Italians and Maltese whose combined numbers reduced the political importance of the East European migrants.

The mass immigration programme was to transform the Australian workforce and the trade union movement. For most of its history the Australian trade union movement had been largely isolated from the influences of non-Anglo Saxon workers. This isolation had led to a deeply entrenched racism among large numbers of Australian workers who were often virulently hostile to workers from other cultures. The danger of the CPA campaign against the East European and German refugees was that it could both intensify and broaden this racism. This is particularly true at times of high unemployment which was a persistent fear of many workers with memories of the Great Depression. The arguments used by the CPA to justify its opposition to the arrival of the East European and German migrants, such as false claims about preferential treatment in housing, and distortions of their political outlook were clearly designed to appeal to these racist traditions. In these attitudes as this chapter has explained, the CPA often transgressed its previously high internationalist standards. However, it was to redeem itself with a more positive approach to the arrival of other migrant workers and the struggle by Aborigines for their human rights. This will be the subject of the next chapter.