AUSTRALIA AND THE EUROPEAN CRISSES

1935 - 1939

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This thesis is based on my own original research.

Canberra, 15 December 1965.
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<td>Australian Broadcasting Commission</td>
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<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>AIPS</td>
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<td>IPC</td>
<td>International Peace Campaign</td>
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<td>SRC</td>
<td>Spanish Relief Committee</td>
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<td>THC</td>
<td>Trades Hall Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>Trades and Labor Council</td>
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Books are cited in the notes after their first appearance by the author's name with a shortened title. 'Labor' is so spelt when it forms part of a proper name, or title. The page references of newspapers, given except when the matter referred to was the editorial, or otherwise easy to find, are in brackets after the date. Thus SMH 15.10.35(6) is Sydney Morning Herald 15 October 1935 page 6. (Page references are not given for The Times, since the series of volumes of 'Press Cuttings on Australia', issued by The Times make reference easy.)
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The thesis attempts to assess Australian public opinion towards the Abyssinian crisis, the Spanish civil war, and Hitler's aggressions till September 1939. Australia was far from Europe, and communications were still relatively undeveloped. There was naturally therefore in Australia a lack of interest in foreign affairs, and a wish not to be involved in the wars and disputes of Europe. The first world war, and the depression of the early 1930s, only increased such feelings.

The invasion of Abyssinia by Mussolini in 1935 forced the Australian government - reluctantly - to make a decision on foreign policy. The government was more concerned with developing the country. The Prime Minister was a Catholic, and probably worried by Catholic support for Mussolini. However, the members of the United Australia Party believed that Britain would act with moderation and restraint, and continued their traditional policy of supporting her. They therefore imposed sanctions, though many probably had reservations. The Labour opposition was weakened by division within the movement between Catholics who followed the support of the Australian Church for Mussolini, and unionists who sympathised with communist ideas of the need for a stand in support of the League. The public in general, although at first reluctant to see Britain take the lead, accepted sanctions after the invasion of Abyssinia, and for a time gave greater support to the League of Nations.
The failure of the League by 1936 led to a reversion to isolationism. The government, after toying with the idea of strengthening the Covenant, adopted the British attitude. The population returned to its traditional indifference to foreign affairs.

The Spanish civil war did not shake the public out of its apathy. Communists and Catholics were intensely moved by the conflict, and did their best to rouse both the government and the public in general, but failed. The government followed Britain's policy of Non-Intervention, partly because it usually followed Britain, and partly because it feared for the vital route through the Red Sea, Suez canal and Mediterranean to Britain. It therefore strongly supported Chamberlain's search for an accommodation with Mussolini, and in the interests of it was willing to see Eden resign.

The Anschluss in March 1938 did not provoke a different response in Australia. The government continued appeasement - directed this time towards Hitler as well as Mussolini. The public was worried, but still inclined to hope that Australia would not be involved. Communists still advocated collective security, Catholics still feared Russia more than Germany. As the Czechoslovakian crisis mounted, Australians began for the first time to feel really involved in the affairs of Europe and tension for the first time gripped the whole community. The reaction to the Munich agreement was therefore an intense - and in some quarters an unbalanced - feeling of relief. Others however, were worried by doubts. Two R.S.L. State magazines, and presumably the branches they represented, the Sydney Morning Herald, and an important radio commentator 'The Watchman' violently criticised the agreement, on the grounds of morality, prudence and
strategic considerations. They had little concrete effect, for the Labour opposition in federal Parliament was still isolationist, and in the government only W.M. Hughes expressed doubts. He was by this time too old and too mistrusted on both sides of the House to lead a sustained opposition.

A reaction occurred, however, between a fortnight and a month after the Munich agreement. Growing doubts of the permanence and wisdom of the agreement were strengthened by the pogrom against the Jews in November 1938. For a while the vigorous advocacy of appeasement and defence of Germany by R.G. Menzies and S.M. Bruce stayed the tide, but the German occupation of Prague ended doubts of all except a few. The death of J. Lyons in April 1939, however, left the way open for the Prime Ministership of Menzies. He continued to look for peace by negotiation until the outbreak of war.

The overwhelming majority of Australians were united in support for the war in September 1939. Catholics had their doubts removed by the failure of the Anglo-Russian negotiations and the subsequent Russo-German Pact. Communists, temporarily cut off from the Comintern, adopted a stand in accordance with the policy they had been advocating for the previous three years—a collective front against further German aggression. (It was only in October, when the new communist 'line' was sent from Moscow, that they changed to opposing the war.) For the populace in general, the issue by September 1939 was clear. After the tension of the last few months, Australians accepted the war quietly. The A.L.P., although many of its members still adhered to their old theories of class struggle, and regarded the war as an imperialist one, accepted that the war was inevitable.
The question remains whether appeasement, as some of Chamberlain's supporters at the time and since have claimed, was essential to preserve a united Empire. Such a plea may apply to Canada and South Africa, with their non-British - if not anti-British - minorities. It does not really apply to Australia. It seems that the British government influenced Australia much more than Australia influenced the British government. The excuse of 'the dominions' should therefore be accepted with caution. However, if Australia had supported a stronger stand at the time of the Munich agreement, the community would have been divided. As it was, Hitler's continual aggressions, and Chamberlain's continual efforts to appease him, although they led to the second world war, did ensure that a united Australia went into the war in September 1939.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to assess Australian public opinion on the Abyssinian crisis, the Spanish civil war, and Hitler's aggressions up to September 1939. The term 'public opinion' is a difficult one for a historian to use, since the evidence on which generalisations should be based is fragmentary. Controlled sampling of public opinion, in the form of Gallup Polls, did not begin in Australia until 1941. Some evidence, however, does remain. To begin with, there are numerous contemporary estimates of popular opinion. These may or may not be the result of sound observation and judgement; often they contradict one another. Their accuracy can be verified to a certain extent by studying incidents and statements reported in the press, letters to the newspapers, opinions expressed in newspaper editorials themselves, speeches made by personalities in the public eye, books and magazines produced at the time, and meetings and official statements of different organisations.

Although it is impossible to make a statistical estimate of public opinion, or to take full account of the vagaries of individuals, it is possible to study the views of different groups in the community. This is a valid method of approach because people, in matters which

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1 R. Morgan, Director of the Roy Morgan Research Centre, Pty. Ltd. (Australia's Gallup Poll), Letter to the author, 29.3.63. Two student polls and a newspaper survey are mentioned in the text. A small group operated in the Psychology Department of Sydney University - 'Australian Mass Opinion' - but its records have been lost. Australian Quarterly December 1939, p.51. Mrs J. Clunies Ross, letter to the author, 7.2.65.
are difficult or remote from their experience, often adopt the attitudes of the groups to which they belong - clubs, political parties, their newspapers, etc. Foreign policy is a complicated subject, beyond the usual interests of the average citizen. The issues need to be simplified for him to make judgements. This is often done by various leadership or interest groups within the community.\textsuperscript{1} Evidence does survive of the thinking, speaking and writing which occurred within these groups. Sometimes they held public discussions of foreign affairs, at other times they made statements on the policy they wished to see adopted. Such matters received notice in the press. The material examined, however, also included a number of the original submissions, which have survived in the official records, made by interested organisations to the Prime Minister.

The following chapters therefore deal with the official policy of organised groups, before going on to make an estimate of public opinion in general. Those sections dealing with 'the government' refer to both the Cabinet and its professional advisers - public servants, especially in the Department of External Affairs - and also to governmental supporters, members of the two parties which formed the composite ministry. Distinct from this are the chapters dealing with 'the Opposition'. These discuss not only the political and industrial wings of

\textsuperscript{1} G. Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy, New York, 1950. Almond calls these groups 'elites'. Later sociological work suggests that his theory is oversimplified. Moreover, it applies more to the system of government in the United States, than that in Australia. However, it provides a certain practical justification for this thesis. Cf. J. Bryce, Modern Democracies, London 1921, vol.II, p.266, 'Public opinion is in all countries produced by the few and improved and solidified by the many'.
the labour movement, but also two strands of opinion within labour itself, communists and Catholics. Neither group was primarily involved with foreign policy, or indeed, as far as Catholics were concerned, with politics. Both, however, held very strong views on the European crises, and each other, and strove to influence the labour parties and the unions to adopt their interpretation of events.

The work falls naturally into three parts. Part One introduces the groups studied and looks at them during the Abyssinian crisis, and Hitler's military re-occupation of the Rhineland. The reaction to the latter incident provides a useful comparison with public feeling when Hitler moved against Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. This Part therefore considers opinion from approximately mid 1935 to July 1936. Part Two deals with opinion on the Spanish civil war. Although this continued until the early months of 1939, by March 1938 attitudes to it had become settled. Moreover, after the German occupation of Austria, the debate turned gradually into one about the intentions of Hitler, and the Spanish civil war merged with the wider issue. Part Two therefore covers the period from July 1936 to March 1938. Part Three takes up the story with the Anschluss and follows the changes in Australian opinion through the succeeding crises until the outbreak of war.

The Australian community between the wars was a small one, isolated from Europe.
distances are vast by European standards. Air communications were then in their infancy. A direct passenger and mail flying-boat service with Britain only commenced in August 1938. An air mail letter then took ten days to reach England. Australia was thus in effect more remote than it is in the era of the jet aeroplane and the lettergram.¹

In such circumstances it was natural for Australians to be absorbed in developing their own continent, and fighting their own political battles. Apathy was the traditional Australian response to foreign affairs. W. Macmahon Ball compared it with that of desert tribesmen, and quoted F.W. Eggleston's comment on the lack of debate on the subject in the Australian Parliament. R.G. Casey noted the difficulty of maintaining an active interest, and Hartley Grattan remarked that debate on foreign affairs in Australia lacked the liveliness noticeable in England.²

¹ A comparison of distances is revealing. By air Berlin is approximately 169 miles from Prague, 281 from Vienna, 493 from Warsaw. From London to Moscow, the capitals at each end of Europe is 1557 miles. Yet by air the distance from Sydney to Melbourne is 462 miles, to Brisbane 479, to Adelaide 743, and to Darwin via Mt Isa 2037. (European distances provided by Qantas Office, Canberra; Australian from the TAA booklet of route maps and flight information.) A regular air mail service had begun in 1934, but it involved seven changes of transport, two sections being by rail. A letter took 13 to 15 days to cover the route. The British government had suggested the use of flying-boats to cover the service in 1936, but the scheme was delayed by the Australian government, which objected to the cheap rates and wanted to use land planes which could if necessary be adapted for defence purposes. Qantas Aeriana, E.A. Crome, Sutton Coldfield, 1955, pp.42, 48, 54-6, 62, 76-8. The Times 7.1.36; 8.2.36; 19.2.36; 2.5.36; 16.11.36; 31.12.37.

These complaints by intellectuals should be received with caution. As noted, foreign policy is a specialised subject, remote from the interests of most people in most lands. The Round Table in 1935 thought that interest in foreign affairs in Australia was keen. However, it seems not to have been widespread, and to have been confined to times of crisis. European affairs did not have the immediacy for Australians, who, far from the scene of events, felt powerless to influence them for good or ill. Certainly there was no popular movement in Australia similar to that which, in Britain, led to Sir Samuel Hoare's resignation in 1935.

Several factors increased Australian preoccupation with internal affairs. The organs of publicity, the newspapers, were centred on their State capitals, and looked more to local events than to foreign affairs. Their international coverage was poor. It was only the outstanding newspapers which tried to give a coherent picture of foreign events. The educational system in the thirties did not make good the deficiencies in the newspapers. The number of pupils receiving a secondary education was small, and the curriculum was weak in current affairs. Moreover, library facilities, especially in the country areas, were inadequate.

More important, perhaps, was the impact of the first world war and the depression. The effects of the latter were disastrous - and long-lasting - in a community which

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1 Round Table, June 1935, vol. 25, p. 603.
had borrowed heavily, and depended on primary produce for so much of its foreign exchange. The first world war, moreover, dominated people's thinking. It had ended barely seventeen years previously. Many of the men who had returned had been affected by their experiences. Others were still dying. A series of books and films about the war had taught the public the nature of trench warfare. That the same thing could happen again was unthinkable. Moreover, it was generally accepted that if another world war occurred, it would be more destructive of human life than the first. 1

Australians therefore looked with jaundiced eyes on pacts designed to keep the peace in Europe, 2 on military action even to maintain clear rights, and, indeed, on Europe and European disputes in general. A distrust of Europe was shared by labour men on the left and Australian nationalists on the right. 'Inky' Stephensen voiced these feelings when he wrote:

With an area not much greater than the continent of Australia, Europe is divided into approximately thirty nations, speaking different languages.... Europe's history for two thousand years has been blood-soaked;....Europe is the world's cockpit and bear pit, the bloodiest and dirtiest continent in the world....

It seems doubtful whether Europe has really learned anything from the war of 1914-18, except the need for 'revenge'....Federations, such as the...United States of Australia, show how local disunities can be overcome in a continental

1 For a contemporary example, see talk by G. Hayes on 3 KY, reported in Labor Call 26.9.35(11).
2 Round Table, December, 1935, vol.26, p.56.
area...In Europe, a nationalist thinks in terms of a piece of territory which is often no larger than an Australian sheep station.¹

More moderate people, if they did not share Stephensen's sentiments in full, at least often wished to avoid too great involvement in European affairs. Even some of the government supporters probably welcomed the idea of an 'Imperial foreign policy' because it saved Australia from being herself concerned in Europe.

The period reviewed by this thesis saw the Australian public, under the stimulus of the various crises, abandon its apathy towards foreign affairs, and opposition to involvement in Europe.

The process, however, was not uniform among the various groups studied, and was not fully completed until the outbreak of second world war. In the opening months of 1935, the Australian community was still primarily concerned with recovery from the depression. Events were occurring elsewhere, however, which were to bring foreign affairs to its notice.²

¹
P. R. Stephensen, The Foundation of Culture in Australia, Sydney, 1936, pp. 155, 162 and 163. (Italics in original). Similar feelings were expressed on the left by many in Lang's group and also labour in Victoria, and on the right by the Bulletin and the Publicist. See the Bulletin cartoon, page 91a.

²
The parts of this thesis which give brief accounts of the European crises are not intended as complete summaries of events, on which many books exist, but to provide a background to events mentioned in the public debate. In these sections, and indeed elsewhere, the term 'fascism' is applied to Mussolini's regime in Italy, 'Nazism' to the very different one led by Hitler in Germany. The 'Axis' is used of the political alliance of the two, without implications. The regimes of Franco and Salazar are simply named as such. The only exceptions to these usages occur in quotations, or where the flavour of the original remarks require it.
Mussolini, under whom the fascists had gained power in 1922, loved militaristic display, and sought to revive Italian prestige, and rebuild a 'Roman' Empire. Abyssinia, mountainous and backward, had remained independent after her defeat of the Italian army at Adowa in 1896. To conquer Abyssinia would be a revenge for that defeat, and would extend Italian domination along the Red Sea route to the East. Therefore, despite the Italian sponsorship of Abyssinia at the League of Nations in 1923, Mussolini for two years secretly prepared to attack the country.¹

A clash between Italian forces and Abyssinian tribesmen at Wal Wal, December 1934, which Mussolini declared to be the culmination of Abyssinian slave running and raids into neighbouring territory, provided the excuse for the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, 3 October 1935.

The League of Nations, which had already failed to check the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, was now faced with a nearer challenge, and one in which the interests of its more important members were more directly involved. The French were preoccupied with the danger of Hitler, and at Stresa, April 1935, had sought an Italian alliance as a bar to German ambitions in Central Europe, especially in Austria. The French government was accordingly reluctant to offend Mussolini. Laval postponed supporting the League, and the application of financial and economic sanctions, and prevented altogether the imposition of more drastic ones. In Britain, however, the so-called 'Peace Ballot' in June 1935 purported to show strong public support for the League, and the British government under Baldwin won a general election in

¹ For Italian motives and preparations, see E. de Bono, Anno XIII, London 1937, pp. 3-17, 116-7, 161.
November 1935 on a policy of upholding the Covenant.\textsuperscript{1} Moreover, Britain's interests in Egypt led to concern over the headwaters of the Nile, including Lake Tsana. The British cabinet, however, was divided. Sir Samuel Hoare, the Foreign Secretary, made a pact with Laval in December 1935, to end the war by partitioning Abyssinia. A public outcry in Britain forced his resignation and replacement by Anthony Eden.

The Australian government therefore was faced with a situation in which both its ties to the British government\textsuperscript{2} and its separate signature of the League Covenant led it to support economic sanctions. Yet it was materially and emotionally unprepared for war, feared Japan, and was concerned for the vital Red Sea - Suez canal - Mediterranean route to Britain. The Australian government, political parties, and people, indeed, were faced with a complex situation and had to make a judgement upon it.

\textsuperscript{1} For the Peace Ballot and the elections, see C.L. Mowatt, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940, London 1955, pp.541-2, 553-6.

\textsuperscript{2} H.M.A.S. 'Australia', at the time of the crisis, was on exercises with the British fleet in the Mediterranean as part of the Empire training scheme. If war had come Australian forces could therefore have been immediately involved.
The Hoare-Laval Plan December 1935.

Boundaries of Abyssinia shown in red.
THE HOARE-LAVAL PLAN
PART I

THE ABYSSINIAN CRISIS

'in Geneva is the only visible hope of a world of peace, order and discipline, and this adventure of Mussolini will decide the fate of this great moral experiment for perhaps another generation. If the collective system holds now, it will have immense effect in preserving the peace of Europe against the strains now being put upon it'.

West Australian 4.10.35

'as for our Commonwealth, the League has been a most powerful bond and support. We were bound by the same great international treaty, and were all allies together in war, or neutrals together in peace. If the Covenant goes this bond and support also goes, and very difficult constitutional questions may arise, which may prove very difficult to solve'.

Smuts to Lothian, 22 June 1936.
CHAPTER I

The Australian Government and the League

From 1935 to 1939 Australia was ruled by a composite government of the United Australia Party and the Country Party. The U.A.P., led in 1935 by J.A. Lyons, was the successor of the Nationalist Party which had broken up after 1929. Lyons himself was a Tasmanian Labour man, who, moderate and reformist rather than socialist, had left the Federal Labour Party in 1931, ostensibly because he disapproved of E.G. Theodore's re-election to the Cabinet while the Mungana scandal was still unsolved, but in reality because he opposed the financial policies to meet the depression which certain members of the A.L.P. were then advocating. The Federal Country Party, led in 1935 by Dr Earle Page, had been established in 1919, and appealed to the rural voters, asserting that it protected country interests against those of the big cities. It had joined composite governments under Bruce and, since 1934, Lyons. The Cabinet in 1935 had four members from the Country Party and ten from the U.A.P. The ministry,

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1 For Lyons motives and background, see P.R. Hart, J.A. Lyons and the 1931 Split, unpublished seminar paper, History Department, I.A.S., Australian National University. Lyons had been Premier of Tasmania from 1923 to 1928, and was responsible for financial and economic recovery there. He wanted to apply the same moderate reformist policies to the Commonwealth. He was particularly worried by the policies of inflation and repudiation as seen in the Lang Plan.

2 See Appendix A.
however, was far from united, and as time passed Lyons was increasingly harassed by divisions within the cabinet—particularly between the Attorney General, R.G. Menzies, and Earle Page.¹

Lyons was noted for his pleasant personality, and widely liked. However, he did not possess great intellectual ability and, anxious to avoid trouble in the Cabinet and the government parties, was prone to compromise and much influenced by the press and people outside Parliament.² An emotional pacifist, horrified by the thought of war, and deeply moved by the sight of the war graves in Northern France, Lyons followed a policy of peace at almost any price.³ Partly because of this, and partly to avoid cabinet dissention, Lyons was inclined to avoid or stifle public discussion of important issues, and later gave the appearance of supporting the dictators.

¹ There was trouble between Country Party members and others in the Cabinet. Menzies was striving for the Prime Ministership. Some of these struggles are mentioned in Chapter 7.

² At least this was Pearce's view in 1937. P.R. Heydon, interview with author.

³ Lyons toured the war cemeteries for three days in 1935, and returned to them in 1937. On both occasions he visited Villers Bretonneaux. The Times, 22.6.35; 24.6.37. Cf. Daily Telegraph, 28.8.35(1). The visits also had a deep effect on Dame Enid, see My Life, Serial in 'Womans Day', published as a booklet by the Melbourne Herald, p.34. Also CPD 186/618/ 26 March 1946.
Very different in temperament was the then aged W.M. Hughes. A one-time Prime Minister of Australia, and with all the prestige of the war leadership and participation in the peace treaties, Hughes' flair for vigorous language had only slightly weakened, and the 'elder statesman' could not always be relied upon to make the vague meaningless statements which avoided trouble and which Lyons favoured. Moreover, Hughes regarded the world from the point of view of power politics, and with a devastating realism, not to say cynicism. He was, however, even in his seventies too able to be omitted from the Cabinet for long.

Apart from R.G. Casey, Treasurer from 3 October 1935, whose interest in and experience of international affairs was well known, and who was credited by some with having a hand in the development of the Department of External Affairs, the only other member of the Cabinet who seems to have taken an active and continuing part in discussions on foreign affairs was Sir George Pearce, Minister for

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External Affairs in 1935. While he held this position, the Department of External Affairs was established on a separate footing, a series of pronouncements on foreign affairs made to Parliament, and the fortnightly Current Notes and the Annual Reports begun. He was probably responsible for Lyons' statements on major international issues, such as the advocacy of the Pacific Pact in the 1937 Imperial Conference.\(^1\) His experience, interest and expertise, however, were in the realm of the Defence Department, which probably accounts for his strong attitude towards the retention of New Guinea.

The Department of External Affairs had had a chequered history. There had been a number of changes in its organisation and functions, and it had, until 1935, been closely associated with the Prime Minister's Department. Increasing overseas responsibilities had led to a need for a stronger department, and discussions had occurred on this subject while Latham was Attorney General as well as Minister for External Affairs from 1932 to 1934. But the immediate impetus for the change was the Abyssinian crisis, which revealed only too clearly the need for more staff. As a result, Lt. Col. W.R. Hodgson, O.B.E.\(^2\) was appointed Secretary and the administrative association with the Prime Minister's Department, except for accounts, came to an end. Four new positions were filled between March and April, 1936, and by December of that year there

\(^1\) P. Heydon, *Quiet Decision*, Melbourne 1965, p.131.

was a Political Section and an International Co-operation Section. The Department began Current Notes on 15 April 1936 as a service for members of Parliament. Requests from outside individuals and institutions, however, led the Department to extend its circulation. Annual Reports for the Department were issued for the years 1936 and 1940.¹

Despite this increasing activity, it must not be assumed that most members of the government were either interested in or conversant with foreign affairs. The government, like the Australian public was primarily concerned with internal development and policy. Lyons' main interest had long been economic and financial. The members of the Country Party were preoccupied with the development of the country districts and their sectional interests. There was no coherent, well-considered, foreign policy. This accounts for the confusion and

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P. Heydon, Quiet Decision, p.125. Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs for 1936, pp.8-11. For understaffing during the Abyssinian crisis, see the exchange between Senator Duncan-Hughes and Pearce. Pearce admitted that during the crisis officers had 'frequently' been forced to work all night and all day on Sundays. CPD 148/2338-42, 3 December 1935 (quoted WolfsohnH, 'The Evolution of Australia in World Affairs', Australian Outlook, March 1953, p.16). For the small size of the Department during the early stages of the Abyssinian crisis, see Commonwealth Gazette, no.57, 18 October 1935, p.2521. At that time, the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department was also Secretary of the Department of External Affairs. Hodgson was then Assistant Secretary, he had under him 4 clerks and two typists, with F.K. Officer in London. Latham was MEA from 6.1.32-12.10.34, when he was succeeded by Pearce.
indecision when the Abyssinian crisis became serious.\(^1\)

In so far as government supporters held a philosophy of foreign affairs in common, it was to be found in support for an Imperial foreign policy. Such a policy, in theory, was only adopted after consultation between the component parts of the Empire. After the Chanak incident it was clearly wise for Britain to consider dominion views before committing herself to action. However, consultation was a difficult and lengthy business; a sudden crisis was liable to find the Empire at a disadvantage. Imperial statesmen therefore tried to decide general principles of policy at Imperial conferences, to discuss details as much as possible by cable and visits but left immediate decisions in the last resort to Britain. Agreement on general principles of policy was helped by common membership of the League, which was one reason why the Abyssinian crisis affected the dominions so directly.\(^2\)

\(^1\) As late as 2 October the Cabinet was divided. Lyons stalled for time, declaring that the international situation was too delicate for premature statements or assumptions of aggression. (The Moffat Papers 1919-43, N.H. Hooker (Ed.), Cambridge, Mass., 1956, p.127. J. Pierrepont Moffat was the American Consul-General in Australia at the time.) The Round Table, June 1935, vol.25, p.600, commented that the government had had to make too severe an adjustment between its component parties to leave much time for discussions of the essentials of policy. But it is to be doubted, however much time the government had been granted, if it would ever have fully discussed foreign policy.

\(^2\) See Smuts' comment, quoted p.11.
This 'Imperialism', which so annoyed members of the A.L.P., had several sources. It stemmed partly from loyalty to Britain as the 'motherland', but also from a realisation of Australian weakness. Australia was a small nation, far from the scene of major world events, with little military power. Government supporters felt that only as part of a great Empire could she be defended or make her viewpoint felt. Menzies expressed this after the Munich crisis when he said:

It is a very simple thing to say that any British dominion ought to have its own foreign policy....[But]....Does that mean that we as a dominion government ought to formulate our foreign policy independent of what may be the foreign policy of Great Britain or any other British dominion....? I say that to adopt such a line of conduct would be suicidal, not only for us, but also for the British Empire as a whole....I have always believed...that the British Empire exercises its greatest influence in the world...when it speaks with one concerted voice....'[This involves prior consultation, enabling the Australian Government] 'to say useful things at the right time to the Government of the United Kingdom....In that sense, of course, we are bound to have a foreign policy. But that means that that policy in any individual matter has to be expressed to the Government of the United Kingdom. It is in our negotiations with it - negotiations which are not going to be posted up on every sign-board for the world to read - that the Government of the United Kingdom wishes to know the assistance we can render'.

Partly as a result of this feeling of dependence, the old constitutional ties remained. The Statute of Westminster had still not been ratified. Moreover the government

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1 CPD 157/429/5.10.38.
parties believed that the maintenance of the British Empire and the close co-operation of its component parts, was beneficial to mankind.

There were, however, less idealistic reasons for government support of an Imperial foreign policy. It enabled it to keep defence expenditure low and largely to ignore foreign policy.\(^1\) That the government was preoccupied with internal matters was partly the result of the depression,\(^2\) but it was also the result of the character and background of its members. From a wide variety of interviews and statements, it is clear that the government, with few exceptions, was neither interested in nor knowledgeable about foreign affairs.

The government, however, could hardly admit that it had no policy of its own, or that it merely followed Britain. Accordingly, when pressed for information, it resorted to vagueness. For example, Lyons in his statement to Parliament in April 1938, after the resignation of Eden from the British Cabinet, merely declared that he had Chamberlain's authority to say that the British Government still adhered to the policy which had been adopted by members of the British Commonwealth

\(^1\) For the government's attitude to defence, and economies, see G. Long, *Australia in the War of 1939-45, To Benghazi*, Canberra, 1952, Chapter 1.

\(^2\) Eggleston makes the point that the depression created something like a panic in the minds of political leaders. In 1935-6 this was the most recent recollection. With fears of a further slump, it was natural that other problems should be postponed. *F.W. Eggleston, Lectures to Diplomatic Students*, vol. II, Lecture 5, p.2; *Eggleston Papers*, MS 297, ANL. (These were given 1947-9.)
of Nations at the Imperial Conference in 1937. As that policy had been none too clearly explained, Lyons' statements were not enlightening, 'and it is difficult to believe that they were intended to enlighten'. In any case, as Curtin pointed out, what Australians wanted to know was the policy, not of the British government, but of the Australian. The latter, however, kept its representations to Britain strictly secret, and merely remarked that it was in consultation with the British government. Even statements in the House, such as those given by Pearce and which P. Heydon so admires, were usually merely historical reviews. 'Foreign policy, however, is in its essence a plan for the future, and reviews of past events are not a substitute for foreign policy.'

Government secrecy may have been the result of the confidential nature of its information from Britain. Moreover, the government may well have feared that public opinion, if roused, might divert it from a policy parallel to that of Britain, and so hinder an 'Imperial' foreign policy. It is, however, difficult to avoid the impression that a main motive was that the government had few policies or ideas of its own, and favoured secrecy because it gave

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the impression that important decisions were being made and new thinking done.

The situation was not helped by the position of the Department of External Affairs. Only separated from the Prime Minister's Department after the Abyssinian crisis had begun, and with a tiny staff, it lacked the prestige and independent standing of well-established departments. Its officials needed time to gain experience, find a composite policy, and win authority in government circles. In the beginning, too, they were possibly a little over-impressed with British Foreign Office mystique. Moreover, their channels of communication were through Britain. Only when an independent diplomatic service was established would this link be weakened.¹

Not only did the Australian government avoid giving the public information itself, it also tried to repress public debate. After the PMG's Department had disapproved of a script for 2SM, the broadcast was not held. According to D.G.M. Jackson, the Catholic publicist in Melbourne,² Lyons personally forbade him to make any more comments on the Abyssinian crisis. This may have reflected Lyons' uneasiness over Catholic opposition to his policy. On the other hand, the habit of suppression of information

¹ In December 1936, the Department of External Affairs had, apart from Hodgson, seven Officers, 4 in a 'Political Section', and 3 in an 'International Co-operation Section'. It had no diplomatic representatives abroad, apart from London. Not only did it receive its official information from Britain, but the ordinary daily news, via the newspapers, also came largely from the same source. Ball, Press etc., Chapter I, esp. pp.10-16. Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs for 1936, p.111.

² See Chapter II, pp. 43-5.
had begun earlier. As the international situation became more tense, this habit was to increase.¹

The characteristics of the Australian government, just considered, were illustrated clearly in the Abyssinian crisis. It has been noted that ministers were hesitant and divided. An informant told Moffat on 24 October that Lyons was still trying to unite his Cabinet.² Lyons himself was a good Catholic, yet his government was to propose sanctions against Italy, and he told Moffat that he could not forget that Australia might some day find herself in the plight of Abyssinia. P. Heydon thinks that the government's hand was forced by public opinion, and adds that this was almost the only instance of such a thing happening in the history of Australian foreign policy. This theory is interesting, but probably reflects Heydon's circle of acquaintances at the time. He was not

¹ Interview with Jackson. He added that Lyons' censorship during the Abyssinian crisis was much more strict than that of Menzies at the beginning of the war.

² Moffat Diary, September 1935-March 1937, October 24 and 25, pp.92-3. A microfilm copy is held in the Australian National Library, ref. G.1004. Permission to quote has been granted by his widow, Mrs A. Levitt. According to Moffat's unnamed source, Parkhill represented 'the arch conservatives', and was primarily concerned with the dangers from Bolshevism. Hughes on the other hand was preoccupied by the threat from Japan. Pearce, 'a Tory patriot' thought of nothing but following British policy. According to Pearce, Carpenter to Cabinet: Thirty-seven Years of Parliament, London, 1951, p.193, Hughes was immersed in correcting the manuscript of the book which was to cause so much trouble and took little part in the discussions. The old man had probably decided that his colleagues did not know what they were talking about. Senator McLachlan, McLachlan: An F.A.Q. Australian, Melbourne etc., 1948, p.160, declares that he supported a strong stand against Italy, and lost popularity in Cabinet for so doing. No available contemporary evidence supports this, however.
then in close touch with the government, and no evidence
to support the theory survives.1 Country Party members
of the Cabinet were probably more concerned with the
effects of the crisis on Australia's trade and the trade
route through the Suez canal. Since the government had
followed a scheme of Imperial naval defence, the
Mediterranean-Suez-Red Sea route was essential. Along
it was expected to come the British fleet to defend
Singapore and Australia's northern approaches. Moreover,
the bulk of Australia's primary products passed that way
to Britain and Europe. Any crisis which threatened to
paralyse this artery was therefore intensely worrying.2

In the circumstances, following Britain's lead, a
course strongly urged by Colonel Hodgson of the Department
of External Affairs, was the only policy that could possibly
unite all the groups, especially if Britain's support for
the League was cautious. The Cabinet accordingly
authorised Bruce to inform the League that the attitude of
Australia was identical with that of Britain, whom it
would support to the fullest possible extent. Lyons
nevertheless privately told Moffat that despite all the
telegrams back and forth he did not know the ultimate
plans of the British government, but he did not expect it
would push matters to extremes, or run the risk of
hostilities. He seemed 'reasonably satisfied' that there
was no likelihood of so severe a sanction as the closure

1 Round Table, June 1939, vol.29, p.623 mentioned Lyons'
'deep but unobtrusive religion, which was the strongest
influence in his life'. Moffat Papers, p.128. P. Heydon,
interview with author.

2 Page, CPD 147/552, talked of the need to protect the
Mediterranean route for Australia's exports.
of the Suez canal, and certainly gave the impression that he hoped it was not a possibility.¹

In Federal Parliament, the Abyssinian crisis was the subject of two protracted debates between 23 September and 13 November 1935. This was the longest discussion of foreign policy in the Australian Parliament since that on the Peace Treaties in 1919. The first debate concerned the nature of the crisis, and the course Britain and Australia should follow; the second was on the government's Sanctions Bill. In both of them the Labour parties opposed any involvement by Australia and bitterly criticised the government's policy, quoting wherever possible previous divergent statements by government supporters. The government - with criticism inside Parliament, a hesitant public opinion outside, and its own members divided - was bound to find the debate a ticklish one, even though Colonel Hodgson was coaching Cabinet ministers on their speeches.²

Both major parties had their rebels, but the most spectacular belonged to the Cabinet itself - W.M. Hughes. Lacking international idealism, he had, in the months which led up to the crisis, been concerned about the danger to Britain if she was inveigled into fighting to uphold the League alone. He was particularly worried by

¹ The Times, 31.8.35; Moffat Papers, pp.127-8.
² Ibid. Hodgson added 'Very few knew anything about the subject, either government or opposition, and he feared that the debate would not be on a high level'. Three of the four Country Party Cabinet ministers did not speak in either debate. (See Appendix A.) The Cabinet ministers who appeared most concerned were Pearce, Menzies, Page, Parkhill and McLachlan, with Hughes an unknown quantity. Pearce had a prestige in such matters, and his influence was probably paramount.
British, and Australian, military weakness. Having no faith in collective pressure, or in the powers of moral suasion to influence dictators, he was convinced that League sanctions would be either too ineffective to worry Mussolini, or, if effective, would provoke him to declare war on the powers enforcing them. His cabinet colleagues either did not share these views, or would not admit to them. Hughes was noticeably silent during the debate. But he was too well known to avoid attention. Moreover, his ideas were revealed in the most spectacular manner possible by the publication, during the course of the Parliamentary debate, of his book, Australia and War Today: The Price of Peace. This, written before the crisis broke, nevertheless refuted all the arguments the government had been advancing. The cabinet was thrown into confusion; and Lyons demanded Hughes' resignation. Hughes made a notable speech explaining his reasons, and resigned. The incident caused a nine-day wonder in the press, which expressed sympathy for Hughes. It also provided the Opposition with subject for much derision of the government - not to mention the typical Hughes' quotations which could be culled from his book.1

Hughes' ideas might not have been so shattering to the government's case if Lyons had not succumbed to the temptation to pretend that there was no danger of war-

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1 Daily Telegraph 27.8.35(1 and 7). Hughes book appears to have been on the bookstalls on 31 October 1935. Argus 1.11.35(9). CPD 147/1299-1307. The general press comment was that Hughes had only expressed what everybody knew. R.S.L. magazines especially supported Hughes. Mufti (see p.100 n.2) 1.12.35(5-6, 10); 1.1.36(2); 1.2.36(8); Queensland Digger 1.8.36(4, 6-7). But see also Bulletin 6.11.35(9) and SMH 6.11.35(13). For Opposition quotations, see CPD 147/1270-1; 148/1436; 1453, etc.
in applying sanctions. This was a tactical error, for some danger clearly existed. Lyons, faced with a worrying problem relied too much on suppression of facts and evasions.\footnote{Lyons, questioned on policy, 'replied in a sentence which epitomises furlongs of the similar evasions which cloak the great principle of Hush. "It seems unwise", he said, "either to anticipate any breach [with Italy] or to announce in advance the course of action to be followed by the Commonwealth government in contingencies the nature and circumstances of which cannot at present be foreseen". Not until three months later did it come out that at the date on which that woolly utterance was made HMAS Australia was already in the Mediterranean and that Australia itself, in the classic phrase, was pledged "up to the hilt". \textit{Bulletin} 18.11.36(8).} The latter became ludicrous in the light of Hughes' book. Hughes had broken Cabinet unanimity, at a time of crisis, and provided critics of the government with ammunition. Moreover, his cynical appraisal of the League and its possibilities came at a time when the government itself was divided. Some of its leading members seemed wholehearted in supporting the League; others were not. But Britain supported the organisation, and the government was committed to follow. Hughes, of course, although stressing that effective sanctions were in fact a measure of war, and might well lead to hostilities, supported their application nevertheless. They were an interesting experiment, necessary to see if the League could be made to work. Such realism, and the willingness to face war if necessary, was repugnant to Hughes' Cabinet colleagues, and was politically inexpedient anyway. Hughes had none of Lyons emotional revulsion from
war. The old man was of a different mould entirely. He seems to have regarded his fellow ministers with a certain amount of contempt, and a division grew up between himself and the others. As it was, his exclusion did not last for long. The Lyons ministry was too short of talent to ignore his ability.

In the debate in Parliament, the other U.A.P. members bitterly attacked Labour's isolationism. They spoke of 'the Mother Country' and 'her hour of need', reminded their opponents that Britain provided the defence of Australia, and stressed the legal and constitutional ties which led Australia automatically to join Britain in any war. The great exponent of this last point was R.G. Menzies, with his argument of the 'single crown'. He declared that the alternatives to membership of the commonwealth and support for collective security through the League were either massive rearmament by Australia, or selected alliances in a Balance of Power.

U.A.P. members were less concerned about Abyssinia and divided about Italy. Some condemned her treaty-breaking and aggression; others asserted the importance of Abyssinia to Italy and praised the wonderful work they

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1 The Abyssinian war did not change his views. In August 1936 he accepted the Vicepresidency of a Commonwealth society which was advocating an International Police Force, on the grounds that law rested on force. Age 31.8.36(9). He said in parliament that to recognise Italy's conquest of Abyssinia was to 'revert to the laws of the jungle'. CPD 155/1196/18.5.38.

2 CPD 147/560-1 (Groom); 1371(Marr); 148/1503(Sampson); 147/661-2(Holt); 73(Sen. Leckie); 81(Sen. Payne); 726(Casey); 579 and 581-2(Menzies).
said Mussolini was doing. There was a tendency to admire what was considered the efficiency of Fascism.¹

Country party members had far less to say than those of the U.A.P., and reveal a more narrow range of ideas. They opposed isolationism and supported Britain even more strongly, but on practical rather than emotional grounds. For example, they stressed the defence of Australia by the British navy, and seemed more conscious of the needs of national security. Their distinctive contribution to the debate, as might be expected, was the importance of keeping the trade routes open. Abbott pointed out that these ran through Suez, and accepted Holloway's accusation that any war that resulted would be one for trade with equanimity. Corser added, 'the primary producers, at any rate, are quite content that we should give what support we can to Great Britain in protection of our seaborne commerce', and added 'the menace of Italy in the Suez canal, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, affects Australia as much as it affects Great Britain.'²

Government supporters differed radically in their attitude to the League. Some UAP members admitted that they had never supported it in the past, but appeared willing to give it a trial at that time. Some talked of the need for an international organisation, and pointed out that the League was the only one in existence. Most members of the government parties, however, seem to have

¹ CPD 147/671-2; 724; 1332; 1407; 148/1493.
² CPD 147/548, 552, 589-90, 649-50, 717, 723 and 1401.
supported the League out of loyalty to Britain.\textsuperscript{1} Beneath the surface there existed complete disagreement on the chances of the League, its effectiveness, and the correct interpretation of its past history.\textsuperscript{2}

Both parties in the coalition naturally supported the government's Sanctions Bill, demanded that Australia fulfil her obligations, and denied that war would ensue. Page, however, diplomatically remarked that the government was not committed to support sanctions up to the point of war, and Green and Senator Hardy probably spoke for many when they stressed that there was no workable alternative to trying sanctions.\textsuperscript{3}

The Parliamentary debates ended with neither side having convinced the other. It was left to events to modify their ideas.

The shallowness of some members support for the League was revealed by their reactions in 1936 when Mussolini began to triumph. Perkins and Holt wondered

\textsuperscript{1} CPD 147/1396, 148/1492, 1504-5, 147/85. For the Country Party, 148/1507. Menzies represented the general opinion when he said, \textit{Age 9.10.35(12)}, that for all its imperfections, the League was the only collective guarantee of peace, and that the people of Britain had faith in it.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{2} While D. Cameron denied that the absence of America, Japan and Germany fatally weakened the League, Menzies stressed their absence. CPD 147/637 Age as note one. Whereas Senator McLachlan stressed the need for Australia to have the League for protection, Hughes felt it provided little. CPD 147/66 and 1300. Whereas Sen. Dein argued that the Manchurian failure had resulted in the Abyssinian crisis, Lane and McDonald were thankful that the League had not intervened in Manchuria, since they felt that the Japanese had then moved to frustrate Russian intervention. CPD 148/1498, cf. 147/713 and 148/1502.

\textsuperscript{3} CPD 147/550, 1322, 672, 1293-4, 1298, 148/1510.
whether it would be better to withdraw from the organisation, and Senator Foll was sceptical about it. The most outright opposition, however, came from A.G. Cameron of the Country Party. He was concerned about the effect of sanctions on Australian trade, felt that collective security had gone, and doubted whether any benefit was gained from League membership.

In the same way the Cabinet's apparently whole-hearted adoption of sanctions needs to be accepted with reservation. Probably after initial doubts, it allowed itself to hope that the League operation would be successful, and caught some of the enthusiasm of League supporters. As late as 1936 it declared that sanctions were producing an effect. On the other hand, it was reluctant to push Italy to extremes. In the Department of External Affairs, Hodgson, at any rate, feared that the defect of fascism in Italy would encourage German aggression. The Age reported that the Australian government sent a cable to the British government approving of the Hoare-Laval Plan before it realised the outcry in England would

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1 CPD 152/1407-8, 150/1199, 153/648-9, 150/1001, 151/1052, 154/120.

2 The sanctions bill was a comprehensive one, CPD 148/1430. Bruce in London urged Eden on, and Eden wrote to Hoare that although some of the Dominions [Australia?] had been 'distinctly doubtful', they were all united with Britain, and if anything wanted the League to be more vigorous than it was. 'The pressure must be kept up on Mussolini and if possible increased'. (Earl of Avon, The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators, London 1962, pp.269-70, see also 297, 306-7). For government optimism, see Current Notes, vol.I, p.9. According to Moffat, Bruce was at that time keenly supporting the League.
force Hoare to resign. After the war, according to Mansergh, 'Australia was the first and the most pressing of the dominion governments in urging upon the United Kingdom that sanctions should be raised'. Other evidence suggests that this is so, and that one reason for it was the Trade Diversion Policy against Japan. The Australian government did not want a struggle with Italy. Its main potential enemy was elsewhere.

Accordingly, after the triumph of the Italian armies, and the flight of Haile Selassie, in May 1936, the Australian government suggested that sanctions should be raised, and that discussion of Covenant reform should be postponed until September to provide time for consideration, and consultation with the rest of the Commonwealth. That some time would be needed was clear from the diverse viewpoint expressed by government supporters. Current

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1 *Age*, editorial, 20.12.35. The basis for this statement has not been found. For Hodgson, *Moffat Diary*, p.196, 5 February 1936. On the other hand Hodgson did not wish the League to lose vitality. He thought the best way out would be for Italian operations in Abyssinia to fall of their own accord. He was bitter about the Hoare-Laval proposals, because he thought they discouraged the United States from more definite action, and knocked the props from under the case the Australian government had been carefully building up - that only in the League could small countries like Australia find protection.

2 N. Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy 1931-39*, Oxford 1952, p.156. *The Times*, 17.6.36, reported that the Australian government had informed Bruce that it thought sanctions should be lifted immediately. If so, Australia could regain the valuable Italian wool market, important because of the tariff policy towards Japan. For Lyons on 18 June, see Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs for 1936, p.23. Moffat reported Pearce in March 1936 as being increasingly preoccupied by Japan. This was the background to his strong statement on New Guinea. *Moffat Diary*, 14 March 1936, pp.280-1.
Notes quoted Lord Lothian in favour of making the Covenant less sweeping, and British public opinion as favouring regional pacts. Menzies, although he gave Eden the impression that he favoured maintaining sanctions against Italy, seems to have felt that a modified Covenant could avoid such an impasse in the future. In an article for the Australian press he felt that the Covenant should provide for investigation and discussion, and 'perhaps' an agreed economic course. Bruce, in the League Assembly, talked of the maximum of economic sanctions, with a readiness to meet force. On 11 September, Pearce rejected both the extreme proposals to strengthen Article 16, and those to abolish it.¹

¹In fact, the Cabinet was taking the question of Covenant reform seriously, and had appointed a strong committee under Pearce to consider it¹. On it were Menzies, Pearce, Hughes, Parkhill, and a member of the Country Party.² Its proposals were announced to the Australian Parliament on 29 September 1936, so as to coincide with Bruce¹s speech, containing them, to the League Assembly. The Committee favoured making financial and economic — but not military — sanctions automatic, and therefore more quickly effective. Moreover, sanctions should be reinforced by regional pacts, especially in the Pacific. Article 19 on Treaty revision should be rewritten to include periodic investigation and reports. The League Covenant should be separated from the Treaty of Versailles,

²P. Heydon, Quiet Decision, p.129. The membership of the committee is derived from an interview with P. Heydon.
and non-member States should be invited to confer with the League on amendments to the Covenant in the hope that all might join.¹

This unusually considered policy, however, was not maintained. On 18 June 1937, Pearce revealed that Bruce in the 17th Assembly had said that the wisest course would be for the League to accept its limitations. He supported British views on speedy intervention in the early stages of a dispute, and on regional pacts, but added that financial and economic sanctions should not become automatic, for 'public opinion' would compel Statesmen to act justly.²

The difference between the attitudes of September 1936 and June 1937 probably did not involve a complete change in governmental thinking. Heydon suggests³ that the Cabinet, probably led by Pearce who was always aware of public opinion, felt that after the notable failure of the organisation it had supported, it was inexpedient to appear merely to follow British policy. An Australian policy had to be stated. To abandon the League altogether or to suggest weakening the Covenant, would be to admit

¹ CPD 151/620-4. For the timing, see P. Heydon, op.cit., p.129.
² CPD 153/45-6.
³ Interview. This section is conjecture, but it seems to fit in with the characters and opinions of the members of the Cabinet, and has the support of Heydon. Moreover, it should be noted that the Committee also wanted no.4 of the 1921 resolutions - on the duty of each individual member to decide whether a breach of the Covenant had occurred or not - to be adopted. Its aim was probably to counter labour criticism that Australia would be dragged into a war without any choice, but by including this proviso, the committee did imply some limits to its idealism.
that past policy had been wrong. The obvious course, to advocate a stronger Covenant, would tally with Hughes' attitude, provide Menzies with a strong speech, and Pearce with a policy which would appeal to the public. Moreover, to strengthen the Covenant was to maintain the basis for a common Imperial foreign policy. Few of the Cabinet, however, probably had much faith in the League in itself. Their policy was therefore soon abandoned under the pressure of external events.

The debate in the League Assembly on Covenant reform was both desultory and inconclusive. The impotence of the League was revealed even more clearly during the Spanish civil war. Moreover, as a result of that struggle, the Australian government became increasingly interested in a 'rapprochment' with Italy, in order to secure the vital Mediterranean route to Europe. The decisive factor, however, was probably the attitude of the British government. This, under Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister from May 1937, began to ignore the League in practice. An 'understanding between the component parts of the Empire for mutual assistance' was by mid 1937 more likely to appeal to government supporters than League idealism.

Another event which led to a weakening of the League prestige was the German military re-occupation of the

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1 This point was noted by Menzies in his introductory speech, 'the League of Nations and the principles embodied in the Covenant have provided a focal point for a joint British Commonwealth policy'. _CDT_ 151/621 of Smuts remark, quoted p.11.

2 R.L. Butler, Premier of South Australia, _The Times_, 17.4.36. He added that sanctions were 'humbug' and the League worthless.
Rhineland. The British government was unwilling to support vigorous action by France, and the Australian Cabinet, although alarmed by the German move, left Britain to deal with the matter. Pearce recounted the facts of the crisis in Parliament, but deliberately avoided making any comment upon them. The Department of External Affairs, however, realised the importance of the incident, and Pearce in reaction to it brusquely rejected German arguments for the return of colonies, especially New Guinea. The crisis, however, petered out without any decision being required of the Australian government. The Department of External Affairs at the beginning of 1937 gloomily remarked that the best that could be said for 1936 was that war had been avoided in each crisis, but at a definite cost.

The period of the Abyssinian crisis is also significant in that it saw the emergence of R.G. Menzies in foreign

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1 Pearce at this time adopted the habit of giving periodic reviews of the international situation in Parliament. After mentioning the Rhineland crisis, Pearce added that it would be unwise to comment, since the issues were primarily of concern to the Locarno Powers. No instructions were issued to Bruce. CPD 149/61, 129. However, according to Moffat, in his Diary, p.281-2, Bruce had become Eden's chief confidant at this time, and the latter took hardly any step without talking it over with him. As for the government in Australia, Moffat lunched with White, McLachlan and Pearce, and reported them to be very bitter against the Germans, and to have told the German Consul 'some home truths' when he visited them for a few days, trying to convince them of the pacific intentions of Hitler. Moffat Diary, p.271, 13 March 1936. As for the Department of External Affairs, 'The French government points out that the Rhineland is of importance to the entire political system of Europe, and is not merely an aspect of the French and Belgian security problem'. Current Notes, vol.I, 15 April 1936, p.2-4. Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs for 1936, p.14. For Pearce on New Guinea, CPD 149/119-23.
policy. He had taken a prominent part in the parliamentary debates on Abyssinia and sanctions, adopting the legalistic point of view. His political opinions were reinforced by a visit to England in 1936. While there, he came into close contact with Bruce, and identified himself with the ruling group in the British conservative party, describing Baldwin as 'typical...of the best in the English race'.

He wrote of his impressions in a series of articles for the Australian press. Too much significance should not be attached to individual points in these, for Menzies' views probably reflected those of the people with whom he had most recently come into contact. But it is clear that he was impressed with the men he had seen, and that his judgement on them and their policies was not always sound. His articles reveal sympathy with the ideas of those who later supported the appeasement of Germany.

On his return Menzies sat on the committee on Covenant reform, making the speech on government policy before Pearce. He also spoke at social functions. According to

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Argus, 1.8.36(22).

The full series was published in the Argus, 1-6.8.36, the SMH published all except number 2, and got the titles wrong. SMH 3-6.8.36.

E.g., his estimate of the abilities of the various British Cabinet ministers Argus, 1.8.36; his gross exaggeration of the effects of British rearmament, ibid., 6.8.36(10) etc.

He said the British people were weary of the anti-Germanism of France and sought a peace with Germany. He stressed the need to bring Germany to the Conference table. Ibid., 4.8.36(8), Age, 7.8.36(11).

P. Heydon, Quiet Decision, pp.129-30.

Age, 24.8.36(9).
Heydon, however, Menzies was not really interested in foreign affairs as such. He used his visits to England to enhance his prestige in Australia. He had no considered programme except to follow that of the British government, and a belief in an Imperial foreign policy.

The Australian government had weathered the storm very well. The Abyssinian crisis may have divided its members, but such divisions were temporary, and the labour movement was even more divided. The Abyssinian crisis was significant in that the League could clearly no longer be the basis of a common Imperial foreign policy. What would replace the League was to be discussed at the Imperial Conference of 1937. Moreover, the Australian government had been concerned by the Italian threat to the Mediterranean and Red Sea route to Europe. This was essential both for defence and commerce, and the government therefore strongly advocated the appeasement of Italy. Such a policy was made more urgent by the outbreak of the Spanish civil war in July 1936.

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The term 'appeasement' was then used without any of the overtones it has since acquired. Government spokesmen meant that legitimate Italian grievances and disabilities - such as the lack of colonies - should be settled on the basis of compromise, as between equals. It was almost the application of the Australian concept of 'a fair go' to international politics. The policy was to be applied, in the first instance, to Italy, although the government was quite willing to see Britain adopt the same attitude towards Germany.
CHAPTER II

The Opposition Adopts Isolationism

The government parties, despite differences of opinion between groups and individuals, were united in supporting Britain and following her policy. This chapter looks at those organised sections of the community which did not so follow Britain - the Catholic Church, the Communist Party and the Labour movement. Each of these sections stood alone in its own right, and also strove to influence public opinion in general. Both Catholics and communists, however, were also active in the Labour movement, and attempted to sway Labour policy. Their success varied, for most Labour men were neither Catholics nor communists, and had their own distinctive ideas.

The most unreservedly Marxist party in Australia was the Communist Party, or C.P.A. - numbering in those years between three and four thousand members - which had been created from two preceding 'communist parties' in 1921 at the orders of the Comintern.¹ The C.P.A. was controlled by this latter body, and followed the various changes in policy laid down in Moscow. In 1934 the Comintern had begun to reverse its policy of the 'New Line' and finally reinstated the 'United Front'. In September of that year Russia joined the League of Nations. Although admitting that it was an organisation of capitalist

¹ Communist, 20.1.22. (This later became the Workers Weekly, see Bibliography).
governments, Stalin felt that it might help postpone an attack on Russia by Germany and other nations. In 1935 the Comintern, in the Seventh Congress, admitted that 'fascism' was such a danger that communists should even defend bourgeois democracy against it, and instituted the 'People's Front'.

Stalin's attitude to the League was in fact an abandonment of Marxist-Leninist theories of war and capitalism, in the interests of Russian security. An alliance with some capitalist States against others ran counter to old ideas, which regarded all capitalists as alike, and all equally to be opposed. Wars between Imperialist States were not the business of the Workers, who, according to Lenin, should rather raise the banner of revolution in their own lands. Moreover, Britain had long been regarded as the arch-Imperialist power, with her rule in India, Ireland, Palestine and the Middle East. By 1935, however, of the European countries communists opposed Italy and Germany. They regarded the Italian

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1 J. Normington-Rawling, The Communist Party of Australia to 1930, unpublished seminar paper, Department of Political Science, Institute of Social Sciences, A.N.U. Workers Weekly, 21.9.34. The 'United Front' was the alliance of all working class parties against capitalism, the 'People's Front', or 'Popular Front', was the alliance of the working class with the lower middle class against fascism. G. Dimitrov, The United Front, London, 1938, p.109. The membership of the Communist Party is hard to discover. It probably rose from 2,824 in December 1934 to just under 4,000 in 1939. This, though small, was the number of active members only. Workers Weekly, 5.7.35. J.D. Playford, Doctrinal and Strategical Problems of the Communist Party of Australia, 1945-62, Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1962, p.24. J. Normington-Rawling estimates its numbers at the end of 1938 to be 3,569 members, and to be 4,000 by June 1940.
corporate State as part of a general capitalist reaction against working-class rule, and were horrified by the regime of the Nazis. This feeling, together with concern for Russia's safety, led Australian communists to follow more easily Stalin's new policy. ¹

The most bitter and organised opposition to the communists came from Catholics. These formed a substantial minority of the Australian population, and between the wars were particularly strong within the Labour movement. ² 'The source of Catholic opinion on foreign policy was communism. It...coloured their outlook in everything'. 'Communism was the main enemy, and we hoped that Hitler would prove a bulwark, though after Austria we had no expectation of him at all'. Hitler, this last speaker added, was never as dangerous as Russia, since there were national boundaries to his ideology, whereas communism was international. A leading Australian Catholic publicist, indeed, admitted that Catholics were almost obsessed with

¹ Communist Review, August 1934, p.30. Communist, 13.10.22 Workers Weekly, 11.1.34, 19.1.34, 5.2.32.
² From 1935-39 between 20-22 per cent of the population were Catholics. Nearly a half were in New South Wales and a third in Victoria. Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1935, pp.543-4, and 1946-7, p.1286. See also Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 30 June 1933, vol.II, p.1022. Crisp and Bennett, A.L.P. Federal Personnel, 1901-54 (Corrections and Additions, December 1954) give the percentage of Catholics among Federal members from 1931-40 as 49 per cent. That in the Lang group in New South Wales was probably higher. In the Gallup Polls of 1946-54, approximately 70 per cent of the Catholics declared they would vote for the A.L.P. In the late thirties, about 60 per cent of Labour MLA's in New South Wales were Catholics. R.N. Spann, in H. Mayer (Ed.), Catholics in the Free Society, Melbourne 1961, pp.115 and 120.
communism in the thirties, being much more frightened of it than fascism. This is borne out by the ACTS pamphlets on communism, by articles in Catholic newspapers, by the linking of communism with Spain and Mexico. Sometimes anti-communists joined the Church, partly because of its stand against communism. An example is Karl Kaeppel. Finally, anti-communism accounts for the opposition of Catholic spokesmen to the League of Nations. Not only had the Pope been excluded from that organisation, but Russia had joined it in 1934, and communists supported it. No good could come of such a body.

Papal policy indeed was bound to influence Catholics in Australia. The Popes would seem to have accepted Mussolini in Italy lest worse befall them. The Concordat

In order of quotation from author's interviews with Father Murtagh, 18 May 1964, B.A. Santamaria, 27 May 1964, D.G.M. Jackson, 26 May 1964. For contemporary evidence see Advocate, 20.8.36(6) Catholic Press, 5.11.36(23).

Australian Catholic Truth Society, e.g. 'The People's Front', ACTS Record, no.167, 10 April 1939. 'Red Rule in Spain', ACTS Record, no.103, 30 June 1937. 'Red Rule in Mexico', ACTS Record, no.79, 30 October 1936.

Kaeppel, a lively intellectual and classical scholar. See A.R. Chisholm, Men Were My Milestones, Melbourne 1958, p.103.

Jackson had indeed formed a local branch of the LNU in Victoria as a school-teacher. Interview cited. For admission that it was Russia's presence in the League which worried Catholics, see Mannix's remark about liking to choose his company. Advocate, 7.5.36(15) and ACTS Record, no.107, August 1937, pp.13-15 in which Jackson talked of Russia's remarkable success in penetrating the Secretariat of the League, and turning the organisation to her own purposes. Cf. W. Teeling, The Pope In Politics, London 1937, p.5, on the Vatican and the League.

Ibid., p.114. Cardinal Hinsley said later that the Pope had to support Mussolini because if he fell 'God's cause' fell also.
of 1929 raised Mussolini's stocks with Catholics, and they remained high despite 'Non Abbiamo Bisogno', 1931. Firmly in power, Mussolini could have made the Vatican's position very uncomfortable. Despite evident misgivings - not clearly noted in Australia - the Pope defended Mussolini's war against Abyssinia. Similarly the equivocal attitude of the Papacy to Nazism, and the Concordat in 1933 with the German government, led many Catholics to soften their condemnation of that regime, at any rate until the late thirties. The Catholic Church, of course, is not committed to any form of government. Historically it has been associated with autocracy, and in the 1930s regarded that and democracy with a lack of distinction that the Left did not find commendable. Its hatred for communism made this more pronounced, and perhaps blinded the Church to the dangers inherent in the dictators.

Of the Australian Hierarchy the most outstanding were Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne, an Irishman who had gained immense prestige in the conscription struggles, and Rome-trained Archbishop Duhig of Brisbane. Mannix is widely praised for the freedom he allowed those

1 'Abroad they speak of a war of conquest. Such a war would be plainly unjust and unbelievably sad and horrible'. He later said that 'self defence' had limits. Advocate, 5.9.35(6); 19.9.35(6). These were quoted, but the lesson, that the venture was to be treated with reservation, was not drawn. Only the Catholic Press noted this part. Catholic Press, 7.11.35(22). For the Papal dilemma, see W. Teeling, The Pope In Politics, pp.128-9.

2 The first official denunciation by the Pope, Mit Brennender Sorge, March 1937, was still limited in scope. See p.285.

3 As Jackson admits, 'Catholics were slow to see the dangers of fascism'. Interview cited.
who worked with him. Yet he seems to have controlled the Melbourne Catholic press, and had enough prestige to avoid petty censorship. All the bishops, and especially Mannix, reached a wide audience of faithful and outsiders by their sermons and speeches.

Among Catholic journals, the Advocate, the leading Catholic newspaper in Victoria, was outstanding in its interests in and knowledge of foreign events. This was due to the influence of D.G.M. Jackson.

Jackson was an English teacher who had come to Australia in an exchange scheme in 1927. In 1934 he had left teaching and taken up a position on the Advocate. Keenly interested and widely read in foreign affairs, Jackson drew many of his ideas from Belloc, Chesterton, L'Action Francais and Je Suis Partout. How far these last influenced him it is difficult to say, but he admits to trying to model his vigorous style on their less scurrilous aspects. He followed the official Church attitude, although it is ironic that the chief spokesman for the Church in Victoria was a man using sources banned by the Pope. Some signs of the influence of these newspapers can be seen in Jackson's occasional disparagement of the Jews, and especially in his demand for the restoration of the

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Jackson, Santamaria, and Murtagh all agree that once Mannix had appointed a person, he gave him full freedom. The Advocate, founded 1868, had been acquired by the Archbishop in 1916. He placed the next two editors at least. The new buildings in aBecket Street, opened in 1937, housed the Australian Catholic Truth Society as well. F. Murphy, Daniel Mannix, Melbourne 1948, p.182.
Hapsburgs. It was typical of the Australian community at the time that an Englishman should have been chosen to speak and write on foreign affairs.¹

Jackson wrote articles under the name of 'Sulla' in the Advocate, and also its editorials. He edited the other Catholic newspaper in Victoria, the Tribune. He spoke as 'Onlooker' on the regular Sunday 'Catholic Hour', where he reached an even wider audience. As a freelance journalist, Jackson placed a number of articles in different magazines and newspapers, under a variety of pseudonyms. Finally, he was a founder-member of the Campion Society, and through it influenced the small group of undergraduates and lawyers who began the Catholic Worker. Jackson's dominance was partly due to the small number of Catholics who were knowledgeable in such matters and partly to the Church using one man in several positions.

¹ Who's Who In Australia, 1962, p.444. This account is based largely on the interview with Jackson, cited. L'Action Francais was an extreme right-wing, Royalist, anti-semitic French newspaper founded in 1899 by Charles Maurras and Leon Daudet. It waged unremitting warfare by slander, personal attacks, and incitement to violence on the Third French Republic, and advocated a return to monarchy by revolution. Its anti-semitism formed a French basis for German attacks on Jews in France during the Second World War. It was on the Index from 29 December 1926 to 5 July 1939, without judgement on individual articles, as a result of a clash with Catholic bishops and Pius XI. Advocate, 3.8.39(2). D.W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France (1870-1939), London 1940, pp.369-71, 643. A. Cobban, A History of Modern France, Penguin edition, Harmondsworth, 1961, vol.II, pp.258-9, 311. Je Suis Partout, according to a letter from Jackson to the author, was a weekly journal with wide European coverage, similar in views to L'Action Francais. They were pro-Mussolini, anti-Hitler, pro-Franco ('furiously'). 'They detested Czechoslovakia - as I did - for reasons quite unconnected with Hitler's feud with it'. Jackson attributes his main interest in L'Action Francais to Bainville, and in Je Suis Partout to a source of information not found in the English press and a forceful criticism of British policy (letter to Author).
to save money. His influence was hidden because he used so many pseudonyms but appears to have been limited to Victoria, at least as a major factor in Catholic opinion.

In New South Wales, neither the Catholic Freeman's Journal nor the Catholic Press were so concerned with or knowledgeable about foreign affairs. Both adopted a cynical tone. The Press, however, was noticeably more liberal than the other Catholic newspapers. It was edited by P.S. Cleary - according to Brian Doyle 'an aging and conservative man' - who probably did not share the views of the young right-wing Catholic intelligensia, centred upon Melbourne.

These newspapers often adopted their stands in reaction to the secular press, attempting to correct 'false' views expounded by the latter. Few Catholics, however, read them, and their effect on opinion is therefore difficult to assess. They would, however, be

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1 'The Tribune and the Advocate reflect the same point of view - mine'. Jackson, interview cited. Father Murtagh interview cited, attests the number of Catholics who listened to and commented on Jackson's talks, and adds that Archbishop Mannix supported him and listened to the broadcasts. He added that Jackson was the only man who was interested in the stuff or could write it. A correspondent to the Advocate, 20.7.39(25) clearly did not know that 'Sulla' and 'the Onlooker' were the same person.

2 These newspapers have since been amalgamated into the Catholic Weekly. Brian Doyle is the present editor of the Brisbane 'Catholic Leader'.

3 The present manager of the Catholic Weekly, in a letter to the author, estimated the Freeman's Journal to have had a maximum circulation of 12,000, and the Press of 6,000.
read by the Catholic leaders, both lay and clerical, and so indirectly reach the ordinary believer. Catholic radio programmes, and bishops' speeches and sermons, especially where reported in the secular press, would have a more direct influence.

Finally there were the new intellectual societies, the Australian Catholic Truth Society, the Campion Society, and later Catholic Action. However, Father Murtagh and B.A. Santamaria are agreed that Catholic opinion was largely naive and uninformed between the wars, adopting the stand of the rest of the community unless roused specifically to do otherwise by foreign events which had an emotional impact.¹

Catholic feeling in Australia was probably more dependent on the race and origin of believers than other factors. Most Catholics were Irish. The first ones had been shipped to Australia, at government expense, after the 1798 rebellion. The famine of 1845-9 and periodic trouble in Ireland increased their numbers. The Irish had long memories, and a profound distrust of the English press, ruling classes, and people. They identified their own fight for better conditions in Australia with the

¹ ACTS pamphlets were on sale outside Churches throughout Australia, and covered among other topics foreign affairs, e.g. no.105, God and Nazi Paganism, 107 World Peace (by D.G.M. Jackson). The Campion Society was founded by F.K. Maher, a law student, in Melbourne, 1931, as a Catholic Adult Education Movement. Branches spread to Sydney (Campion Soc), Adelaide (Catholic Guild of Social Studies), Brisbane (Aquinas Society), Perth (Chesterton Club). The leaders of the Melbourne Campion Society formed the nucleus of 'Catholic Action', formed 1934-7, and the editorial staff of the Catholic Worker, January 1936. J. Murtagh, Australia - The Catholic Chapter, Sydney 1959, p.177. T. Truman, Catholic Action and Politics, Melbourne 1959, pp.70, 84-5.
struggle of Ireland for independence from Britain. This accounts in part for the anti-British tone often adopted by the Catholic newspapers, and their sceptical attitude to Britain's motives and wisdom. It also accounts for Catholic spokesmen so often demanding an independent Australian foreign policy and national spirit.

Till the thirties Irish Catholic attitudes fitted them most easily into the labour movement. That too opposed the Imperialism of the conservative parties, advocated a nationalist policy for Australia, and strove to better the conditions of the lower ranks of society, among which so many Catholics found themselves. It remained to be seen whether this alignment of Catholics with Labour would survive the developments of the late thirties. Although Catholics shared the apathy of most Australians to foreign policy, and were ill-informed about it, where communism or their church were involved, they were likely to react strongly. Because of their political allegiance, this reaction was most likely to be felt in the Labour movement.

Australian Labour regarded its primary objective as internal - to improve the hours, wages and conditions of the workers. Trade union officials and party members spent most of their lives, and devoted most of their thinking, to these matters, or in struggles for power within the machinery of the movement. The federal structure of Australian politics and the distance from other centres of European civilisation also turned the Australian Labour man inwards to Australian affairs. His knowledge of, and interest in, the rest of the world was limited.

The very idealism of the movement tended to emphasise this feature. Australian Labour had put Australia high
on the list of countries which provided social amelioration and security at the turn of the century. Labour men therefore tended to regard the rest of the world as backward - with sweated conditions, long hours, poor wages and depressed workers.

Moreover, the price for becoming involved in overseas affairs was joining the continual wars which foreign governments waged. The absence of war inside Australia, due to a homogeneous community isolated from aggressive neighbours, was regarded by some Australians with self-satisfaction as a sign of superior virtue. Nevertheless, they felt that, in international affairs, wars were inevitable, due to economic factors - the struggle of a decaying capitalism for markets and raw materials. In such struggles, capitalists made immense profits, while workers fought and suffered. The only sane 'working class' policy was therefore to keep out of 'foreign entanglements' and to continue the struggle for better conditions in one's own land. This view was not the prerogative of communists, but was held in common by most of the left wing. In the Labour movement, its impact was made greater by the strong advocacy of a minority of pacifists.

The first world war had turned these opinions into dogma. It had been in Europe, and had been caused by European diplomats. Capitalists had made profits; the poor had suffered. Economic and Imperialist conflicts had preceded it. After the revelations of the nature of trench warfare, the pacifists had united more closely with the Marxists in a revulsion from war. Finally, the conscription issue, which divorced the nationalist element from the Labour Party, creating an intense and lingering bitterness, had provided a symbol for the dogma.
Members of the Australian Labour movement, moved by utopianism, radical nationalism, or Irish anti-British sentiment, combined with pacifism and Marxist theories of the economic causes of war, were, in their outlook and attitude to the world, isolationist. The sentiment was only increased by the effects of the depression, which turned Australians inwards and led to other splits - Lyons and his followers left the party, and the only federal Labour government for twenty years collapsed. Meanwhile, J.T. Lang's dictatorship in New South Wales had caused a series of bitter struggles and contributed to the debacle. In the Federal Parliament in 1935, Labour was divided into two groups. The larger A.L.P. had beside it the smaller 'Lang Group' of nine members from New South Wales who owed their allegiance to Lang. The overwhelming concern of the federal leadership, therefore, was to keep at least a semblance of unity, to draw the ranks together, and to avoid a possibly final disintegration. The obvious course was to ignore foreign affairs where possible - there were more immediate matters for attention - but otherwise to appeal in a general way to widely held Labour prejudices and ideas.

The trouble with the European crises in the late thirties was that they provided issues which roused intense emotions in two diverse elements within Labour - the

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1 The correct title of the 'Lang Group', whose leader was J. Beasley, was 'A.L.P., New South Wales'. It maintained a separate existence in Federal Parliament from 4 March 1931 to 11 March 1936, during which time its members were not admitted to the A.L.P. Caucus. (See Appendix A for personnel). The struggles around Lang in New South Wales, and the attempt to create a stable party there, united with the A.L.P., continued throughout the period covered by this thesis, and was the background to the debates in the Labour movement on foreign policy.
communists and their sympathisers, and Catholics. The former found their way into the Labour organisation through trade union representatives in the Trades Hall Councils and the Annual Conferences of the State Parties. Indeed, since the rise of Hitler, Australian communists had demanded a 'United Front' with the Labour movement. When rebuffed by the official organisations, they had attempted to win over the rank and file membership, especially in the trade unions, by various front organisations. Although the Communist Party wanted them to appear independent, and therefore persuaded prominent people to serve on their committees, it attempted to control these organisations - not always successfully - by having its members elected as Secretaries and Treasurers.¹

An interesting example of the above, and the one which most nearly touches this thesis, was the 'Movement Against War and Fascism'. This began as the 'League Against Imperialism' - in Australia in 1930. Fear of Japan led the Comintern to seek to win wider support for the Soviet

¹Workers Weekly, October-November 1934; 4.1.35, 3.5.35. The term 'front' refers to an organisation begun by communists in an attempt to win a wider popularity for some aspect of their policy. Often the members of such a body sincerely held the views they advocated. Nor could the Communist Party always be sure of controlling the members of such a body once it was established. A. Davidson, interview. In the late thirties, the term used was 'fraternal', but for the sake of clarity the current term is used above. In the thirties, the most famous of the 'fraternals' were the 'Militant Minority Movement', the 'Unemployed Workers Movement', the 'Friends of the Soviet Union', 'International Labour Defence', and the 'Movement Against War and Fascism'. J. Normington-Rawling, The Communist Party of Australia, 1930-45, unpublished seminar paper, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Science, A.N.U. Rawling, however, is embittered against the Communist Party.
Union. After a Conference in Amsterdam, 1932, the delegates were sent to organise their own conferences. ‘The New South Wales Council Against War’ was held on 8 April 1933, and the organisation spread. The Victorian State Conference, 1 August 1934, claimed to represent 38,000 members. The peak of the Movement’s success occurred in 1935 and 1936, after it had brought Egon Kisch into Australia for an anti-war rally to coincide with the centenary celebrations in Melbourne in 1934. The government’s attempt to stop Kisch landing, his dramatic jump fifteen feet to the quay in Port Melbourne, the language test in Gaelic, and its subsequent dismissal by the High Court, provided maximum publicity for the Movement, and made the government look at the same time both repressive and inept. The Kisch affair ended in April 1935, by which time the Movement was spreading into the factories, especially in Victoria.  

Anti-communist sections of the Labour movement, especially among trade unionists in Victoria, were alarmed. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council refused to affiliate with the Movement, and declared that no constituent union or member could be connected with it. When Maurice Blackburn declined to obey, he was for a time expelled from the Victorian Labour Party. In January 1935 a ‘Labour Anti-war Committee’ was set up, which represented the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the A.L.P. of Victoria, and produced the pamphlet ‘Labor’s Case Against War and Fascism’. It mentioned the economic causes of

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war, regretted the failure of the League and disarmament, and went on to declare that Labour would sever relations with nations engaged in capitalist war. This was probably an effort to counter the spread of the 'Movement Against War and Fascism' into the trade unions, as well as reflecting Labour Marxism, pacifism and isolationism.

'IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL PROVISION BE MADE... FOR MILITARY ACTION OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA OR FOR COOPERATION OF ANY KIND IN ANY OVERSEAS WAR'. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council endorsed the policy, and attempted to secure its adoption by Labour as a whole.¹

Communist ideas and organisation thus had their effect on the Labour movement. Russia's joining the League in 1934, and the inauguration of the United Front period, August 1935, with Dimitrov's sinister-sounding analogy of the Trojan Horse, roused those who feared the soviet. This does much to explain the Catholic attitude to the Abyssinian crisis. The Kisch affair and the increasing strength of the Movement Against War and Fascism - wooing the rank and file of the Labour movement - provided a background to the Abyssinian crisis. For the build-up

¹ Labor's Case Against War and Fascism, Melbourne, January 1935. ANL. Capitals of quotation in original. Labor Call, 25.7.35(3). For an account of the Victorian 'Labor Anti-war Committee', and its activities, see A.L.P. (Victoria) Central Executive Report, 1935-6, ANL. The M.A.W. & F. seems to have reached its peak after the Kisch affair, in 1935-6. In the latter year, the Commintern decided to set up an even more respectable body, the 'International Peace Committee'. Great care was taken to inveigle Lord Robert Cecil into calling a meeting at Geneva, and to use his name to persuade prominent churchmen and others to head the Australian committee. It does not appear to have been outstandingly successful. J. Normington-Rawling, Recollections, etc.
of Mussolini's aggression coincided with renewed suspicion of Russia and communism in Labour circles. Labour men were therefore little inclined to accept the communist view of the Abyssinian problem.

When the Abyssinian crisis began, the communists themselves were not united on a clear line. As has been noted, Soviet policy was in process of change. The new attitude to capitalist democracies and other social democratic parties took some time in being fully absorbed by the C.P.A. Indeed, the Abyssinian crisis was at first regarded as an example of discord among Imperialists, and the reaction of the Communist Party was the slogan 'Hands Off Abyssinia', and a demand for a United Front in defence of that country and the Soviet Union. The League, and the use of sanctions, were not supported, and the general attitude was 'Revolutionary Defeatism'. A certain amount of confusion was evident among party members.¹

The change in line coincided with the Victorian Annual State Conference of the Movement Against War and Fascism, on 4 and 5 August 1935. N. Nugent, Secretary of the National Council, seems to have been before his colleagues in realising the implications of the change, for he sent a letter to Lyons urging support for Abyssinia

¹ 'Rawling Collection' A.N.L., Workers Weekly, 27.8.35, 27.9.35. The Communist Review, August 1935, republished Lenin's article 'The Defeat of "Our" government in an Imperialist War'. L.P. Fox, The First World War and the Second, Melbourne, early 1935. 'The State Relief Workers and Unemployed Movement' wrote a long rambling letter to the Prime Minister which included a mixture of Labour isolationism, and communist propaganda. The 'Rawling Collection' includes evidence that other sections of the movement were not 'up to date'.
and strong British action through the League of Nations, 
and ending 'Yours fraternally'. This was the 'fascist' 
government leader whom he was addressing, and in any 
case the phrase revealed the communist control of the 
M.A.W. & F. Nugent was reproved by the Party leadership, 
and had to 'explain' in the October issue of War, What 
For?¹

However, in September the Communist Party began to 
change. Support for sanctions, dubious at first, became 
more wholehearted when Lang and the Labor Daily switched 
to attacking the League. This support, however, was 
admitted to be a temporary expedient to forestall an 
attack upon Russia, and to allow communists to organise 
the workers.² What inhibited more unconditional support, 
apart from Marxism, was intense distrust of Britain. 
Communists regarded her basically as bad as the Italian 
government, blamed her for war tension because she had 
begun rearmament, and assumed that her policy was to turn 
German aggression against the Soviet Union.³ However, 
under the impetus of the debate, and presumably instructions 
from Moscow, communists came to support the League with 
vigour. Because of lingering suspicion, they insisted 
that sanctions should be applied collectively, and not by 
Britain alone. But they declared that collective economic 
sanctions would be effective, and collective military ones, 
if needed, overwhelming. A stand would strike a blow for

¹ War, What For? September and October 1935. The letter 
was quoted in Federal Parliament, CPD 147/664.
² Workers Weekly, 3.9.35, 17.9.35, 1.10.35. R. Dixon, 
Peace or War?, Sydney 1935, 'Rawling Collection'.
³ Workers Weekly, 6 and 10.3.36.
democracy, whereas retreat and weakness would open the way for unlimited aggression.¹

Catholics, on the other hand, adopted the completely opposite attitude. Their hierarchy and publicists suspected the League and Britain as much as the communists did — and supported Mussolini.²

Mannix, a master of statements with hidden implications, appears at first sight to have been impartial. He said that he thought that Italy had acted wrongly, wished the League success, and expressed horror at war. However, by bitterly criticising the Versailles settlement, by talking of the 'Haves' and the 'Have Nots' and the need for colonial redistribution, by pointing to Britain and France as the world's greatest Imperialists, by defining it as a trade war — as he said the 1914-18 one was — by comparing British actions in Belfast with those of Mussolini in Abyssinia, and blaming the League for later events, he gave the impression that Italy had a reasonable case, that action against her was of doubtful morality, and especially that Australia should keep out of any war.³

He thus discouraged Catholics from considering support for the League. Beneath his studiously moderate language,

¹ L.F. Fox, Labor Call (sic) 3.10.35(7), Workers Weekly, 24 and 28.1.36.
² Papal policy has already been noticed. It should also be remarked that the Apostolic delegates to Australia and New Zealand, changed during the crisis, were both Italian. Archbishop Bernadini was replaced by Archbishop Panico. Catholic Freeman's Journal, 24.10.35(25) and 12.3.36(26).
³ Mannix's statements in Advocate, 17.10.35(12), 24.10.35(15), 14.11.35(13), 7.5.36(15).
Mannix, though probably disapproving of Italy's policy, favoured giving her a free hand.

Archbishop Duhig, however, was less equivocal. He began early by attacking the League (for excluding the Pope). Italy had a case. If she conquered Abyssinia, she would use her powers to civilise the people; she should therefore be given a mandate over the country. His letter to the Brisbane press defending this statement, though ostensibly a plea for moderation till the facts were proven, comprised a large number of pro-Italian arguments, including Abyssinian atrocities and slave owning; that the League should never have admitted Abyssinia to membership; that promises to Italy by the Allies had been broken at Versailles. Like Mannix he advocated isolation. In answer to the storm of criticism this roused, he again declared that he expressed no opinion on the rights and wrongs of the war, but merely tried to stop misrepresentation of Italy.¹

The rest of the episcopate were silent. Perhaps their views more nearly coincided with the bulk of the population. The lower clergy also seem to have said little, except Dr Rumble, in charge of 'Radio Replies', a semi-official spokesman of the Church in New South Wales. Dealing primarily with religious controversy, he adopted an extremely defensive attitude. After the war, indeed, he declared that 'the armed invasion of Abyssinia by Italy

¹ Catholic Freeman's Journal, 1.8.35(21), 10.10.35(24), 17.10.35(25), 14.11.35(25).
was more than justified, and in conflict with no Christian principle'. He appeared uneasy about it however.¹

Catholic newspapers too defended Mussolini. Jackson of the Advocate, although sceptical of the motives of all sides at first, later strongly supported Mussolini. The Freeman's Journal followed a similar course.² The Advocate included eulogies of Mussolini and while attributing atrocities to the Amhara, disbelieved those of the Italians. The Catholic Worker and the Freeman's Journal blamed both sides, but managed to imply that most blame lay with the Abyssinians. All naturally defended Papal policy and declared that it was a trade war, from which Australia should keep clear. The League of Nations, they thought, was dominated by the 'Satisfied Powers', whose motives were suspect. It had not acted in the past. It had waited till Italy was committed, and had never considered the Italian claim. League sanctions would lead to war, or at least only aggravate Italy. They were unjust then, since they had not been applied in any of the previous crises. Jackson and others bitterly attacked the ideal of collective security, declaring it would lead to universal war. Scorn was poured on the Abyssinians. Abyssinia was a divided and backward, slave owning and raiding country, a threat to its neighbours.³

¹ Catholic Freeman's Journal, 4.7.35(7), 19.12.35(11), 24.9.36(10).
² Advocate, 4.7.35(17), cf. Catholic Freeman's Journal, 26.9.35(24), 20.2.36(18), 17.6.37(25).
³ Advocate, 11.7.35(17), 1.8.35(17), 26.9.35(17), 3.10.35 (17 and 25), 9.1.36(17), 30.4.36(17), 7.5.36(15); Catholic Worker, 1.2.36(3), 2.5.36(1); Catholic Press, 18.7.35(23), 29.8.35(24), 12.3.36(18), 16.7.36(22); Catholic Freeman's Journal, 5.9.35(25), 12.9.35(23), 3.10.35(24), 17.10.35(24), 31.10.35(24), 16.4.36(21).
There were, however, differences among the Catholic newspapers. The Advocate, as we have seen, took by far the most intense, intelligent and informed interest in foreign events. It was, however, also the most right-wing of the Catholic newspapers. It came more under the influence of Mannix, but probably Jackson was most responsible for the characteristic attitude of leading Melbourne Catholics to foreign affairs in the late thirties. For example, he was much more condemnatory of the League than Mannix was. His conclusion on the war seems to have been that to defend Abyssinia was to defend barbarism, and that an Italian conquest of that country would be an unmitigated good. Jackson seems to have been carried away by his emotions, but alone among Catholic commentators he appeared worried about the European implications of the war. Mussolini had staked the prestige of his regime on the venture. If his government collapsed, Italy would fall into disorder, and Hitler would seize the opportunity to attack Austria and project the world into a new war. The Western Powers thus could not afford to allow Italy to fail, and Abyssinia should be partitioned to prevent this. Jackson now - in the mid-1960s - asserts that he was incensed with British and French policy because it ignored the real dangers, Hitler and the communists. There may

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1 Mannix's influence would appear to have been felt in the matter of colonial redistribution. He had stressed the need for this as a cause of Italy's action, and predicted that unless something were done, Germany would follow Italy's example. The Advocate, 9.4.36(25), together with the Catholic Worker, 4.7.36(1), took up the point. It was flatly contradicted by the Catholic Press in Sydney, which was most concerned about New Guinea, and opposed to colonial appeasement, 3.10.35(22).

2 Advocate, 8.8.35(17), 19.12.35(17), 30.4.36(25).
be hindsight here, but at the time Jackson insisted that the Stresa Front was vital to curb Nazi expansion. Indeed he saw the remilitarisation of the Rhineland as a direct consequence of the Abyssinian policies of Britain and France, and felt it only made the restoration of the Stresa Front more vital. Of the two enemies, however, he feared Russia most. Therefore, in other articles he forgot the Stresa Front, and instead declared that to avoid the division of Europe into two armed camps, which only benefitted Moscow, Britain and France should abandon any ties with Russia, and make a Four Power Pact with Italy and Germany. He was not happy about the alliance, but felt that communism was the more dangerous and destructive of their enemies.¹

Thus we come again to the Catholic assessment of communism; combined with Jackson's emotional attachment to Austria.² To Jackson, Mussolini was infinitely preferable to communism or Hitler in central Europe. He should therefore be supported, even if this meant sacrificing Abyssinia.

The Freeman's Journal adopted a similar policy to that of the Advocate, but was not so intensely concerned with the crisis. The number of points it raised were noticeably fewer, and it almost entirely ignored the European implications. It was more vulgarly anti-League

¹ Advocate, 24.10.35(17), 25.6.36(17), 13.2.36(17), 12.3.36 (17). Interview with Jackson, cited. Jackson seems to have regarded the Stresa Front as a means of curbing Germany, and bringing her to a more reasonable frame of mind. If that happened, Germany could herself join the other three allies in a Four Power Pact. Stresa therefore, in his plan, would have been a prelude to a four power pact against Russia.

² See pp. 40-41.
than the Advocate. Although Jackson abused the political intentions and honesty of the leading League powers, he at least admitted the good social work League organisations did.¹ The Freeman's Journal accused the whole organisation of wasting money and demanded that Australia should leave it.

There could be a sane and patriotic body of opinion holding the view that Australia should never have been in the League from the beginning and that the sooner she is out of it the safer she would be.

Jackson had political objections to the peace-keeping powers of the League, the Freeman's Journal was narrowly provincial in its horizons, and saw no good in any international organisation at all. Australia had blundered in joining the League; it cost her sixty thousand pounds a year, and merely reflected the will of Britain. It was useless to keep the peace. There was a close similarity between Lang's viewpoint and that of the Freeman's Journal, which was

¹ 'England, the world's greatest Imperialist Power; Soviet Russia the fomenter of world-revolution; the Masonic-radical and Socialist gang in France; the Red Tyrants of Mexico and the unspeakable Turk'. Advocate, 30.4.36(25). For social work, see 20.2.36(25).
the most isolationist, chauvinist, and generally 'Langite' of the Catholic newspapers.¹

The Catholic Press, on the other hand, although it also adopted a cynical flippant tone, directed the cynicism towards Mussolini as well as the League, and so gave readers a more balanced picture. It condemned Italy as an aggressor, and described Italian excuses as 'the purest "baloney" of the whole controversy'. It admitted that slavery existed in Abyssinia, but felt that it was not Mussolini's place to cure this, and denied flatly that Abyssinia was an unsupportable disturbance to its neighbours. It ignored accusations of atrocities by both sides. The most that the Press would admit was that Italy had suffered provocation, and had as much right to colonial expansion as other nations. But war, it asserted, was the wrong way to proceed. In this it followed the Pope's implied criticism of Italy.²

The attitude of the Press to the League was a mixture of derision and support, depending on the circumstances.

¹ Catholic Freeman's Journal, 4.7.35(21), 3.10.35(24) (quotation), 2.1.36(20), 12.3.36(24). Jackson at least realised that if Britain were involved in war, Australia was implicated, although he agreed with Mannix that Australia should try to keep out. Advocate, 26.9.35(17), 24.10.35(17). The Freeman's Journal, on the other hand, declared that Australia had no duty to the British government, talked of conscription, and demanded a separate foreign policy for Australia. It declared that Australia should only mobilise in its own defence, and if the League 'began warmongering in the name of peace', should ignore it and set an example to the rest of the world. Catholic Freeman's Journal, 19.9.35(24), 31.10.35(24), 2.4.36(26).

² Catholic Press, 18.7.35(22), 29.8.35(25), 7.11.35(22), 20.2.36(22).
It agreed with its contemporaries that the League was dominated by the satisfied Powers, and suspected its motives. However it felt that America could still make the League work if it wished to, and at the beginning implied support for Britain's policy of collective security. It condemned the Hoare-Laval Plan as 'outrageous' and declared that British public opinion came out of the affair with more credit than the Cabinet.¹

Although the Press noticed the repercussions in Europe, and the quandary of France, torn between the League and the Italian alliance, it was concerned with the remilitarisation of the Rhineland only as a prelude to the demand for the return of New Guinea. Hitler, it felt, had not yet gone beyond his own boundaries, and to attack him therefore would be aggression. The legal aspects of the breach of the Treaty of Versailles, and its strategical significance, were ignored or denied. It said that the Versailles treaty had been forced on Germany, and that the demilitarisation clauses of Locarno 'could not be permanent'. The Press was not willing to be involved in the issue, especially in view of the Franco-Russian Pact.² Only Jackson among Catholic commentators realised the danger signal the Rhineland episode provided. The Press and the Freeman's Journal chose to pretend that the incident did not concern them.

¹ Catholic Press, 3.10.35(22), 19.12.35(22), 2.1.36(23), 12.3.36(22-3). After the war it changed its mind, and said that the League could not survive the defeat it had suffered and suspected left-wing and communist support for collective security, as well as that the Western powers were using it merely as a means of preventing treaty revision. 14.5.36 (23), 16.7.36(22), 9.4.36(22).
² Ibid., 12.3.36(18), 19.3.36(22).
We have so far looked at the background to the three different groups studied in this chapter, and seen how both the communists and the Catholics reacted to the Abyssinian crisis. The time has come to consider how each of these attempted to influence the Labour movement, and how that movement, despite wide differences of opinion among its members, adopted a policy.

The Communist Party bitterly criticised the traditional isolationism of the A.L.P., and attempted to spread its views among Labour membership. L. Fox wrote an article for Labor Call putting the communist case, and R. Dixon held a meeting at Transport House, Sydney, in which he urged that there was less danger in the collective application of sanctions than in any other policy. On 22 August, the 'Movement Against War and Fascism' in Sydney sent a circular letter to all trade unions, cultural and other organisations, asking them to protest to the Federal government. A whole series of meetings were held throughout the country. W. Nugent toured New South Wales giving lantern lectures, and public meetings were held in parks, halls, etc. In short, the communists did their best to influence union membership and to whip up public

1 Labor Call, 3.10.35(7), 'Rawling Collection'.
feeling, or if not to at least give the impression that strong public feeling existed.\textsuperscript{1}

Catholic leaders used different methods. They appealed through sermons and admonitions of the hierarchy to the conscience of the individual Catholic. Where more than this was done, there is a suggestion that it was through quiet pressure behind the scenes on important persons.

The first and perhaps decisive change occurred in New South Wales. The \textit{Labor Daily}, controlled by the Lang Group, had begun by strongly supporting the League and the application of sanctions, including the closure of the Suez canal. On 23 August, however, the newspaper began to stress the danger of war. A campaign developed which led up to Lang's big meeting on 4 September in Australian Hall, Sydney. It is interesting that evidence suggests that the change in policy of the \textit{Labor Daily} occurred after Lang's representative had visited Archbishop Sheehan (Roman Catholic Co-adjutor Archbishop of Sydney). At this meeting, Sheehan emphasised the support of the Catholic Church for Italy, and the preponderance of Catholics in Lang's party. An intense struggle - by different groups but including communists - was about to develop in New South Wales.

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Ibid.} Its terms were similar, but abbreviated, to those of Nugent's famous epistle. The attempt to organise 'working class opinion' was more in keeping with communist ideas than support for the capitalist States of the League. After the failure of the latter body, they turned all the more to the masses. 'if it [the League] can play a role in the fight for peace, well-and good, but the real guarantee of peace can only come from the anti-war activity and opposition of the masses'. \textit{Workers Weekly}, 1.5.36.
South Wales against Lang's leadership. His Abyssinian policy of isolationism, criticism of Britain and the League, and anti-communism, would especially appeal to Catholics, pacifists, and opponents of the communists; and would rally traditional labour support behind his banner. As a result, foreign policy became inextricably mixed with the internal fight for power in New South Wales. 1

Repercussions of this struggle were seen in the Australian Railways Union. The annual meeting of the State Council of the A.R.U. passed a resolution demanding that the League should apply sanctions against Italy, as the only means of preventing the outbreak of war. However, the A.R.U. delegate to the Lithgow Trades and Labor Council, Mr W.M. O'Neill, subsequently voted against a motion condemning Italy and supporting sanctions. As a result the Federal secretary, Lloyd Ross, denounced O'Neill's action as being against the decision of the A.R.U. which could not be reversed till the next Council meeting in November. 2

Lloyd Ross now asserts that the union did not instruct its representatives to Labour Councils to vote for sanctions. 'In view of the divisions which developed within the union on this subject, my own view was that we should allow as much freedom to our representatives as possible although I took pains to announce an official policy'. He thought that Mr O'Neill was largely influenced


2 SMH, 26.9.35(11), 15.10.35(11), 16.10.35(13).
by his Catholicism, but also by his strong support for Lang. 'He was one of the last people to leave Lang.'

Mr W.M. O'Neill himself says that he opposed the majority at the meeting of the State Council, of which he was a member, on political grounds, including suspicion of communism. At no time were his decisions subject to direction from the Church.

It seems clear that a serious division had developed within the ranks of the Railways Union. This division was involved with Lang's struggle against his enemies, as well as the Abyssinian crisis. Moreover, there was a close connection between Catholicism and anti-communism, and also between Catholics and the Lang group. This connection was not necessarily organised by the Church authorities, but individual Catholics found Lang's views closely similar to the attitude of the Church. Catholic spokesmen could have widespread influence throughout the community, without taking any direct action. Finally, O'Neill was a member of the Lang Group. Although he denies directions from a religious source, he omits to mention a political one. The State Council of the A.R.U. met after Lang's change of policy, and it seems likely that we have here an illustration of the Lang Group attempting to win over the industrial movement.

The lead set by the Lang group was soon followed. Lang's big meeting, on 4 September, featured the slogan 'Sanctions Mean War'. On 6 September F. Forde, the deputy leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party, arriving in Sydney, spoke strongly in favour of Australian aloofness.

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1 Letter to the author, 23.9.64.
2 Letter to the author, 24.11.64.
from any impending conflict. On the twenty-third of the same month, just as Parliament began, the Parliamentary Labour Party 'Unanimously' agreed to a policy of non-participation, representing 'as far as we are able to judge' Labour opinion throughout Australia.¹

The virtual agreement between the Lang's supporters and the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party, had repercussions in Victoria.² In the opening days, debates in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, and articles in the Labor Call had tackled the problem theoretically. This, according to A. Calwell, reflected the indecision of Labour within the State. However, on 12 September, D. Lovegrove declared that the Abyssinian crisis was the result of an imperialist struggle, that economic sanctions could not be divorced from military, raised the conscription issue, and criticised the League. Prime among his motives would appear to have been anti-communism.³

¹ Labor Call, 12.9.35(7), CPD 147/13-14.
² The Victorian Party and industrial movement had previously favoured Lang's Party, and advocated its re-admission to the A.L.P. D.W. Rawson, The Organisation of the A.L.P. 1916-41, Ph.D. thesis, Melbourne, 1954, pp.241-6. They were all the more likely to take such a view after Lang had adopted anti-communism as his rallying cry.
³ Ibid., 25.7.35(3), 11.7.35(8). A. Calwell, interview with author, 28.4.65. Calwell himself broadcast in favour of closing the Suez canal to Italy, but at the same time for Australia to keep out of any war that resulted. Labor Call, 1.8.35(13). In the interview he declared that he himself supported sanctions, and produced a pamphlet defending them. He stressed the divisions within Labour in Victoria. For D. Lovegrove, Labor Call, 12.9.35(10). The Movement Against War and Fascism was under debate in Victoria at the time. Ibid., 12.9.35(13-4), 19.9.35(2-3).
On 3 October the **Labor Call** began definitely to oppose sanctions, and a debate on them began in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. D. Cameron, for the Executive, opposed them on the ground that they were equivalent to war. Some members wondered if that meant repudiating the I.L.O.; others pointed to the weakness of the League. On the resumption of the debate, the Executive's motion against sanctions, despite opposition, was carried. Victorian opinion was probably decided by the virtual agreement on the issue of the Lang Party and the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party. But the policy also suited Victorian conditions and thinking - the strong Labour anti-war movement, the particular clash with the communists, the vehemence and organisation of the Catholics in that State, and Marxist-based isolationism.

Repercussions of the latter were seen in the **Labor Call**. Its attitude to the crisis was similar to that of the **Labor Daily** in New South Wales, although it discussed the issue less. Contributors differed, but the editor was consistently anti-League, thought the Covenant was designed to prepare the masses for war, and was proud that the A.L.P. was the only Labour organisation in the world which opposed League action. Indeed, the British Labour Party was condemned for supporting the League. 'Our duty is to stay out and to sell our produce...to the highest bidder for spot cash'. Australia should be neutral, not only in this was, but in all future wars, no matter what the result. The editor strongly opposed

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1 **Labor Call**, 10.10.35(2-3).
2 **Labor Call**, 17.10.35(3).
3 **Labor Call**, 5.9.35(1 and 15), 3.10.35(8), 10.10.35(7 and 8), 31.10.35(8).
sanctions - misinterpreting Article 16 to mean that acceptance of them meant accepting military sanctions as well - as a weapon used by one Capitalist group against another. Economic sanctions would need military force to succeed and this the Labor Call would never accept, for it flatly opposed the idea of war.¹

The Call did not seem vitally concerned in, or knowledgeable about, foreign affairs. Faced with the Abyssinian crisis, it reacted partly from its Marxism and partly from its distrust of Britain and opposition to 'imperialism'. It was blinded by its own ideology and emotional catch-cries, which in fact were a substitute for thought instead of aids to it. This accounts for its confusion, as for example, in claiming support for the League in principle while opposing the organisation in practice; in condemning Mussolini's aggression, but being unwilling to support those who opposed it; and in 'Scrutator's' unhappy attempt to combine selfish isolationism with some sort of internationalism. The lesson it derived from the war was the need for the League not to be stronger but to adjust the distribution of colonies and raw materials.²

In the debate in Federal Parliament, late September to early November 1935, Labour members raised a whole host of reasons why Australia should not be involved. They revived the conscription issue, mentioned armaments firms and capitalism, and declared it to be an Imperialist war for economic interests. They appeared unsympathetic

¹ Labor Call, 14.11.35(2 and 11), 5.12.35(8).
² Ibid., 21.11.35(1), 2.6.36(4), 30.7.36(4).
towards Abyssinia, divided towards Italy and critical of Britain, but their basic motive was the complex of ideas and feelings already discussed, including opposition to any involvement in the wars and diplomacy of foreign countries. Thus official Australian Labour adopted 'Non-participation', the Lang Group 'absolute isolation and strict neutrality'. Both demanded a foreign policy independent of Britain, and jeered at the government for finding itself in alignment with communists.

It is noticeable that in the debate the Lang Group set the pace. They were the first to use many of the Opposition arguments, and they were more extreme in their attitude. Unperturbed by their isolation from all Labour movements overseas, they showed an indifference to the concrete international situation not even seen in the A.L.P. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Lang Group was utterly uninterested in international affairs, utterly isolationist in its outlook, and wished merely to outflank the A.L.P.

1 CPD, 147/583, 716, 1375; 147/14, 148/1441; 147/657-8, 71, 1450.
2 For the two groups' policies, CPD 147/13-4 and 36-42. In the debates, the word 'neutrality' was carefully avoided by A.L.P. members. For an independent foreign policy, CPD 147/554-5, 586. The usual jest at the government was the letter it had received from Nugent, CPD 147/554, 664.
3 Note the language of their policy. Arguments first raised by the Lang group included the fate of HMAS 'Australia', the danger of conscription, the change in the League's character, that sanctions meant war, etc.
4 CPD 147/1383. Cf. the tone of the A.L.P. statement with that of Beasley, who showed none of Senator Brown's appreciation of the dangers of a militaristic Germany. CPD 148/1531.
Labour members were divided in their attitude to the League, but it was left to the Lang Group to demand that Australia leave it. A.L.P. members stressed past League failures as an excuse for Mussolini, and declared that the absence of Japan, America and Germany changed its character into an organisation of the victors of the last war, using it to maintain their ascendancy. They tried to argue that the Covenant was not binding, while the Kellogg Pact was. Moreover, the sudden fervour for 'the sacred principles of the Covenant' in unexpected places increased Labour fears that behind it lay sinister forces planning another world war. Labour in the past had seen the League as a kind of world Parliament, using moral persuasion. Now that that was no longer possible, they wavered in their support. They recoiled in horror from the thought that war might be needed to maintain League prestige.

Labour began by being moderate, and it was left to the Lang Group to raise the cry that 'Sanctions Mean War'. In the second debate, on the Sanctions Bill, the attitude of the A.L.P. hardened. They completely opposed the

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1 CPD 147/584-5, 678, 719, 863, 1376; 148/1488; 147/41 (Beasley cf. the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church), 148/1533-4, 147/658, 1420.
2 This point was largely made by Brennan CPD 147/587-8. Brennan, a lawyer, had been Attorney-General in Scullin's government, 1929-32. It was a weak case, as the Kellogg Pact specifically excluded aggressor nations from its benefits, a point the Australian representatives had ascertained at the time of signing.
4 On 9 October Curtin admitted the idea of sanctions was a good one, CPD 147/565-6 though he stressed the danger of regrouping the world powers. 147/567, cf. Beasley, CPD 147/39-40.
application of sanctions, and seem to have adopted the ideas of the Lang Group, though they tried to give them a logical backing, rather than that of emotion.¹

Many of their premises, however, could lead to other than their conclusions. The weakness of the League could be an argument for doing something to strengthen it; failure in Manchuria provided an all too clear warning of the results of inaction. Many Labour statements were too obviously rationalisations for isolationism. They talked of 'General Peace' as if this could be maintained apart from particular instances. When asked what practical action they would take, they equivocated, retreated in a haze of emotional slogans, or refused to say.² The Lang Group was saved from this predicament. Its members had not tried to be logical. They echoed the policies and attitudes of Lang and the Labor Daily.

Rumours were current at the time that Harold Macauley visited Beasley in Canberra before the debate, and set out

¹ Labour opposed leave to introduce the Bill, and the first reading, Curtin and Beasley filibusted in the second till Menzies introduced the guillotine. Labour even spoke in the Committee stage and the Third reading. They later refused to help the government modify the Bill, even in a direction of which they approved. CPD 147/1257-78, 148/1663-5. CPD 148/1434-5, 1452-3, 1490. Ross suggests that the A.L.P. adopted Beasley's arguments partly because he was a very persuasive character, and partly because the Lang Group had a definite, clear policy, expressed with confidence. The A.L.P. faced with misgivings, needed such a lead. Beasley moreover appealed to the Catholic element in the A.L.P. Interview with the Author, 26 March 1964.

² CPD 147/71, also 148/1488.
the line the party was to take. Beasley would probably have adopted his stand without instructions from Sydney, but there is no reason to disbelieve the tale, and it would account for the Lang Group, and Beasley in particular, having its ideas organised before the debate; hence the large number of arguments which they first put forward. Members of the A.L.P., on the other hand, appear to have felt their way, and to be somewhat undecided in the early stages. They were likely to adopt the strong stand of the Lang Group, rather than let the latter appear to lead working-class opinion.

A change is noticeable in Curtin in the debate. In his opening speech, on 9 October, he acknowledged that Australia could not 'be indifferent to the fate of Abyssinia, or anything that threatens or jeopardises the peace of the world, and may, by its repercussions profoundly affect our security'. However he talked of Australia's special circumstances, being a minor power remote from the centres of trouble. During the debate Curtin became more isolationist. On 21 October he made an uneasy statement to the press which stressed this attitude. On 1 November he warned against the government muddling Australia into European disputes, and on 7 November said they might 'place us under an obligation to become for ever a party to the police system of Europe', where wars were

1 Harold Macauley was Lang's private secretary and often acted as his agent. The Macauley family were entrenched in the party and business organisations set up by Lang. Interview with J.J. Maloney, 17.3.65.

2 E.g. Senator Collings began by admiring Britain. CPD 147/13.

3 CPD 147/565, 1268-9, 1421, SMH, 22.10.35(9).
always occurring. On 11 November, he spoke in Melbourne against sanctions on the same platform as the leader of the Federal Lang Group, Beasley.\(^1\) Curtin was more aware of foreign affairs than many in the Labour Party. From his speeches he appears not to have been fully convinced of the soundness of the arguments he was propounding. He had only become leader of the party on 1 October 1935, and probably moderated his private views in the interests of party unity.\(^2\)

Even in Federal Parliament, Labour members expressed divided opinions. For example, despite demands that Australia should not be involved, opposition members — even Catholic ones — still disliked fascism. Brennan, a Catholic, criticised Mussolini, and Baker, also a Catholic, called him 'a megalomaniac with homicidal tendencies'. Many in the A.L.P. did not at all like what Italy stood for or was doing.\(^3\)

The most fundamental disagreement, however, was expressed by M. Blackburn. After much heart-searching, he decided to support the government on sanctions. The *Age*

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1 This was a conference held 'against War and Fascism'. It is interesting in that it shows (1) How the Victorian Peace Movement found a link with Lang's ideas, and (2) How Curtin and Beasley were coming together. *Labor Call*, 13.11.35(3), 21.11.35(10).

2 For Curtin and the I.L.O., see A. Chester, *John Curtin*, Sydney 1943, pp.35-8. For his interest in, and knowledge of, foreign affairs, *ibid.*, p.44. Curtin seems to have believed at the time that wars were caused by economic and social factors, and to have seen the Abyssinian war as an example of this. *Ibid.*, p.56.

3 Senator Collings, Brennan, Martens and Holloway criticised Mussolini, as well as Baker. *CPD* 147/13, 584, 678, 714, 728.
thought that Blackburn's attitude influenced Curtin to modify Labour's original attitude as outlined by Forde. Curtin and Crofts both criticised Blackburn, but not as bitterly as members of the Lang Group.¹

Labour members in other States also disagreed with the official policy. A.G. Ogilvie, Premier of Tasmania, and the Tasmanian Labour party supported the League and sanctions. P. Collier in Western Australia seems to have agreed. The confusion amongst simple Labour supporters was seen in the Ballarat Trades Hall Council. Government spokesmen quoted the large number of letters received from individuals and groups supporting sanctions. It was not enough, as J. Rosevear did, to dismiss all these as either cranks or communists.² A perusal of the letters reveals that although many were communist in origin, many others did come from bona fide Labour organisations.

In Sydney, although the Australian Worker, under the control of the veteran H.E. Boote, regarded it as axiomatic

¹ CPD 147/864, Age, 17.10.35(9), SMH, 1.11.35(11), 2.11.35(14), 20.1.36(11), Argus, 8.11.35(9). Cf. Curtin's criticism CPD 147/864-5 with Rosevear's CPD 147/1383. The Lang Group was of course, particularly piqued that Blackburn had disproved their assertion that Labour was united.

² SMH, 26.9.35(11). The Times, 26.9.35, reported Ogilvie as remarking that, the day might come when Australia might need help herself, and that Britain and the Dominions had signed the Covenant, and were morally bound to uphold its principles. To abandon them would destroy all hopes of world peace. Labor Call, 10.10.35(12). (After a member had asked what Labour policy was, a confused debate on the general issue resulted. In the end, the meeting agreed to accept Forde's declaration - apparently because they were too divided among themselves to agree on an alternative.) CPD 147/660.
that all wars were fought for economic reasons, in this case oil, and that international politics were immoral, it particularly resented Italy's action and jeered at her excuses. It was impatient with League dilatoriness and demanded that no mandate be granted to Italy but instead that arms be sold to the Abyssinians.¹

The **Australian Worker** wanted economic sanctions imposed on Italy, and the Suez canal shut to Italian ships. The League's very existence, and perhaps the future of the human race, depended on its action. The only possible attitude for organised Labour was to support the League; isolation was impossible.

It IS our concern. Whenever injustice is perpetrated, whenever the militaristic spirit flaunts itself in predatory violence, it is the intimate concern of the workers of the world.

But at the same time, Australia should keep out if any imperialistic war occurred. For Boote was convinced that prompt economic sanctions would be effective. He continued his support for sanctions, declared that Mussolini was bluffing and violently attacked the Hoare-Laval Plan.²


² Ibid., 28.8.35(11), 25.9.35(3), 9.10.35(3), 27.11.35(3), 23.10.35(3), 18.12.35(3). The *Australian Worker* declined to use force if sanctions failed. Compared with other Labour newspapers, however, the *Worker* was a staunch supporter of the League, and more internationally minded. This policy did not represent the leadership of the A.W.U., but H.E. Boote's own views. He had too much prestige, however, to be silenced easily.
The Labor Daily's new policy of isolationism, however, was continued. 'Sanctions Mean War' was repeated at length.

A blockade means war between Britain and Italy

WORLD WAR MUST FOLLOW

...Sanctions mean war.
War means conscription.
Conscription means a foreign grave for your husband, brother or son... Beware the Sanctioneers.
Keep out of War.

John T. Lang¹ [signed]

Some sensible comments were made on the European situation, on the destruction of the Stresa Front, and the precarious position of Austria. The newspaper recognised the connection between the Abyssinian war and the remilitarisation of the Rhineland.² No conclusions, however, were drawn. By the end of October, interest began to lag, and was only revived by dramatic events. The basic position of the Labor Daily did not change - radical suspicion of Britain, anti-imperialism, anti-League, and isolationism.³ This attitude was to

¹ Labor Daily, 18.10.35(1), cf. 11, 12, 14.10.35 etc.
² Ibid., 6.2.36, 9 and 10.3.36.
³ E.g., the Hoare-Laval Plan, and Hoare's resignation, w/e 21.12.35 Roosevelt's declaration of American neutrality, w/e 11.1.36. For the Labor Daily's major characteristics, see 15, 19 and 22.10.35, 21.12.35, 20.1.36, 5.3.36. A major part of its policy was to withdraw Bruce from the League Council, and if necessary leave the League. 6, 13, 14 and 23.9.35.
continue until Lang lost control of the journal.

This diverse thinking on foreign affairs, evident throughout the Labour movement and parties\(^1\) was seen at the Special Conference of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, held between the 25 and 28 November 1935. This saw a victory for the Victorian-New South Wales-F.P.L.P. policy. The Executive Committee of the A.C.T.U. felt that war in all its forms should be opposed, and that it was impossible to divorce economic from military sanctions. A compromise supporting instead trade union sanctions was therefore carried. But Chappie of the Victorian A.R.U. wanted to eliminate defence altogether from Labor's Case, and he was supported by Roberts of the Engineers, who declared that he was an out-and-out pacifist. However, with the aid of the President, A.E. Monk, in the chair, awkward spots were avoided and the policy of the Executive was steered through the meeting. Its motion declaring uncompromising opposition to the policy of sanctions was passed by 78 votes to 41, and Cameron's

\(^{1}\) E.g., at the Annual Conference of the Victorian A.L.P. J. Holland wanted international government, while in the same period P.J. Clarey, President of Melbourne Trades Hall Council repeated the old Labour arguments to the University Peace Group. In June the Trades Hall Council did not know whether it should congratulate Blum on his United Front government or not - in view of its own opposition to links with communists. Yet it could still toy with the idea of a bloc of Socialist States. Labor Call, 16.4.36(10), 7.5.36(13), 25.6.36(6 and 12). The Labor Anti-War Committee was active. On 6 October 220 delegates from A.L.P. branches and trade unions met in the Trades Hall, and a meeting on 11 November in Melbourne Town Hall was addressed by Curtin, Blackburn, and members of the Trades Hall Council and Federal Parliamentary Labour Party. (A.L.P. (Victoria) Central Executive Report, 1935-6, esp. p.13, ANL.)
addendum declaring the Abyssinian conflict to be imperialist, and one in which Australia had no obligation to engage herself, was also passed. Efforts by A.R.U. members to defend League action failed. The Executive dominated the meeting.¹

Thus despite different opinions within the party, Labour had come to a public policy which was generally accepted by the powerful elements. Lang's change in New South Wales, followed by Forde and the Federal Party, was naturally enough adopted by Victoria, despite hesitations of individuals. It fitted well with the sympathy for Lang in Victoria, with the hostility to communism of the Catholics there, and the strong anti-war movement. Indeed, it was the manifesto of that movement which became the debating point of the A.C.T.U. Conference, in November. At that conference, the Victorian policy was accepted, and became what was, for all intents and purposes, an official A.L.P. policy. How widely it was accepted by the rank and file of Labour supporters is a matter of guesswork. Probably the average unionist thought as little about these things as he was allowed, regarded foreign affairs with considerable apathy, and felt that though Italy's invasion of Abyssinia was not 'fair play' it was no concern of Australia's. To such a man, Labour policy would represent his general feeling.

¹ Labor Call, 5.12.35(2-3), 12.12.35(2-3) Australian Worker, 4.12.35(14). The debate was based on Labor's Case, which should be read first. As for control of the meeting, the President ruled some amendments out of order, and declared others a negation of previous decisions. His rulings led to a certain amount of bitterness, especially when he ignored Orr's plea for further time in which to defend sanctions. An attempt to move that he had shown partiality was, however, overwhelmingly defeated.
The Abyssinian crisis set the pattern for the future attitude of the three groups to foreign affairs.

The communists had by 1936 fully adopted the new policy of the Comintern. Their faith in the League proved short-lived, but the term 'Collective Security' remained as part of communist jargon. As they used it, however, it meant a Russian alliance with a combination of Western Powers, against Germany and Italy. This was to remain their main demand in foreign affairs until the Russo-German Pact of August 1939.

As for their policy during the Abyssinian crisis, communists had little ground for assuming that Mussolini's threat to declare war if oil sanctions were applied was mere bluff. The Ciano diaries suggest that the reverse is true. Moreover, communists overlooked the political difficulty in applying such sanctions, with the United States out of the League, and France unwilling to drive Mussolini nearer Hitler. Britain, whatever communists said about 'collective action' would have had to have borne the main burden of any struggle and it is extremely

1 *Workers Weekly*, 8.5.36. Communists followed Dimitrov's assessment of the dangers of German expansion, threatening Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland preparatory to an attack on Russia. *Ibid.*, 26.6.36. Such a forecast was made in the 'Women's rally for Peace', (?) November 1935. Rawling Collection.

2 *Ciano's Diary, 1937-8*, Trans. A. Mayor, London, 1952, reveals that in August 1935 Mussolini toyed with the idea of a surprise attack on the British Home fleet. The Italian navy 'put on the brakes', and in fact the British fleet was not then in the Mediterranean (p.47). What the outcome of any military action would have been, and whether Britain would have been well advised to face a war in 1935 in the hope of strengthening the League, remains conjecture. See *ibid.*, p.34 for Mussolini's statement that oil sanctions would have meant war (for 17.11.37).
doubtful if opinion in Britain, or in the Dominions — or among the communists, but for different reasons — would have accepted this. As an abstract statement of the situation, however, and in their warning that the League would be drastically weakened by failure to act promptly and effectively, they have the verdict of history on their side.

Their policy within Australia was to attempt to stir public opinion, or at least to give the impression of strong popular feeling — to persuade the government to adopt their policy — and to influence the Labour movement. They failed in all three aims. The public may have been concerned, but was disinclined to protest vigorously on communist lines. It was content — where it was not wholly apathetic — to follow the government. Nor was the government so naive as to take all the protests at their face value. The latter were useful when arguing with the A.L.P. as 'evidence' of public feeling. But the government followed Britain, not the C.P.A., and later supported the Mother Country in abandoning sanctions and in recognising Italy's victory. Finally, the Labour movement seems to have been resistant to the communists. The printed petition demanding sanctions, which the latter circulated in New South Wales, was sent to the government by unemployed and relief worker organisations, and co-operative societies. Similar petitions, although not in exactly the same words, were forwarded by the Newcastle Trades Hall Council and the United Trades and Labour Council of South Australia, and by a few unions, mainly in the mining or transport industries. There was a very noticeable lack of response from other unions, however, and not one Labour Branch co-operated. Although individual unionists and Labour members agreed with the communist viewpoint, they were outvoted in the Labour Council of New South Wales, and
Melbourne Trades Hall Council and in the A.C.T.U. Congress. Only Blackburn among federal politicians had the courage to support League sanctions. There was no hope of easily influencing the Labour parties. As for the industrial movement, the start would have to be made against Lang in New South Wales.

Catholics, despite the hierarchy and newspapers, were not fully roused. Certain individuals involved in politics saw the crisis as an added reason for their political alignments, and tried to give the Church's attitude some effect. Others tried to influence the government. But the basic reason for these activities seems other than the Abyssinian crisis - more a matter of anti-communism than an analysis of foreign affairs. Father Murtagh and D.G.M. Jackson agree that the Abyssinian crisis never became a 'Catholic' issue.1

Finally, what of the Labour movement itself? It had reacted according to its traditional theories and thinking during the Abyssinian crisis. Isolationism, apart from being the result of Labour traditions, was also necessary to maintain unity when so many differing viewpoints were held. These differences were not merely between Catholics and communists, but between Lang and his opponents in New South Wales, and between individuals. Isolationism was in many ways the only policy which all these sections would

1 Interviews with Murtagh and Jackson, cited. As for attempts to influence the government, a petition of 750 signatures on 43 sheets was sent in by E.L. Kiernan, MLC from Melbourne. It appealed for the dropping of sanctions and an effort to re-establish friendly relations with Italy. It made much of trade figures. The irony was that the Prime Minister whose government was applying sanctions was himself a devout Catholic.
tolerate and at the same time remain within the ranks of the movement. The trouble was that isolationism, although a viable policy in the twenties, was ceasing to be so by 1935, and in any case conflicted with Labour hostility to the Nazi and fascist regimes.

By his Abyssinian adventure, Mussolini had destroyed any lingering prestige the League might have had, and, perhaps even more important, revealed only too clearly the military and moral weakness of the British and French governments. Broadly speaking, four types of policy were possible - some form of isolationism, either Empire or Australian; 'Collective Security', based on the League, but backed in the last resort by armed force; an anti-German alliance supporting a definite stand against further aggression; or appeasement, the search for a negotiated settlement, with concessions by the 'Have' powers to placate the 'Have Nots'. In 1935 and onwards Labour adopted isolationism, although that policy meant in effect watching from a distance while the European dictators increased their power and ambitions until Australia was clearly threatened. Labour, however, regarded the League as not fully representative and suspected that the organisation was used by Russia to further communist ends. An alliance was unthinkable, since a balance of power system was held to have been a cause of the world war. Appeasement was yet to be tried, but in 1935 Labour preferred to keep clear of all entanglements, including attempts to placate.

These possibilities were not necessarily clearly considered. The movement was so complex, with diverse and often unconnected power and decision-making organs, that new thinking and coherent leadership were difficult. With trade unions separate entities, often fighting the State Labour parties, as in New South Wales, and only
minimally led by the A.C.T.U.,\(^1\) with each State having its own Labour party, often preoccupied with State politics and its own in-fighting, and Federal members bound to their State parties in different ways, the platform of the party had to be generalised to win acceptance.\(^2\)

At the time of the Abyssinian crisis Labour reacted according to traditional theories and internal conflicts, in adopting isolationism. The result does not appear to have led to any modification of this attitude. Labour newspapers and leaders largely ignored the German military re-occupation of the Rhineland, and Labour views on the League appear to have been strengthened. Henceforth it was regarded as useful for little apart from social work.\(^3\)

The crisis, however, was to have ultimate effects in two ways. It brought Labour face to face with a concrete international problem for the first time since

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2 For the organisation of the Labour movement, see D.W. Rawson, *Organisation of the A.L.P.*, especially pp.3-4, 36-8 and 43.

3 As for the Rhineland, the *Australian Worker* merely remarked that it was the result of the Treaty of Versailles, and post-war treatment of Germany, but advocated no policy, 11.3.36(3). The incident did, however, rouse some in Victoria to oppose any surrender of New Guinea. The federal Conference of 1936 amended the platform to express abhorrence of war and fascism, and urge the government to seek friendly relations with other countries. It was more concerned, however, with the organisation of defence in the interests of the workers than with foreign policy as such. *Labor Daily*, 31.7.36. For comments on the League, see CPD 151/1053, 153/448, 158/1510, 154/102.
the depression, and obliged the movement to state a policy. Once a policy existed, a debate on it was possible. Moreover, this period saw the beginning of a new struggle against the Lang group in New South Wales by men who adopted the policy of collective security, under a variety of meanings, in foreign policy. The opposition to isolationism of Lang's enemies was to spread in the movement at large. The process of change was slowed down, however, by the Spanish civil war, which was to rouse intense and differing emotions in the two sets of Labour supporters we have considered— the communists and the Catholics.
CHAPTER III

Strands of Opinion Within Society

Noticeable changes occurred in Australian public opinion between mid-1935 and July 1936, in response to events overseas and the policies adopted by the British, Australian and Italian governments. Yet many sections of the public maintained consistent attitudes throughout the whole period. This chapter attempts both to compare the more permanent characteristics of the various sections, and to trace the chronological changes of opinion in general.

Newspaper editorials, although they reflected to some degree changes in opinion, were based on more permanent foreign policy attitudes. For example, the strongest support for the League came consistently from the Melbourne Age and the West Australian. Indeed the Age, according to E.A. Ferguson, was 'perhaps the most pro-League newspaper in Australia'. At the beginning of the crisis it accepted that Italy had grievances, but was moved by Mussolini's intransigence to support strong League action. However, it wanted the way kept open for negotiations within the framework of the League, and even considered an adjustment being forced upon the Emperor. The West Australian, although it discussed Italy's economic position, dismissed it as a possible motive for Mussolini's action, and
strongly opposed any compromise that would threaten Abyssinian independence or League prestige.¹

Both these newspapers stressed the immediate need to keep international order, and therefore wanted a swift application of sanctions. Both, however, had reservations. The Age insisted that sanctions should be applied collectively, and not by Britain alone. The West Australian, convinced that economic sanctions would work, declined to face and admit the possibility of war.²

After the Italian Invasion of Abyssinia, both newspapers admitted the shortcomings of the League, but felt it was the greatest hope for peace, and stressed Australia's obligations to it. The West Australian realised the significance of the Abyssinian crisis to the future of the League, and declared that Australia's defence rested on that organisation. Both newspapers, having confidence in Britain's fidelity to League obligations, were dismayed by the Hoare-Laval Plan, but the Age was the more critical. The West Australian was worried by the European implications of the crisis - France's use of the League conflicting with her desire for an alliance with Italy, the danger of driving Italy into Germany's arms or encouraging Hitler's ambitions in Eastern Europe.

² Age, 7.10.35, 1.1.36. West Australian, 5.9.35, 7.10.35, 4.2.36, 6.3.36.
Thus the Hoare-Laval Plan led to a toughening of the policy of the *Age* while the *West Australian* became more cautious.\(^1\)

The *Sydney Morning Herald* supported the League, but for reasons of power politics. Its attitude seems to have been that 'Collective Security' was worth a trial. If it worked, and provided safety for Britain and Australia, so much the good, but neither Britain nor Australia should jeopardise their security to gain a League victory. This last was despite statements that if the League failed, the dead of 1918 had died in vain, and that only collective security could ensure peace. Indeed, the *Sydney Morning Herald* did not seem a very convinced League supporter. It did not censure Italy much, and dispassionately considered partitioning Abyssinia into spheres of interest. When the League had clearly failed, it reverted to form.

The newspaper's attitude to the League probably stemmed from the senior leader-writer, F. Cutlack. He had travelled in the East, and defended Japan and criticised the League during the Manchurian crisis.\(^2\) The *Sydney Morning Herald* 's defence of vigorous League action was the result, then, not of faith in the League, but of loyalty to British policy. Moreover, the editorial staff of this newspaper seem to have been more aware than many in Australia of the realities

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   *West Australian*, 4.10.35, 11.10.35, 29.11.35, 16.12.35,  
2  Interview with Professor T.I. Moore, A.N.U., 29.6.65.  
   Professor Moore was appointed to the editorial board at the end of 1934, but had not gained an influence in the body by the time the Abyssinian crisis occurred.
of power-politics. Its attitude was more akin to that of W.M. Hughes than other Journals. This explains the policy the newspaper later adopted at the time of Munich. In 1935, however, it felt that British prestige was involved in League success, and therefore for a while supported the League.¹

The other Australian newspapers were more isolationist. The Melbourne Herald made much of the League's extravagence, and while occasionally indulging in eulogies of world peace, assumed that Australia did not really benefit from the League, should not pay much for membership, and certainly should not fight for the organisation. The Argus said that although the League represented a fine ideal, it should not be allowed to spread the war. It was in its cradle, and the British Empire should take what steps it considered necessary to defend itself. The Daily Telegraph remarked that 'Abyssinia is little more than a name on a map to the majority of Australians'. It seemed worried by the danger to the white races if their prestige were diminished by an Abyssinian defeat of Italy. All three newspapers were concerned, like Hughes, that Britain should not be left to uphold the League alone.

A change in editorial policy probably occurred in the second and third weeks of September 1935 as a result of the increasingly definite British stand. The heading for the editorial of the Melbourne Herald on 12 September was 'Australia is wholly with Britain and the League'. Moffat, on 21 September, after noting that the newspapers had begun by disliking sanctions, added, 'the trend of

editorial opinion this last fortnight has been slowly but surely in the direction of supporting Britain in all eventualities. The newspapers in fact had not wanted Britain to give a lead in supporting the League. When her policy became clear, however, they began, somewhat late in the day, to talk about international obligations.

That their motive was not support for the League, but merely British policy, was revealed by their attitude to the Hoare-Laval Plan. The Sydney Morning Herald had previously praised Hoare's ideas for a review of colonies and raw materials, and therefore strongly favoured his attempted settlement. The Melbourne Herald hailed it with delight, as a guarantee that Italy's interests were being considered. After his fall, the Argus declared he should not have resigned, while the Sydney Morning Herald bitterly criticised British public opinion. The Daily Telegraph made no comment, being content to follow British policy.

In short, these newspapers supported the League because Britain did, but had little faith in the organisation, nor did they very often regard its fate as important. Their attitude varied according to the latest reports from Britain. The old wolf of Imperial Foreign Policy appeared fleetingly under the sheepskin of support for the League.

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1 Moffat Diary, 20-21 September, pp.30-31. Thus the Melbourne Herald, which previously had felt that sanctions would extend any war, then declared foolish the Labour Party's charge that 'sanctions mean war'. All three newspapers condemned Mussolini.

The Bulletin was at least free from such 'double-think'. It did not conceal its views, but openly advocated isolationism, 'Europe is a mad continent, and we would do well to keep out of it'. Neither collective security nor Abyssinian independence was worth fighting for. The League was the centre of talk rather than action. The Bulletin, unconcerned with treaty obligations and international justice, flatly opposed sanctions, and was worried about Australia's trade with Italy, but declared that the failure to impose oil sanctions, the only ones likely to be effective, revealed the weakness of the League and the insincerity of its members. It supported the Hoare-Laval Plan on the grounds that Abyssinia would gain more from that than it would from defeat.¹

The Bulletin's image in the 1890s had been a combination of brash nationalism and radical sympathies. In the late thirties, however, it was to be found defending Mussolini, Franco, and ultimately, Hitler. The startling change was at the time and has been since attributed to Catholic influence, either in the Prior family or in the editorial board. A strong similarity certainly existed between the arguments of the Bulletin and those of the Catholic newspapers. However, no proof of Catholic influence is available, and those nearest to the organisation deny it. It seems more likely that the paradox is more apparent than real. The Bulletin's 'radicalism' in the 1890s included a strong element of xenophobia and isolationism. The first decade of the twentieth century saw most of the magazine's radical ambitions achieved. The result was that it began to move

QUESTION!

“Come along, Aussie—you're in this.”

“Who said so?”
to the right about the time of the first world war. During that struggle, it supported conscription. The communist revolution of 1917, and the depression, with the struggle in New South Wales against Lang, only increased its movement away from Labour. By 1935, nationalism, violent anti-communism and isolationism were all that remained of the journal's earlier attitudes, and inclined it to defend the European dictators.

The Bulletin, moreover, had as its Editor in 1935, J.E. Webb. He held strong views on foreign policy, with a certain lack of balance. Defence of Hitler's regime, anti-semitism, intense hatred and suspicion of Russia were the staple ingredients. Holding such views, there was a natural tendency to appeal to Catholic sentiment, which, as has been seen, was also anti-communist and pro-Mussolini. The extent of the break with the left was not apparent during the Abyssinian crisis, since the A.L.P. also adopted isolationism, and the Bulletin could have been regarded as following its traditional policy. However, its attitude was to become clearer during the Spanish civil war.\(^1\)

The influence newspaper editorials had on 'public opinion' is difficult to assess. To begin with, the

\(^1\) Interview with A.T. Shakespeare, ex-Managing Editor of the Canberra Times, author of a History of the A.P.P.A. Letter from H.K. Prior, then Chairman and Managing Director of the Bulletin. J.E. Webb was Associate Editor from 1924 and Editor from 1933. Who's Who In Australia, 1938, p.519. Exit An Empire (pamphlet), Sydney 1957, reveals that he did not change his ideas. In it Webb opposed support for Czechoslovakia, the breaking up of the Hapsburg Empire, and argued that Hitler had stopped the movement of communism Westwards. He still opposed intervention in Spain and going to war for Poland. Whether a Catholic or not, Webb often referred to Catholic feeling. Bulletin 6.9.39(12).
number of people who read editorials is small—especially on such a subject as foreign policy. The number of those affected by them must be even smaller, since those who read them are more likely to be able to make up their minds without the editor's help and often in spite of it. Moreover, many of the newspapers are read for their local news, their sporting news, or the classified advertisements. Yet an Australian Gallup Poll in 1950 found that 52 per cent of the people it tackled thought they received their opinions on current events mainly from the newspapers. It is clear that many people who never read editorials would have their opinions formed by the presentation, amount of news given, headlines and photographs. Thus the news of Hitler's aggressions, or the photographs of bombed towns in Spain, would stir opinion without comment being needed.

A close survey and comparison of news columns and presentation would, however, be a lengthy business. The editorials have been chosen, partly because they influenced some people, and partly because they reveal the thinking of one group of professional men in Australia—the leader-writers. These men would themselves influence the people with whom they came into contact.¹

¹ For newspaper circulations see Appendix B. The SMH had the largest circulation, although the Daily Telegraph was growing steadily. The circulation of the Bulletin had fallen. In Victoria, the Argus improved between 1935 and 1939, surpassing the circulation figure of the Age in 1937. The greatest Victorian circulation, however, was made by the Melbourne Herald. The West Australian, with a small circulation, was outstanding for the interest and knowledge it displayed on foreign affairs. According to Henry Mayer, The Press in Australia, Melbourne 1964, pp. 226-7, the amount of space leading newspapers devoted to international affairs on political, social or economic matters (expressed as a percentage of 'Editorial Space') was:—SMH 4.94, Daily Telegraph 4.46, Age 5, Melbourne Herald 6, West Australian 7.12. These newspapers would be taken home and read by the family, so the circulation figures could be doubled or trebled to give the number of readers.
It is easy to exaggerate the influence of the press. Henry Mayer puts the 'serious' readers of Australian newspapers at between ten and fifteen per cent of their circulation. However, he still feels that

It seems reasonable to assume that the Press is the greatest single factor in determining in many fields what sort of things most people get even a chance to have any opinion about.... On the positive side it has the power of initiative, selection and presentation; on the negative side, that of exclusion.¹

Another influence on public opinion, that of the radio, was then growing. In Australia, however, its scope was limited. The Australian Broadcasting Commission had been established by the Federal government only in 1932. It used the 'A' Stations alongside the commercially-owned 'B' Stations. The P.M.G.'s Department controlled all technical services, and there was no position in Australia comparable to that of the Director General of the B.B.C. The P.M.G., moreover, not an independent Board, had the power to issue or withhold licenses, and he had the same power of censorship over 'B' class Stations as over 'A'. As has already been noted, the government disapproved of debate over the air on foreign policy, and censored it. Moreover, the newspapers were jealous of radio competition affecting their circulations, and accordingly took action to limit the amount of time given to news.² Despite all

this, radio commentaries, such as those by 'The Watchman', alias E.A. Mann, were very popular, and reached a wide audience.¹

Broadcasts were made by other commentators, such as Professor Macmahon Ball in Melbourne, and Professor S.H. Roberts in Sydney.

Unlike books or newspapers, however, radio scripts are unlikely to have survived intact. Studios broadcast millions of words a year, and have limited space to store material. Commentators keep scripts as mementos, but after a time either lose or dispose of them. Thus the A.B.C. has destroyed all the scripts of 'The Watchman' except a few, and extensive enquiries amongst relatives and others have failed to locate more.²

Evidence on opinion among academics and intellectuals is similarly fragmentary. Academics more than others use the spoken word, and Australian newspapers do not often

¹ 'The Watchman' gave two talks, 'At Home And Abroad' - short comments on the news from Monday to Friday - and 'News Behind the News' on Sunday evenings. People, during the second world war, stood outside public houses and radio shops to listen to him, and cafe proprietors invited the public to enter and listen free of charge. Crowds gathered on the pavements in Adelaide to listen. Arrows in the Air, a small selection of broadcasts by 'The Watchman', Melbourne, 1944, pp.5 and 9. The Watchman spoke from 1934 to September 1940 on the ABC network, and thereafter on 3 UZ.

² Those that survive may be found in the ABC Archives, Sydney. They cover 22.3.35; April-August 1937; 4 from 1938; and 15 September 1939 to the end of 1940. 'The Watchman' was censored for criticising Munich, and left the ABC after a difference of principle. A certain suspicion is therefore attached to the destruction of the scripts. Letter to author from G.L. Mann (a son), Sir Alan Mann (Chief Justice of New Guinea) and J.F. Breen.
consider it worthwhile to report university debates. Student rallies, except when they commit outrage or violent division is evidenced, are not newsworthy. Macmahon Ball, for example, declares that there was intense interest in politics in Melbourne University; ideological conflicts were real to both students and staff, and lecture halls were filled for political debates, especially during the Spanish civil war. Little evidence of this has survived.

Moreover, there was no central organised body which spoke with the voice of authority for all its members. Intellectuals, although presumably more educated and knowledgeable on these matters than other people, were just as prone to prejudice and all the more divided. Four groups discussed international affairs; the Australian Institute of Political Science, the Institute of International Affairs and, closely linked with it, the

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1 Interview with Professor Macmahon Ball, May 1964. An example of lack of evidence on views among intellectuals is F.W. Eggleston. During this period he was senior partner in a firm of solicitors, Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Austral-Asiatic Bulletin (the journal of the Victorian Branch of the A.I.I.A.), and engaged in writing Search for a Social Philosophy (Melbourne and London, 1941). His thoughts on foreign events were not then set down as a single considered whole, but were to be gleaned by passing references in other subject matter. The Eggleston Papers in the Australian National Library are, with the exception of his Lectures to Diplomatic Students, closed, as is the index to them. Library officials, however, report that they mainly cover the period before 1930 and after 1946. Some typescript notes of Eggleston's are held in the A.N.U. Library, but they contain little comment of his own.
Institute of Pacific Relations, and the Round Table group in the background.¹

Australian intellectuals, like the rest of the community, were uncertain in their reactions to the crisis. For example, Professor H.A. Woodruff declared that he firmly believed in the League, but only when all the Powers were determined to stand by its decisions. The consensus of opinion, however, seems to have been to condemn Italy's aggression, as Woodruff did, and to support varying degrees of League action. Professor K.H. Bailey, while admitting Italy might have grievances, supported economic, though not military, sanctions as the only way of protesting against aggression. C. Badger criticised the fascist regime. From the University of Western Australia, F. Alexander and others sent a letter to the West Australian supporting collective security and criticising Labour neutrality as narrow and impractical.²

¹ F.W. Eggleston appears to have been in the last three groups. Reflections on Australian Foreign Policy, Melbourne 1957, Intro. pp.xiii-xiv. For an account of the Round Table see J.R.M. Butler, Lothian. The Round Table was the magazine of the Empire, with articles contributed anonymously on behalf of groups in each of the dominions and Britain. It is difficult to discover how much influence these groups had. According to Butler, p.272, both Casey and Officer were members of it. F.W. Eggleston is reputed to have had influence on the government, but it is impossible to verify this.

² Labor Call, 1.8.35(4). Australian Quarterly, December 1935, pp.30-8. Argus, 12.11.35(6). Australian Quarterly, September 1935, pp.35-8. West Australian, 25.9.35(16). Woodruff was Director of the Bacteriology Department, University of Melbourne. Bailey was the Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Melbourne. Badger was Tutor and Extension lecturer at Adelaide University. Alexander was lecturer in Charge of the History Department, University of Western Australia. (Who's Who In Australia, 1938). Other signatories to the West Australian were F.R. Beasley, A.C. Fox, and W. Murdoch. N.B. To save confusion, the titles, positions etc. referred to in this thesis are those held by the persons at the time.
The seriousness of sanctions, and the danger of spreading the war, was keenly debated by lawyers. Sir Robert Garran raised the problem early in 1935, and the legal aspect of sanctions aroused interest. Sir John Latham declared that though economic sanctions had been regarded as a substitute for armed conflict, legally they were an act of war. Moreover, effective ones often involved a blockade, which, if resisted, had to be enforced. The decision to employ sanctions was therefore similar to that of war. A.B. Piddington denied the whole argument, declaring that economic sanctions were a substitute for war; like a fine on a criminal, no violence was involved. Australia had the legal right to decline to trade with any country anyway. A.H. Charteris, Professor of International Law at the University of Sydney, went into the argument in detail. He agreed with Latham; the step from effective economic sanctions to war was short. The Round Table agreed.

The most extreme exponents of each side were Carl Kaeppel and W.R. Harniman. Kaeppel detested the Nazi regime, and feared its aggressive intentions, especially towards Austria. As a result, he did not wish to alienate Mussolini. Accordingly, he bitterly criticised the Abyssinians, and praised Mussolini as 'conciliatory' and able. He produced all the stock arguments against the League and sanctions, and had close affinities with the ideas of the Catholic controversialist, Jackson.¹

On the other hand, W.R. Harniman in March 1936 emphasised that the future of the League depended on the outcome of its policy in that crisis. League action had been ineffectual because it had failed to apply oil sanctions or close the Suez canal, and because of the attitude of America. The only answer, therefore, was a blockade. This, however, had to be faced by the League members in general, not just by England attempting to police the world on her own. On its record to date the League had failed, and collective security was a dangerous myth. Harniman's ideas, at least in the insistence that force had to be adequate, were similar to those of Hughes.²

This support for Hughes' ideas, and a realisation of the need for force, was clearly seen, as might be expected, in the R.S.L. This prominent organisation, alone among Australian interest groups, had direct access to the Cabinet. However, in fact the organisation was hardly

¹ Australian Quarterly, September 1935, pp.81-5, December 1935, pp.52-7. Kaeppel indeed, joined the Catholic Church, see p.41.
² Australian Quarterly, March 1936, pp.16-25.
'representative' of returned soldiers, and moreover was almost exclusively preoccupied with its internal interest-group activities. Its self-appointed tasks were to keep alive the memory of the exploits of the Anzacs, and to look after the returned servicemen, (repatriation, pensions, etc.). Apart from its keen interest in defence, loyalty to the British Empire, and Nationalism, it rarely had any corporate view on foreign affairs, and tended instead to follow the ideas of the Press. Each State and several capital cities produced magazines, which had, however, only a limited circulation.

The R.S.L., as noted, regarded loyalty to Britain as a virtue, and moreover its members had seen action and were not likely to regard Mussolini's aggression as less than serious. Accordingly, support for British policy and the League, and criticism of Italy was natural. R.S.L. magazines tried to explain the League covenant to their

1 G.L. Kristianson, Pressure Group Activities of the Returned Servicemen's League, A.N.U. Ph.D. thesis, 1965, p.206. On p.109, Kristianson gives the percentage of R.S.L. members to Returned Servicemen in the States, 1936 and 1939 as: Queensland 29-35 per cent, New South Wales 30-32 per cent, Victoria 32-33 per cent, South Australia 51-56 per cent, Western Australia 42 per cent, Tasmania 47-52 per cent. The numbers involved in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania were small compared with those in Victoria and New South Wales. For concern with defence, see Mufti, 1.6.38(12), 1.8.38(3). The object no.7 of the League was 'to inculcate loyalty to Australia'. That the League followed the press for ideas on international affairs, author's interview with C.W. Joyce, State President of the Victorian branch, RSSAILA, 4.1.65.

2 In New South Wales Reveille was the official Journal, in Victoria Mufti was 'appointed' its organ until taken over officially in 1936, the Duckboard was the official magazine of the Melbourne branch, the Listening Post of Western Australia. The Queensland Digger was an official magazine, but was not editorially responsible to the branch. All magazines appeared once a month.
members, and some insisted that the League was the best thing that had resulted from the war. Others however, were more doubtful, but supported the organisation as part of loyalty to Britain.¹

The West Australian congress of the R.S.L. was sitting when Italy's invasion of Abyssinia was announced. That body thereupon reaffirmed its 1933 resolution in support of the League of Nations, and the State President, Mr Yeates, submitted a fresh one deploiring the outbreak of war, hoping that the League of Nations could restore peace, and pledging itself to strive for that end. This was sent by telegram to the Federal Executive, which passed it on to the Prime Minister, and informed him later when the twentieth Annual Federal Congress of the R.S.L. endorsed it.²

The R.S.L. was very concerned by the military unpreparedness of Britain and Australia. However, some members realised that the League's authority might depend on the backing of military force. 'We believe that the League of Nations is the world's chief bulwark against another world war, but, unless the League is supported to the extent that it is able to enforce its decisions, it might as well disband'.³ It seems likely, therefore, that

¹ The most pro-League magazines were the Queensland Digger September-November 1935, and Mufti November 1935, January-February 1936. Reveille and Listening Post were more doubtful, Listening Post 26.7.35(4-6), 16.12.35(3), Reveille 1.11.35(1-2). That loyalty to Britain was a basic motive, see R.D. Huish, Queensland President, Queensland Digger, 2.12.35(3). For criticism of Italy, Queensland Digger, 1.10.35(5 and 20), Listening Post, 25.10.35(3 and 4), Reveille, 1.11.35(1).
² Listening Post, 25.10.35(3, 8-9), R.S.L. Documents Dockets 8194B, 8195B. (Permission of R.S.L. through G.L. Kristianson.)
³ Listening Post, 15.11.35(4).
the R.S.L. magazines, and the State Executives they represented, would have been willing to support a stronger line by Britain. It may be significant that this was the only occasion 1935-9, that the official bodies actually forwarded resolutions on foreign policy to the Federal government. Thereafter there was silence. The R.S.L., however, did not become a pressure group on this or any other foreign policy issue. It was divided, as was the rest of the population, and preoccupied with bettering the condition of its members, and remembering 'old unhappy far off things, and battles long ago'.

The Abyssinian crisis does seem to have awakened 'public opinion' on foreign policy, and forced many Australians, at least for a time, to consider events abroad. From press editorials, speeches, letters to the newspapers, it appears that Hughes represented a definite section of the population in the opening days, in fearing that Britain would be involved alone against Italy.

This feeling was in some people concern for the British Empire, and a realisation of British military weakness, often combined with a scepticism of the League. In others it was isolationism, or strong anti-war sentiment.

Intense dislike of war was widespread in Australia. When the Publicist, in its early editions, declared war to be 'biologically inevitable' it received so many

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1 R.S.L. opinion can perhaps better be gauged by studying the speeches of Federal Parliamentarians, members of it. See Appendix A - R.S.L. Members marked with an asterisk.
complaining letters that its writers came to regard pacifism as one of the most dangerous forces in Australia.\(^1\)

There was indeed a large number of bodies concerned with the maintenance of peace in the country.

In the universities, a number of groups existed, providing an outlet for student idealism and pacifism, and combining with Church organisations and the League of Nations Union. The communists tried to weld all university movements into a front organisation. The 'Melbourne University Peace Group' condemned nationalist armaments, the British Empire - unless it was fighting for the League - compulsory military training and military display on Anzac Day, and advocated universal disarmament.\(^2\)

Two 'Peace Ballots' were held. In Sydney, a 'Joint Committee for Peace', established ostensibly under the auspices of the League of Nations Union, copied the idea from Britain, and held a ballot in August (?) 1935. The idea spread to Melbourne, where a more extensive series of lectures prepared the student body to consider the issues involved, in May 1936. The questions were loosely phrased, and the ballots were held in different universities at different times, so deductions are difficult. It is interesting that the faith of the second group, in the League of Nations, after the triumph of Mussolini, was apparently slightly increased, although support for

\(^1\) For the Publicist, see pp.205-6. Publicist, November/December 1936(1), October 1937(1).

\(^2\) The Proletariat, the organ of the Melbourne University Labor (sic) Club, ended after December 1935, when the group joined the 'Student League'. This was part of the Student fronts becoming more respectable. Proletariat, October to December 1935, Rawling Collection. For the Melbourne University Peace Group, Argus, 18.6.36(7).
economic sanctions, very strong on both occasions, had diminished somewhat by May 1936. Even the first group had strongly opposed the idea of military sanctions, and the second group followed. Interest in the League, and knowledge of its aims, together with idealistic support for it, seems to have resulted, but idealism and revulsion from war prevented the students from accepting the practical step of enforcing League authority by military measures. The ballots reflect, in fact, current left-wing views on international affairs. Only forty-two per cent of the Sydney students answered the first questionnaire, and fifty-five per cent of Melbourne students. As the Argus said, 'Experience has shown that the more conservative students do not vote at such ballots'.

Individuals and groups within the R.S.L. also were interested in peace. The organisation was a member body of the 'British Empire Service League' and through it came into contact with international servicemen's associations, such as F.I.D.A.C. and C.I.P. In 1933-4 the Victorian branch of the R.S.L. had suggested an international conference of ex-servicemen to ensure peace, and repeated the suggestion in 1935. The Twentieth Annual Conference adopted it unanimously, and passed it on the B.E.S.L. Despite the failure of the plan, the R.S.L. continued

1 Argus, 16.3.36(8). The lectures in Melbourne were serious affairs, and Eggleston spoke at one of them. Argus, 28.4.36 (10). See also Labor Call, 4.6.36(8). As for the student reaction to war, both groups denied war was inevitable, supported a scheme for universal disarmament, and opposed compulsory military training. For the questions and figures in both ballots, see Proletariat, cited, and Argus, 26.5.36(10).

2 FIDAC - Federation International des Anciens Combattants - was an allied nations ex-servicemen's association, CIP - Comite International Permanent - included ex-soldiers of all countries.
support for F.I.D.A.C. Its support for the League of Nations, although largely the result of loyalty to Britain, was thus in some members also the result of altruism. Indeed, S.J. Cantor became a vigorous advocate of a 'Commonwealth of nations' with a federal Parliament and an international police force. It was, perhaps, ironic that he, the most prolific writer in Australia who publicly urged a world government over-riding national sovereignty, wrote for the R.S.L.\(^1\)

Undoubtedly the most striking articles against war were those published in Mufti, under Austen Laughlin, entitled 'Let's Face the facts, Shall We Fight?'. The first, after dealing with the excitement of youth at the prospect of soldiering, and then the horror and savagery of combat, went on to declare that the maintenance of

\(^1\)Reveille, 1.12.36(35), 1.3.37(5), 1.7.37(21), 1.10.38(14). The British Legion felt that an exchange of ex-servicemen from Germany and England was not 'opportune'. R.S.L. Documents, Docket 8198B. R.D. Huish, State President of Queensland, praised FIDAC, Queensland Digger, 1.8.38(3). For praise of the League of Nations in the 1937 Federal Congress, see Mufti, 1.2.38(3). S.J. Cantor was senior medical officer in the Department of Mental Hygiene, Victoria. I have noted 15 articles by him in Reveille, one each in Listening Post, and Queensland Digger, 3 in Mufti, and 11 articles and 6 stories in Duckboard. He also offered his services as a lecturer to sub-branches. Mufti, 1.3.36(4).
the prestige and power of the League of Nations was the only possible justification for going to war.¹

Anti-war feeling, common to many sections of the public, could lead to hostility to Italian aggression, or to the wish to avoid any involvement. Moffat on 21 September 1935, thought that the public was divided. What he called 'the conservative, or propertied classes' were keen on supporting the British lead one hundred per cent, while the militant Labour group was definitely isolationist. 'The Middle classes', however, were still refusing to face the issue, hoping that the crisis would pass and Australia would not become involved.²

Opinion appears to have changed as Mussolini's action became more flagrant, and Britain's policy became more clear. The newspapers, for example, at first prone to show some sympathy for Mussolini's claims, lost it as his intransigence revealed that he was intent on aggression.

¹ Mufti, 1.11.35(6-7). The article was probably the most effective piece of anti-war writing at the time, and still retains considerable impact. It was quoted by Labor Call, 14.11.35(11) and at length in the Federal Parliament by Garden, CPD 147/1329-30. The article became the beginning of a series, and a lively correspondence ensued. Both were cut short when the Victorian Branch took over the magazine officially in May 1936. According to W.C. Joyce, interview cited, the Victorian Council feared they would be involved in debts run up by the Laughlin Publishing Company, Ltd., and other of Laughlin's numerous financial enterprises. Doubtless, however, they also disapproved of his spectacular journalism, and his attitude to international affairs. The publicity the article provoked in Parliament may have led to complaints. Discussion of international affairs dropped out of Mufti till 1939.
² Moffat Diary, p.30.
The Italian invasion of Abyssinia caused a reaction against Italy and in favour of League sanctions led by Britain. Contemporary observers were almost unanimous that a majority of the public was strongly in favour of the imposition of sanctions. The Bulletin later admitted that it had received a large number of insulting letters when it opposed them. Peter Heydon's remark, that the government was influenced by public opinion, has already been noted.1

The support for sanctions, however, was the immediate reaction against an aggressor who had smashed dreams of world peace, combined with loyalty to Britain, rather than belief in League ideals. In the past there had been a distinct lack of interest in the League in Australia. Intellectuals had pointed to its weakness outside Europe, especially after the Manchurian failure, but ordinary citizens probably merely felt that it dealt with complicated and distant European squabbles, and was of little immediate concern to themselves. There was a general lack of support for the League of Nations Union. Moffat commented on the lack of any strong feeling about the moral issues involved. (I have scarcely met an Australian outside official circles who

has discussed the problem from a League point of view; to him the problem is essentially a British Empire one).  

Support for the League after Britain made her policy clear is deceptive. Minority opinion in favour of the League, muzzled at the time of the Manchurian crisis by the inactivity of the British government and the agreement of the Australian government and the press, was enabled to make itself heard. Moreover, many Australians regarded support for the League as an endorsement of British policy. Those who wanted an 'imperial' foreign policy approved of the League Covenant because, as several observers noted, it ensured that the policy of the Empire was conducted on united, righteous lines.

The result of the war in Abyssinia, and the League's application of sanctions, supported by Britain, was, in the closing months of 1935 and the beginning of 1936, a new interest in and support for the League. J.C.R. Proud, in his book, World Peace, the League and Australia,

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1 Moffat Diary, p.33 [the second so numbered]. For lack of interest in the League, Round Table, December 1935, vol.26, pp.174-5. Cf. Mansergh, Problems etc., p.144, 'nowhere in the British Commonwealth did it [the League] enjoy less assurance of support than in Australia'. I. Clunies Ross, Australia and the Far East, pp.92-3 suggested that a separate organisation should be set up for the Pacific. For those worried by the fear of war, Labor Call, 17,10,35(12) letter.

2 F. Aaorons, What the League Means to Australia, pp.4-5. J.C.R. Proud, World Peace, the League and Australia, Melbourne 1936, p.53. Round Table, December 1935, vol.26, p.176. West Australian, 28.5.37 - 'British policy has pledged itself to remain within the Covenant, which commits the Empire to a policy of law and order and regulates its relations on definite lines which the Dominions can trust in advance'.
published in 1936, said 'It is probably true to say that public opinion in Australia today is more whole-heartedly in favour of the collective system of security than ever before'. It was significant of the interest at that time that the book should then have been published. Proud reserved judgment on the League, but was moderately optimistic.¹

Defence of League action came most fully from the 'League of Nations Union'.² Its Executive in Sydney asked the government to explore all means of upholding the principles of the Covenant. R.G. Watt, the Secretary, like many in the community, thought that sanctions, unless they were accepted by all governments, would only extend the war. However, he insisted that the maintenance of international law and the sanctity of treaties was essential. He clashed with Archbishop Duhig, and, as the crisis progressed, came to support sanctions more strongly, appealing to Australians to study the facts of the international situation. The Executive had received resolutions from many branches, and welcomed the government's policy. It later sent an urgent telegram, bitterly criticising the Hoare-Laval Plan, to the Prime Minister. Judge Foster, President of the Victorian LNU, wrote an optimistic foreword to J.C.R. Proud's book.

¹ J.C.R. Proud, World Peace, p.56.
² The League of Nations Union, according to Miss C. Duncan, ex-secretary of the Victorian LNU, did not have a federal organisation. In Victoria, it was centred in Melbourne. The Sydney Branch was reported to have increased its membership in 1934 by 37 per cent. SMH, 28.11.35(10) (second editorial).
Looking at the speeches made and resolutions passed, however, one gets the impression that many members of the LNU, like many Labour men, believed that the League could work by the 'moral pressure' of 'world public opinion'. This would account for Watt's early hesitation over sanctions. War was unthinkable as a method of maintaining League authority, and not only to the pacifists and Churchmen, who were prominent in the organisation. Assuming that the League would have overwhelming strength, they never faced squarely the possibility of military sanctions, on which many would have had reservations. For a while, however, there does appear to have been an increased public interest in and support for the League of Nations Union.¹

Much support came from people moved by emotional, idealistic and humanitarian motives. These people also expressed indignation against Italian atrocities. The Catholic newspapers, in denying the latter, showed that they clearly felt that such reports turned public opinion against Mussolini's case. Women's organisations began to pester the government about the use of poison gas. In Melbourne an 'Ethiopian Relief Committee' was set up, apparently in February 1936, to obtain medical supplies for the Abyssinians. The usual humanitarian and church organisations were represented on it, with a sprinkling of communists, and left-wing groups and individuals prominent in the more famous 'Spanish Relief Committee'. It sent a petition to the Italian Consul in Melbourne,¹

¹ Labor Call, 26.9.35(2), SMH, 8.10.35(8), 17.10.35(11), 28.11.35(10), 3.2.36(8). Letters to the Prime Minister show that resolutions in support of the League came especially from Queensland. Macmahon Ball, interview cited.
protesting against the use of poison gas and flamethrowers, signed by one hundred and fifty persons, including three leading members of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. ¹

Humanitarian feelings, support for Britain and religious animosity, were seen in the Protestant churches. An Anglican synod in Sydney sent a letter to the Prime Minister supporting the Kellogg Pact, deploring Italy's threatened action, and urging a pro-League policy. The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church was criticised, and Dr Crotty, Bishop of Bathurst, declared that if Italy could not be stopped it was the beginning of the end, and attacked pacifism and isolationism. Church feeling, regarding the League as a source of 'moral suasion', but reluctantly facing facts and supporting action, was probably better expressed by Dr Mowll, Archbishop of Sydney, who said he would support sanctions, but with 'profound reluctance and regret'. He endorsed an ambulance appeal by the Archbishop of Canterbury. ² The Free Churches had no united policy advocated by widely-accepted spokesmen,

¹ Some of the women's organisations were the National Council of the Women of Australia, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Woman's Non-Party Association, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Women's Service Guild of Western Australia. These seem to have been particularly strong in South Australia. For the 'Ethiopian Relief Committee', Argus, 19.2.36(6), Duckboard, 1.4.36(7-8). Labor Call, 30.4.36(6). The meeting in Melbourne Town Hall included M. Blackburn, Helen Baillie, two members of the Red Cross Council, the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, representatives of the ILD, teachers and students. For the 'Spanish Relief Committee', see pp. 142-44.

² SMH, 26.9.35(11), 8.10.35(8), 15.10.35(11), 19.10.35(17), 25.10.35(11), 7.11.35(10), 13.11.35(12). Dr Crotty had been to Europe. West Australian, 2.10.35(10).
although the Executive of the 'Christian Youth Committee for Peace' supported even unilateral sanctions.  

If humanitarians of various persuasions, members of the L.N.U., Churchmen, communists and government supporters all defended the idea of League sanctions imposed on Italy, opposition was expressed by those Imperialists who, like Hughes or the Sydney Morning Herald, were concerned with the military position of Britain; the isolationists, including the Bulletin and Labour; the Catholics; and certain business firms. The common ground of opponents of the government was some form of isolationism, either because sanctions struck at their interests, or because, like Catholics, they supported Italy, or because they did not want to be involved in European wars.

Once the reaction against Italy's invasion - and the resultant enthusiasm for League action - had died down, isolationist sentiment began to revive. Most Australians did not want to be involved in overseas adventures. Moreover, by February 1936, the Hoare-Laval Plan had cast doubts on the whole-heartedness of the British government, and the League had failed to check Mussolini. Early hopes and enthusiasm began to wane, and, with them, willingness to be involved in maintaining peace overseas.

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1 It claimed to represent all Protestant Church Youth organisations, the S.C.M., Y.W.C.A., Y.M.C.A., etc. It admitted that there were pacifists in its ranks, but declared that most of its members would support military sanctions as a last resort if necessary. Letter 24.9.35.

2 Firms exporting to Italy wrote to the Prime Minister about the effect of sanctions on consignments to Italy at the time of imposition. In 1936 a printed petition was circulated among exporters, pastoral and dairying interests by John Reid Ltd., the agents for the Italian and Australian Steamship Co., against sanctions.
The German military re-occupation of the Rhineland, March 1936, increased this feeling. In many respects this was a different kind of issue. The League was not involved so directly, and the 'aggression', if it existed, was less blatant. Indeed, the Rhineland crisis could be regarded as the inevitable result of the injustices of Versailles. Nevertheless, different in kind as it was, it came at a time when it reinforced the isolationist tendencies already latent in public opinion. The public had been unwilling to go to war to defend Abyssinia or the League; they were utterly opposed to war to support what was considered the French phobia for security. Thus newspaper editorials showed a greater consensus of opinion than they did on Abyssinia.¹

Most of them distrusted German intentions, and noted that Hitler's move was a breach of Locarno, freely signed by Germany. They felt, however, that counter-measures would lead to war, 'over an issue which in reality dates back to peace terms imposed upon the vanquished'. The move was bloodless, and only technically an act of war, for the Rhineland was after all German territory. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *West Australian* were more concerned than the other newspapers with Europe, and more suspicious of Germany; but none of the newspapers wanted drastic action. Most praised Britain's caution, declared the idea of a neutral zone under an international police force unjust if not ludicrous, and wanted Hitler's offer - of a twenty-five year non-aggression pact and a return by Germany to the League - accepted at its face value and tested. They

¹ For the background to, and the significance of, the German military re-occupation of the Rhineland, see pp. 215-16.
regarded the French as obstinate and aggressive. Minor
differences were evident, the Melbourne Herald adopting
a naive optimism, the Bulletin aggressive isolationism,
but the editors were unanimous that there was no call for
any involvement in the crisis, either of Britain or of
Australia. The strategic importance of the coup was
ignored, or, by the Argus, denied. The press, in short,
wanted a policy akin to that of British-Empire isolationism.1

Little evidence survives on what academics thought
of the matter. The Australian Quarterly published two
articles, giving opposing arguments. C.T. Moodie thought
that the German action did not conflict with the
principles of Versailles, and that the balance of power
would keep the peace. E.P. Reymond regarded it as a
deadly threat, giving Germany a base to attack France and
Belgium, and a fortifiable area to enable her to turn
Eastwards unmolested.2 The very lack of overt response
by intellectuals, however, suggests that they too were
either resigned to British and French inaction, or did not
see the move as serious enough to warrant comment.
Isolationism was not confined to the press.

The general reaction to the crisis was that it did
not concern Australia. Almost no letters were written to
(or at least printed by) the newspapers. Many Australians
probably felt, like the newspapers, that Germany had a

1 Age, 8-10.3.36 (quotation from last date), 12.3.36,
25.3.36, 3.4.36. West Australian, 3.2.36, 9, 11, 12, 19, 23
and 26.3.36, 13.4.36, 19.6.36. Argus, 9,11.3.36, 14.3.36,
16.3.36. SMH, 9-11.3.36, 18.3.36. Melbourne Herald, 9, 18
and 20.3.36. Bulletin, 11 and 18.3.36.
2 C.T. Moodie, 'What is to be done about Satisfying the
Expansionist Nations?', E.P. Reymond, 'France and Europe'.
Australian Quarterly, June 1936, pp.5-22.
good case, Moffat believed that there was much 'incipient pro-German feeling in Australia, coupled with a very keen dislike of the French'. The latter, probably derived from Britain, also arose from fears that French policy would involve Australia in another war. Moffat attributed the Australian reaction to the Rhineland crisis to widespread ignorance of the documents, pacts and understandings abroad, which meant that instead of an analysis of events there was merely an emotional reaction to them. Over the Rhineland, this reaction probably favoured Germany. The German action did, however, underline the weakness of the League. Moffat noticed a growing admission that sanctions and the League had failed, and a fear that England had blundered in making an enemy of Italy.¹

The triumph of Italian arms, in May 1936, led to a further development of public opinion. Idealists continued to support the League, and indeed advocated strengthening it. In the correspondence columns of the Sydney Morning Herald C.E.W. Bean criticised that newspaper's scepticism, as did Canon Garnsey, who provoked editorial comment, but remained unabashed. Although some correspondents agreed with the Sydney Morning Herald, the general opinion seems to have been to

¹ Only one letter on the Rhineland crisis was noted, SMH, 4.4.36(12), although others may have been missed. There was certainly a dearth of letters on the subject, however. This may have reflected editorial policy, or the editor's assessment of public lack of interest. Moffat Diary, 9 March 1936, pp.264-5. Moffat had just lunched at the Union Club, and his entry probably reflects conservative opinion in the propertied and upper middle classes in Sydney. This tallies with a remark by E. Baume, I Lived These Years, London 1941, pp.13-14 that Sydney society folk regarded the Nazi system as more buoyant than brutal.
continue to support the League.\(^1\) A meeting of the 'League of Nations Union' in Sydney reaffirmed its faith in the League with only one dissentient among five hundred people. The 'Federation of Women voters' asked the Lyons government to do what it could to restore the League, and Dr Head praised its ideals. 'The Watchman' attacked those who complained of its cost, and attributed its failure to the half-hearted support of its members. Some disgust at Italy being allowed to succeed, and opposition to the recognition of the Italian conquest at Geneva, was expressed by others apart from the communists. Bishop Stephen compared the reconciliation of England and Italy to that of Herod and Pilate after the crucifixion.\(^2\)

The main result of the Italian victory, however, appears to have been confusion and a weakening of support for the League. The Annual Congress of the West Australian R.S.L., whose predecessors had supported the League of Nations, declined now to condemn the organisation, but looked instead to Empire economic and military strength for security. The Listening Post, which circulated in West Australia, looked to appeasement, although it too regretted the League's failure. The Queensland Digger

\(^1\) SMH, 8.5.36(8), 13.5.36(8), 14.5.36(4), 15.5.36(3), 16.5.36(10), 18.5.36(3), 28.5.36(4).

\(^2\) Bulletin, 20.5.36(8). Reveille, 1.12.37(1). The Watchman, 'At Home and Abroad', 30.6.37. A correspondent wrote to T. Paterson, MHR, 1.9.37, 'One hears on every hand expressions of disgust that Mussolini was not prevented from exploiting the Abyssinians'. Cf. 'disgusted, St Kilda', Age, 26.9.36(28). Bishop Stephen, Age, 17.5.38(10). Archbishop Le Fanu, primate of Australia, remarked that the devil had won a considerable victory. The Times, 7.5.36.
and Duckboard merely stressed the failure. Amongst the general public, only the communists advocated strengthening the League by a military alliance of the great powers directed against the dictators. They received little support, despite their attempt to hide the significance of their demands by using the term 'Collective Security'. That alliances caused war was still a widely held opinion.

Academics wrote little or nothing on their reactions, but were probably more inclined than others to favour appeasement, especially of an economic kind. This was seen in Macmahon Ball's book, Possible Peace. Ball echoed ideas common in the community. For example, he criticised secret diplomacy, and demanded a 'democratic' foreign policy. He attributed German actions to injustices in the treaty of Versailles. He dealt with the economic causes of war at great length, and implied that these predominated. He discounted the idea of war for 'collective security', and disliked the idea of a bloc of League powers against Italy, Germany and Japan. He was, however, very wary about committing himself to any one policy. Although critical of German acts and intentions, he declared that 'the overwhelming majority of the German people sincerely desire peace', and implied support for appeasement, especially over colonies. Academics, like other sections of the community, could see no clear way

1 Listening Post, 21.8.36(41), 16.11.36(9), 15.10.36(3), 15.12.36(3). Queensland Digger, 1.6.36(3-4). Duckboard, 1.6.36(4), 1.7.36(5). Reveille, 1.1.38(5 and 8) thought that stronger sanctions would have worked. It is clear that many different views existed in the R.S.L. on the cause and lessons of the defeat.
ahead, sat on the fence, and hoped for the best. Appeasement seemed a reasonable policy to adopt.¹

Newspaper editorial comment on League failure was in character. The Age and the West Australian mourned the League, and discussed measures for strengthening it. The West Australian thought that military sanctions might be needed next time. The Age would not go so far, but felt that economic and financial ones, if applied promptly and continuously, would prove effective. Both newspapers advocated reform of the organisation and regional pacts. The Sydney Morning Herald dropped its disguise and turned on the League. It should not have encouraged Haillie Selassie. It had collapsed with neither force nor authority, and peace was now more important than its prestige. The newspaper criticised what it considered to be the ignorant British public opinion in its treatment of Hoare, the indiscreet Peace Ballot, and the British League of Nations Union. It revealed a complete lack of sympathy for, or understanding of, British support for the League. It published a series of letters giving the Italian case, which provoked the correspondence already mentioned. The newspaper thought that the League had failed, that sanctions should be dropped, and a new organisation, which should include Germany, formed. The Melbourne Herald and the Argus adopted an optimistic pose, declaring that the League had

¹ Macmahon Ball, Possible Peace. Ball was senior lecturer in Political Philosophy in the University of Melbourne. See p.56 for quotation. For optimism, see the remark 'and today, if our imaginations could grasp the nature of the second world war, there will be no war', p.159. The book indeed did not face realistically enough the bases of power in the totalitarian dictatorships, the intentions of the dictators, the possibilities open to Britain and France - or, in fact, the causes of war.
not suffered a great blow, and supporting the government's ideas on League reform. The Bulletin became more rabid. The League, it felt, was a decadent, artificial, utterly ineffectual political misconception in which no sane man any longer trusts, and in which few sensible men have ever trusted.

It had weakened Abyssinia and united the Italian people against their old ally Britain. The Abyssinians were savages and sanctions should be lifted.1

Of the Australian newspapers, only the West Australian and the Age had any real belief in the League of Nations, or in the need for an international organisation to maintain peace. Even these developed reservations as a result of League failure, and the others demanded that Britain and Australia avoid continental commitments, and retire into a kind of Empire isolationism. This tendency had been revealed clearly in their reactions to the Rhineland incident.

The same is probably true of the population at large. The debate on what was to replace the League seems to have involved only a minority.

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1 Age, 5.5.36, 1.10.36. West Australian, 6, 11, 13 and 20.5.36. SMH, 4, 6 and 7, 5.36. For the correspondence see 1-9.1.36. Melbourne Herald, 23, 4, 36, 16 and 29, 6.36. Argus, 7.5.36. Bulletin, 29, 4.36(8), 13, 5.36(9). Strangely enough, the only newspaper which turned to supporting the League as a result apparently of the Abyssinian crisis was the Daily Telegraph. That specifically denied isolationism, and declared that the League, despite its weaknesses, was still the best hope for peace. 8, 4.36(8), 5, 5.36(6). Nevertheless, the newspaper ignored the Spanish civil war as much as the others, and its statements do not appear to have reflected its attitude.
The failures of the League in the Manchurian and Abyssinian invasions, though they ruffled the sea of Australian apathy,...left behind a still deeper lack of interest in the Geneva organisation.

Hardly any letters at all were written to the press on the Rhineland incident. The League as a subject dropped out of newspaper correspondence columns. The League of Nations Union began to lose members.¹

From the policies adopted by Britain and France in 1935-6 stemmed later European developments - the collapse of League prestige, the Axis between Italy and Germany, the series of aggressions that were to lead ultimately to the second world war. From the point of view of international politics, it is difficult not to agree with Bullock that

There was only one assumption on which British policy could be defended. If the British were prepared to support sanctions against Italy to the point of war, thereby giving to the authority of the League the backing of force which it had hitherto lacked, their action might so strengthen the machinery of collective security as to put a check to any aggression, whether by Italy or Germany....By insisting on the imposition of sanctions Great Britain made an enemy of Mussolini and destroyed all hope of a united front against German aggression. By her refusal to drive home the policy...she dealt the authority of the League as well as her own prestige a fatal blow, and destroyed any hope of finding in collective security an effective alternative to the united front of the Great Powers against German aggression.²

¹ F. Aarons, What the League Means to Australia, p.3. For the decline in L.N.U. membership, Miss Constance Duncan.
In this respect D.G.M. Jackson was right. The Abyssinian policies of the Western powers destroyed the Stresa Front without replacing it by any other means of curbing German expansionism. Yet the situation was complicated by many more considerations. Public opinion in both Britain and elsewhere would not have accepted readily the idea of abandoning the League organisation and making a cynical deal with Mussolini. Could it then have been persuaded to support stronger - if necessary military - action, or was it so ignorant of the problems of international affairs that it was incapable of making a sound judgement on them? The state of British public opinion is beyond the scope of this thesis, but some observations can be made upon Australian opinion.

Public ignorance of and apathy towards international affairs, already noted, was at least partly the fault of the government itself. The natural reasons why such an apathy should exist have already been noted. Yet despite Menzies' plea for more public discussion, especially in Parliament, there was in Australia no tradition for the government to take the people into its confidence in matters of foreign policy, and whenever possible it actively avoided doing so. Partly as a result of this, the Australian public and political parties were largely uninformed on foreign affairs when the crisis broke. Ignorance of the economic, political and strategic reasons for inaction during the Manchurian crisis meant that it was quoted in the crudest way as an argument for inaction in 1935. Similarly Hughes' book was misunderstood.
Not primarily on the League, it sought to rouse people to the need for more armaments.¹

There was in Australia a very strong anti-war sentiment, together with a reluctance to be involved in Europe. Such feelings were expressed by Labour, the Bulletin and other groups, and used by Catholic spokesmen who did not want to oppose Mussolini's regime. Newspaper editorials in the opening days of the crisis echoed this opinion, and expressed fears that Britain would be drawn into upholding the League alone. Yet Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia shocked opinion and the rallying of League members to sanctions led to a reaction in favour of the League. The unanswerable question is whether the general public would have gone on from this, if the British and Australian governments had given a lead, and supported a firmer line by Britain, including sanctions on oil, a blockade of Italian ships attempting to pass Suez, etc. Catholic spokesmen would have been indignant, pacifists and those who felt like them horrified. But the impression remains that the public probably would have supported such a policy. The demand to blockade the Suez canal was made by quite wide sections of society, including Labour men. Imperialists like Hughes and the Sydney Morning Herald would have rallied to a move calculated to raise British military prestige. The R.S.L. leadership would almost certainly have supported

¹Argus, 10.9.35(9). Round Table, vol.26, December 1935, p.179. Hughes' argument was that the League system could only work if members were willing to back it with overwhelming force. This they clearly had no intention of doing. Australia therefore would need defence forces. In any case, economic sanctions, beyond an empty gesture, involved a blockade, with a risk of war. Therefore whichever system Australia looked to, she had to face the necessity for increased armed preparedness. Round Table, vol.26, March 1936, pp.398, 400.
a stronger line. Once Britain adopted a definite policy, all those sections who were accustomed to follow Britain would have been drawn towards that policy. An indecisive and wavering policy, however, led to hesitations and indecision.¹

For the Australian government, the crisis posed two problems, the fate of the international organisation at Geneva, and with it the basis for a common Imperial policy. This is not to suggest that the government clearly considered these problems. It is difficult not to agree with Mansergh that despite its vigorous advocacy of the League, the government was really luke-warm and merely supported the British policy of using the Geneva organisation. Its main interest was in the imperial defence and trade routes - of especial concern to the Country Party - and the danger of Japan in the Pacific.² This concern accounts for the later attempts to appease Italy and to develop regional pacts. Mansergh³ would appear to be wrong, however, in that the Australian government's first reaction was to strengthen the League Covenant - although it may have done so for reasons of internal political

¹ For a demand to shut the Suez canal, see A. Calwell, p. 67 and the Australian Worker, p. 76. Of the newspapers, the Age and West Australian supported the League, the Melbourne Herald, Argus and Daily Telegraph followed British policy. The SMH expected it to be of a particular type. These newspapers would probably have supported a stronger policy by Britain, although it must be admitted that opinion in general would have been divided.

² That Hodgson, Hughes and Casey were very concerned with the threat from Japan in the opening months of 1936, is attested on several occasions by the Moffat Diary, e.g. 14 January, 5 February, 7 February, 30 and 31 May.

³ Mansergh, Problems etc., p. 157.
expediency, as Heydon suggests, or to provide a basis for an Imperial policy, or merely because it thought that Britain would adopt such a course. The most permanent and important result in Australia of the Abyssinian crisis, however, was the strengthening of the Department of External Affairs. It was the first hesitant step towards an independent judgement on international events.

Once the initial excitement of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia had worn off, the population probably returned to its traditional apathy to foreign events, and to its private preoccupations. Father Murtagh admits that, despite Catholic publicists, the Abyssinian war never became a 'Catholic' issue. 'The Movement Against War and Fascism' failed completely to stir up even a semblance of vigorous popular support for the League. Despite the lengthy debate in federal Parliament, the fact that there were at least seven calls for a quorum to be formed in the House of Representatives raises the question of how far each party really regarded the crisis as of vital importance to Australia. The Round Table noted that the decision for sanctions was taken as external to Australia - which in a sense it was.¹

¹ Round Table, vol. 26, December 1935, p. 177. As for the sense of importance in Parliament, the Bulletin (13.11.35 (9)) maliciously remarked that the passage of the Sanctions Bill through Parliament 'was delayed owing to the greater urgency of the Melbourne Cup'. This is not to contradict the earlier argument that 'public opinion' would probably have followed a stronger British policy. That feeling was a temporary response to the Italian invasion and events at Geneva. Apathy was the more usual reaction. The vocal sections of the public, accustomed to following Britain, probably would have done so - with one or two notable exceptions. For calls for a Quorum, CPD 147/644, 669, 711, 712, 717(2), 1315.
The government, after its first thoughts on Covenant reform, swung into line with British policy. Considering Australia's resources, and lack of diplomatic representation abroad, it could do little else. Labour was committed to isolationism, and the bitter divisions within the political and industrial movements during the Spanish civil war were to keep it to that course. The Abyssinian crisis, then, led to a further weakening of confidence in the League system as a source of security to Australia, a recognition that Australia must concern herself with national security, and a reinforcement of isolationist sentiment. In the latter there was a coming-together of the policies of the Opposition and the government. Empire isolationism, unhurried rearmament, and appeasement were the order of the day.¹

Typical of this was the reaction to the German military reoccupation of the Rhineland. There was no section of the population, apart from the communists, who thought that Britain and France should act, or that Australia should have anything to do with the problem. If the Rhineland episode was the last occasion when Hitler could have been stopped easily, and a case has been made

¹ E.A. Ferguson, et al., 1938 Commonwealth Relations Conference, Papers, Series D, no.2, p.4. F. Aaorons, What the League Means to Australia, p.13, noted that when Japan invaded China in 1938, the government adopted the attitude of 1931, and neither it nor the Opposition anticipated or desired League action.
out for this argument,¹ it is equally clear that Australian opinion would have been almost unanimous against any British commitment, and quite unanimous against any Australian involvement. This Empire isolationism was to be seen clearly in the next crisis which darkened the international sky - the Spanish Civil War.

¹ W. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, London, 1960, pp.291-95. Shirer notes that the German generals opposed the scheme, and that Hitler himself later admitted that he only had four brigades, and that a retreat would have spelt collapse. Shirer also stressed the consequences - the success fortified Hitler's popularity, ensured his ascendancy over his generals, and cut the ground from French influence in Eastern Europe. For the precarious German position, Shirer quotes, P. Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, London, 1951, p.41, and Hitler's Secret Conversations, 1941-44, New York, 1953, pp.211-2.
PART II

The Spanish Civil War

'The conflict in Spain is between a Communist Government and a collection of Fascist rebels....We have no very great concern whether communism defeats fascism in Spain or vice versa. Each system of government, while it may be admirable for Spain, is, I believe, of no possible value in a British community'.

R.G. Menzies, Argus, 23.9.36 p.9

'The Straits of Gibraltar and the Western Mediterranean are vital stages in one of the most important of Empire highways, and the significance of any alteration in their status is fully realised'.

Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs,
Year ended 31 December 1936, p.37.
CHAPTER IV

Communists v. Catholics

The Abyssinian crisis had hardly ended, when, on 17 July 1936, the Spanish generals revolted against their government, and civil war broke out. 1

The causes of the war were extremely complex. The economic and social backwardness of the country in the nineteenth century, and the position of the Roman Catholic Church, meant that reform was urgently needed. Movements for autonomy by the Basques and Catalans only increased difficulties. A larger number of splinter parties had grown up. The Republic, established in 1931, had had therefore a precarious existence. It attempted speedy reform; abolishing Jesuit schools without establishing others; stopping State payments to the clergy; giving Catalonia autonomy and agricultural workers slightly better wages and conditions. However, it did not tackle the major problems - the settlement of the Church, the

1 On 5 May the Italian forces had entered the Abyssinian capital, Addis Ababa, and on 4 July 1936, the League Assembly decided to raise sanctions by the fifteenth of the same month. (SMH, 7.5.36(11), 6.7.36(9)). Two days after the date the League had fixed on, the revolt of the Spanish generals occurred. The application of sanctions by Britain and France rankled with the rulers of Italy, who never forgave or forgot, and affected relations between the countries long after the crisis was ostensibly over. Ciano's Diary, 1937-8 passim, but especially p.34, 17 November 1937, 'We shall not forget all that London did, and Paris connived at, two years ago'.

establishment of modern education, the division of the large estates. In the election of 1936, the left-wing 'Popular Front' was returned to power, though by a minority of votes, Land-owners, Church and army leaders, and businessmen — indeed all who felt their interests threatened — prepared to resist. The murder of Calvo Sotelo, July 1936, sparked off the revolt which the generals had for some time been planning.\(^1\)

Foreign intervention, however, turned an essentially Spanish civil war into a European problem. The British government, faced with more trouble on its Mediterranean route to the East, adopted the suggestion of the Blum government in France that a policy of 'Non-Intervention' would be best. Excellent at first, and in theory, this continued long after intervention — especially by Italy and Germany\(^2\) — was clearly occurring. A series of aerial and submarine attacks on ships, including those flying the British flag, led to loss of life, but although the retaliatory action adopted by the Nyon Conference,

\(^1\) H. Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, London 1961 provides the most authoritative account of the war, and has been used where necessary as a source of information.

\(^2\) From the outbreak of the war both sides appealed to prospective supporters, Franco to Germany and Italy, the Spanish government to Russia, Mexico and the West. Mussolini appears to have entered the war to maintain Italian military prestige, and to prevent what he considered an unwelcome regime from being established. Hitler from the first wanted to prolong the war to divide Mussolini even further from Britain and France. He also used it to test German military and air techniques — as, for example, the bombing of Guernica. Shirer, Third Reich, pp.297-8.
September 1937 proved effective, the lesson was ignored, and the prestige of the Western Powers sank accordingly.  

For the British government was concerned - like the Australian - for the Mediterranean-Suez route. It was far from willing to adopt a policy which might offend Mussolini. Instead it sought an accommodation with him. In the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' between Britain and Italy, January 1937, both sides had promised to maintain the status quo and respect each others interests in the Mediterranean.

At the Imperial Conference, May 1937, British and dominion statesmen had decided to continue such efforts. Appeasement, in the sense of a negotiated settlement of outstanding differences, then became the basis for Imperial foreign policy. It was one which the dominions could support as being most likely to forestall war in Europe, and thus avoid, for a time, the constitutional problems which Smuts had feared would come from the collapse of the League. However, although such a course may have been convenient from the point of view of a common Empire policy, it remained to be seen whether it would succeed diplomatically. Eden resigned in February 1938 because he felt that a tangible reciprocal move should be expected from the Italian government, and Chamberlain proceeded with the Anglo-Italian Agreement in April of the same year.

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1 For the effects of Non-Intervention on each side, Thomas, Spanish Civil War, pp.611-15, 634-43. Between April and June 1938, 22 British ships were attacked, 11 were sunk or seriously damaged, and 21 seamen died. Ibid., p.538.
The Spanish civil war, bitter and bloody, was fought out till the final collapse of the government forces in March 1939.

The conflict in Spain affected intensely only two sections of the Australian population - the communists and the Catholics. It concerned the latter because it touched closely both the aims and methods of communism and the position and survival of the Church. Thus the Advocate sharply criticised Menzies.\(^1\) For Spain held a very special place in Catholic tradition.

Spain showed in the seventeenth century that Protestantism, which was as contagious then as Marxism is now, could be stopped by resolute action...She also stopped the Westward march of Islam.

Catholic writers insisted that 'the Christian *i.e., Catholic tradition...was woven into the whole fabric of Spanish life*.\(^2\) It was this holy land of Spain, with its long list of martyrs, that was threatened by - as they saw it - the scourge of international communism.

More, therefore than on any other issue between 1935 and 1939 there was an *official* Catholic attitude to the Spanish civil war. The message of the Australian Catholic Hierarchy to Pius XI expressed sympathy for the suffering religious and laity of Spain, did homage to the martyred dead, mourned the destruction wrought by 'the enemies of God and religion' and set up a Catholic Spanish Relief

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\(^1\) See p.127.

\(^2\) *Advocate*, 1.10.36(17), 29.10.36(7), 27.2.36(17).
Fund. Archbishop Kelly in Sydney sent a pastoral letter on the war to be read in churches on 6 September 1936. The Freeman's Journal declared unequivocally that ecclesiastical authority had given a judgement on the facts, and that its support for Franco stood for Catholics everywhere. ¹

The attitude of the Australian Archbishops was quite definite. Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne, while cautious in his judgements, gave the current excuses for Franco's revolt, and talked of the government ruling with the support of a minority, heavily backed by Russia and the communists. He supported Franco. Archbishop Kelly made the official moves in New South Wales, but took no part in later controversy, and alone did not apparently donate to the Catholic relief fund. Co-adjutor Archbishop Gilroy, however, thought that the part played by the Catholic Church in Franco's rebellion was one of which it might be proud. He slighted the Spanish Consul-General - and got the worse of an argument that ensued - and vehemently defended the Nationalists. In 1939, he was to hail their victory with joy, and go into an unbalanced eulogy of Franco. ²

² For Mannix' views, see Advocate, 10.9.36(11), 21.1.37(15), 28.1.37(15), 25.2.37(16). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 3.12.36(25). In New South Wales, Sheehan had left, and Gilroy was the new Co-adjutor Archbishop. Ibid., 3.6.37(26), 8.7.37(18), 9.3.39(25) - Franco was 'a man who seemed to be raised up by Almighty God - a military genius the like of which has rarely been seen in the history of the world - a magnificent organiser...'. For Gilroy's clash with the Consul-General, Senor Baeza, SMH, 8.11.37(8), 13.11.37(22). Baeza had been Professor of Spanish History at Cambridge University.
In Brisbane Archbishop Duhig, unrestrained as ever, was obsessed by the menace of communism. The revolt had hardly broken out when he declared that Franco was fighting for the life of his country, its institutions and its ancient civilisation against the enemies of Moscow and barbarism and atheism...

If the Spanish government won, there would be nothing but the catacombs for the Church. Indeed, he declared at a communion breakfast, there was not one relieving feature about the government.¹

The bishops were just as emphatic. Norton of Bathurst declared that this was a religious war, and urged Catholic members of the Labour movement to keep it on the right path. He made much of atrocities, and declared that the Spanish government was communist. Foley of Ballarat also appealed to the unionists of his congregation; Dwyer of Wagga attacked the newspapers for bias and defended the Nationalists against the charge of bombing towns.²

The lesser clergy followed the lead of the bishops. Father Dalton in Lithgow declared communism to be the curse of the world, and that four hundred priests and nuns had been murdered in Barcelona - the nuns having been

¹ SMH, 27.7.36(9), 7.9.36(12), 19.10.36(9). Later he said, 'We knew that ever since the inception of the Republic in Spain...the hand of Bolshevism and communism had been unmistakably there'. Catholic Freeman's Journal, 5.11.36 (25).
² Ibid., 29.10.36(22). Catholic Press, 11.3.37(18) - 'I hope we shall never live to see the Church whose foundation stone we have just placed in position a blackened smoking ruin'. Advocate, 8.10.36(11). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 13.5.37(38).
soaked in petrol and burnt to death. Father Nichol of Kyogle described Franco as 'a delightful man, a born soldier, courageous, modest, and well and truly deserving'.

The Catholic clergy and newspapers vigorously advocated the Nationalist cause, and declared that the picture of Spain provided by the secular press was biased and utterly unreliable. They accused the press of being anti-Catholic and pro-communist, and objected to the terms 'rebels' and 'loyalists'. Indeed, the 'Knights of the Southern Cross' visited Melbourne editors to protest against the 'one-sided' news, and threatened an organised boycott.

According to Catholic newspapers, there was a need for strong central control in Spain. They asserted that the elections of 1936 had been riddled with chicanery; the so-called government receiving fewer votes than the 'the Right wing'. At the same time they declared that a

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1 SMH, 17.11.36(11), 28.7.37(12). Opinion was more moderate in New South Wales. Archbishop Sheehan presided over a meeting where Father Rumble admitted that the Spanish landowners were deaf to the cries of the poor, and that widespread poverty had provided a rich soil for the communist agitator. Catholic Freeman's Journal, 10.9.36(25).

2 Advocate, 30.7.36(17). Catholic Worker, 5.9.36(1). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 17.9.36(25). Catholic Press, 27.8.36(23). The information about the Knights of the Southern Cross was provided by Father Murtagh, who says he was informed by T.M. Burke, the founder of the 'Knights' in Australia. Interview cited.

3 Advocate, 26.3.36(21), 27.2.36(17). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 22.10.36(10). Catholic Press, 23.4.36(22). For the results of the elections see Thomas, Spanish Civil War, pp.93-4. They were more complicated than Catholic apologists admitted, and it is by no means uncommon in elections for a government to win by a minority of the total votes.
wave of atrocities against individuals - including priests and nuns - and sacrilege - such as Church-burning - had occurred, both before and during the elections, and had influenced their result.

All Catholic spokesmen and writers emphasised the atrocities, and the newspapers provided, where possible, photographs. An attempt fully to document these tales would require the whole thesis. 'The bodies lie where they fall - at the foot of walls, along the sides of deep cuttings... Nuns were dragged out, one by one, from places of hiding'. Papal expressions of horror were reported. The Catholic Worker, talked of 'the most ferocious persecution... since the days of Nero and Diocletian', and the Advocate, 18 February 1937, reported that 160 Churches had been burnt and 11 bishops and 16,750 priests killed.¹

Exaggeration was natural in the circumstances, especially as most of the stories came from the Catholic press in France, Spain and Ireland, if not directly from Nationalist propaganda sources.² But Catholic spokesmen

¹ Several of the newspapers provided a photograph of the decomposed bodies of Salesian nuns, displayed by Anarchists on the steps of a Cathedral. See Catholic Worker, 3.10.36 (4). For the quotation, ACTS Record, no.103, June 1937, 'Red Spain', pp.41, 43. The pamphlet has a red and black cover with a mound of dead bodies pictured. See also Advocate, 17.9.36(25). For the Pope, ibid., 8.10.36(11). Catholic Worker, 5.9.36(1). Figures in Advocate, 18.2.37 (17). H. Thomas, Spanish Civil War, p.173 gives 12 Bishops and, apparently, 8,279 religious killed for the whole war. (Unfortunately his figures do not tally with his total.)

used the atrocity tales to rouse the emotions of fellow Catholics - and, if possible, members of the public - to make them support the Nationalist cause. They argued that the Spanish government had failed to defend its citizens, or had even deliberately and ruthlessly instigated this violence against its opponents and the Catholic Church, and that the violence began before the revolt, and was one - if not the major - cause of it.¹

Catholic writers, who on occasions declared the Spanish people to be Catholic at heart, sometimes explained the attacks on the Church by reference to the poor social conditions in Spain, but much more often and emphatically to communist influence. Indeed, they never doubted that the hand of Russia was at the bottom of the Spanish trouble long before they could have had any evidence on which to base that belief. 'The origin of this "Spanish business" is to be found in Russia and Russia only'. It was all part of a communist plan to infiltrate and control Western Europe.²

The war then was clearly a religious war, a war 'for God and Spain' - 'the last crusade'. It was not a class struggle, or to defend democracy, as communists said. When this view was challenged, Jackson resorted to the

² Advocate, 14.5.36(17), 23.7.36(17), 27.8.36(6), 18.2.37(1). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 22.7.37(25), 23.4.36(24). Catholic Worker, 5.9.36(1). Catholic Press, 26.3.36(23), 9.4.36(23).
dangerous claim that only a Catholic could understand the Spanish civil war.\footnote{Advocate, 15.10.36(25), 29.10.36(7), 19.8.37(4). The devotions of Franco's troops were emphasised to give the impression of a Catholic religious revival in Nationalist Spain. Ibid., 21.1.37(4).}

Catholic writers therefore strongly defended the Nationalists against the charge of atrocities, declared them justified in attacking British ships, and demanded that they be given belligerent rights. They asserted that Nationalist Spain was free from Italian domination, and that the Nationalist government was providing an enlightened regime which was busy reconstructing Spain on the lines of Catholic social teaching. As for aid from abroad, they insisted that Russian and French aid to the Republic was vast and continuing, while Italian and German aid to Franco had been exaggerated.\footnote{Advocate, 29.7.37(14), 2.9.37(6), 28.10.37(6), 10.2.38(6), 6.1.38(4), 16.6.38(17). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 8.10.36(25), 22.10.36(24), 21.1.37(25), 11.2.37(25), 15.4.37(24), 8.7.37(25). Catholic Press, 24.9.36(28), 7.1.37(22), 4.2.37(25), 4.3.37(23), 6.5.37(22), 8.9.38(23). Catholic apologists were worried by the Basques, since there was no question that they were devout Catholics. However, it was asserted that they were blinded by Nationalism and 'Red' propaganda. Advocate, 22.4.37(6 and 17). Catholic Worker, 9.1.37(3). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 24.6.37(24).}

These views, forcibly expressed and flavoured with strong prejudices, need some explanation. It is clear that the propaganda put out by the Nationalists and the Spanish Church fitted Australian Catholic preconceptions about Spain. For example, prejudiced by their own struggle against secular education in Australia, Catholic writers...
regarded the educational policy of the Spanish government as the logical extension of the evils of the Australian system. Moreover Jackson, and others influenced by him in Melbourne, favoured the corporate State, and there was a distinct anti-democratic flavour about the Advocate. Jackson continually stressed the need for order, put the word 'democracy' in inverted commas, and described the system as slow and ponderous, and inadequate to deal with Marxism [sic], Mussolini's type of rule had therefore definite advantages.\(^1\) Jackson, then, like the Spanish generals, would have regarded an autocratic Catholic Spain as ideal, and would have opposed the Republic whatever it had done or omitted to do. He and other commentators disliked its religious and social policy, branded it with the red brush, and expected terrorism.

The Sydney Catholic newspapers were not so anti-democratic. Father Rumble of 'Radio Replies' said that the totalitarian state was 'essentially wrong in itself', and that justice would never be done until affairs in a country were run by men chosen by, and answerable to, the people.\(^2\) The Catholic Press was once again the mildest and most liberal of the Catholic newspapers read, and

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\(^1\) Advocate, 22.10.36(6), 1.4.37(15).

\(^2\) Catholic Freeman's Journal, 15.4.37(11). Although not anti-democratic, the journal lacked balance on the civil war. It featured 'Red' atrocities more than the Advocate. (Forty-seven editions mentioning them were noted, without undue care being taken, e.g. 7.4.38(25, 34-5)). Declared support for Franco to be a matter of Church policy more definitely, and seemed to feel that Franco's actions were unexceptionable (e.g. the bombing of towns). Its outcry against the secular press reached near-hysterical proportions. (Thirty-four attacks were noted, e.g. 3.12.36(24)).
seemed a little uneasy at the cause it espoused. At the beginning it gave no support, either open or implied, to Franco. It recognised Azana's good points, although it feared he might turn out to be another Kerensky. Until November 1936 it minimised the Spanish civil war, and maintained a quiet tone. Opposition to communism, and the religious issue seems to have swayed Cleary and the Press into eulogising Franco in January 1937. The newspaper remained more moderate, however, reporting fewer atrocities, and stopping reference to them earlier. Indeed, it discussed the Spanish civil war less than the other Catholic newspapers, either because Cleary harboured some misgivings about the Australian Catholic attitude, or because the newspaper was more concerned with local events.1

Communists, like Catholics, were more moved by the Spanish civil war than by almost any other event of the inter-war years. The Workers Weekly had hardly mentioned Spain before 1936, but in the next three years references in its columns to that country outnumbered those on other foreign subjects made during the whole inter-war period. The Communist Review was similar. They commented on the deeds and policy of the Spanish government, the heroism of the Spaniards - not so much in the early days, but more later when government forces were losing - the siege of Madrid, fascist atrocities, and the attitude of the Catholic Church. Their numerous articles, comments and reviews, implied the following argument:

1 Catholic Press, 23.7.36(23-4), 13.8.36(22). In the first two issues of December 1936 it declared that communism, rather than Nazism, was the real enemy of Europe, and by January 1937 it came to feel that communism on the side of the Republic outweighed the rights and wrongs of the struggle. 7.1.37(18), 14.1.37(11).
1. The Spanish government was dominated by neither socialists nor communists, but was a legitimate government of the 'United Front' variety, which should be supported.

2. The war was against a typical 'fascist' uprising, and its result would affect the struggle against 'fascism and warmongers' everywhere.

3. It had, moreover, strategic implications for Britain and France. Axis forces in Spain threatened Britain's communications in the Mediterranean, and France's communications with her African colonies, not to mention forcing France, in the event of war, to defend a third frontier.

4. The war, then, was not religious but political in origin and significance. A great deal of trouble was taken to refute the Catholic assertion that the war was one against 'Godless atheism'. Nettie Palmer was quoted on religious toleration in Catalonia, and much was made of Catholic support for the government, especially by the Basques.

5. Non-Intervention should be abandoned. The rebels received 'fascist' aid, and to balance it the Spanish government should be given help.

6. Appeasement was useless. Acquiescence in Abyssinia and Spain did not remove the danger of war, for these aggressions were merely preliminaries to what communists regarded increasingly as a plan for world conquest.
Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and North China are stages on the road to a new great war of pillage on the part of fascism, and unless the aggressors...are checked now, world war will eventuate.¹

The communists pressed this viewpoint in all their publications, and held meetings throughout the country trying to whip up feeling on the issue. Like the Catholics, they laid particular emphasis on atrocities - this time by the Nationalists - which, they declared, proved their arguments sound.² Again like the Catholics, they tried to rouse emotional support for their cause and made little effort to verify the stories they repeated. They also sent a large number of letters to the government urging their policy.

The various fronts were useful to the Communist Party because apparently unconnected organisations would

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E.g. the bombing of the Basques destroyed 'the lie that Franco is fighting for Catholicism and Christianity, the lie that this is a religious war'. VCAW & F, Rawling Collection.
demand similar things. They also organised meetings themselves and attempted to influence public opinion. The Movement Against War and Fascism was the most active of the regular fronts, holding meetings up and down the country, showing films etc. The most outstanding organisation of the period, however, in view of its influence on the public at large and also the clash between it and the Catholics, was the Spanish Relief Committee.

The 'Spanish Relief Committee' was formed as a result of a public meeting in Sydney summoned by the 'Movement Against War and Fascism' and 'International Labour Defence'.

1 What effect all this had on the general public is discussed in Chapter VI, pp.186-9. Amongst the letters sent to the Prime Minister were 12 from branches of the International Peace Committee, four from Unemployed and Relief Workers Groups, twelve from the M.A.W. & F., 10 from the League for Peace and Democracy, and 12 from Communist Party branches. The usual arguments were advanced. It was a war of democracy against 'fascism', and Non-Intervention was a useless and immoral policy. Britain should take a firm stand, especially after the sinking of her ships, and the League should act. Franco should not get belligerent rights, and credits should be supplied to the Spanish government to buy Australian wheat. (This was especially between December 1938-February 1939). Franco's government should not be recognised, but Negrin's proposals for a negotiated peace be accepted. After the war, asylum was requested for Spanish refugees and the government was asked to use its offices to encourage Franco to grant an amnesty to his opponents.

2 The policy of making the fronts more respectable was applied to it, and its name was changed to the 'League for Peace and Democracy'. Apparently at the Fourth Congress, 16-18 April, 1938, Rawling Collection, which see for a record of its numerous activities.
on 26 August 1936. Its secretary, P. Thorne, was also secretary of the I.L.D. To the leaders of the Communist Party it was, besides being an expression of world-wide working-class concern with events in Spain, an offshoot of the other fronts, and part of the drive to win a 'Popular Front' in support of Russian policy. To those who organised it, and attended its meetings, its all-important aims were to relieve suffering in Spain and if possible to further the cause of 'the people's victory'.

The Committee decided on 2 September to send four nurses to Spain, and appealed for funds. Similar committees began in other capital cities collecting food and medical supplies, and money to provide ambulances, and for the Spanish children at Christmas 1938. They also sent letters to the Commonwealth government on issues which roused their attention.¹

The Sydney Spanish Relief Committee adopted a large number of different methods to appeal to the community. It arranged for films, such as 'They Shall Not Pass' to be shown, and for lantern lectures and talks to be given by knowledgeable or interesting people - such as the leader of the Australian nursing unit or returned International Brigaders - to Trade Union meetings, A.L.P. branches and any other groups who so desired. It organised public meetings and concerts. It produced a float for the May Day parade in Sydney 1937. Representatives attended the 'Peace Conference' in Melbourne in the same year, and

¹ Circular Letter, ANU Archives, P 15/4/1 and 2, or Minutes, P 15/12. The President was A. McAlpine, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Council of New South Wales, but the usual chairman was the veteran A. Rae. Council members were a mixture of religious, and union leaders, and communists. Circular letters 12.1.37, 18.1.37, 27.10.38. Argus, 16.8.38(9), 22.6.37(9).
a separate 'Aid to Spain Conference' in February 1938. It printed leaflets and pamphlets in large numbers, and organised petitions. It produced **Information Service** weekly, and made appeals to the press for publicity.¹

Although the initial response was slow, and the Committee worked on a hand-to-mouth basis, money after a while began to come in. The nursing unit was despatched to Spain, and sums of money were cabled to the Medical Aid Council in London. By June 1937, the fund had reached £2,400, and other appeals, more 'respectable' had been launched.²

All this activity roused Catholics to furious opposition. In Adelaide Town Hall, on 5 May 1937, a large group organised by the 'Guild for Social Studies' wrecked a public meeting called by the Spanish Relief Committee. For a while the incident became a major topic of letters to the *Adelaide Advertiser*. Catholics objected both to

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¹'They Shall Not Pass' was censored in Melbourne. Argus, 9.10.37(2), 29.10.37(11). The leader of the nurses, Sister Lowson, was especially recalled for a tour. By the end of November 1937 she had addressed 65 meetings, the largest being in the Princess Theatre, Melbourne. For activities, see *Information Service*, P 15/5, especially 1.10.37, 26.11.37, also *SRC Circulars*, 15.10.37, 21.12.37, 20.9.38, 8.10.38. A petition to the Prime Minister contained at least 402 signatures.

²The Committee in Sydney could not afford a 'lantern' to show a film, and the possibility of its Secretary, P. Thorne, getting a lift to borrow one from the Melbourne Committee was canvassed. The same meeting, however, cabled £400 to London. Minutes, P 15/12, 21.4.37. See also *Information Service* including 1.10.37. A meeting in Melbourne initiated the Spanish Aid Committee, which claimed to be strictly non-political, and at which Archbishop Head and the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were represented. Soon after a 'Joint Spanish Aid Council' operated under Church leadership. Age, 13.2.37(24), 24.2.37(13).
the collection of food - for a food ship - and money. They accused the Spanish Relief Committee of corruption, and of sending the money to finance the communist movement in Spain, if not directly to buy arms. In Melbourne, the Catholic Worker objected to the 'communist control' of the fund, and disparaged the Australian nurses in Spain.¹

Catholic spokesmen, indeed, did not appear to be concerned to relieve the suffering which their newspapers so stressed. The Catholic Spanish Relief Fund was set up 'to rebuild the desecrated alters and shrines of Catholic Spain'. The amount donated - mainly from the clergy - by March 1937 was £2,514. No other references to the fund have been noted. It was probably merely a reaction to the Spanish Relief Committees. However, as the Nationalists were winning, and Catholics had such faith in Franco's enlightened government, perhaps there was less need for charitable appeals. The work of reconstruction, however, was bound to be great, and there had been much suffering.²

Australian Catholics, however, concentrated their energies on attacking their opponents' relief schemes. The Age, for example, was the scene of a bitter correspondence from members of the Campion society. Two apparently unconnected letters from S.J. Ingewersen and K.T. Kelly began it by expressing regret that the S.R.C. was a communist organisation, since the writers had intended to donate to it. Supporters of the S.R.C. admitted

¹ Adelaide Advertiser, 6-11.5.37. Advocate, 25.2.37(17), 4.3.37(17), 27.1.38(17), 6.4.39(7). Catholic Worker, 1.4.39(2 and 4).
² Advocate, 19.11.36(21), 26.11.36(15), 25.2.37(16), 4.3.37(18).
that their funds went for humanitarian work behind the
government lines, but insisted that all in need were
helped there, without discrimination of religion or
politics. Catholics, however, demanded that aid should
be sent to both sides. Kelly protested against the appeal
being 'associated with disgusting and virulent communist
propaganda', and declared that he had evidence that the
Third International had ordered the Communist Party to win
public support through the Spanish Relief appeal. Attempts
by outsiders to placate the letter-writers of both sides
were ignored. By this time the Catholics and their
opponents could only see each other. The argument
degenerated into unseemly irrelevancies, and at length
the editor closed the correspondence - none too soon.¹

Catholic charges against the Spanish Relief Committee
were unfounded. According to the auditors, the running
expenses of the fund were for a period less than 9 per cent.
The Committee sent, apart from the nursing unit, £10,860
in money, as well as seven ambulances, together with food
and medical equipment to Spain. There can be little doubt
that the money went to the causes for which it was
collected, and not, as Catholics alleged, to other less
worthy ends. The fund, of course, did send its aid only
to Republican Spain. But it was a humanitarian appeal,
and Catholics were perhaps ill-advised to oppose it so
intemperately. They gave the impression that they were
unconcerned with suffering as long as their political
object was gained. Reading their writings, one cannot
help feeling that if the war had been waged in Australia,

¹ *Age*, 3-11 March 1937. Kelly and Ingewersen were both
leading members of the Campion Society. The opening letters
of the debate were too 'innocent' to be genuine.
Victorian Catholics would have given as little mercy to their opponents as Franco did to his. Opposition to Spanish relief, however, was due partly to Catholic inability to believe that the money was not going to the Spanish government or the Communist Party.¹

Despite bitter Catholic opposition in Melbourne, the Spanish Relief Committee there collected more money than most of the others. Perhaps this was due to the energetic backing of the Victorian Council Against War and Fascism, perhaps to the preoccupation of the Sydney Committee with administering the fund federally. Perhaps the bitter and vocal opposition of the Campion society only served to keep the issue in the public eye, and to rouse interest. On the other hand there seems to have been much more of an intellectual ferment in Melbourne in the late thirties than there was in Sydney.²

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¹ Australians In Spain, booklet published for the S.R.C., Sydney 1948, p. 63. A.N.U. Archives, P 15/1/6. The S.R.C. came under the Charities Collection Act of New South Wales, and therefore registered itself and submitted its books for yearly audit. The auditors, 'Ross, Sampson and Co.', were deeply impressed with the organisation of the fund, and the clarity of its records. Auditor's reports, P 15/13. Also Circular Letter, 18.2.38.

² For collected moneys see Appendix C. Each State had its own Spanish Relief Committee, but the moneys collected went through the New South Wales Committee, in Sydney, to London or Paris. An accurate comparison of the various committees is difficult, since the Melbourne S.R.C. did not differentiate between the sums it collected itself and those donated by Trade Unions. However, it was clearly active at this time, and P. Thorne, interview 17.9.65, remarked on the participation of the intellectuals in Melbourne, especially the Palmers, and added that the same did not happen in Sydney.
The correspondence in the Age had included a challenge to debate issued to Ingewersen. Avoided at the time - both sides were manoeuvring for a meeting in their favour - the clash finally occurred in Melbourne University. Over a thousand people were present to hear a debate on the motion that 'the Spanish government is the ruin of Spain'. The meeting was noisy and tense, and was clearly attended in force by Catholics, who shouted down their opponents. The Catholic speakers, from the Campion Society (B.A. Santamaria, K.T. Kelly and S.J. Ingewersen) won the day, to volumes of applause from their supporters, and proceeded to send a telegram to Franco and inform the Bulletin. They were delighted when the Student's Council solemnly met and declared that the meeting did not represent the views of the vast body of the students.

The 'great debate' was probably the subject of some organisation by the Campion Society. Perhaps the young B.A. Santamaria was experimenting with Catholic Action. How much organisation was involved however, is difficult to say. Santamaria himself says that he and his friends broke the power of the communists in Melbourne University by the end of 1937. Certainly the Workers Voice reported removal of notices and 'organised rowdyism' by members of the Catholic Truth Society in 1936. The University Peace group seems to have become weaker, and some of
its demonstrations were 'counted out' by hostile interjectors.¹

Professor H. Burton, however, thinks that Santamaria exaggerates both the power of the communists, and the influence of his own group. He feels that most students were moderates, and rejected the extremism of both communists and Catholics. 'A plague on both your houses' was the likely response. This was seen indeed, in a letter in Farago, the Melbourne University Students Magazine, from the Secretary of the University Debating Society.

To the Loyalist supporters the rebels are monsters because the rebels are baby-killers, and to the rebel supporters the loyalists are monsters because the loyalists are priest-killers. The figures given for these atrocities are, as most people know, useless except as examples of the capacity of figures for spontaneous multiplication.

The University atrocity-mongers dump their wares on meeting after meeting, in the hope of gaining adherents to their

¹Catholic Worker, 3.4.37(1). Farago, 5.4.37(4) remarked that over half the audience were 'outsiders'. Jackson, interview cited, remarked that Santamaria 'packed the meeting with blokes from Newman'. Santamaria denied this, but added that they did the same thing in Ballarat. From the Workers' Voice, 28.4.37(4), that meeting was clearly highly organised. Interview with Santamaria, cited. For action in the University, Workers' Voice, 23.10.36(1), 9.10.36(8). Argus, 4.8.36(8), 3.10.36(17). The incident of the telegram comes from Jackson, but he may have misremembered another incident. A similar trick was played with the Teacher's College Peace Group. Argus, 13.10.36(9), 14.10.36(7).
causes, though adherents gained in this way would ruin any cause.

Who has ever heard of a war without atrocities?\footnote{Interview with Professor H. Burton, of the A.N.U., 30 June 1965. He was, in 1937, lecturer in economic history at Melbourne University. \textbf{Farage, 5.4.37}(3). (Quoted Margaret McInerny, Fourth Year Essay for Final Examination pt.II, B.A. Honours, Melbourne University, \textbf{The Reaction of the Catholic, Communist and Labor Press to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9}.)}

The argument between the Catholics and the communists on the civil war was fought out, as we have already seen, in the correspondence columns of the press. Indeed, the dispute over the Spanish Relief Committee was the second of its kind in the columns of the \textit{Age}. The first was likewise provoked by the Catholic apologists. K.T. Kelly declared that there was no democracy in Spain: Cecil Sharpley rose to the bait, and this drew upon him the heavy guns of the Campion Society, including Jackson. These stressed the persecution of religion, but also raised the 'communist plot' excuse for the revolt. Pleas for moderation by outsiders were ignored, and the argument raged on. Sharpley gave several lists of alleged Catholics in Spain who supported the government; Catholics poured scorn on his lists. Neither side believed the other nor produced any evidence for its assertions. The editor closed the correspondence, with many letters still unpublished.\footnote{\textit{Age}, 18.9.36 to 10.10.36. In fact there were two major debates, and a variety of minor ones later. For the Communist Plot reason for Franco's revolt, see H. Thomas, \textit{Spanish Civil War}, p.108, n.1.}
As with the Catholic newspapers, Catholics in Victoria were much more concerned, much more organised, and much more aggressive, than those in New South Wales. In Victoria, the initiative was taken by the Campion Society members, in an effort to stir up debate and popularise support for the Nationalists. In New South Wales, however, the issue was raised by others, and Catholics merely defended their Church.

The main debate in the Sydney Morning Herald was started by Lionel Lindsay criticising Archbishop Duhig, and declaring that the government in power was a moderate socialist one. This was likely to rouse protest, and there followed several letters giving the Catholic viewpoint. A debate developed between Lindsay and P.S. Cleary over the origins of the war and the nature of the Catholic Church in Spain. The editor closed the correspondence and the matter was not raised again.

The new editor of the Labor Daily blundered into a fracas in August 1938 with an article on the bombing of Guernica, which roused letters producing the usual Catholic atrocity tales, stigmatised by the leading article as 'fascist propaganda'. The editor reported that he had

1 See Kelly's two opening letters, the second one being followed the next day by an exactly similar one from Ingewersen. Whereas opponents usually replied to Catholic charges after a lapse of time, Catholic replies invariably occur the very next day, and on important issues by two members of the Campion Society, e.g. Jackson and Kelly, Age, 30.9.36(15). G. McLaughlin (for the Executive of the Catholic Worker), and F.K. Maher (President of the Campion Society), Age, 8.10.36(13).

2 SMH, 9-24.9.36. (Letters appeared earlier, but no protracted correspondence).
received nineteen letters criticising Burke and ten supporting him, and remarked that a surprising flood of letters on the Spanish question had reached the Labor Daily. Those that were published advanced the usual arguments, and the editor hastily closed the correspondence.¹

Communists and Catholics were thus emotionally involved in the Spanish civil war to a greater extent than other groups within the community. It remains to consider how united each group was, to compare the methods each used to spread its views, and to discover what influence the Spanish civil war had on the attitudes of each to foreign affairs in general, and to Hitler and Mussolini in particular.

The unity of communist thought on the Spanish civil war is not a difficult problem. Communist Party members were united by common political ideas, reinforced by strict party discipline. Catholics came together, on the other hand, for non-political reasons, and were the more likely to differ on politics. Church discipline was confined to matters of faith and morals — although the border line with politics has always been vague. Nevertheless, the public unanimity of the Australian Catholic hierarchy, journals, organs and apologists was in striking contrast with France and America.²

¹ The control of the newspaper had been wrested from Lang's group by the unions, and the journal's policy on Spain changed. Labor Daily, 9-29.8.38.
² In America the Catholic Worker adopted a neutralist attitude, while in France Mauriac, the young Catholic reformers around L'Aube, and even the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris had strong reservations about Franco's cause. Catholic Worker, 7.1.39(2 and 4). D.W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939, London 1940, pp.716-7.
Catholic unanimity in Australia probably resulted from the nature of the Australian church and society. A long way from the events - unlike their French co-religionists - Australian Catholics had only their preconceptions and the official channels to guide them. The predominance of Irish anti-British sentiment among clergy and laity, and the overwhelming prejudice in favour of Italy among Australian Catholic journals and prelates, clearly had great effect. Moreover, the devoutness of the Irish in Australia, reinforced by their identification of the Church with national sentiment, meant that the anti-clericalism found in many European countries was absent from Australia. Australian Catholics therefore greeted the reports of priest-killing and church-burning with horror and incomprehension. The tales only reinforced their belief that something evil was in the background - communism. In such circumstances, the views of Jackson - in the newspapers he edited, over the air, and in the Campion Society and its affiliated movements in other States - and the Catholic hierarchy, were bound to have the maximum effect.

Catholic opinion was not, of course, as monolithic as it appeared. Not all Catholics agreed with the official policy. Differences between the Catholic Press and the other newspapers have already been noted. A member of the hierarchy has confided that he always felt there was too much of propaganda in Jackson's arguments. The very insistence on the official nature of Church support for Franco might imply that waverers existed. Although, as Jackson said, most Catholics followed the lead of their bishops, some, at any rate, expressed doubts. In Melbourne, a person signing himself 'Catholic Democrat' was worried by the apparent support for fascism in Jackson's writings,
and even in the *Advocate* another correspondent asserted that 'Not all Catholics find it easy to see in Franco a crusader for the faith'. In Sydney, Noel Monks declared that although a Catholic he had come to support the Spanish government. Two letter-writers who claimed to be Catholics criticised the Church in Spain, and a 'Catholic Father' reported that a bitter division existed in his household, with one son supporting the government against a brother and sister. 'Whenever my son comes home, the argument starts'.

Prominent Catholics in public supported Franco, however, and this was almost more important than the number of those who kept their doubts to themselves. The Campion Society, the bishops, and the Catholic newspapers provided a focus of pro-Franco opinion within the organs of society, especially the trade unions and the Labour party, which might not otherwise have found a hearing.

The methods Catholics and communists used have been discussed already. The communists strove to use the fronts to rouse popular support. They held meetings, distributed pamphlets, organised petitions. Catholic leaders, instead used sermons and speeches and their press, and acted through the conscience of the individual Catholic. They organised fewer meetings of their own, concentrating instead on disrupting the meetings of their opponents. Both sides attempted to influence the Labour movement, as well as the general public.

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2 These matters are discussed in chapters V and VI.
Finally, as a result of the Spanish civil war, the Communist Party became more convinced than ever of the threat of militant 'fascism' and the lack of wisdom in appeasement. Thus it considered that the 1937 Imperial Conference had drawn the wrong lessons from the Abyssinian crisis. It wanted the Empire to support the policy it dubbed 'collective security' - alliance with France, Russia and, if possible, the United States. It accepted Lyons' Pacific Pact, provided it had teeth, and was not just another Kellogg Pact. Eden was regarded as merely a skilful 'appeaser' until his resignation in February 1938, when communists began to wonder if he was not better than he seemed. The Workers Weekly refused to believe Lyons' remarks on the lack of significance of the incident, and declared that nothing had been so significant for a long time. Eden was then credited with distrusting the Axis and with being 'the emblem of collective security and peace through the League of Nations'. The Communist Review demanded an independent foreign policy by Australia, forcing the British government to abandon 'appeasement'. It was not therefore inclined to see the Anglo-Italian Agreement as a hopeful sign, but rather as a result of weakness which would only encourage more arrogant demands.  

The Communist Review, July 1937, April 1938. Workers Weekly, 25.2.38. A letter in the Rawling Collection from the London office of the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' gives the official attitude to the Anglo-Italian Pact. It was regarded as an example of British 'reactionaries' trying to buy off claims against the British Empire by sacrificing small countries. Its result, however, was declared to be to increase the aggressors' sense of impunity, and lead to ever more demands.
therefore an established and strongly held policy by the time the German army moved into Austria in March 1938.

Catholics too found their views of the world strengthened by the Spanish civil war. Both Jackson and the Freeman's Journal came to see Germany as the bulwark of Europe against communism. They defended Hitler despite his persecution of the Church, and turned even more against the League, regarding it as the tool of Moscow for sowing dissension in Europe. Catholic newspapers continued emphatically to support Mussolini's Italy.¹ On this matter, however, dissension was more noticeable. Eris O'Brien completely opposed defence of the Nazis, and the Press still criticised totalitarian government. Though it felt that Britain might be wise to join the Axis, it was much more critical of Hitler, and less disposed to defend Mussolini.² The stronghold of support for Italy was clearly Melbourne, and the hierarchy.

Jackson was a vigorous advocate of a 'rapprochement' with the Axis, to form a Four Power Pact to defend Europe against Russia. Especially did he advocate an understanding with Italy. He therefore welcomed the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' and insisted afterwards that Italian actions had not contravened it. He was glad when Eden resigned.

¹ Advocate, 29.10.36(6), 7.1.37(6), 1.4.37(6), 16.12.37(17). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 3.9.36(24), 30.9.37(24), 11.11.37(25). It was a commonplace of Catholic thinking that fascism was a lesser danger than communism. Catholic Press, 5.11.36(23).

² Catholic Freeman's Journal, 28.10.37(18). Catholic Press, 24.12.36(23), 22.7.37(23). 'It would be a sorry world if every anti-communist had to be a fascist or a Nazi.'
He argued that Eden's fanatical antipathy to Italy, and his pathetic faith in an impotent League, were dividing Europe and leading to war. (A similar attitude was adopted by the Press and the Freeman's Journal). Jackson hailed the Anglo-Italian Pact with delight, and trusted that the Western Powers could thus escape the dangers of an 'anti-fascist crusade', which the 'collective security' advocates always sought.¹

The immediate effect of the Spanish civil war on communists and Catholics was to convince both groups that their analysis of international events and movements was right, and to make them more extreme in their language and beliefs. Once the war had begun, neither became willing to compromise or to admit that their opponents were other than either disastrously mistaken or evil.

¹ Advocate, 3.9.36(6), 14.1.37(6), 16.9.37(17), 3.3.38(6), 21.4.38(17). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 3.3.38(24). Catholic Press, 10.3.38(23). The Press made fewer comments on the Agreement, while the Freeman's Journal was running its own crusade for Australian isolationism at the time. It had adopted this during the Abyssinian crisis, and the Spanish civil war only increased its feelings.
CHAPTER V

The Political Parties Avoid the Issue

Catholics and communists were alike vitally concerned with the outcome of the struggle in Spain. What is most noticeable about the major political parties - the government and the Federal Labour Party - was their avoidance of the subject. Both were under pressure by interested groups, but that pressure was more dangerous, and more likely to have disastrous results, in the ranks of Labour.

Labour attitudes towards foreign policy, including the Spanish civil war, had in New South Wales become inextricably mixed with the struggle around Lang. Lang's own newspaper, the Labor Daily, while adopting the left-wing attitude to the causes of the war, and becoming very critical of the Nazi regime, made few references to the issue, and supported the policy of Australian and Empire isolationism and strict neutrality. It continued Lang's habit of regarding international affairs only from the point of view of internal political advantage. ¹

Lang's opponents, however, were interested in the Spanish civil war as such. Many were communists or at least members of the extreme left, who saw the war in a different light to Lang. Others whose interests were

¹ Labor Daily, 24.7.36, 27.8.36, 2.2.37, 10.11.37. As an example of using external events for internal advantage, see its attempt to manufacture a war scare before the 1937 federal elections. 9.9.37-14.10.37.
more parochial at least realised that an attack on Lang's foreign policy would rally support to their side.

The most intense and continuing interest in the Spanish civil war was shown by the Australian Worker. Its opinion was definite. Capitalists everywhere saw fascism as a means of destroying Labour movements. The Spanish capitalists were aiding a revolt to defend their vested interests against a moderate, constitutionally-elected government, which had popular backing. It was therefore a 'class war'. The defeat of the Spanish government would be a victory for 'reaction' and would have the utmost strategic importance, not only in the Mediterranean, but throughout Europe.

The editor of the Australian Worker, H.E. Boote, demanded the abandonment of the Non-Intervention policy. Italy and Germany were intervening in force in Spain, as a prelude to their domination of Europe. To be neutral was to favour Franco, and the dictators. The British government was 'pro-fascist', and was indulging in criminal stupidity.

Boote was very concerned that Australian Labour leaders had avoided the issue of Spain, and did his best to influence the A.W.U. He made a long speech to the Annual Convention in 1937 which dealt at length with the international situation. He was commended for this, and asked to write a special article for both Workers.¹

¹ Australian Worker, 29.7.36(7 and 11), 5.8.36(3), 23.9.36(3), 7.10.36(3), 17.2.37(3), 14.4.37(7), 3.3.37(19). Boote's views, once again, did not represent the union, which in fact was conservative, and run by 'machine politics'. 
WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST!
The "Crusaders of Civilisation" Speak to Madrid.
During this period the Labour Council of New South Wales was becoming gradually more suspicious of Lang, and hostile to his policy. In October 1937, it passed a motion, suggested by an A.R.U. representative, expressing solidarity with the Spanish workers, and urging the lifting of the arms embargo. In January 1938 it devoted much time in hearing a talk on Spain, and discussing the points raised. A fortnight later it strongly supported the 'Aid for Spain Conference'. In May the Barrier District Council of the Miners Federation suggested that its resolution calling for increased financial support for Spain be forwarded to all unions and in June prominent members sent a protest against Chamberlain's policy to the London News Chronicle.¹

Lang's opponents also expressed their ideas in the Labor Daily after they gained control of that newspaper in March 1938. For two months the journal was preoccupied with other matters, but in May it attacked Franco, and later criticised Chamberlain, declaring that he and Eden did nothing because both felt safer with fascism than with democracy. Its article on Guernica roused the debate mentioned in the last chapter.²

In New South Wales, therefore, the Spanish civil war saw the hostility between Lang's group and the unions increase. The A.W.U., the A.R.U. and the Miners, with others, succeeded in swaying the Labour Council, and taking

² The first edition of the Labor Daily under the new management was 22 February 1938. For its policy, ibid., 30.5.38; 20.6.38, 18.7.38.
over the *Labor Daily*. From these positions they could hope to influence a wider section of the Labour movement in Australia, including the A.C.T.U.

On the subject of Spain the A.C.T.U. Executive was in agreement with the New South Wales unions. It appealed to all affiliated branches to contribute to a fund to assist the Spanish workers. Its Emergency Committee requested the Federal government to lift the arms embargo on Spain, and when it did not, insisted despite Lyons' reluctance on seeing him and stating its case. In June 1938 it expressed its horror at the continued slaughter of civilians in Spain, and repeated its demands.¹

Both communists and Catholics were involved in these issues. Communists spear-headed the struggle against Lang, and did their best to influence the unions, as part of the 'United Front Policy'. Wherever possible communists appealed to local A.L.P. branches or unions to support their demands on the government. For example, the Griffith Branch of the A.L.P. sent a request to the Prime Minister that credits should be granted to the Spanish government to buy Australian wheat eight days after the Griffith branch of the Communist Party. In Darwin a day separated the request (to lift the arms embargo) of the 'Unemployed' and the Waterside Workers. Letters from A.L.P. branches were usually worded more moderately than those from communist ones, but the unions appear to have come under more direct influence.

Catholic apologists and supporters likewise did their best to influence the Labour movement. The *Freeman's*

Journal pointed out that Catholic Labour supporters could not defend the Spanish government because of its religious persecution. Bishop Norton appealed to Catholics to stay in the Labour movement, but to keep it true to the purposes for which it was founded, which the Press defined as the economic betterment of its members, not international affairs.

Catholic leaders made a particular effort to influence the trade unions, especially over appeals for money. The Press even advised Catholic unionists to test in the courts the legality of any vote of union funds for Spanish relief. It affected disappointed surprise with the Australian Worker, and, like the Freeman's Journal supported Lang's policy of isolation. The Freeman's Journal bitterly criticised the A.C.T.U. support for 'the Reds', and was also critical of the Labour Council of New South Wales, and - after Lang lost control - the Labor Daily.¹

Catholics appear to have at least partly succeeded. Lloyd Ross told Moffat on 23 October 1936 that the unions had in the beginning been united in opposing the rebels in Spain, but that in the previous week or two many had grown luke-warm as a result of Catholic propaganda. He thought that a large section in the unions then viewed the civil war less as one between right and left than as between Catholicism and atheism. Ross, however, may have

been referring less to New South Wales than to the momentous changes that had just occurred in Victoria.

In that State, the Labor Call had begun by seeing the civil war in left-wing terms. It had strongly praised the reforms of the Spanish government. It felt that a government victory was important to the working classes, otherwise one more brutal dictatorship would be established in Europe. To avoid a European war, it had favoured Non-Intervention, until it came to feel like the Australian Worker, that this in practice was applied unfairly. It then wanted the Labour movement to put moral pressure on the Federal government to see either that the Non-Intervention Agreement was made effective, or that the Spanish government be enabled to buy arms.  

The Melbourne Trades Hall Council adopted a similar policy. It passed a resolution of congratulation to the workers of Spain. It formally associated itself with the A.C.T.U. appeal, to which certain affiliated unions began to respond. The main supporters of this attitude were A. Monk, Secretary of the Trades Hall Council and the President of the A.C.T.U., and C. Crofts, Secretary of the A.C.T.U.

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1 Moffat Diary, 23 October 1936, p.586.
2 Labor Call, 30.7.36(3-5), 13.8.36(4), 10.9.36(1). It flatly denied that the civil war was religious, and accused the Catholic Worker of supporting fascism. Ibid., 17.9.36 (3).
3 Labor Call, 6.8.36(6), 17.9.36(6), 24.9.36(12), 8.10.36(7), 22.10.36(3). Australian Worker, 23.9.36(7).
However, the bitter Catholic opposition to the Spanish Relief Committee has already been noted. Catholics regarded the A.C.T.U. appeal, and the support for it by the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, as evidence that communists were infiltrating the unions. Catholic feelings were voiced for the first time in the debate on the A.C.T.U. appeal in the Trades Hall Council. Afterwards the Advocate declared that the Council was coming under 'Red' influence, and Mannix (and Lyons and Pearce) criticised its decision. The full attack, however, was yet to be launched.¹

On 5 October, Bishop Foley declared that the Ballarat Trades Hall Council's support for the appeal was 'subsidising savages'. This was a direct incitement of Catholic Labour men, and implicated the Melbourne Trades Hall Council as well. The following day E.W. Peters, the Catholic President of the Victorian A.L.P., made a public statement supporting the bishop, on the grounds that no one had enough information to say whether the Spanish government should be supported or opposed, and that neither the Victorian nor the Federal Executives had yet declared a policy. This was a convenient argument, for as a result of Catholic pressure neither of these bodies was likely to do so. A storm blew up - some criticising Peters, others defending the A.C.T.U. appeal. In the debate in Melbourne Trades Hall Council, left-wing unionists tried to use the clash to force the Victorian Executive to support the Spanish government. This rallied the moderates, however, in view of the split that was only too likely to occur. The meeting decided that an enquiry should be made.

¹ Advocate, 25.10.36(17). Argus, 15.9.36(11).
Peters, unrepentent, criticised Ballarat Trades Hall Council again, repeated his views, implied that he disliked both sides in the civil war and supported isolationism. In a second debate in the Melbourne T.H.C., Peters 'Non-apology' to this effect was reluctantly accepted, although the Council dissociated itself from his remarks.1

The Catholics joyously proclaimed a victory, but others worried. The moral for A.L.P. politicians was the need to avoid at all costs any reference to the Spanish civil war. But the struggle had a wider significance. It was the first time since the depression that the industrial movement in Victoria had been opposed to the political movement. More important, perhaps, it revealed that bitter anti-communism might lead Catholics to split the Labour movement, rather than accept any sort of compromise. The omens for the future were dark.2

1 For Peters' Catholicism, Crisp and Bennett, A.L.P. Federal Personnel. For the incidents, Age, 6.10.36(9), 7.10.36(11). Labor Call, 15.10.36(6 and 13). Argus, 9.10.36(9). Age, 8.10.36(9), 10.10.36(21). Labor Call, 22.10.36(6), also Age, 16.10.36(11).

2 Catholic pressure was at work. The Advocate on the day of the T.H.C. meeting, urged all members of the Labour movement to oppose its capture by communism (15.10.36(17)). It later was satisfied - 5.11.36(17). The Catholic Press, 22.10.36(23) in distant New South Wales was jubilant. For worries by unionists, see Labor Call, 22.10.36(12). Jackson, in interview, remarked that in their youthful exuberance his group 'nearly split the Labour movement'. This suggests that the Campion Society was at work. It was certainly behind Catholic ex-Senator Daly in his clash with the President of the South Australian T.L.C. In a meeting organised by the Guild for Social Studies, he declared he would prevent any organisation 'from using the Spanish situation for spreading propaganda against the Divine Law'. Adelaide Advertiser, 11.5.37(27), 8.5.37(28) - letter from Ingewersen (sic). Cf. Catholic Worker, 8.7.37(1).
Catholic pressure had other results. It was probably the main cause of the poor response of unions to the A.C.T.U. appeal. By 16 October 1936 the Trades Hall Council had received only one hundred and sixty five pounds. By February 1937 the sum reached was only £450. The Labor Call quoted a list sent by the 'International Federation of Trade Unions' which placed Australia nearly at the bottom. In March 1938 Monk reported that very little money was being subscribed. The final figure is not available, but S.R.C. sources mentioned the figure of £1,000 by 1939. The Spanish Relief Committee was disappointed by the results, and made a definite effort itself to appeal to unions. Such response as was forthcoming, however, was almost solely from the Miners and Waterside Workers. From other unions the sum donated by any standard, was pathetic.

A second result was the adoption of Non-Intervention by the Labour Party and Industrial movement in Victoria, and the complete change in policy of the Call. After a noticeable absence of comment on the Spanish situation from October 1936 to January 1937, the Call declared that Non-Intervention was after all the wisest policy. The

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1 Argus, 17.10.36(17), 5.2.37(10). Labor Call, 25.2.37(8). Britain led the way with 2,300,000 French francs. Australia gave 30,000. Her position is not changed if the list is revised according to per capita donations on total population. Australian Worker, 23.3.38(13), P15/4/31.5.37, 1.8.38, 25.8.38, 20.9.38, 28.6.39, 10.7.39. The Barrier Miners donated in all £2,236.6s.6d. An approximation in S.R.C. papers attached to P 15/13 gives the total by 1939 as £1,000. The source is not stated, but the figure looks reasonable. P. Thorne, interview cited, pointed out that the unions who wished to donate to Spanish relief usually did so through the S.R.C. rather than the A.C.T.U. Despite this, the general impression remains.
retreat was taken a stage further by a fracas in the Victorian Conference of the A.L.P. in March 1937. Against a moderately worded motion, T. Carey launched a bitter attack, on the grounds that it struck at his religion. Uproar ensued. In the end the motion was passed, but it made Non-Intervention the official policy of the Victorian Labour Party. The Catholics appear to have won. The Call ten days later demanded complete isolationism, in an article which repudiated all its previous arguments. Thereafter it made hardly any references at all to Spain, except to publish a major attack on the Spanish Relief Committee in 1938.¹

Catholic opposition, however, appears to have been stronger in the political movement than in the Trade Unions, or at least to have had a more paralysing effect there. Although individual Catholics put their views in the Trades Hall Council, they failed to sway that organisation. Its leaders declined to modify their views, and talks on Spain giving the left-wing attitude were given by prominent speakers.²

¹ The Catholics continued pressure for isolationism - see Peters, Labor Call, 24.12.36(13). For change in attitude of Call, see 14.1.37(4), 8.4.37(1 and 5). Uproar in the Victorian Conference was not reported in the Call. See Age, 30.3.37(10). Attack on S.R.C., Labor Call, 13.10.38 (2 and 12), 3.11.38(8).

² In a May Day message, the President of the T.H.C., W.P. Evans, and Secretary, A. Monk, said that Spain was a vital phase of the workers' struggle against capitalism. Monk later declared that the bombing of Guernica proved the Council had judged the war correctly. The T.H.C. heard talks on Spain by the leader of the Australian nursing unit, and returned International Brigaders, as well as a representative of the London fund. Labor Call, 29.4.37(1), 6.5.37(14), 4.11.37(6), 14.4.38(7), 11.5.39(8). Australian Worker, 26.1.38(13).
Even more significant was the A.C.T.U. Conference held in July 1937. This completely reversed the policy decision of the 1935 Conference, and instead adopted support for Spain and 'collective security'. It is clear from the debate that the initiative in propounding the new policy, and the support for it, came from Lang's enemies in the New South Wales unions, especially the A.R.U., and that the main opposition came from Victoria. The resolution, however, if it was to become official union policy, had to be accepted by a majority of State Councils, a contingency which, as the Age remarked, was doubtful.

The new policy received a cool reception in Victoria. The Call pointed out that it represented a complete reversal of the policy adopted in 1935, and feared that it might have far-reaching effects on Labour in that State. The Assistant Secretary of the T.H.C., D. Cameron, refused to move the motion accepting the A.C.T.U. resolution. When C. Crofts had done so - on the ground that the A.C.T.U. was greater than the industrial movement of any one State - both Cameron and D. Lovegrove argued that 'collective security' was a myth, and that unions in Victoria had already adopted a diametrically opposed standpoint to that then adopted by the A.C.T.U. After three long and bitter debates, the Trades Hall Council rejected both the A.C.T.U.'s foreign policy, and its advocacy of uniting all anti-war organisations. The latter would have cut across Victorian Labour's refusal to join a united front with the communists, and its ban on members joining the movement Against War and Fascism. Indeed, the main result of the 1937 A.C.T.U.

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1 Age, 23.7.37(12), 24.7.37(26), 26.7.37(10). Labor Call, 21.10.37(8).
Conference resolutions in Victoria seems to have been the collapse there of the previously active Labour Anti-War Committee.\(^1\)

The clash between communists and Catholics, and the changes in power and policy within the industrial movement, were worrying to the politicians, especially those in the Federal Labour Party. Curtin was still preoccupied with party unity, and for this needed at all costs to avoid contentious issues. Thus although he and several members of the F.P.L.P. would have liked to support the Spanish government, they refrained. References to Spain by Labour members in the federal House of Representatives were extremely few, and the subject was avoided completely in Caucus.\(^2\)

The only safe policy was that begun during the Abyssinian crisis — isolationism. Curtin therefore remarked of the A.C.T.U. decisions that the only authority for the Labour party was the triennial conferences of the A.L.P., and opposed participation in the disputes of

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\(^1\) Labor Call, 29.7.37(4), 23.9.37(8), 30.9.37(6 and 14), 14.10.37(1), 21.10.37(8 and 9). The argument turned in part on whether the political or industrial wing of Labour was supreme, and in part on the possibility of any alliance for any purpose with communists. But the feeling that the previous policy came from Victoria also seems to have had some effect. Crofts, Secretary of the A.C.T.U., felt obliged to accept its policy, and as a result the Labour Anti-War Committee was divided. See D. Rawson, Organisation of the A.L.P., p.253.

\(^2\) Curtin told Lloyd Ross that although he sympathised with the Spanish government he only had to say one word to split the party from top to bottom. Interview with author, 26.3.64. A. Calwell seconded this opinion, Interview, 28.4.65. For the House, CPD 155/204 and 159/219. Caucus Minutes.
Europe. This last point was given prominence in the campaign for the 1937 Federal elections. At all costs Curtin had to avoid making any judgement about specific European issues. He accordingly insisted that Labour stood for the national defence of Australia - especially by means of an air force - but also the avoidance of international entanglements. Australia could neither influence nor police Europe, but by defending herself would make a major contribution to the defence of the British Commonwealth.

This attempt to reconcile conflicting opinions within the movement in fact leaned towards the Lang party in New South Wales and the Victorian A.L.P., rather than the unions in the A.C.T.U. It was vigorously criticised in union circles in New South Wales and South Australia. Nevertheless, Curtin probably had an accurate knowledge of what the movement in general would tolerate. There seems little doubt that his own views were not expressed. With divisions in the movement, and apathy still the most widespread feeling towards foreign affairs, isolationism was the only policy that would keep Labour united.

Lack of interest was revealed in international affairs other than Spain. Some members of the A.W.U. appear to have been awakened to the danger of the dictatorships, as

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1 Age, 26.7.37(10). Labor Daily, 21.9.37(1 and 7). For a good resume of Curtin's problem, see G. Sawyer, Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1929-49, Melbourne 1963, p.99. The Labour Council of New South Wales was unrepentent, and T. Garland, President of the Adelaide T.L.C. declared that isolationism was 'treacherous', calculated to lose the election, and selfish. There was talk of a special Federal Conference to revise the policy. Australian Worker, 29.9.37(14), 13.10.37(8), 24.11.37(14). The Times, 13.10.37, 30.10.37.
was Monk in Victoria. But the Imperial Conference was largely ignored, apart from the danger that it might inveigle Australia into European wars. Labour newspapers, for different reasons, were uneasy about the Conference. They also differed in their dislike of Eden. The Call disliked his support for collective security, the Worker appeasement in Spain. However, they were convinced that Eden's resignation meant a drastic change in Chamberlain's policy, and that it presaged a further step towards the Axis Powers. As for agreement with Italy, the Call and the Labor Daily (under union control) were not very hopeful, but felt that anything which kept the peace of the world had to be tried. The Worker had shown no faith in the 'Gentlemen's Agreement', and now declared that the new Pact did nothing to promote peace, that it condoned aggression, and left the Spanish situation unaltered. It suspected that the Pact was one step in a policy of a Four Power Alliance against Russia. In short, none of the Labour newspapers liked either the Imperial Conference, Eden's resignation, or the Anglo-Italian Pact. Their opposition, however, stemmed from differing premises. Curtin's policy of isolationism was clearly the only practical one.

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Lloyd Ross on reflection considers that the Spanish civil war marked the turning point in attitudes of the trade union movement to foreign affairs, gradually persuading unionists to support collective security. Never were overseas events so warmly discussed.\(^1\) Ross was deeply concerned with foreign policy at the time, and convinced by communist arguments. He was himself an influence on the unions to debate matters such as the Spanish civil war. Nevertheless, he is a witness whose testimony bears weight.

After an initial response of sympathy for the Spanish government, unionists, influenced by Catholic propaganda, began to have doubts. Responsible officials may have tried to quieten troubled waters, and Catholic and left-wing extremism doubtless led many members of the unions to react against both. Apathy was the widespread and traditional response to foreign affairs. But as the war continued, with incidents such as the bombing of Guernica, and with German and Italian intervention becoming more blatant, a growing antipathy to the Axis probably began. Moreover, this period marks the change in control of the machine. During and after the Abyssinian crisis the agreement of the F.P.L.P., Victoria and the Lang Group ensured the adoption of isolationism, under whatever particular name it might hide. But Lang was facing mounting challenge in New South Wales and during the civil war lost control of the Labor Daily and his support in the Labour Council. The A.C.T.U. Conference of 1937 was not decisive, but it was an indication of the shift both in opinion and power in the movement. Debate was to continue over the next months; the struggle against Lang

\(^1\) Interview with Lloyd Ross, cited.
to grow more bitter. The majority of unionists were no
doubt indifferent to foreign affairs, but the series of
German aggressions after March 1938 ensured that the
argument over the Spanish civil war turned into one on
the policy to be adopted against an armed and aggressive
Germany. Such aggressions, moreover, made Curtin's task
in guiding the party to face realities more easy. During
the Spanish civil war, however, he could only avoid the
issue, and wait for time to clarify the situation.

The Federal government, like the Opposition, did not
feel involved in the issues of the war, and wanted no part
in it. Government members, as Menzies' remark\(^1\) signified,
did not feel at first that Australia's interests were
affected. Concerned with internal development, with Lyons
himself a devout Catholic, and with near memories of the
storm of opposition to Australian involvement in the
Abyssinian crisis, the Cabinet desired above all to avoid
any commitment. It therefore immediately adopted a policy
of 'strict neutrality and non-interference in the internal
affairs of a foreign country' - a phrase Lyons continually
repeated. Indeed, he went further, and appealed to the
Australian people not to contribute to any funds or to
do anything to assist either of the conflicting parties
in Spain.\(^2\)

In pursuance of this policy, the government declined
to discuss the recognition of any Spanish government,

\(^1\) See p.127.

\(^2\) CPD 151/56-7. For Lyons repetitions, CPD 151/1022,
152/1406. The appeal not to contribute, SMH, 12,9,36(17).
implying that it would recognise whichever side won clear control. It took action through the British consulate to repatriate several Australians. When, later, it donated money to relieve suffering in Spain, it did so only after insistent requests by various organisations, and appears to have been particularly concerned to avoid any suggestion of partiality. Finally, despite pressure by the Spanish Relief Committee and communists, it refused to provide credits for the sale of Australian wheat to government Spain.  

As for the war itself, neither government spokesmen nor the Department of External Affairs saw the issue as a black and white one. Pearce declared that the Spanish government consisted of moderate left-wing parties, but feared that they would be submerged by communists, anarchists and others, an idea that had first appeared in Current Notes. The struggle, that publication pointed out, was not, in origin, one purely between communists and fascists, although intervention by foreign powers tended to make it become such. Current Notes, while providing a studiously neutral account of events, gave the

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1 CPD 151/57 Current Notes, vol.II, p.109. £2,500 was given to the International Commission for Child Refugees, and £500 to the International Red Cross Committee. CPD 156/2057. Australian Worker, 22,2,39(11). Its motives for the refusal of credits were probably the nearness of Republican collapse, and unwillingness to compromise neutrality. However, the request for credits went to the Department of Commerce and Trade and Customs. It is reported that the Department of Commerce was staffed almost entirely by Catholics, so the reply was not likely to be favourable! The government did appear worried by Franco's methods of warfare, and supported the British government in its appeals to Franco to desist bombing towns and to grant an amnesty to his opponents.
impression of supporting the Spanish government. To the Cabinet, however, Australia's line of conduct was clear. After the Abyssinian crisis Australians had turned from the League to Imperial isolation and neutrality. The Spanish civil war was an issue, the government felt, which clearly called for such a policy.\textsuperscript{1}

The only members of the government parties who expressed doubts were Hutchinson and Hughes, and they not until Hitler's aggressions had begun. Thus Hutchinson in November 1938 talked of German and Italian intervention, to which Hughes in January 1939 credited Franco's victory. Although declining an invitation to greet publicly Australian volunteers returned from Spain, Hughes sent word that he would be glad to see them in private.

Such evidence as remains, however, refers to the period after the Anschluss. Hughes' doubts, like those of Churchill, were probably aroused late in the conflict by continuing German moves. During the earlier period most government members seemed little concerned by the purely Spanish aspects of the civil war, and Menzies' remark probably represented their attitude. Later on, if they had doubts, they did not express them, and the government followed Britain in recognising Franco's regime in March 1939.\textsuperscript{2}


\textsuperscript{2} CPD 158/1943, 23 November 1938. Daily News, 27.1.39(1). SMH, 15.2.39(17), 18.2.39(13). Hughes was non-committal about Spain in December 1937 - CPD 155/203, and was later very concerned about the threat to the Mediterranean, SMH, 16.1.39(10). For Churchill's attitude, see H. Thomas, Spanish Civil War, pp.220, 531.
There were, however, two aspects of the struggle that closely concerned the Australian government. Lyons' interest in world peace has already been noticed. He and his Cabinet colleagues desired the war to be confined to Spain and not turn into a general European one. This was one reason why they strongly supported the British policy of Non-Intervention. Moreover, the Australian government, like the British, hoped for a general European settlement, and felt that Non-Intervention aided this. It therefore turned a blind eye to the magnitude of the infringements.

The second major concern of the Australian government was to secure the free transit of ships through the Mediterranean, Suez Canal and Red Sea. This was of particular interest to the Country Party, for by that route Australian products went to Britain. But just as important was the strategic significances of the route. The Australian government had for years based its defence estimates on the Imperial scheme of naval defence. This, to work, needed a fleet at Singapore, or at least British ability to send one at the time of Australian need. For this, the Mediterranean-Suez canal route was vital. The possible effect on the safety of the route if the dictators gained bases in Spain roused concern in the Department of External Affairs, and led Lyons to repeat somewhat unconvincingly Italian reassurances. The attacks on

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1 See p. 13.
2 Pearce, CPD 152/1630-1, 154/59, Lyons CPD 152/1406, Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs for 1937, p. 22. For 'turning the blind eye', see Menzies' reply to Hutchinson, CPD 152/2833.
shipping in the Mediterranean, which led to the Nyon
Conference, were then of direct interest to Australia.¹

The problem of how to maintain free passage through
the Mediterranean, and the wider considerations of European
peace, were discussed at the Imperial Conference of 1937.
Moreover, the constitutional problem which Smuts had
foreseen - what was to replace the League Covenant as a
basis for Imperial policy - had also to be faced.² To
Chamberlain the solution to all these problems was
appeasement; that is, a search for a negotiated settlement
with the dissatisfied powers. According to Eggleston,
British representatives stressed that Britain had fallen
behind the dictators in her armaments, and urged
appeasement as a policy of prudence on dominion statesmen.³
The League, however, could not be jettisoned too openly.
Eden was still in the British cabinet, and public comment
would be roused. The debate, therefore, had to be kept
generalised.

¹ Annual Report of the Department of External Affairs for
1936, p.37. CPD 155/537-8/27.4.38. According to Eden,
Earl of Avon, Facing the Dictators, p.469, 'the dominions'
supported the Nyon Conference. He does not specify further,
and it seems certain that the Australian government would
have supported it as a means of arbitration, rather than
direct action. The Age, 2.6.37(11), reported that dominion
representatives told Eden that they did not want to be
involved - but it was probably guessing.

² That this problem was in the minds of members of the
Australian government, see Hughes¹ in Annual Report of the
Department of External Affairs for 1937, p.6. Lyons CPD
154/22/24.8.37.

Map: Australia's route to Europe. *Truth*, 16 April 1939, p.22.

N.B. This map reveals quite dramatically how the Italian Empire of Mussolini lay athwart the main Australian route to Europe and Britain, and therefore caused concern to the Australian government. It is, perhaps, also symptomatic of the lack of detailed knowledge in Australia of foreign affairs that the map contains an important error. It omits to notice that Eritrea should be coloured black, which would make Italian East Africa even more imposing.
This map, reproduced from the "Los Angeles Examiner," with additions and alterations by "Truth" artists to bring it up to the minute, gives a comprehensive idea of the aims of Mussolini, and also shows the positions of the various states and nations in relation to Germany. To those who would like to put themselves au fait with European happenings and Mediterranean demands, this map will provide most absorbing study.

SPOTLIGHT SHIFTS TO MEDITERRANEAN
This last result appealed to South Africa and Canada - where isolationist sentiment, especially amongst the French Canadians and Boers, was open and strong - but was less satisfactory to Australia. Neither of the other dominions was so vitally concerned with the Mediterranean route, or so worried by defence. Canada sheltered under the United States' 'umbrella', and South Africa had not the threat of Japan. But the Australian Department of External Affairs was somewhat gloomy about the prospects of peace, and anxious that Britain should not be at war simultaneously with Germany, Italy and Japan. Fear of Japanese intentions led to the suggestion for Regional Pacts - especially in the Pacific - and suspicion of the Axis Powers in Central Europe caused Australian representatives to seek a practical and concrete discussion. Canada led the rest of the dominions, however, in keeping it general.¹

After the conference, the Australian government maintained its policy of avoiding taking the people into its confidence. According to Lyons, the aims of the British government were peace by conciliation rather than force, based upon the League of Nations. The collaboration of other countries would be sought, with the assurance that 'differences of political creed should be no obstacle to friendly relation between governments and countries, and

that nothing would be more damaging to the hopes of international appeasement than the division, real or apparent, of the world into two opposing groups. For the rest, the Commonwealth sought disarmament, economic and financial adjustment, and stood for law and order in peace.¹

These were noble ideals, which could win a wide measure of support. The all-essential questions, however - who was going to be appeased, in what circumstances, and with what - remained unanswered. So also did the thorny question as to what would be done if support for the League and 'principles of public law and order' conflicted with 'European appeasement' and peace. In fact it is now clear that strict support for the League Covenant had been abandoned for a nominal adherence, while a means of securing peace was sought outside the League by direct negotiation with the Axis powers. However, the declaration was sufficiently vaguely worded, not only to hide this from the public, but to keep it hidden. The decisions of the Imperial Conference could be appealed to whenever any later course of action was challenged. For since no one outside the government knew clearly what the decisions were, no one was in a position to dispute the government's interpretation. Moreover, it nicely avoided the real point at issue, which was not whether the policy the government was following had been decided upon with the

¹ CPD 154/22-37/24.8.37.
other dominions, but whether, in the changed circumstances, it was a wise one to pursue.1

Concern for the Mediterranean route led the Australian government to take an active interest in appeasement in the Mediterranean. Alone among the dominions it was separately represented at the Montreux conference, June 1936, and played a positive role in the negotiations which led to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Lyons on his trip to England in 1937 suggested to Chamberlain that an approach be made to Mussolini. The Australian government was consulted on the proposed negotiations on 27 January 1938 and 'warmly approved'. It was informed of progress during the course of the discussions and was apparently delighted with the agreement. Nor did Lyons regard it as a weapon to use against Germany, but as 'a material contribution to the alleviation of tension and to the general appeasement of Europe' - and, be it added, a means of securing the Mediterranean route.2

1 Mansergh makes the point that in the two vital years that followed the 1937 Conference the Australian government was content, as long as the United Kingdom policies could be defined as conforming to the decisions of the Imperial Conference, to defend those policies. Thus the Imperial Conference had an importance in Australia not seen in the other dominions. As a result, the Australian government... gave consistent support to the policy of appeasement'. Mansergh, Problems etc., p.166. This seems to be putting the cart before the horse. Because the Australian government so whole-heartedly adopted appeasement, for other reasons, they found the Imperial Conference a convenient source of authority to which to refer.

In the interests of the agreement with Italy, the Australian government was willing to accord de jure recognition of the incorporation of Abyssinia into the Italian Empire, and to see Eden resign from the British Cabinet. To concern at the possible significance of the incident, and the demand that Parliament should be summoned, Lyons replied with evasions. He declared that differences between Chamberlain and Eden were those of method only, not principle; that the Commonwealth still based its policy on the League, and the 1937 Imperial Conference decisions, and that the matter was one of domestic British concern only. Of the Australian cabinet, only Menzies was moved to commiserate with Eden. ¹

Lyons in short adopted the same attitude as in the opening days of the Abyssinian crisis. He did not wish to summon Parliament or to see an informed public debate. Instead, oversimplifications, references to Chamberlain, debating points and rhetoric obscured the policy of the government. At times these characteristics were striking

¹ Lyons' evasions included a number of self-contradictions, e.g., he quoted Chamberlain's stress on League weakness, and followed it by the declaration that they still held League principles. Argus, 28.2.38(9), 1.3.38(1), 2.3.38(1 and 3), 3.3.38(3). SMH, 2.3.38(17), 4.3.38(11). CPD, 155/534-6. Menzies, according to P. Heydon, was profoundly moved by Eden's resignation. He saw it in terms of an ambitious man resigning for a principle. Eden was the first person Menzies rang when he arrived in London, and had a private meeting with Eden later. For Menzies' letter of sympathy and support to Eden, see Earl of Avon, Facing the Dictators, pp.603-4.
enough to rouse comment even from newspapers who were unsympathetic towards the Opposition.¹

Like members of the Labour movement, government members were confused and uncertain about foreign events, and did not want to be involved in them. Unlike Labour men, however, they were quite willing to follow Britain's lead - as, for example, over the Non-Intervention policy, which enabled them to avoid making a judgement on the Spanish civil war as such. Safety of passage along the route between Australia and Europe was, however, a direct and immediate interest, and the Australian government did what it could to facilitate agreements between Britain and countries bordering the Mediterranean.

¹ *Age*, *Argus* and *Melbourne Herald*, 3.3.38. This was the third occasion that the *Herald* had commented.
CHAPTER VI

The Public and the Civil War

To all appearances the Australian public in general showed considerably less interest in the Spanish civil war than it did in the Abyssinian crisis. After the first outbreak of fighting, editorials in the newspapers dealing with Spain were few in number. R.S.L. magazines likewise ignored the issue. As the editor of Mufti said:

these were matters of concern only for the people unlucky enough to be in countries affected - they had no concern for the more peace-loving people of the Commonwealth.¹

Very few of the population, apart from communists or Catholics felt called upon to write to the press. The only more general response occurred amongst intellectuals and those members of the public whose humanitarian feelings were roused.

Once again there is a lack of evidence about the thinking of intellectuals. H. Burton spoke over 3DB, supporting the A.C.T.U. appeal. He said that a victory for the rebels in Spain would be disastrous for all democratic peoples and for peace, and that the war, far from being a religious one, was a conflict of democracy against dictatorship. Non-Intervention was merely playing into the hands of the rebels. In the correspondence columns of the Sydney Morning Herald Lionel Lindsay wrote

¹ Mufti, 1.1.39(3) - the matters to which it referred were the wars in Spain and China.
criticising the Spanish Church and Archbishop Duhig's speech of 7 September. C.E.W. Bean, more in sorrow than in anger, condemned those in Spain who had in the past blocked freedom of thought and expression. The Australian Quarterly printed only one article on each side of the question. Carl Kaeppel put the Catholic point of view, stressing particularly the communist threat to 'Western Christian civilisation'. W.A.W. Wood put the left-wing viewpoint. He stressed the backwardness of Spain and the tendency of the Catholic Church to ally with reactionary elements.¹

Humanitarian sentiment was undoubtedly touched by the bloodshed and suffering in Spain. Many of the newspapers were horrified by the ferocity of the war. Letters sent to the Prime Minister, although few in number, came from a wide range of interests and professions. The Protestant Churches, as could be expected, protested against atrocities, and the Assembly of the Congregational Union carried a motion of disgust at Franco's indiscriminate bombing of civilians. Protestant Churches were closely connected with humanitarian appeals. The 'New South Wales Council for the Relief of Spanish Distress' was set up through the auspices of the League of Nations Union by Archbishop Mowll of Sydney, and representatives of the

Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches, and the Society of Friends.¹

Yet this was not the expression of widespread interest. Letters sent to the Prime Minister were overwhelmingly from communist and Catholic individuals and organisations, and very few indeed from 'the general public'.²

The response to the various appeals was significant. The Spanish Relief Committee was the largest and most successful, collecting in all between fifteen and seventeen thousand pounds. Some of its activities - such as the sailing of the Australian nurses to Spain - caused temporary minor sensations. However, public interest after the initial outbreak of the Spanish civil war needed specific events to stimulate it. This was natural, for the war continued a long time, and continual appeals were made. Public response reached a peak in May 1938, and thereafter began to fall away, until in 1939 the attempt

¹ SMH, 21.8.36, 29.9.36. Daily Telegraph, 23.1.37(3) /photographs/, 22.1.38. Letters to the Prime Minister included ones from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Hon. A. Griffith, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, Messrs Alexander and Patterson, and private individuals. For Church protests against atrocities see Age, 4.5.37(11); for the New South Wales Council For the Relief of Spanish Distress, SMH, 29.4.37(9), 11.6.37(10), 22.7.37(6), 15.7.38(15). Another organisation was the Joint Spanish Aid Council. The L.N.U., apart from helping in such organisations, does not appear to have been so active. One gets the impression that the failure of the League to protect Abyssinia was having a disastrous effect on its public support.

² That communist propaganda did have a fairly wide appeal was shown by the petition in 1939 protesting against the recognition of Franco as the ruler of Spain, signed by two MHRs, 3 parsons, the Headmaster of Melbourne High School, and Professor Crawford, as well as the usual members of the communist party and its fronts. This, however, was after Hitler's moves had reinforced the communist argument.
to continue the appeal after the civil war ended was disastrous.¹

The sum collected by the Spanish Relief Committee was an outstanding one, considering the length of the war, the traditional apathy to international events in Australia,² the lack of newspaper emphasis, and Catholic opposition. The achievement says much for the selfless enthusiasm of those who organised the appeal. It is true that nothing in Australia compared with the meeting in London at which Atlee spoke, which collected £3,000, or the pledge of the

¹ Australians in Spain, p. 63, gives the figure as £17,115. The audited accounts to June 1939 appear to give a figure of £15,131. After a slow start money came in steadily during 1937. A big effort by the S.R.C. combined probably with a reaction to the moves of Hitler to lead to a great increase in donations in the first half of 1938 - the peak month, May, seeing a total of £1,124. A distinct drop occurred in the second half of the year, the decline only being modified in September 1938 and February 1939. Minutes P15/12 and 13. The departure of the nurses appeared in the newspapers, 'Woman Today' interviewed them, and questions were asked in the House of Representatives. Spain, pp. 8-10.

² To assess the comparative apathy towards events abroad, one need only consider that the Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal, after the disastrous bush fires of 1938-9, raised £262,476. Age, 28.7.39(14). That disaster, however, struck Australian homes, near at hand, and all the newspapers stressed the damage, photographed it, and opened subsidiary appeals.
British A.E.U. to raise £50,000, and the Miners Federation £82,000. P. Thorne declares, however, that he was informed by the Paris Co-ordination Committee that the Australian total, per head of population, was amongst the highest of foreign countries. Indeed, considering the circumstances of the time, the figure of £17,000 was surprisingly large. For the years 1936 to 1939 were still bad years for many in Australia. The unemployment figures did not finally return to 'normal' until increasing rearmament in 1939-40 took up the slack in the economy. Much of the money donated to the S.R.C. was given by class-conscious working men who were themselves either out-of-work or paid little.

The more prosperous sections of the community, however, and the middle classes which had recovered from the depression, did not apparently feel so involved. Their attitude was similar to that revealed by the editorials in the daily newspapers.

1 The British figures were quoted in S.R.C. Circular Letters, P/15/4-12.1.38, 1.8.38. P. Thorne, interview cited. A set of figures in the S.R.C. papers, P15/14, without quoting any source, put Australian totals to June 1939 at approx:--

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Spanish Aid Council</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W. &quot; &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.C.T.U. appeal</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Relief Committee</td>
<td>£16,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£21,150</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 The basic wage in Sydney, for those men lucky enough to be earning, varied in 1936-9 from £3/7/- to £4/2/-.. The basic wage in 1964 was £15/15/-. (Commonwealth Year Book 1936, p.546, 1939, p.441, 1964, p.481). The S.R.C. total can, for purposes of comparison, therefore be multiplied by four. If the difference in population - 7 million to 11 million - is also taken into account, the S.R.C. total corresponds to a present £107,000, collected against the wishes of the government, without the prestige value of middle-class appeals, by an organisation dubbed as 'communist inspired'.
There was much in common in the editorial comment of the various newspapers, except the Bulletin. For example, all the rest declared that there were rights and wrongs on both sides in the struggle. They pointed to the social evils of Spain, but disliked the violence of the left and the failure of the government to control it. They suspected Marxist influence. Opinions differed, however, over the merits of the Spanish government. The Age and the Melbourne Herald praised it, while the West Australian and the Daily Telegraph wondered if Spain would follow the example of Russia. Several felt that the Spanish experience of Parliamentary democracy was too short to enable it to function effectively, and wondered if a dictatorship would not suit the country better. Others noted, and feared, the tendency of the struggle to turn into an ideological one which threatened to spread to all Europe.¹

Despite such remarks, it is clear that the main concern of most of the newspapers in the struggle was its effects on the British Empire, especially its possible repercussions in the Mediterranean. In this respect the Australian government's attitude clearly represented conservative opinion in the country. Thus, although the R.S.L. magazines almost entirely ignored the civil war as such, both the Queensland Digger and Reveille printed articles dealing with the threat that Italy's Spanish policy might pose to the Empire's Mediterranean

communications and France. In the same way the surviving scripts of 'the Watchman' reveal that at any rate by mid-1937 his attention was directed towards the question of freedom of passage through the Mediterranean, Suez canal and Red Sea.

Interest in the Mediterranean, combined with lack of concern for the outcome of the war in Spain, led the newspapers to support the Non-Intervention policy. They regarded the war as a Spanish affair, better left to the Spaniards. Unrestricted aid to either side would only increase the suffering, and threaten European peace. Even if the policy was flouted, it was a good, or at least the only possible, one for Britain to adopt.

The Melbourne newspapers stand out as the most isolationist apart from the Sydney Bulletin. The Age stressed the need for prudence, and did not want the Non-Intervention policy enforced by the Western powers, since that would enlarge Empire obligations. The Argus avoided comment on the Spanish civil war for as long as possible.

1 Queensland Digger, 1.10.36(5), 1.7.37(26-7). It thought it saw a deliberate Italian plan to close the Mediterranean to Britain and, allied with Germany, to pursue a policy of colonial aggrandizement. Cf. Reveille, 1.1.38(28-9). The editor, J. Black, waived his rule about non-discussion of international affairs in the magazine, and a heated exchange occurred over the threat to the Empire and France from a Spain controlled by Franco, 1.5.38(14-5), 1.9.38(2). Cf. West Australian, 11.8.36.

2 'The Watchman' At Home and Abroad, 18.8.37, 20.8.37.

possible, and then declared that only Empire interests should be considered by Britain. It praised Chamberlain's passivity over the attacks on British ships. The Melbourne Herald demanded Empire isolationism combined with rearmament.  

The reason for Melbourne newspaper support for isolationism is obscure. The Age had been the most ardent supporter of the League of Nations during the Abyssinian crisis. The failure of the League in 1935-6 may have disillusioned it, and made the other newspapers even less inclined to support the international organisation. Perhaps Melbourne editors feared reactions from Catholics especially after the visit of the Knights of the Southern Cross. In all probability, however, the Melbourne press merely adopted the attitude of the British and Australian governments.  

The most extreme advocacy of isolationism, combined with support for the Nationalists, came, however, from the Sydney Bulletin. That magazine continued its policy of friendship towards Mussolini; hatred of communism and the League of Nations; and Empire isolationism. It considered the term 'rebels' to be objectionable, since it thought that the Nationalists represented Spain's culture and civilisation. It strongly opposed the Spanish government,  


2 The Melbourne Herald was less timid than the other two journals. It blamed the weakness during the Abyssinian crisis for the subsequent strength of the Axis; disapproved of the rebels, and gave prominence in its news coverage to Nationalist atrocities. However, it avoided stating a policy of its own. 22.8.36, 26.10.36. News coverage, January and February 1938.
which, it said, was dominated by communists. It praised fascism, Germany and Chamberlain and asserted that Non-Intervention was the best policy. It declared that Australian newspapers were scare-mongering, run by Jews, and produced lying propaganda - supporting the Russian case and opposing the German. Its arguments closely resembled those of the Catholic newspapers. For the Bulletin's editorial policy, discussed earlier, was becoming clearer. The Spanish civil war led it, like the Catholic journals, to adopt a more extreme attitude. Opposition to communism gradually turned into defence of fascism and even Nazism.\(^1\)

The Sydney newspapers differed greatly, however, amongst themselves. The Daily Telegraph did not have a coherent policy on the Spanish civil war. Instead it varied its attitude according to previous events. Thus it accepted the Non-Intervention policy in the opening days - always on the proviso that it worked. After the Anschluss, it wondered if a show of strength might not in future be more effective. However, its support for strong action to maintain the Spanish government occurred after the series of German aggression had begun.\(^2\) In a somewhat unthinking way it mirrored the fluctuations in the attitude of many of the newspapers to the Spanish civil war.

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1. Bulletin, 21.10.36(9), 31.3.37(13), 28.4.37(13), 26.5.37(13), 7.7.37(13), 14.7.37(12), 4.8.37(13), 8.12.37(13), 23.3.38(13), 6.7.38(13). Guernica was burnt by the 'Reds' 12.5.37(12) and the Nationalists were justified in attacking 'British' ships. 22.6.38(12).

Such variations appeared most clearly in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In the opening days of the struggle it criticised the Spanish left, felt that a dictatorship was the best way to stop anarchy, and supported Non-Intervention. By April 1937, after Franco's action against British shipping and clearer German intervention in Spain, it feared for the security of the Empire, and accordingly supported the Spanish government - together with the Basques - and demanded the end of Non-Intervention and strong action to combat piracy in the Mediterranean. However, when attacks on ships became less frequent, the *Sydney Morning Herald* showed less concern for the Spanish government, and printed articles giving the Catholic and Nationalist viewpoint. The newspaper, in short, continued its old attitude of considering first the interests and prestige of Britain and the Commonwealth. Where they were not threatened, its distaste for any regime which could be regarded as 'Red' tempted it to sympathise with the rebels.

The reaction against the Nationalists as a result of attacks on British ships was common to those who, like the *Sydney Morning Herald* valued Britain's honour. Thus of the R.S.L. magazines, the *Queensland Digger* demanded strong action, if necessary the end of Non-Intervention, and a regular contributor to the *Listening Post* agreed. 'The Watchman' felt that Non-Intervention could only be continued at the price of humiliations by England,

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1 *SMH*, a) Horrified by the slaughter, but pro-Franco:– 29.7.36, 7.9.36, 18.11.36, 23.11.36, 12.1.37.  
b) Infuriated by attacks on shipping – pro-government:– 15.4.37, 22.6.37, 17.7.37(16), 28.7.37(12), 6.9.37.  
c) More concerned with effects on the Empire:– 22.10.37, 23.10.37(13), 18.7.38.
remarking grimly that at least it was an application of the principle of 'peace at any price'.

In short, the usual attitude of most government supporters was to be shocked by excesses in Spain, but to be more concerned with the effects of the struggle on the Commonwealth's route through the Mediterranean, and perhaps also Britain's strategic position in Europe, and her prestige, than with the fate of the Spaniards.

Concern with the Mediterranean route, and debate on what attitudes and policy should be adopted towards the dictators, came more into the open during and after the 1937 Commonwealth Conference - to which Australian newspapers devoted much editorial space. To the Sydney Morning Herald and the Daily Telegraph defence was the main issue, while to the Age it was the maintenance of Australia's tariffs, which the Age frantically demanded should be kept at the highest possible level. The West Australian said that Lyons' suggestion of a Pacific Pact could have been predicted to fail; the Bulletin thought that it exposed 'the mental bankruptcy of all concerned'. The other newspapers praised it, and Lyons for his opening speech. All the newspapers realised, and most were a little disappointed by, the vagueness of the official report, although the West Australian defended its 'simple piety', and others talked at length about 'the value of discussions among the members of the family'. The general

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public however, appeared apathetic towards the issue. The official nature of the Conference, and perhaps the ceremony, together with the government's vagueness, hid the significance of the meeting. Yet important decisions had been taken, including the one to attempt to come to terms with Italy.

That there was in Australia a certain amount of anti-fascist feeling, however, was revealed when the Italian cruiser, the 'Raimondo Montecuccoli' made a 'goodwill' visit to Australian ports in February 1938. Such a visit was bound to rouse communists and those who felt like them. Trouble began in Brisbane, when an attempt was made to induce members of the crew to leave the ship. In Sydney a scuffle occurred outside a social function involving the Italian consul, and members of the audience were expelled by the police. All these incidents appear to have been caused by small groups of left-wingers, and not to have involved many persons. In Melbourne, however, affairs reached a climax. When sailors from the ship visited an Italian Club in Carlton, anti-fascist literature was distributed among them, and a fight broke out. Suspecting that more literature was being smuggled onto the vessel among the crowds of visitors, the Captain set a watch. Members of it seized an Italian

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1 SMH, 31.5.37, 17.5.37, 17.6.37. Daily Telegraph, 15.5.37, 17.5.37. Age, 17.5.37, 18.5.37. West Australian, 26.5.37, 17.6.37. Bulletin, 26.5.37(12). Argus, 18.5.37, 17.6.37. As for the report, the Age was glad it was indecisive, presumably in continuance of its advocacy of high tariffs, the Bulletin was sacrastic about Lyons' secrecy, and Australia's ties with Britain. Age, 17.6.37, Bulletin, 22.6.38(12). The greatest notice of the conference was taken by the West Australian, which devoted seven editorials to it.
taxi-driver who had lived in Melbourne for twelve years, and, despite his protestations of innocence, beat him and dragged him before the Captain. The latter interrogated him, and, since the taxi-driver denied having been in the club in Carlton, and had no incriminating evidence on his person, let him go. The incident provided a nine-day wonder for the press. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the Labour Council of New South Wales, made protests, and the Adelaide Trades and Labour Council resolved that no Labour representatives would attend the official welcome when the Montecuccoli reached Adelaide. In Melbourne, two thousand 'anti-fascists' with banners and loud-speakers burnt an effigy of Mussolini two hundred yards from the ship. A crowd which the Daily Telegraph estimated at 30,000 gathered to watch them. A hundred police, summoned from all the Melbourne suburbs, kept an eye on proceedings, both on land and from the Harbour Trust fire float which they had commandeered. By 9 p.m. the crowd seemed larger than 'that which awaited the Duke of Gloucester in 1934'. The reporter's estimate of the number of people present was probably exaggerated. On the

1 Australian Worker, 23.2.38(1 and 14), 2.3.38(7), 9.3.38(13).
2 Daily Telegraph, 18.2.38(1). The Cabinet had invited the Italian government to send a vessel to Australia to take part in the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the founding of New South Wales. If it was part of the attempt to encourage friendly relations with Italy, it certainly misfired. As for the crowd, the Telegraph described the scene; 'By trains, trams and private cars, vans, buses and on foot, the enormous crowds poured into Port Melbourne from 7 p.m.'. It reported that voices in the crowd shouted 'Down with Fascism; Hands Off Spain!'
other hand the incident had clearly roused more than the usual attention, and affected people other than communists. For such a crowd to gather on a Thursday night in Melbourne suggests positive interest. Too much, however, should not be inferred from it. Adelaide and Perth appear to have received the cruiser quietly.¹

If anti-fascist sentiment was not uncommon amongst the population at large, intellectuals, though divided, seemed in general to have favoured the search for negotiated settlement, especially of an economic kind, with the dictators. Thus at the time of the Imperial Conference, six Melbourne Professors sent a manifesto to the Australian delegation. They declared that the dictators had persuaded their people that they had real grievances, especially as a result of the restrictive trade treaties, and the deprivation of colonies. The British Empire could remove this complaint by reducing trade restrictions, especially Empire preferences, and putting all colonies under the control of the League and open to every nation. Such action should be conditional on the Axis powers returning to the League and supporting Collective Security. The press criticised the presumption of academics to interfere in politics. Their colleagues,

¹ Perhaps it furnishes another illustration of the ferment in Melbourne about fascism, seen in the chapter on Catholics and communists (Chapter IV, pp.145-51). It should perhaps be added that another Cabinet crisis occurred. Hughes, in anticipation of his colleagues, adopted an intransigent attitude, demanded an apology, and compensation. No demand for apology was, however, sent. Argus, 26.2.38(1), Age, 4.3.38(12).
S. H. Roberts in Sydney and A. R. Chisholm in Melbourne, also declared that the manifesto was impractical.¹

The most important and revealing debate by intellectuals before Hitler's series of aggressions began, however, was that in the Australian Institute of Political Science Summer School in January 1938. In this, despite Hartley Grattan, the possibility of Australian neutrality was dismissed in silence, and isolationism declared to be impracticable. The lack of interest in foreign affairs in Australia was noticed, and a separate Australian policy, and an information service - especially in regard to the Pacific - was desired. As far as policy was concerned, P. D. Phillips in the opening paper felt that some kind of League system was required, but did not specify what kind. J. G. Crawford, however, talked of the need for the economic appeasement of Japan, an idea which seemed to appeal more to the speakers. Opposition was expressed to making appeasement conditional upon a political settlement. D. A. S. Campbell, for example, opposed any idea of an attempt by Britain to use a balance of power system against the dictators, and advocated the peaceful solution of European problems through a policy of equity and economic appeasement. One lone voice was reported defending collective security.²

¹ The signatories were Professors D. B. Copland, L. F. Giblin, R. M. Crawford, and Messrs Macmahon Ball, H. Burton, and W. B. Reddaway. For the manifesto, Argus, 17.4.37(16) Copland replied to charges that the manifesto was theoretical. Argus, 20.4.37(10). The Argus, ibid., p. 8 (editorial) criticised the manifesto for daring to suggest a lowering of tariffs, and the Bulletin for mentioning the idea of 'collective security' (28.4.37(12)).

² Duncan, Australia's Foreign Policy, passim.
It seems clear that there was a fairly general support for the policy of appeasement, especially economic appeasement, among certain intellectuals. It appealed to their logic, and humanitarianism, and 'reasonableness'. Unfortunately, such qualities were no sound guide to Hitler's intentions and character. E.M. Higgins castigated what he considered to be the Summer School's indifference to the current political situation, and its preoccupation with economics. He wondered why academics appeared the loudest apologists for Japanese imperialism, and quoted Zilliacus that one could understand evil too well. No real desire, he felt, was evinced to produce a foreign policy that would be a practical guide for action.

It is difficult to disagree. Speakers at the conference failed to realise any more clearly than the

1 It was also of especial appeal to those who had had legal training. An example of this was F.W. Eggleston. He felt that European 'instability' was due to 'deep-seated economic maladjustment'. He accordingly advocated 'economic adjustment'. (He disliked the term 'appeasement', but this was the sense in which most intellectuals then used the term). F.W. Eggleston, Search for a Social Philosophy, Melbourne and London, 1941, pp.7-8. The book also illustrates the intellectual's predilection for abstract reasoning, which can lead to wrong conclusions, e.g., pp.271-2. 'In proportion, therefore, as each nation fears change, it builds up the instruments of war'. What of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy? See also his advocacy of universal free trade and disarmament as the cures for world troubles, pp.278-83.

2 'Listening to the discussions no one would have guessed that at the present moment large-scale war is actually raging in Spain and China, and that a new technique of aggression makes it inevitable that such war...must spread if it is not stopped'. Many speakers produced cliches on international economic anarchy, but 'seemed quite indifferent to...the equally real international political anarchy'. Australian Quarterly, March 1938, pp.61-6 (quotation p.64).
rest of the population that the war which loomed before them did not arise from factors similar to those which led to the first world war, but from long-planned, deliberate aggression. Moreover academics, as unsure as other people of the future, in an endeavour to protect their 'public image' too often resorted to vagueness, and 'sitting on the fence'. Thus in this conference speakers carefully avoided supporting a concrete policy. It was left to a contributor to *Australian Quarterly* to point to the German threat to Central Europe, and to imply that it was in the interests of Britain and all the democracies to support Czechoslovakia.¹

The same avoidance of judgment was seen in the best-seller which appeared in October 1937 - S.H. Roberts' *The House That Hitler Built*. This book, the result of a visit to Germany, discussed the Nazi regime in detail, including the character of Hitler, German political immaturity, the Nazi leaders, the 'night of the long knives', relations with the army, and German economic policy. But J.M.K. Phillips, in reviewing the book, was not only critical of style and factual errors, but also noted the author's 'apparently unconscious inability to draw any positive conclusions from his argument'. Roberts avoided clear judgement. For example although he was critical of the mental slavery involved in the German Youth Movement and press control, he was enthusiastic about Labour Service; although he realised the German inspiration behind the Sudeten claims, he felt that Czechoslovakia had been unwise to adopt unity instead of federalism. Roberts, moreover, shared certain popular

¹ A.C. Morgan, *ibid.*, pp.84-92.
delusions, as that Hitler was a puppet under the influence of the men around him, and that the army was growing in power, and that if it did, more moderation would be evident. There were signs that the book was written in haste, while Roberts was still partly under the influence of German propaganda. Although he shook much of this off, especially in regard to Hitler's foreign policy, traces still lingered. Thus he accepted the Nazi claim to be a revolutionary movement which should not be judged prematurely. Roberts' mind, like those of many other people, was made more clear by Hitler's aggressions of 1938 and 1939.1

In 1937, however, the main threat in the public eye was not Germany, but Italy. She had gained it by her attack on Abyssinia, Mussolini's warlike utterances and open intervention in Spain. The question what to do about Italian power in the Mediterranean received sporadic attention. Thus those of the newspapers who had made any comment on the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' had welcomed it, although feeling that it had its limitations. As for the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938, only the Daily Telegraph voiced strong doubts. The Sydney Morning Herald and the West Australian accepted it critically. The Age was hopeful, but noted, as did the Sydney Morning Herald, that the agreement depended for its ratification upon the Italians leaving Spain. The other newspapers, however,

strongly approved. The Melbourne *Herald* was wildly optimistic, and saw the agreement as a step towards a general European peace pact; the *Bulletin* unrestrainedly praised Chamberlain; the *Argus* talked of old friendship, and the security of Empire communications.\(^1\) The public in general, however, if correspondence columns in the newspapers are a guide, displayed little interest.

Indeed, whether the principle of seeking an agreement with Italy was a good one had been raised in February 1938 by the resignation of Eden from the British Cabinet. Reactions to this event in Australia were limited. Press comment merely reflected the general foreign policy of the newspaper concerned. Thus the Melbourne Press supported Chamberlain, and the *Bulletin* summed up its attitude with the headline 'Good Riddance!'. The *West Australian* gave a historical account, somewhat in Eden's favour, and then supported Chamberlain — on the ground that he should not be hindered in his great experiment of reconciliation with the dictators. Only the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph* doubted Chamberlain's policy and defended Eden. Most R.S.L. magazines ignored the incident entirely,

\(^1\) The *Age*, *Bulletin* and *Telegraph* did not think the Gentlemen's Agreement worth comment, and the *SMH*, 5.1.37 welcomed it as far as it went. See also *Argus*, 5.1.37 and *West Australian*, 6.1.37. For the Anglo-Italian Pact, all editorial comment was either on 18 or 19 April, 1938, except that of the *Bulletin* - 21.4.38(13). It did, however, sum up the other newspapers on the Agreement, 28.4.38(13).
except the two stalwarts of a 'strong' British policy, the *Queensland Digger* and the *Listening Post*. The League of Nations Union 'profoundly regretted' Eden's resignation, and urged the government to restate its support for the principles of the Covenant. On the other hand, Macmahon Ball, defending Chamberlain's policy before the University Peace Group, declared that support for the League has not been a success, and that Eden's policy would have led to war.¹ To all these Eden's resignation was not an event which required a reappraisal of policy, but one which merely provoked a response in accordance with the policy they already advocated.

A lengthy correspondence in the *Argus* revealed divided opinions. A slight majority of correspondents favoured Eden against Chamberlain, despite the *Argus* editorial policy. Whether this represented the feeling in the community is doubtful. The *Round Table* in mid 1937 had felt that public opinion in the Empire would be reluctant to enter into commitments in Europe until a fresh attempt had been made sincerely to reach an agreement. In February 1938 it felt that the main public concern over Eden's resignation was that it revealed weakness in the system of imperial consultation. This, however, probably merely represented the reaction of the intellectuals in the Round Table group. What few references have been noted suggest that the public was more concerned with the implications of a change in policy. The *Round Table*,

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however, was undoubtedly right in saying that the Anschluss diverted attention from Eden's resignation. 1

There were, however, small groups in Australia who supported Germany, and who sometimes received disproportionate attention. Eric Campbell toasted Hitler on behalf of returned servicemen in a German Club. The occasional letter defended Germany in one of the newspapers. A West Australian Nazi organisation booked an R.S.L. hall for a meeting during Armistice Week, but R.S.L. authorities awoke to the situation in time to cancel the booking. From the remarks of the Listening Post, the 'Nazis' seem to have had a pitiable following. 2

Defenders of the Axis were, in the main, limited to the Catholics, the Bulletin, and small groups and individuals on 'the lunatic fringe'. Probably the best known of the last was in Sydney around the Publicist. P.R. ('Inky') Stephensen had fallen out with the Bulletin in 1933, and had completed the financial ruin of himself and his publishing company in a libel action against that

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1 Argus, 28.2.38-20.4.38. Round Table, vol.27, June 1937, p.498; vol.28, June 1938, pp.604, 606. E.A. Ferguson, et al., 1938 Commonwealth Relations Conference Papers, Series D. no.2, p.5-6 said that the popular reactions were dismay at the acknowledgement of League impotence, resentment amongst League champions, anxiety concerning war and distrust at negotiations with the Italian government. From all the evidence, however, the incident seems to have had a much slighter effect on public opinion. Indeed, it hardly rippled the surface! Perhaps these undercurrents were present, but it seems doubtful.

2 SMH, 14.11.36(17), 1.1.37(6). Listening Post, 16.11.36(23). It added, 'But why must the local Nazis have a hall for their following? Surely a sentry box would be big enough'. Perhaps this group was the 'Blueshirts', which demonstrated in the gallery of a Perth theatre when 'Till The Day I Die' was produced. Daily Telegraph, 23.7.36(2).
magazine in 1935. However, in that year he met J.B. Miles, who enabled him to produce in 1936 *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*. At the same time they started the *Publicist*, a monthly magazine designed to rouse in Australians a vigorous independent Nationalism.\(^1\)

The *Publicist* declared that Britain and her Empire was in decline, and that Australia should cultivate self-dependence, put herself first in everything, and develop an Imperialism of her own. It therefore opposed both conscription, and the sending of Australian troops overseas to fight in 'a British war'. Yet it declared that Australia could not remain neutral if war, which it regarded as 'biologically inevitable' did break out. Although the *Publicist* denied that it was fascist or Nazi—such terms applied only to Europe—it vigorously defended Germany against Roberts' criticisms, quoted with approval Hitler's speech to the Reichstag in May 1937, and declared that there was no reason to be hostile to Germany, a country which had saved Europe from communism and civilisation from the Jews.\(^2\) The *Publicist* became more explicit in its philosophy after the Anschluss, but in 1936-7 it was already clearly sympathetic towards Nazism.

The government, as before, did not want a vigorous debate between defenders and opponents of the political theories of the Axis Powers. Thus Thorby early in 1938 appealed to 'all loyal Australians' to avoid entering

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1. The *Publicist*, June 1939, p.1. For the libel action, *ibid.*, November/December 1936. The foreword to *The Foundations* was written in July 1936. The book bears the imprint of J.B. Miles. The first issue of the *Publicist* was in July 1936.

into public controversy on the international situation, and proposed that all such controversy should be stopped.

In Sydney, the Chief Secretary of New South Wales, the Hon. F.A. Chaffey banned Odet's play, 'Till the Day I Die' after Dr Asmis had officially protested to the Federal government. The police attended a special performance of the play by the New Theatre League to an invited audience of prominent people. Whether Lyons had anything to do with Chaffey's action is not clear, but he was reported to have written to the Chief Secretary of Victoria, stating that he thought the purpose and result of the play would only be to stir up bitterness, and asking him to ban it. The Victorian Chief Secretary obliged, despite objections by the Council for Civil Liberties. The Australian Quarterly, although considering the play a poor one, was perturbed by the incident.¹

Local authorities and the A.B.C. appear to have followed the government's lead. The Town clerk of Melbourne refused the League of Nations Union permission to use the Town Hall to hold a public meeting to discuss Eden's resignation, and, after protests, offered the Hall if the exact wording of any resolution was submitted beforehand to the Lord Mayor and himself. The Labour Council of

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Melbourne Herald, 26.2.38(1). Cf. Macmahon Ball's comment, Press etc., pp.32-3. The Federal government was not above using foreign affairs for its own advantage, e.g., Forgan Smith's speech over 4QC was banned in Queensland on the grounds of a State election (a year away) while the same day in Melbourne Casey spoke on the work of the Australian government at the Imperial Conference, although the federal election was a month away. Labor Call, 26.8.37(3). Australian Worker, 18.8.37(11). For 'Till the Day I Die', Daily Telegraph, 23.7.36(1 and 2), 25.7.36(5), 31.7.36(2). Melbourne Herald, 21.10.36(1 and 2). Australian Quarterly, December 1936, p.120.
Collingwood refused permission for 'Till the Day I Die' to be produced in their Hall. The A.B.C. instructed Miss Ann Caton, of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, London, to delete the word 'German' from a reference to the planes which bombed Guernica. She refused to give the talk.\(^1\) A definite and determined effort was apparently made by diverse authorities, prompted by the Federal government, to reduce criticism of the Axis.

Such efforts were doomed to failure. The opposite view to that of the dictators was put. Thus Professor D.B. Copland, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce at Melbourne University, on returning from a tour of Europe and America, said that 'fascism' rather than communism was the real menace to world peace. And the *Daily Telegraph* expressed mild surprise that a man who had shouted 'Down with fascism - Spain Today, Australia tomorrow!' was fined two pounds for 'offensive behaviour'. It was, the newspaper thought, 'a slogan all Australians hear in some form or other every day'. In May 1937, Dr Asmis, the German Consul-General, complained that he was finding it difficult to promote goodwill between Germany and Australia, and felt obliged to deny that German planes had bombed Guernica.\(^2\)

Nevertheless, if Australians heard the arguments of the two sides frequently, they did not appear to have been intensely moved by them. The general apathy towards the

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\(^2\) *Australian Worker*, 16.12.36(13). *Daily Telegraph*, 19.5.38, 1.5.37(5). That Asmis chose this incident suggests that it roused hostility to Germany in the population.
Spanish civil war was paralleled in the response to the Imperial Conference, and the search for an Agreement with Italy. None of these matters roused much comment or, apparently, attention. Various incidents, together with letters to the press and newspaper comment, however, suggest that there was an underlying hostility to the Axis, which further events were to bring into the open.

The argument so far is that the failure of the League in the Abyssinian crisis led to a weakening of faith, never very strong, in the international organisation, and a turning back to isolationist sentiment by nearly all sections of the population. Thus the press in general did not feel that Australia should be vitally concerned with the Spanish civil war, and was interested only in the implications of the war to the Empire. Ex-servicemen's associations also lost their interest in international affairs after the Abyssinian crisis. No annual Conference mentioned such matters after 1935. There seems to have been a fairly widespread feeling that Menzies was right and that the outcome of the Spanish civil war was not of much interest to a British community. The Non-Intervention policy was therefore supported, and only the Sydney Morning Herald and the Queensland Digger (and possibly the Watchman) advocated a stronger policy.

The Watchman scripts for the early part of 1938 have been lost. However, the Watchman had been interested in the Mediterranean in August 1937, and had implied disapproval of a rapprochement with Italy and expected Chamberlain to demand concessions. He had hopes of a Cabinet shuffle which would presage a firmer policy. At Home and Abroad, 3, 4 and 18 August 1937. Later in 1938 he violently opposed appeasement. See pp.349-51.
The greatest concern for the outcome of the civil war itself was shown by Catholics and communists. Both felt that the war proved correct their opinions of world politics, and both made a definite bid to influence public opinion. Both failed. Although certain intellectuals and others were moved by communist arguments, and the Spanish Relief Committee met with moderate success - by Australian standards - the public was not roused in large numbers to demand a different policy, and there are signs that it was growing tired of constant appeals by 1939. Indeed there seems to have been a reaction against both sides and a strengthening of isolationist sentiment - a feeling that Australians were lucky to be away from the area of conflict. The Catholics, however, succeeded in keeping the war an issue before Australian eyes - which it might not otherwise have continued to be. Catholic Action emerged, and, by pressure within the political Labour movement petrified policy at the stage it had reached by the end of the Abyssinian crisis. The techniques tried at this time, and the mentality roused in the struggle, were to be seen again in the post-war era. However, within the trade unions the Catholics were not so successful even if they prevented official support for the Spanish government.

Australia, however, was particularly affected by the security of the Mediterranean route to Europe, not only for trade, but also for defence. Sympathy for Italy, whether Catholic or otherwise, was thus reinforced by vital interests. For the Spanish civil war cut across the Australian government's hopes of friendship with Italy, and meant that there were renewed hostilities in the Mediterranean. The tradition - developed to maintain the White Australia policy - that there should be no
interference in the domestic affairs of any country by outsiders, was thus logically the one to follow. It was given added point by the reflection that intervention on the side which lost in Spain would only jeopardise Imperial access to the Mediterranean. Strict neutrality, together with a search for a negotiated settlement with Italy, was thus the wisest policy.

It was also supported by a number of intellectuals. Accustomed to regarding international affairs as amenable to reason and logic, and holding to the view that the causes of the tension were to be found in economic inequalities, together with ill-treatment of Germany and injustice to Italy after the war, these men urged the governments of both Britain and Australia to negotiate with Italy to remove all outstanding grievances and difficulties. They failed to realise that Mussolini sought aggrandizement, and would accept all he could in preparation for further demands. His appetite was insatiable while he suspected weakness in others.¹

The Australian government applied its policy at home by suppressing criticism of the Axis (despite Menzies appeal to the public to take a more lively interest in international affairs, the government and those in authority regarded critics as either trouble-makers or fools), and abroad by urging the British to come to an agreement with Italy. The Imperial Conference was merely one incident in the Australian government's consistent policy. Despite Lyons' statements on Eden's resignation, he was probably

¹'Mussolini, when he has obtained something, always asks for more'. Ciano in Ciano's Diary 1939-42, London 1947, p. 83. This characteristic of the fascist leaders - Ciano included - comes out very clearly in the Diary.
content to see him go. For Lyons was an admirer of Chamberlain, and fervently hoped that by his policy the peace of the world might be preserved.

Some people, however, were beginning to doubt the wisdom of granting concessions to persons as indifferent to their promises as the dictators were. Although the Anglo-Italian Agreement was welcomed by all the newspapers except the Telegraph, strong reservations were held by several. So too the working man, who rarely if ever read editorials, would see the pictures of destruction in Spain as he turned to the sporting pages. In this respect Guernica and similar incidents were important. They created an impression which would remain, and caused a dislike of the Axis that could be brought into the open at a later date.

The civil war, however, was a long way away, did not directly affect Australia, and involved unpleasant incidents and doctrines on both sides. Most Australians, therefore, did not feel any need for involvement by their own country. If some people in Britain had begun to have an uneasy feeling in 1935 that the dictators might have to be met by force, that feeling did not manifest itself widely in Australia until 1938. The seeds of doubt however began to grow when Hitler embarked on his series of aggressions in Central Europe. The change was slow, partly because of the factors already mentioned - the effects of the World War and the depression, distance, sympathy with some of the dictators' aims and antipathy to communism - and also because Hitler's facade of legality and skilful rationalisations hid the true nature of the threat. Moreover, in a situation of doubt and no direct involvement, it was the well-established habit to fall
back on the policy adopted by the British government - especially if that policy was to avoid war. It was natural therefore that the first of Hitler's major aggressions should be met with the old reactions of isolationism, and an attempt to find a reasonable settlement.

By the outbreak of the second world war, this policy was seen to be unprofitable and abandoned. The turning point occurred at different times with different individuals and groups. But whereas in September 1936 no section of Australian opinion studied in this thesis would have accepted a war without doubts and divisions, and some would have completely opposed it, in September 1939 every section - if only for a short time - felt that war was unavoidable and that Britain's action was justified. The theme of the remaining part of the thesis is therefore the change of opinion in each group studied - to see how and when this unanimity was achieved.
'The latest occurrences in Europe have brought us up against a stern reality which we in this country were inclined to ignore or overlook.

We are an integral part of the living, pulsing world, profoundly affected by everything that befalls it - its hopes, fears, ills, misfortunes, crimes, injustices and perils'.


"...'where Britain stands, there stand the people of the entire British world'.

R.G. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, Speech to the Australian people on the outbreak of war,

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1939, p.11.
CHAPTER VII

The Australian Government and Appeasement

French and European security against a resurgence of German military power was provided for in the peace treaties by the demilitarisation of the Rhineland, the temporary cession of the Saar to France, and provisions preventing German rearmament and unity with Austria. Moreover France had built the Maginot line, and concluded alliances with the Little Entente, including Czechoslovakia, and later Russia. Czechoslovakia herself was protected by another line of fortifications along her mountainous northern frontier. On the East, Germany was bordered by a resurrected Poland, which controlled the 'Polish corridor' to the Sea, where stood the 'free port' of Danzig. This corridor divided East Prussia from the rest of Germany.

Central Europe after 1919
The remilitarisation of the Rhineland by Germany was a serious blow to this system, and also to French prestige, since if France did not react to such a direct breach of the treaties, and threat to herself, she would be little likely to respond to threats to her more distant allies. Moreover, once the Germans had built the 'Siegefried line' in the Rhineland, France was in no position to act decisively in Eastern Europe, even if she had been willing. Accordingly, France lost much of her influence among her allies there, and Germany secured her right flank for a drive southwards into Austria.

By 1938, then, Hitler had made considerable progress in overthrowing the restrictions imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. He had introduced conscription, begun rearmament, regained the Saar in a plebiscite, and re-militarised the Rhineland. His further ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe required next the elimination of Austria and Czechoslovakia.
Mutual rivalries had prevented these two countries, and the other States which had resulted from the break up of the Hapsburg Empire, from achieving the unity necessary for strength. Mussolini's action, rather than any by either the Western powers or the 'Succession States', had alone prevented Hitler's bid to unite Austria with the Reich after the murder of Dollfuss in 1934. By the Rome-Berlin Axis, October 1936, and Mussolini's visit to Germany, September 1937, Hitler won Italian acquiescence in any future German pressure on Austria.

In February 1938, therefore, Hitler invited the Austrian Chancellor, Schuschnigg, who had continued the clerico-fascist regime since 1934, to visit Berchtesgaden. There, under pressure, Schuschnigg agreed to lift the ban on the Austrian Nazi party, and to appoint leading Nazis to his Cabinet. Once back in Austria, however, Schuschnigg decided to hold a plebiscite. Hitler, forced into the open, passed orders to the Austrian Nazis to create disturbance and riot, and, by threatening to invade Austria, forced Schuschnigg to resign on 11 March 1938. German troops occupied Austria 'to quell disorder'. The legal Anschluss - or total fusion of the country into Germany - followed. Although this action was a direct breach of Versailles, and much post-war policy, and drastically weakened the position of France, the Western Powers made a complaint only against the method of the union. Many felt that Austrians were German by race, and the Anschluss 'inevitable'. Yet it not only added seven million people to the Reich, but meant that Germany
After the Anschluss

now flanked Czechoslovakia on three sides, and by-passed her northern mountain fortifications. Moreover it convinced Hitler that neither Britain nor France would act to stop him.

Czechoslovakia, a democracy established by the Peace treaties, had large minorities of Slovaks, Ruthenians, Magyars, and, more important, Sudeten Germans. The latter, although suffering certain disabilities, were, by European
standards, not badly treated. However, under the leadership of Henlein, local Nazis demanded first almost impossible rights of autonomy, and, when the Czech government agreed to these in principle, complete union with Germany. Chamberlain, abandoning isolationism, decided to intervene to impose a settlement on the parties, if necessary against the interests of the Czechs. Runciman, ostensibly a mediator, produced a pro-Henlein report. When Hitler-inspired trouble increased, Chamberlain flew to Berchtesgaden on 15 September, to find out exactly what Hitler wanted. After the British and French Cabinets had accepted the German terms, Chamberlain flew to tell Hitler so at Godesberg on 22 September, only to find that Hitler's demands had increased. When war seemed inevitable, an appeal to Mussolini to intervene led to the Munich Conference, 29 September, at which the Czechs were not represented. The German terms were forced on Czechoslovakia.

The immediate public reaction was one of intense relief at the avoidance of war, but with time the sceptics gained more support. The arrogant way in which the Germans interpreted the agreement in their own favour, the Polish and Hungarian demands against the prostrate Republic, and even more the Nazi pogrom against the

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1 Shirer, *Third Reich*, p. 415, quotes documents to prove that the 'Italian compromise proposals' had in fact been concocted in Berlin, and telephoned to Mussolini in Rome.
Jews after the murder of Von Rath,\(^1\) led to second thoughts. These were confirmed when German troops occupied Prague in March 1939 to establish a 'Protectorate'; the President Hacha having been summoned previously to Berlin and maltreated into asking for it. An 'independent' Slovakia was established, but in fact Germany controlled the country, and German troops now extended along the Polish Southern frontier.

\(^1\) On 7 November 1938 a German-Jewish refugee, Grynszpan, shot and killed the third secretary of the German embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath, in revenge for the German persecution of the Jews, in which is father had suffered. On the night of 9-10 November, the worst pogrom till then in Germany, organised by Goebbels and carried out by the S.D. and the S.S., occurred. The preliminary report stated that 815 shops, 171 houses and 119 synagogues were destroyed, 36 Jews killed and 20,000 arrested. Afterwards the Nazi government fined the Jews a million marks, and confiscated their economic enterprises and property. \textit{Ibid.}, pp.430-34.
After snapping up the 'unconsidered trifle' of Memel, Hitler put pressure on Poland at Danzig and the corridor. Chamberlain meanwhile, faced by mounting opposition to his policy of appeasement, reluctantly abandoned that policy, and guaranteed first Poland, and then Rumania, Greece and Turkey against German aggression. The only practical way to defend Eastern Europe however was in alliance with Soviet Russia — and arguments on the possibility or desirability of this raged during the summer of 1939. The Russo-German Pact settled these arguments and made Poland indefensible. The German invasion of 1 September 1939 led Britain, two days later, to put into effect its promise of immediate assistance. The second world war began.  

The reaction of the Australian government to the foregoing events is the subject of this Chapter. In it an attempt will be made to distinguish between the views of various members of the Cabinet, to see who supported or advocated the different policies. Lyons' Cabinet comprised such a small group that personalities were bound to be important. Moreover, in R.G. Menzies and W.M. Hughes it possessed men of such stature that their opinions deserve attention, especially since they frequently made statements

1 Danzig a 'free port' was under its own city government, guaranteed by the League of Nations. However by this time the League had sunk into impotence, and the local Nazis completely controlled the city. Numerous frontier and customs incidents could be created to stir up a *casus belli*.  
2 A discussion of certain of the details of this story occurs at the appropriate place in the thesis.
which were either not in accord with the remarks of Lyons or else contradicted them. For the theory of Cabinet unanimity had not gained the hold in Australia that it had in England. Lyons' Cabinets were probably the most discordant in Australian history, and this, his last, was the most divided of all. (In this chapter, therefore, the phrase 'the Cabinet...' is used where a decision was clearly made by the Cabinet as a group. Statements attributed to Lyons are those which, for various reasons, can be assumed to reflect his personal reaction.) In short, there was much less coherence in the Australian government's views on foreign policy than a written account is liable to suggest. Lyons, despite ill health, continued in office because he alone held the squabbling sections of the government together.\(^1\)

Finally, some remarks should perhaps be made on the word 'appeasement'. Since this era it has gained overtones which hinder clear thought. As noted previously,\(^2\) it was used by government supporters to mean the avoidance of war by conciliation of possible enemies - removing their grievances by concessions and compromise. Such a policy is not necessarily unwise or immoral. However, it can be accused of immorality if the interests of third parties, rather than those of the disputants, are sacrificed, or previous promises broken, or the subject for compromise

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\(^1\) The division between Menzies, aspiring for the Prime Ministership, and Page, has already been noted, see p.13. The Times, 3,4,8,9, and 10 November 1938, reported unseemly squabbles between members of the Cabinet for positions and prestige, with Page having the ear of Lyons. It appears that Menzies and Gullett opposed Thorby and the Country Party, the opposition to Lyons in the Cabinet being led by Menzies. For the Cabinet members, see Appendix D.

\(^2\) See p.37.
is immoral in itself. The wisdom of appeasement is a separate matter. A judgement on it requires an assessment of how successful and permanent any agreement is likely to be, whether a satisfactory quid pro quo is obtained, and how far compromise might affect the future position of the 'appeaser'. It might, of course, be necessary to support a policy of appeasement, not from a belief in a lasting result, but as a temporary measure to gain time to remedy a weak situation.

In succeeding pages the external and internal policies of the Australian government will first be studied. It should then be possible to decide how far the government supported 'appeasement', from what motives, and whether it held in its ranks any who disagreed with the majority.

Lyons' government, as we have seen, had by 1938 supported the appeasement of Italy for some time. It naturally, therefore, when Hitler began his series of aggressions that threatened war, favoured the application of a similar policy to Germany. A difference was soon apparent, however, between the various members of the Cabinet.

Lyons' support for appeasement was probably a matter of emotion, but a pragmatic defence was provided by R.G. Menzies. He had visited England in 1936, and in a series of articles written on his return praised Baldwin, opposed the anti-Germanism of France, and looked to an

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1 See p.13 for Lyons' visits to the war graves in Northern France.
agreement with Germany. He was in England again from 28 April to 8 August 1938, as a member of the Australian trade delegation - which included White and Page - and while there was invited to make a short trip to Germany, where he saw Henderson and Schacht. He seems to have identified himself completely with the circles in London which supported the appeasement of Germany. On his return to Australia he adopted the pose of the 'expert' who had visited Europe. He assured listeners that German intentions were defensive, not aggressive, and that though totalitarian rule was not suited to the genius of the British people, there was a great deal of 'spiritual quality' in the willingness of young Germans to serve the State. He blamed the earlier treatment of Germany for the rise of Hitler. As for Czechoslovakia, Menzies adopted the idea of The Times that the only solution was a federal state, like Switzerland, under international guarantee. He insisted that there were two sides to the question, and that Germany had a 'prima facie' case.

His most outspoken opponent was W.M. Hughes. The old fire-eater had always regarded international affairs as the lawless realm of power politics. For this reason he had opposed Wilson's idealism in 1919, had put little faith in the League, and criticised the theory of appeasement

1 Argus, 1-6.8.36.
2 The Times, 28.4.38, 9.8.38. According to P. Heydon, the people Menzies saw, apart from single visits to Churchill and Eden, and many to Amery, were Chamberlain, Halifax, Lord Stanley, Oliver Stanley, Malcolm MacDonald, W.S. Morrison, Dawson of the Times and many lawyers. In Germany he saw Weizacker, Schacht and Neville Henderson. The latter probably was a major influence, as doubtless Bruce himself was.
when there was talk of partitioning Abyssinia in 1935.\textsuperscript{1}
Hughes' conception of international relations may have been narrow, but by chance it fitted perfectly the policies the dictators were adopting. Unfortunately, Hughes' rather crude power politics repelled his associates; they could not see that in the situation as it was Hughes might well be right. The old man was past his prime, was distrusted on both sides of the house, and had not the organisation or the capacity to rally and lead a sustained opposition within the community. All his feelings, however, revolted against giving way to force. Only strength, and the confidence it provided, could, Hughes felt, enable them to avoid vacillation and weakness, the inexcusable blunders of diplomacy.\textsuperscript{2}

The Cabinet, however, was not swayed by Hughes' feelings. After the Anschluss, Lyons appealed for calmness and restraint, and declared that tension had been relieved when Chamberlain had received assurances from Hitler that there were no designs on Czechoslovakia. Lyons, indeed, approved of Chamberlain's double policy of refusing to guarantee that country while at the same time pointing out that Britain might well be involved in any European war. Such a policy was quite useless to deter Hitler from further aggression, but the Australian government approved of it because it avoided definite commitments and enabled peace overtures to continue. Lyons' main concern at that time was the Anglo-Italian Agreement. Meanwhile, Menzies in London said that Europe was more stable than in 1936, and that the Anschluss did not necessarily

\textsuperscript{1}W.M. Hughes, \textit{Australia and War Today}, pp.154-5.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Age}, 9.8.38(11).
strengthen Germany, owing to difficulties the Germans would meet in administering the country.\(^1\) Despite such apparent optimism, the government was clearly anxious about Czechoslovakia. It placed its faith in Chamberlain, Menzies praising him for his flexibility and sense, Lyons for his 'courage and clear foresight'.\(^2\)

During the Czechoslovakian crisis there was very close consultation between the British government and the Australian. The latter not only supported all the measures Chamberlain took, but also did its best to urge the British government to appease Hitler. At the time of the Runciman mission, which it warmly supported, it wanted the Czech government to make an immediate public statement of the most liberal concessions it could offer. K. Officer in America thought it advised Britain not to be manoeuvred into going to war over the issue. 'The Rhineland was the furthest frontier that Australian public opinion could allow Great Britain'.\(^3\) The Cabinet knew beforehand of Chamberlain's proposal to visit Hitler, debated it in a thirteen-hour session, and sent a cable warmly supporting him, for which it received his thanks.\(^4\) According to

\(^{1}\) SMH, 14.3.38(14). Argus, 22.3.38(3). CPD 155/537/27.4.38. SMH, 1.8.38(12).


Macleod, it opposed strong action after Godesberg. 1
When Hitler put forward his deadline for acceptance of
his terms to 2 p.m., 28 September 1938, Lyons, after a
long Cabinet session, both telephoned and cabled
Chamberlain, suggesting an appeal to Mussolini and
offering the services of Bruce. 2 He cabled Roosevelt and
asked him to act as a mediator. When the news of the
Munich settlement arrived, he sent a cable of congratulations
and gratitude to Chamberlain, called for a day of
Thanksgiving, and retired to Tasmania. 3

Page, for the government, alleged in federal
Parliament that the agreement was much more favourable to
Czecho-Slovakia than the previous German memorandum,

1
2
SMH, 30.9.38(11). In Parliament he later implied that
it was as a result of his action that the Munich conference
was secured. CPD 157/332. Dame Enid claims the credit
for herself, asserting she suggested the appeal to
Mussolini when Lyons telephoned her. My Life, p.34. A
comparison of the dates and times with the published British
documents reveals however that Chamberlain had already
authorised Perth to appeal to Mussolini before Lyons'
message arrived. E.L. Woodward and R. Butler (Eds.)
Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-39. Third Series,
Britain, and delays in coding and decoding cables, the
Australian government was unlikely to be able to reply to
the British government before the latter had come to a
decision.
3
CPD 157/388. SMH, 3.10.38(11). For the text of the
cable to Chamberlain, see Macleod, Chamberlain, p.270.
Lyons had previously called for a Day of Prayer, when
opening the Lapstone Conference, for the aid of, as he
put it, 'a Higher Power' to bring peace. Current Notes,
vol.V, pp.107-10. As for Lyons' return to Tasmania, his
health was already breaking under the strain of holding
his divided Cabinet together and the international tension.
Six months later he was to die of a heart attack.
misrepresented its terms, and said that it was a satisfactory compromise which he hoped would inaugurate a new era. Menzies declared his 'unqualified regard' for Chamberlain's method, and repeated that the merits of the case were evenly divided. Chamberlain, he felt, had expressed the deep longing of the common man for peace. This support for Chamberlain was seen clearly in Current Notes.¹

Even some government supporters who praised Chamberlain, however, doubted the trustworthiness of Hitler's word.² More emphatically Hughes, then Minister for External Affairs, declared that the settlement was an illustration of his contention that force alone prevailed in international affairs. Despite appearances, 'actually nothing is changed; the danger is still there; in a little while the clouds will gather again¹. Treaties and the League were nothing but words, pounded in the dust by the juggernaut of force. Peace-loving powers had to unite

¹ CPD 157/388-92. For example, Page declared that the Czechs were to be allowed to take their foodstuffs, cattle, etc., with them, whereas a glance at the text of the Agreement he was tabling would have told him that it was not so agreed. Indeed, Hitler specifically refused to grant this right. Shirer, Third Reich, p.416. Despite this speech, Page in Truant Surgeon, Sydney, 1963, p.259 declared that the government was not blinded by flimsy hopes, but regarded the Munich settlement as merely a respite. For Menzies, CPD 157/430-33. He said that the Czechs had shown tactlessness and petty discrimination, making the Sudeten desire to rejoin the Reich perfectly natural. See Current Notes, vol.V, pp.235-57 for a very biased account of the post-Munich debate in the House of Commons.

against it, or be beaten down one by one.¹ Hughes' power politics, however, did not appeal to the House, still in the first flush of post-Munich relief and optimism.

That feeling, soon passed. A fortnight after the agreement Maj. Gen. G. Rankin told an ex-serviceman's reunion that he thought the day would come when they would have to fight the dictators, and would regret that they had allowed Czechoslovakia to be dismembered. Hutchinson at the same time was concerned about the working of the International Commission. He defended Czechoslovakian treatment of her minorities, castigated retreat before armed blackmail, and thought that Munich was 'a sorry spectacle'. German arrogance, their use of the agreement to extract all their demands, and the pogrom of November 1938, led to a further reversion of feeling. Even Lyons, prodded by Hutchinson, reluctantly mentioned the pogrom and admitted that the hopes of Munich had not been entirely fulfilled.² By the turn of the year the Department of External Affairs admitted the completeness of the German victory. Hughes, meanwhile, continued his advocacy of a clear firm policy based on adequate force.³

¹ CPD 157/400.
It was largely Hughes' persistence which led to a renewed effort to improve Australia's defence position, after the Anschluss defence expenditure had been more than doubled. In December 1938 a further increase was announced. A recruiting drive was begun, with Lyons speaking at public meetings in Melbourne and Adelaide and over the air. On 4 December he declared 'Would that you knew, while there is yet time, on what a slender thread peace in Australia depends', and in January he added that the peace of Australia, enjoyed for 150 years, might be broken. This last could only refer to a danger of invasion, and warranted Curtin's request that Lyons should summon Parliament. Lyons, however, refused to do so.\(^1\)

The government, despite its profession of faith in British policy, clearly had some misgivings and realised at last the danger of Australia's military weakness. Lyons, however, could not publicly stress the latter, partly because to do so would invite further aggression, and partly because he had himself been in office since 1931, and shared some of the blame for the situation. Moreover, bitter divisions had developed within the Cabinet, especially between Menzies and Page. To maintain Cabinet

\(^1\) When asking Curtin to join him in a recruiting drive, Hughes said 'if I can persuade him [Lyons] to make up his mind on a matter on which he appears now to have no mind'. The Cabinet was upset, as it was over Hughes later criticism of the Defence Department for incompetence. \(\text{Age, 26.11.38(31). Argus, 21.2.39(1). Hughes, backed by the R.S.L., was trying to 'ginger up' the defence drive. That it needed it, see Lt. Gen. E.K. Squires, Inspector General of the Australian Military forces, Argus, 28.8.39(9), and Gavin Long, To Benghazi, Chapter 1. For Lyons' speeches and Curtin, Age, 20.12.38(11). SMH, 5.12.38(11), 26.1.39(11). Argus, 15.12.38(1), 27.1.39-4.2.39.\)
unity, and his own position as leader, Lyons needed to avoid summoning Parliament, where divisions would come into the open; to be associated with a diplomatic success, such as Munich; and to stand before the electors as the man who had restored Australia's security. He was thus torn between lavishly praising Munich and declaring that dangers were still imminent. He did his best to suppress comment on international affairs by other Cabinet ministers, e.g., at the time of Hitler's Reichstag speech in January 1939. This enabled him to silence both Menzies and Hughes (for different reasons), and to maintain his prestige as leader by his own broadcasts.¹

The struggle behind the scenes came into the open in October 1938. Menzies, after praising the Munich Agreement and defending Germany as better governed under its dictatorship, added that the lesson of the crisis was to take the people fully into the confidence of the government, and to give them as inspiring leadership as that of the dictator countries. These remarks were clearly directed against Lyons.²

By January 1939, then, Lyons was meeting increasing trouble in his Cabinet, and doubts of the wisdom and permanence of Munich had grown. Despite Lyons' prohibition, Hughes had referred to the Reichstag speech, in a recruiting talk, and cast doubts on Hitler's word. He

¹ *Age*, 1.2.39(13). Menzies had to cancel a comment he was in process of making to the press when Lyons' request became known.

² *SMH*, 25.10.38(11). CPD 159/16/20.4.39 - for Page's later reference to the remarks. An informant declares that Menzies was reproached by Lyons for the speech.
also ran a campaign against any thought of returning New Guinea.¹ At this juncture S.M. Bruce² arrived in Australia for a visit and consultation, and took upon himself a vigorous advocacy of appeasement. Like Menzies, he criticised Czechoslovakia, drew a distinction between 'moderates' and 'extremists' in Germany, adding that the 'people' desired peace, and lauded the policy of the British Conservative government in immoderate terms. He declared that the international situation was improving every day. Although Bruce had not intended to use his visit in this way, he arrived at a time when Lyons needed all the help he could get, both to maintain faith in appeasement and to enable him to avoid summoning Parliament. Bruce visited State capitals and spoke to their Cabinets, Federal members, and to the National Defence Council. He gave a three-hour address to M.H.R.'s in Canberra. Even after the German occupation of Prague - which destroyed his case, and vindicated the doubters - Bruce's first reaction was to maintain an optimistic pose. Things, though serious, were, he felt, improving every day.³

¹ Age, 3.2.39(11). Argus, 2.2.39(11).
² Bruce, after his defeat as Prime Minister, had become High Commissioner for Australia in Great Britain (1933-45). He perhaps used his visit to sound his ex-colleagues on the possibility of a return to the Prime Ministership. As a result, a coolness is said to have developed between him and Menzies.
³ According to P. Heydon, Bruce's visit to Australia had been arranged before Munich, when the Australian delegation was in London. Interview cited. For his visit to the State capitals, Age, 2.2.39(9). SMH, 9.2.39(11), 25.3.39(10), 31.3.39(10). For his immoderate support for appeasement, SMH, 25.1.39(17-18), 8.2.39(17). Argus, 17.3.39(11). For 'moderates' v. 'extremists' in Germany, Argus, 28.1.39(7).
Lyons immediate reaction to Prague was similar to that of Chamberlain. Despite 'profound disappointment and alarm' he still asserted that the damage was not irreparable. Chamberlain himself, however, soon adopted a firmer line, and the rumoured threat to Rumania led his government to consider some sort of alliance in Eastern Europe to counter German aggression. The Australian Cabinet was informed of Britain's intentions, and after a protracted debate declared that it supported the new policy. As a result, Lyons publicly noted the abandonment of racial limits to Nazi power, and the German technique of aggression, and abandoned all hopes of further appeasement. It must have been a bitter moment for him, to have to admit the futility of all his hopes, and the realisation of failure probably contributed to his death.

Hughes regarded Prague as the final proof of the futility of appeasement. He declared that the evidence was accumulating that the Munich Agreement did not represent German intentions, and that Europe faced the threat of deliberate aggression. Australia, relying on Britain for her main defence, was vitally concerned with any challenge to Britain's position. In a talk on 2GB he made a scathing and outright attack on the doctrine of appeasement, declaring that Munich had been an attempt to placate the implacable, and that there would be no peace or security until the aggressors were confronted with drawn swords, and told 'This far and no further'.

\[1\] SMH, 18.3.39(11).
\[2\] Ibid., 20.3.39(11), 22.3.39(17), 24.3.39(11). Page, in a broadcast on 7 April, implied that the occupation of Prague was one of the factors which led to Lyons death. The Times, 8.4.39.
Democracy could not ignore the arrogant challenge of the Totalitarian States. He felt that Prague had nullified all the efforts of rearmament that Britain and Australia had made in recent months.¹

Lyons' death, however, on 7 April 1939, left the way open for the Prime Ministership of R.G. Menzies, who still maintained his defence both of Germany and the Munich agreement. He declared at the end of March that the door to negotiation had to be kept open. He still said that German actions were the result of harshness to Germany in the Versailles Treaty and in the years since 1919, and declared, as he had after the Anschluss, that the latest acquisition of territory would provide Germany with immense problems. 'I do not accept the doctrine of an unimpeded march by Germany to a territorial conquest of middle and south-eastern Europe'. War was not inevitable. At all costs they should avoid dividing the nations into two camps. Menzies and some of his supporters even continued to defend the internal policies of the dictatorships, for they had not yet finally discarded the idea of a negotiated settlement.²

¹ Statement tabled in the House of Representatives. See Current Notes, vol.VI, pp.178-93. SMH, 20.3.39(11). His condemnation of Munich was more sweeping than this suggests. The full text is in the Hughes papers. A.N.L. SMH, 27.3.39(12). Hughes had always been very conscious of the military aspect of appeasement.

² SMH, 28.3.39(11). Menzies admired the economic recovery of Germany, West Australian, 13.7.39(18). Guilett spoke of Mussolini's 'genius, his patriotism...and almost superhuman capacity' and Hitler's 'shining record of service to his people'. CPD 159/197. For other representative comments see SMH, 27.4.39(9), 13.6.39(11), CPD 159/234.
Opposition to further appeasement however was becoming more vocal. Hughes declared that only force would stop Germany, and implied that it would be used next time. Marr and Senator McLeay began to have doubts, but Hutchinson went the furthest, declaring that the democracies should have acted sooner, that Britain had shown 'weakness and vacillation', that the Axis was blatantly aggressive, and that it was a mistake to believe you could negotiate with such people. He hoped there would be no weakening in the new British policy.

The government however had not yet abandoned hopes of negotiation. Menzies still publicly defended the Munich Agreement, and declared that Germany had a case for sympathetic consideration in Danzig and the Polish Corridor. However, his firm conviction in the need for a common Imperial foreign policy, and the constitutional, practical, and emotional impossibility of Australian isolation, led him to support the British government's guarantees to Eastern European States. Moreover his faith in Chamberlain convinced him that the new policy, as the old, aimed at peace and accommodation. Privately the Cabinet probably liked the guarantees as little as did A.G. Cameron, who bitterly attacked the policy in Parliament. The trouble with Cameron's demonstration

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1 Argus, 27.3.39(2). SMH, 15.4.39(11). CPD 159/204, 206, 213-15 and 952.
SMH, 16.5.39(11). That a major consideration was following the British government is suggested by the lavish praises Menzies still bestowed on Chamberlain. Argus, 13.5.39(2). The Times, 25.5.39.
3 CPD 159/219-25. Cameron, a returned soldier, had a grasp of the strategic implications in the guarantees unusual in Parliament.
of the military impracticability of aiding Poland, and
Menzies continued search for negotiation, was that they
both led back to appeasement - which had demonstrably
failed. Other government members favoured a stronger
line. Gulllett declared that the Nazi regime was predatory
and aggressive, and Marr pointed to atrocities inside
Germany. The Department of External Affairs, in Current
Notes gave unqualified support to the Polish case for
Danzig and the Corridor.¹

Immediate interest, however, was not so much centred
on Poland as on the proposed Pact with Russia. The
Department of External Affairs stressed Russian strength
and Hughes the urgent need for an ally.² The Cabinet,
however, feared that such a pact would lead Japan to
co-operate closely with the Axis, and so make inevitable
a war in the Pacific simultaneously with one in Europe -
a situation in which Britain could not send sufficient
strength to Singapore, and Australia would be left to
defend herself. The Commonwealth government therefore
'emphasised the special interests of Australia in the
Pacific' but 'said nothing that would prejudice a better
understanding...of a non-aggressive kind, with Russia'.³
The government was probably more reluctant than Menzies'
words would imply, for Gulllett admitted later that it
followed the negotiations closely, and while supporting
the move insisted that any pact should apply only to

³ Menzies, CPD 159/605.
Europe, and not prejudice Japanese interests in any way. Its advice to Britain was not likely to lessen Chamberlain's caution. When the Russo-German pact ended discussions, Cabinet ministers expressed relief that this would at least alienate Japan from the Axis, and make war in the Pacific unlikely.

Even before the Russo-German Pact, however, the tone of governmental remarks was hardening against Germany. At this time the Cabinet recognised the methods Hitler had used, but not that the alleged German grievances were mere camouflage for straightforward aggression. Menzies, for example, still declared that there were two sides to the Polish question, but at least insisted that the matter be settled by peaceful means, and not by force or the threat of force. The absorption of Poland would only lead the way to further German claims. The government therefore wanted Poland to negotiate, but added that this was conditional upon Germany being reasonable and the signing of a general European settlement. It felt that the allies should adopt a liberal and generous approach to Hitler's proposals, as long as the generosity was at their own expense [*sic*], and they did not connive at a settlement which would leave Poland at such a disadvantage that its

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2 SMH, 25.8.39(11).
3 Menzies praised democracy, and declared they would not sit quietly by while the things they stood for were driven out of the world. Argus, 14.8.39(11).
future history would resemble that of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{1} Gullett declared that Poland would not be let down.\textsuperscript{2}

Yet the government was still seeking negotiation, and apparently had hopes from it. Menzies took some pains to counter the feeling that war was inevitable. He attacked 'the jitters' on the stock exchange, talked of the 'outpourings of peace in the minds of the people', urged that they should give up talking about the inevitability of war and talk instead of peace and happiness, and declared that time worked for peace.\textsuperscript{3} Even more significantly, he played a 'conspicuous part' in persuading the Cabinet not to raise the pitifully small force of 1371 regular soldiers which the Lyons government had authorised in March as a nucleus of a regular army. The reasons Menzies gave were economy, and also the difficulty of readjustments when the war dangers had passed.\textsuperscript{4}

Hughes did not share Menzies' optimism. He postulated a lightning swoop by the Nazis on southeastern Europe, followed by the devastation of German cities by allied bombers. A reprimand from Menzies was expected by the newspapers. If it was made, it had little effect, for on 21 August Hughes declared that New Guinea was the one tangible thing which came out of the

\textsuperscript{1} CPD 161/32.
\textsuperscript{2} SMH, 21.8.39(12).
\textsuperscript{4} Argus, 28.8.39(9).
\textsuperscript{4} SMH, 3.8.39(9), quoted Gavin Long, To Benghazi, p.29.
war for Australia, that bombers placed there were within range of major Australian cities, and 'what we have we hold'.

Menzies, however, still had not grasped the nature of the German regime. He was moderately optimistic on 30 August, and said that in the discussions he thought were proceeding, 'good sense and fairness will have a better opportunity of succeeding', and talked of 'the problem' - whereas the real problem was not Poland at all but Hitler's intentions. The German invasion of Poland finally lifted the veil, and revealed for Menzies the truth his critics had long realised - that Mein Kampf did express Hitler's aims, and that it was useless to discuss in reasonable terms problems which Hitler had himself created in order to cover his plans of aggrandizement.

The government's reaction to the outbreak of war was, given the preceding developments, inevitable. Menzies throughout the period had been the most consistent exponent of the doctrine of the indivisible crown. No separate declaration of war by Australia was necessary. Government supporters, whose ideology stressed loyalty to Britain, rallied to the cause.

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1 SMH, 16.8.39(17), 17.8.39(11) - Late Edition only.
2 SMH, 31.8.39(9).
3 SMH, 2.9.39(17), 4.9.39(11).
4 CPD 161/11 (Sen. Abbott), 20 (Sen. Macdonald), 44(Page), 47(White), 62(Gullett). Although Page said the matter was one of Hitler against the British Empire, he was careful to insist that contracts for the sale of produce to Britain be for one year only, so that primary producers could increase their prices.
The internal policy of the Australian government mirrored its attitude to external events. The Lyons government, divided and flustered by foreign affairs, continued to avoid, and if possible suppress, discussion of such matters by the public. Thus Lyons declined to summon Parliament during the various crisis he publicly stressed. When Parliament was sitting, he evaded requests for a debate. When foreign affairs were nevertheless mentioned, his government, instead of openly stating the policy it followed, merely declared that it was in close and constant communication with the British government. It refused, naturally, to reveal any of the details of that correspondence.¹

The Australian government also apparently felt that it should make every effort to help the cause of appeasement abroad by muzzling criticism of, or remarks judged offensive to, the Axis within Australia. Thus in March 1938, a rather dramatic advertisement of the radio programme 'Time Marches On' — dealing with the Anschluss — provoked the P.M.G.'s department to telephone the studio to prevent its repetition. Lyons asked the press to subdue its comments on the Anschluss 'in the National interest', and had no qualms about so doing.²

¹ CPD 155/1065, 1376-7, 156/2253. Compare and contrast Gullett 159/193. For the correspondence with Britain, CPD 155/545, 158/1525. The government implied that it was fully informed of all events in the world. The Russo-German Pact, however, proved the fallacy of this contention. CPD 159/1061. Argus, 23.8.39(7). SMH, 24.8.39(9). There is some evidence that the postponement of debate in Parliament after Berchtesgaden was at the request of Chamberlain. Caucus Minutes, 21.9.38.

² Argus, 17.3.38(2). CPD 155/568/27.4.38.
Much more serious and noticeable, the A.B.C. so
censored a talk by Judge Foster, President of the
Victorian League of Nations Union, on 'Free Speech',
that the Judge refused to give it. From questions in
Parliament and by journalists, it became clear that the
censorship was imposed by W.J. Cleary, Chairman of the
A.B.C., but that the government had given instructions
to suppress all comment that could be offensive to the
dictators, in the belief that this would aid the cause
of peace. 

When Herr Asmis, the German Consul-General, in
December 1938, complained to Lyons of attacks on him in
the Labor Daily, and requested the government to stop
them, Lyons, instead of replying courteously that the
press in Australia was free, but that the government did
not approve of the Labor Daily's conduct, wrote a rather
abject apology, with profuse remarks about friendly
collaboration, giving Asmis permission to quote his views.
He probably had some part in the enforced resignation of
Eric Baume from his position as radio commentator on 2GB
after Baume had criticised Hitler, and talked of Nazi

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1 SMH, 5-12.5.38. CPD 155/1019. Daily Telegraph, 6.5.38(2)
said that after this last, Maclachlan added that the
desire of the government was not to permit provocative
statements to be broadcast on international affairs. The
desire of Australia was to be at peace with all nations.
How those nations managed their domestic affairs was no
cconcern of Australia, and was no matter for comment that
might arouse their resentment. The full text of Judge
Foster's talk was given by the Sunday Sun, 8.5.38(13),
and also Australian Worker, 11.5.38(8 and 14). For the
repercussions in Victoria, see Labor Call, 19.5.38(1).
organisation in Australia. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lyons was reluctant to make a statement on the German pogrom against the Jews. The trouble was that the Labour Opposition, being isolationist and even more anxious to avoid European war than the government, was only too willing to see censorship 'in the interests of peace'.

The government, however, cannot altogether escape the suspicion that it took advantage of the excuse so provided to suppress criticism not only to the Axis, but of itself. Reading Judge Foster's talk it appears that his major criticism was not of the Axis, but of the Australian government for suppressing Australian freedom, at the time of the conscription referenda in the first world war, and during the Kisch affair in 1934. Eric Baume had not only criticised Hitler, but also Thorby and Page. In the same way, the new Post Master General, A.G. Cameron, cut 2KY off the air at one minute's notice,

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1 Asmis and the Labor Daily, SMH, 1.12.38(13). The Listening Post, 15.12.38(23) commented 'We have sacrificed much to avoid war. We have dimmed our prestige and even besmirched our honour'. For the incident involving Eric Baume, see p.336.

2 Labour members of Parliament continually attacked the press for 'war scares' and declared that they should be suppressed. See Senators Collings, Keane and Armour, CPD 159/379, 394-5, 951.
in the middle of a race commentary, because its commentator, J.K. Morley, had abused government members.¹

The most spectacular incident, however, occurred when H.G. Wells visited Australia for the A.N.Z.A.S. Conference in January 1939. Wells told press reporters that, in view of Hitler's theories and policy he could be regarded as a 'certifiable lunatic', and that Mussolini was 'a fantastic renegade from the socialist movement'. Lyons took notice of these remarks, and publicly rebuked Wells. When the latter made a non-committal and mild reply, Lyons declined to be placated, and declared that Wells' views were not those of the Commonwealth government. The latter was anxious to create conditions of peace. Acts or statements which jeopardised this needed close scrutiny. One wonders whether Asmis had complained again. At any rate, Lyons' comments were praised in the German press.

Wells, back in Britain, summed up the Australian government. Lyons, he declared, had laid bare 'all that is indecisive, disingenuous and dangerous in the present

¹ SMH, 22.12.38(11), 26.12.38(8). The main annoyance of the government appears to have been over Morley's comments on the Pig Iron dispute in Port Kembla, but Cameron was incensed by the implication that he had Nazi sympathies. Morley had also criticised Thorby. It is noticeable that the members of the Country Party, which usually held the Office of PMG, were particularly prone to use its powers of censorship to defend themselves from criticism. However, the fear of repercussions abroad was also evident. One of Cameron's demands on the station prior to reconnecting it with the transmitters, was reported to be that 'there shall be no radio comment which could be considered hostile to the government's foreign policy'. Daily News, 14.12.38(5).
leadership of British communities. He, Wells, had not only the right, but, by British tradition, the freedom, to discuss the mentality of the leader of Germany. But

I had insulted the head of a friendly State. It might annoy him, and then where should we all be? Lyons, like Chamberlain, manifestly suffers from delusions of sagacity, and thinks that by winks, nods, and secret talks, isolationist bargains are to be made. Miracle workers are not to be insulted by enquiries or embarrassed by comment until the job is done. They do not want to crush people, they want to paralyse them. They want a sort of world stoppage and to call it peace.¹

It is very noticeable that in internal matters a complete change occurred after Lyons' death. Menzies, although still a convinced supporter of Chamberlain, was by no means as sensitive as Lyons to public criticism, either of his Cabinet or the Axis. After Prague, Hughes refused to recognise the German consulate as representing Czechoslovakia. Gullett reproved a German Consular official for criticising England's attitude to the Danzig question, and his action was supported by Menzies.²

Some commentators have suggested that Lyons' suppression of debate was a result of 'Imperial Foreign policy'; that he did not want discussion, lest it lead to criticism of British policy or to pressure on the Australian government to follow a different course. He

¹ Quoted from the London News Chronicle, by Labor Call, 9.3.39(7). For the incident, see SMH, 5.1.39(10), 6.1.39(9), 7.1.39(17), 9.1.39(12), 10.1.39(13). As for the government dissociating itself from Wells' remarks, the irrepressible W.M. Hughes presided at one meeting and seemed to approve. SMH, 23.1.39(13).
could naturally not disclose the contents of British letters sent in confidence to the Australian government. Yet critics did not really want to know the contents of British letters, but the policy of their own government. It was because Lyons evaded this request by referring to letters, that critics became curious about them. Moreover, Menzies was as staunch a supporter of Imperial Foreign policy as Lyons, yet did not resort to the same measures. It is true that by April 1939 open appeasement had been abandoned by the British government. But the change of attitude in Australia to public debate appears to have been largely due to the personality of the members of the new Cabinet, and especially its leader. Lyons had always been uncertain in foreign affairs, and accordingly wanted to stifle discussion of them. He had no policy, except peace and following the British government. Menzies, more confident of his own powers of debate, allowed more foreign affairs statements and debates in the Australian Parliament. According to D.G.M. Jackson, even during the war Menzies did not exercise so strict a control over comment as Lyons did during the Abyssinian crisis.

The views of the various members of the Australian Cabinet, and the official policy of the government, have been traced from March 1938 to September 1939. The time has come to return to the considerations suggested at the beginning of this chapter. There it was remarked that a policy of appeasement could be accused of immorality if the interests of third parties were sacrificed. It is clear that in the Munich settlement the immediate loss was borne by the Czechs, and any ultimate weakness the
democracies suffered was far from their intention in signing the agreement. So too, it is clear that the Australian government expected the Czechs to make sacrifices in 'the general interest of peace' which it was not willing to make itself. In the nearer matter of New Guinea there was what amounted to a consensus of opinion that, as Pearce said, to accept German and Italian claims for colonial redistribution would only be submission to blackmail, and would not bring security. It was 'unthinkable' that Australia should hand over any territory. Hughes repeated Pearce's argument, and declared that they had built their church upon this rock, and all Hell would not shift it. Page in October 1938 declared that the League mandate was 'a sacred trust', and that any talk of surrendering the territory could only be described as cowardly and unjust. Lyons in November 1938 stated that the government had no intention of handing back New Guinea. The opponents of appeasement were forcing the hands of the others, but it is noticeable that no Australian seemed to realise that the arguments used so strongly against the return of New Guinea applied with even greater force to the return of the Sudetenland by the Czechs. It should have been possible for Australians to sympathise with the reluctance of the Czechs to give their mountain frontier to the strong, heavily-armed Germany, whose capital was only one hundred and sixty nine miles from their own.

The question whether Lyons, Menzies, and Bruce really believed what they said about Munich, or regarded it as a temporary respite, as Page has since claimed, is a difficult one. Naturally, a person who accepted Munich from a realisation of military weakness was not likely, for security reasons, to say so. Nevertheless, such a person would not defend the settlement too wholeheartedly, and would stress rather the need for rearmament. Judgement on the motives of Australia's leaders must therefore rest on the tone of their speeches and the issue of defence.

In this respect Menzies' support for Munich clearly went too far. He was under no necessity to defend the internal regime of Nazi Germany. It was not that any one of his statements, taken alone, was objectionable. But by continually stressing German industrial efficiency - declaring that in five years the country had been raised from bankruptcy to a dominant position, and that Hitler had done great things economically for Germany as well as raised the spirit of its people - he gave the impression that the Nazi regime was praiseworthy. Nor was he obliged to criticise the Czechs so wholeheartedly. It is true that he always insisted that there were two sides to the question, but he implied that the German one

1 SMH, 15.11.38(13). Argus, 15.10.38(8). He particularly emphasised this in West Australia in July 1939. See The Times, 19.7.39, West Australian, 13.7.39(18). Apart from the above, Maloney quoted Menzies as saying that he had great admiration for the Nazi regime in Germany, that she had a case against Czechoslovakia, and that they must not destroy Hitlerism, or talk about shooting Hitler. CPD 163/337/20.4.40. Menzies did not deny the remark, which fits in with his expressed attitude at the time.
was better - for example his remark that the Czechs had shown tactlessness and petty discrimination, making the Sudeten desire to join the Reich natural. That he was sometimes tempted to go on to accept German propaganda is seen in his statement that the Czechs had surrounded Germany with a ring of heavily-armed nations, and therefore brought German action upon themselves.¹

That Menzies believed appeasement would provide a permanent solution is suggested by his misjudgement of Hitler's motives. Just before Munich he said, 'If we could persuade Germany that we were prepared to give her justice, we might drive out the evil spirit of suspicion and hatred'.² Moreover, he continually underestimated the position of superiority that each new aggression gave Germany.³ In fact, he misunderstood both the causes and nature of the German challenge, the brutal efficiency of the regime, and its ultimate intentions. Even until the invasion of Poland he maintained the possibility of negotiation and compromise. That his remarks were sincere, was confirmed by his abandonment of the pitifully inadequate scheme for a regular army, and the reasons he gave for this.

It is noticeable indeed, that the great exponents of appeasement in Australia were not those who most emphasised the need for rearmament. Menzies hardly referred

¹ CPD 157/432-33. SMH, 12.12.38(11).
² The Times, 12.9.38.
³ See his remarks on the Anschluss and Prague. The latter provoked the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald to remark that his comforting words might have carried more conviction if Menzies had been a sounder guide to European affairs in the past. SMH, 29.3.39.
to it, and both he and Bruce overestimated the effect of British and Australian rearmament in their speeches. Lyons certainly spoke for the recruiting campaign, but the defence initiative came from others, particularly Hughes, who opposed appeasement.

The evidence suggests that Page is probably wrong, and that those of the government who supported appeasement did so because they believed it could work, and not as an expedient to buy time. This, of course, is not to suggest that there was any searching or coherent thought amongst most Cabinet ministers on the problem. Few probably really trusted Hitler, but they hoped that the worse would not come to the worst. If he could be bought off with territory, and Australia and the world could avoid war, so much the better. As for Menzies, his training as a lawyer probably led him to the wrong conclusions. An advocate is trained to see two sides to every question, and to put a case he may suspect to be bad. Menzie's protestations of personal loyalty to democracy – especially in view of his liberal attitude to censorship and Parliamentary debate – may be believed. But he also felt that he had to see good points in the Nazi regime; its very order and discipline were bound to appeal to the legal mind. He thus fell into the trap of defending it.

The greatest factor in the Australian government's support for appeasement would appear, however, to be the British government's policy. To start with, the Australian

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Menzies said 'Britain is probably two years better prepared to defend herself than she was last September'. SMH, 26.8.39(17-18). For Bruce, who also lauded Australian efforts, see SMH, 8.2.39(17), 25.2.39(13).
government was obliged to leave the initiative to Britain. Being twelve thousand miles from London, and without its own diplomatic service, it could neither influence events nor, in a period of acute and immediate crisis, even keep abreast of them. By the time the news of any particular incident or demand had reached Australia, and the Cabinet met and discussed it, Hitler had as like as not made a new move. Responsibility for decisions affecting the whole Empire was bound to rest with London.

Yet support for British policy was more than necessity; it was the result of sentiment. Lyons had adopted 'Tune in With Britain' as the slogan of his first government. Bruce had identified himself with the group in the British conservative party around Chamberlain, its policies and prestige. Menzies, in his visits to England, came under the same influence. His lavish praise for Chamberlain, and tendency to remark that Hitler was a bulwark against communism were two aspects of the same cause. It was therefore no wonder that Sir Alfred Zimmern noted 'an unmistakable Downing Street flavor in some of the recent Australian ministerial utterances on foreign affairs'.

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1 The absence of a diplomatic service was both a cause and a result of subservience to Britain. Thus Moffat Diary, 26 September 1935, p.38. 'There is no doubt that the Australian government is somewhat fearful of creating legations as it prefers any political question to be taken up by the British government'.

2 For Menzies, on Chamberlain, see Argus, 12.9.38(2), 17.9.38(2), 26.9.38(2). On communism, ibid., 1.5.39(11). He commented on the Russo-German Pact 'it is impossible to reconcile it with Herr Hitler's repeated claims to be Europe's bulwark against Russian communism', ibid., 23.8.39(7). Zimmern's comment was quoted in editorial, Labor Call, 12.1.39(4).
Finally, governmental theories led to support for Britain. As noted before, government members held strictly to the idea of an Imperial foreign policy. Menzies' speech, that it would be suicidal for each dominion to adopt a separate policy, but that each could say 'useful things to Britain at the right time' was made after the Munich crisis. As government members supported the idea of an Empire policy, in times of sudden emergency they felt they had to support Britain.

This leads naturally to the question of who influenced whom. Supporters of appeasement in Britain declared that 'the dominions' would not accept any other policy. Thus Dawson of The Times said that visits from dominion statesmen in 1938 convinced him that 'war with Germany at that time would have been misunderstood and resented from end to end of the Empire'. That this was a major motive with Dawson is asserted by both The History of the Times and Evelyn Wrench. The Times indeed, quoted

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1 See p.18.
Menzies' speeches with approval. But the Australians Dawson saw most often must have been Bruce and Menzies, whom he and his circle had impressed into supporting Chamberlain's policy. Thus the views of Dawson, the Round Table group, and the supporters of appeasement in England and Australia passed back and forth, each side quoting the other. S.M. Bruce would seem to have been a major link in the chain. If Dawson was not rationalising, he was at least citing his own influence to support his arguments. An Australian who saw Dawson at the time declares that he appeared to have made up his mind firmly, and that Menzies was more influenced by Dawson than Dawson by Menzies. Certainly Menzies' pro-German tone, and his support for Czechoslovakia's change to a federal State like Switzerland, were exactly akin to The Times' attitude.

1 Dawson's remark is in a letter quoted by Feiling, Life, p.362. See also E. Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times, London, 1955, p.374, 'the really vital factor in Geoffrey's mind...was his deep misgiving lest the United Kingdom government should be led into war in circumstances in which the Empire might not support us'. He 'was very sensitive...to the views of eminent men from the dominions who fostered this misgiving'. There is little doubt who the 'eminent men' were. On p.378 Wrench mentions that Bruce, very worried about the risk of war, visited Dawson on the 27 September. See also pp.376 and 379. The History of the Times, The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-48, Pt.II, 1921-48, London, 1952, pp.922, 949, 1003, 1005-6 etc. For The Times' quotations of Menzies, see 9.8.38, when it thought that his remarks were 'excellent as models of views that may hope to command very wide assent throughout the Commonwealth and Empire'. This was an example of Dawson's technique of quoting dominion statesmen who agreed with him as evidence for his own generalisations about dominion public opinion. It must be admitted that The Times often noticed Australia. On 26 January 1938, it published a special number for the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the colony.
in the summer of 1938.¹ Others too have blamed the dominions, either, like Lord Samuel, for influencing British policy, or like Schacht, for adding to Hitler's prestige by their visits. But, as Eggleston noted, 'It is a common and quite deceptive habit of British politicians to find, in Dominion opinion, an alibi for any course which they may wish to take'.²

In fact, both British and Australian supporters of appeasement adduced their counterparts as evidence that no other course was open to them. However, it seems very likely that both would have supported the policy in any case. It is difficult to imagine either Chamberlain or Lyons standing up to Hitler, whatever the other had said. It is quite clear that the Australian government supported appeasement intensely for reasons of its own - fear of Japan in the Pacific, and for the Mediterranean route to the East, and the characteristics of its leaders. On the other hand, Australia did not have the deep racial divisions that existed in South Africa and Canada. The plea that appeasement was the only policy that would keep the Empire united could with some reason refer to those two countries; it was not valid when applied to Australia. If Chamberlain had adopted a strong stand

¹ History of the Times, pp.920-1. Menzies' optimism in August 1939 echoes Lord Halifax's speech of 8 June, Current Notes, vol.VI, pp.281-3. While in England Menzies also came under the influence of Bruce. A coolness developed between the two men in 1939 however.

at Munich, and war had resulted, the Australian government would still have supported Britain. The background, theories and interests of its members would have led them to adopt the same course then as in September 1939. How far this is true of the Australian public will be discussed in later chapters.

Government supporters differed in the times when they abandoned hopes of appeasement. Doubts at the time of Munich, expressed by Holt, White, Hutchinson and Hughes, soon became stronger. By January 1939 even Lyons was disappointed, and the Department of External Affairs realised the worst. The arrival of Bruce for a while stayed the tide, but Prague ended faith in appeasement for all its major apologists except Menzies. He had stood out as its most extreme and consistent advocate, and did not fully abandon it until the invasion of Poland. In this matter, too, he resembled the British government, which changed its policy with reluctance, and still hoped against hope for a negotiated settlement.¹ There is, indeed, a strong similarity between the Australian government and that of Chamberlain, in the years 1938 and 1939.

CHAPTER VIII

Editorial Opinion

Since the major Australian newspapers and the R.S.L. magazines uniformly adopted a conservative standpoint, it is convenient to consider them immediately after the Australian government.

As a result of the Abyssinian crisis and the Spanish civil war, each newspaper and magazine had developed a more or less distinctive attitude towards foreign affairs. It was only natural that the same attitude should be adopted in response to Hitler's occupation of Austria in March 1938.

In Melbourne, for example, the Age and the Argus continued their support for British Empire isolationism. The Age implied that the Anschluss was not important enough to warrant a war, and was shocked by the method rather than the aim of Germany. It felt that the people of the dominions had 'a right to be protected...against embroilment in war over some European issue which in no way concerns them'. The fewer commitments Britain had to Europe, the better she could lead the Empire. The Argus said that Versailles had been an unjust treaty, representing the vengeance of France. Britain should abandon 'academic adherence to outworn treaties'. Though more openly hostile
to Germany than the Age, the Argus felt that Hitler would win in Europe and that nobody would move to stop him.¹

The danger to Czechoslovakia had been seen by both newspapers, but neither wanted Australia to be involved. Thus the Age, while it demanded a just settlement, declared that Czechoslovakia was an artificial state, and was glad that Chamberlain had given no pledges to it. Both newspapers praised Chamberlain's 'realism' and badly misjudged Hitler's intentions and power. The Age, however, was the more isolationist. Whereas the Argus felt that Hitler was bluffing, and therefore even favoured a British ultimatum to Germany, the Age thought it would only encourage Czech intransigence.²

Isolationism was forgotten for a moment in face of the Munich crisis. Both newspapers welcomed Chamberlain's flight to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The Age expected - the Argus demanded - Czech concessions. Both newspapers greeted the Munich pact with relief. The Age discussed the new method of approach while the Argus went into ecstasy, declaring that peace had been saved and was assured for the future.³

¹ Age, 14.3.38, 18.3.38. Argus, 14.3.38, 15.3.38.
² Age, 21.3.38, 24.5.38, 8.8.38, 14.9.38, 15.9.38, 28.9.38. Argus, 9.9.38, 14.9.38, 28.9.38. [The explanation of the Argus' policy is to be found in its complete miscalculation of German and British strength.]
The Sydney Morning Herald completely disagreed. It too had noted the danger to Czechoslovakia when Hitler occupied Austria. Indeed, it regarded the move as the first step to fulfil the program outlined in Mein Kampf. It insisted that a strong clear policy by Britain was essential.

non-German Europe has to face the stark fact that unless, somewhere, at some time a stand is made against the lawless ambitions of Nazified Prussianism, the larger part of the continent will fall under its sway.¹

The Sydney Morning Herald did not think that the Sudeten grievances were genuine. It stressed the strategic importance of Czechoslovakia to any country that wished to dominate Europe, and any opponents who wished to prevent it. The notion of appeasement through concessions and goodwill was 'sheer delusion', and merely whetted the aggressor's appetite. Czechoslovakia would be followed by Poland. The democracies could not avoid fighting such an inflated power sooner or later, and, without allies, would probably lose. Firmness, however, would save peace, both then and in the future. The journal therefore greeted the Berchtesgaden proposals with 'dismay and incredulity'. It felt that the history of modern Europe would have been searched in vain for such a capitulation before the threat of violence. Hitler, by a diplomatic victory, had overthrown the last obstacle to German domination of Central and Eastern Europe, and dealt British prestige a crushing blow.²

¹ SMH, 8.3.38, 14.3.38 (quotation), 17.3.38.
The Sydney Morning Herald appeared stunned by the Munich settlement. Although expressing relief that there was no war, it added that the question of guarantees to the truncated Czechoslovakia was vital. If Hitler was appeased, well and good, but if not, the balance of power was tipped heavily against the democracies. Such mild comment suggests indecision. Professor T.I. Moore, however, says that the first reaction of the editorial staff to Munich was one of intense shame. Britain, whose prestige and honour the Sydney Morning Herald had always valued, had betrayed the interests of a smaller country to protect herself.

With the shame went the uneasy feeling that such a policy would have its own reward. The Munich Pact would be 'as disastrous as it is disgraceful'. Within two days, therefore, the journal began to express stronger doubts. The pivot of French policy, the barrier to German domination, had gone, and the Western Powers had gained little in exchange. It expressed pity for the Czechs. Slowly it mounted a full-scale attack. On 5 October it suggested that as 'the hysteria of relief' had passed, the price could be assessed. Met immediately by Czechoslovakia - which henceforth would be indefensible - the cost would ultimately have to be paid by Britain and France. Successive surrender had only led to successive humiliations and cumulative weakness, in the loss of allies and strategic positions.

On 7 October it launched a vitriolic attack on Page's assertion that the Agreement represented a satisfactory compromise.
At the best, the Munich pact embodied a solution of the Sudeten problem so violent and so inimical to the long-range interests of the Western democracies as to be acceptable only as an alternative to war. At the worst it involved, in the words of Mr Churchill, 'a disaster of the first magnitude for Britain and France'.

The largest group of newspapers, however - those which seem to have followed British policy rather than their own wishes - consisted of the Melbourne Herald, the Daily Telegraph, and the West Australian.

The Melbourne Herald assumed that Britain would act at the time of the Anschluss, and declared in advance its approval. When the British policy of inaction became apparent, the Herald agreed with other journals that force would have been needed, and placed all its confidence in the wisdom of the British government. The people of the dominions, it said, had no certain knowledge of foreign affairs, and therefore they should support Chamberlain.

In the same way the Herald urged a compromise settlement of the Czechoslovakian problem. Germany, it declared, was intransigent, and was extending its tyranny into neighbouring countries. German hegemony of Europe threatened the peace of both the Empire and the world. But once again the Herald asserted - this time on the 9 September - that Australia was bound to follow Britain's lead and trust her absolutely. Lyons' policy of following Britain should therefore be supported. The Herald, however,

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1 Ibid., 1.10.38, 3.10.38, 5.10.38, 7.10.38. Interview with Professor T.I. Moore, cited.

2 Melbourne Herald, 12, 14, 15 and 18.3.38.
while approving of Chamberlain's attempts to maintain peace, expected it to be a 'peace with honour'.

The *West Australian* felt that the Anschluss was not quite clear enough as an act of aggression to justify war. It gave, however, the current doubts and uncertainties. It discussed at length the arguments for and against appeasement, and suggested that a stand might have to be made against Germany, whose policy was beginning to look suspiciously like that outlined in *Mein Kampf*. 2

The *Daily Telegraph* was more definite. It stressed the use of force in the Anschluss. A stand had to be made or Germany would dominate Europe and destroy Britain's allies one by one. It therefore accused Chamberlain of pursuing a weak and evasive policy, and implied he was sympathetic to fascism. It declared that the dictator's bluff could be called. As the crisis developed the *West Australian* came to agree, noting the strategic results if Czechoslovakia were absorbed by Germany.

However, as a result of Chamberlain's policy, both newspapers changed their attitude. The *West Australian* began tentatively to support appeasement after Chamberlain's flight to Berchtesgaden, although it implied reservations even with the Munich Agreement, about which it solemnly debated the pros and cons. The *Telegram* continued its opposition to conciliation until the end of September. Its reaction to the Godesberg meeting was to insist that Hitler should be told in clear terms that the allies would fight, comparing this with the lack of clarity in British

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1 Ibid., 28.5.38, 19 and 29.8.38, 9, 12, 15 and 20.9.38.
2 *West Australian*, 14, 16-18 and 23.3.38, 11.4.38.
CHAMBERLAIN TO DALADIER: "COME ON IN. THERE ARE NO SHARKS."

By FINEY

Daily Telegraph 20 September, 1938, p.6.
policy before the outbreak of the World War. However, it joyfully accepted the Munich Agreement, which it misrepresented as a surrender by Hitler before British strength. The Herald too thought that a new era had dawned, and that Hitler's move for European domination had been blocked.¹

All three newspapers, in short, despite reservations and doubts, followed British policy. All three, however, would possibly have been happier to see a stronger stand made by Britain on behalf of the Czechs, and stressed that unless a clear change of heart appeared in the German dictator, a definite stand against further German aggression would sooner or later have to be made.

Once the relief of Munich had begun to wear off the newspapers reacted true to form. The Age felt that Chamberlain had been proved right, that his system was a good one, and that appeasement should be continued, e.g. over Memel. It was optimistic as late as February 1939, on the occasion of Hitler's Reichstag speech. The Argus, while ignoring international affairs after Munich, agreed with the Age. The three newspapers which had supported appeasement tardily, and probably because it was Chamberlain's policy, began to express doubts. The pogrom in November 1938 seems to have had a great influence on all three. By December the Telegraph again favoured a strong policy, criticised Bruce and Chamberlain, and declared that Hitler's real aim had been to dominate the

strategically important Czechoslovakia. The Herald had by then abandoned its early optimism. It expressed the thoughts of all when it said, 'Britain and France...simply cannot be forced, retreat by retreat, into a position where the defence of their vital interests will be impossible'.

By 17 October the Sydney Morning Herald thought that the disastrous consequences of Munich were emerging. It too was shocked by the pogrom, but implied that Britain's military unpreparedness was almost a mitigation of Chamberlain's folly. However, it doubted whether Germany would have gone to war if Hitler had been squarely faced. As it was, there was no mistaking German ascendancy, or actions against Czechoslovakia, since Munich. The newspaper began to consider possible allies against the Nazi menace.1

The occupation of the remnants of Czechoslovakia presented the newspapers with a further intimation of Hitler's intentions. The Age, Argus and West Australian continued to approve of appeasement. The Age, although it demanded that the democracies look to their defences, implied that no major crisis had occurred, still less a call to intervene. The Argus agreed with the Age on the last point, but did admit that suspicion of Hitler had been justified. The West Australian was badly disappointed, but declared that the act was not technically aggression.2

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2 Age and West Australian, 16.3.39. Argus, 17.3.39.
These three newspapers, in fact, only changed their policy after Chamberlain had made his Birmingham speech, and the official British attempt to appease Germany had clearly ended. Even then the West Australian was cautious, and it seems to have been the German occupation of Memel, on 22 March which finally led it to accept the view that the policy of appeasement should end, and to support the British guarantees to Poland. The Argus too welcomed the firmness of the guarantee, and on 29 April openly abandoned both appeasement and Empire isolationism, and declared roundly that a threat to one country was threat to all, and could not be ignored. No nation could be neutral or impartial. The Age, however, appeared more anxious to avoid a heavy British commitment than to prevent further German aggression. It accepted the German account of the return of Memel at its face value, and was not unhappy about Chamberlain's new policy of commitments to Europe. It especially objected to the position where another country could commit Britain to war. Although welcoming the pledge to Poland, it attempted to hedge it round with restrictions. The conversion was clearly superficial. The Age had loyally followed the British government but in fact it longed for the old Imperial isolationism.\(^1\)

The Melbourne Herald and the Telegraph, on the contrary, immediately abandoned support for appeasement after the occupation of Prague. This, they declared, was 'the ultimate exposure of Hitlerism'. Pretence was futile. Nazi power threatened the whole of Europe and beyond, and

\(^1\) Age, 21-23.3.39, 31.3.39, 3 and 5.4.39. West Australian, 20, 22 and 23.3.39, 3 and 5.4.39. Argus, 21-22.3.39, 1, 3 and 29.4.39. Chamberlain's Birmingham speech, 'Is this the end of an old adventure or is it the beginning of a new?', was made on 17 March.
Britain had to mould an alliance against it. Both newspapers changed their policy before Chamberlain's Birmingham speech, and cannot be accused in this instance of merely following Britain. Both attacked the old policy of appeasement, and Chamberlain. As the Daily Telegraph said, the Munich agreement 'was a final gamble in the face of all that we knew or should have known about the morality of the man we gambled with'. Both stressed the importance of an alliance with Russia, thoroughly approved of the guarantee to Poland, and insisted that its aim was not merely to protect that country, but to halt Nazi aggression over the whole world. The Herald pointed out that if Germany gained the hegemony of the continent, the Mediterranean would be cut. Its heading, 'Poland; A Step On the Way to Australia' summed up its views. Hitler was not bluffing, and had not abandoned any of his ambitions.

The Sydney Morning Herald had opposed the appeasement of Germany from the time of the Anschluss, and therefore found in the occupation of Prague justification for its views. Although it admitted that Britain had been ill-prepared in September 1938, it still felt that the main motive had been Chamberlain's acceptance of Hitler's promise that the Sudetenland was his last territorial demand. Chamberlain's mild initial response in the House of Commons therefore caused the Sydney Morning Herald 'pained surprise'. New methods, it felt, such as collective action, and perhaps new leaders [sic] had to be found.

1 Melbourne Herald and Daily Telegraph, 16 and 17.3.39.
2 Melbourne Herald, 21 and 23.3.39, 1 & 5.4.39, 1.5.39. Daily Telegraph, 20, 22 and 29.3.39, 3.4.39.
3 SMH, 17-18.3.39.
The newspaper therefore greatly praised Chamberlain's Birmingham speech as the end of appeasement. It felt that Poland's claim to aid - because of its autocratic government - was probably not as good as that of the Czechs, but the democracies had to call a halt to Nazi aggression in Europe then or not at all. Otherwise in time the allies would be faced with a Germany made so powerful by the fruits of conquest as to be invincible.¹

Australian newspapers, by the end of April 1939, had thus swung into support for Chamberlain's system of alliances to block any further German aggression in Europe. All of them, except the Age, realised and insisted upon the need for Russia to give weight to such a system. For example, the Argus declared that the form of government in Russia was irrelevant. Russia was strong. The newspapers expressed disappointment at the delay in coming to an agreement with Russia, and, if anything, supported Russia's arguments against Britain. They felt that the Baltic States should be guaranteed, and pressure put on Poland to make her see the light. They felt that Russia's mistrust could be attributed to Chamberlain's policy at the time of the Munich Pact.²

Meanwhile events were taking their course. Newspaper comment on the Italian invasion of Albania was sardonic, and to the effect that it provided the final proof of the failure of attempting to appease either of the Axis partners. As pressure built up on Danzig, the newspapers

¹ SMH, 20.3.39, 1 and 3.4.39.
rallied to the British government. The *West Australian* and the *Telegraph* insisted on the strategic necessity of Danzig to Poland. The former indeed declared that the Versailles settlement in this matter was fair, and that the Poles had right as well as necessity on their side. The only wavering was seen, as usual, in the *Age*. This still defended Chamberlain's earlier policy of appeasement, still opposed Britain's continental commitments, and still on occasion declared that Germany had a case which was subject to reasonable negotiation. It did, however, admit that if force were used it would have to be countered.¹

The report of the Russo-German Pact came as a stunning blow to the Australian press. The *West Australian*, *Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* found it difficult to believe. They blamed Chamberlain and the policy of appeasement for Russia's policy. They felt, however, that Russia had bought immediate safety at the possible price of later difficulties. The newspapers realised quite clearly the serious results of the Pact, but felt that Britain and France had to stand firm. Their guarantee to Poland had not been conditional on a Russian alliance. All noticed, as some mitigation of the gloomy prospect, that Japan was alienated from her partners, and little likely to join them immediately in any war.²

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The Australian press was thus united in support of Britain on the outbreak of war. Even the *Age*, most isolationist of the journals, supported the necessity of fighting, although it did not sound completely convinced by its own protestations. The *Argus* spoke of the war aims in abstract terms. The *Herald* declared that the honour and security of the democracies, and of all free peoples, were concerned. It felt necessary to add, however, that Australia was automatically committed if Britain was at war. The *West Australian* felt that the occupation of Prague had been the turning point, revealing clearly Germany's aggressive intentions. The *Telegraph* stressed self interest - that if Germany were allowed to dominate the continent, the turn of the British Empire could not be long delayed. The *Sydney Morning Herald* considered more the moral aspect. Never had aggression been clearer, or the justification for it more thin. The responsibility for the war rested on Hitler alone.¹

A clear pattern emerges among the Australian newspapers. Melbourne was the home of isolationist sentiment. The *Age* was the most isolationist of all the newspapers, supported appeasement - in so far as it kept Britain and the Dominions out of war - whole-heartedly, and only changed its policy reluctantly, after Chamberlain changed his. It is interesting that this newspaper, which was the strongest supporter of the League at the time of the Abyssinian crisis, had by 1938 become so isolationist. Perhaps it had been disillusioned by the League failure. The major series of letters to the press, with which the

Campion Society attempted to influence opinion, were sent to the *Age*. Its remarks also often resembled those of Menzies, as when, for example, in August 1939 it favoured negotiation and was optimistic after Hitler's Reichstag speech.\(^1\) It would appear to represent that section of opinion which continued to harbour some hopes from appeasement until the very end.

The *Argus* was at this time going through the series of internal crises which were to lead to its extinction after the war. Editorial policy was unpredictable and the editorials often revealed a greater ignorance of European and foreign events than that of the other newspapers. In July 1939, for example, it thought that the initiative in foreign affairs had passed from Germany to Britain. Its reaction to the Russo-German Pact was to declare that war was not inevitable, and to retreat in a haze of metaphysical generalisations.\(^2\)

A complete contrast was provided by the *West Australian* which was amongst the best informed, and produced probably the most intelligent summaries of events, of all the newspapers. However, it tended to hide behind these and to avoid committing itself to any definite policies. In practice, while it realised the danger of attempting to appease Germany, it followed closely the policy of the British government.

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2. *Argus*, 19.7.39, 24-26.8.39. E.g. 'Christian civilisation of Europe and the moral framework of the Western world' etc.; 30.8.39. Wrong in its prognostications to the end, on the 1 September 1939, it thought that Hitler was chastened.
The Sydney Morning Herald has been discussed on several occasions. Its editorial board was solidly liberal in outlook,¹ and concerned with the honour of England. It probably hesitated at the time of the Munich Pact, before finally taking the - for it - drastic step of opposing violently the policy of the British conservative government. This stand, however, had been foreshadowed in the preceding crises. The Sydney Morning Herald had always stressed the military and strategic importance of events. It was for this reason among others that it had opposed the British lead in sanctions, although its opposition to British policy was masked because it criticised the League rather than Britain. This realisation of the military and strategic significance of surrender to Hitler was unusual among Australian newspapers, as was also a clear understanding of Hitler's aims. Perhaps the series of articles by Professor S.H. Roberts had an effect. The Sydney Morning Herald was certainly the newspaper most akin to Hughes in ideas and attitudes, and the most likely to have supported him if he had made any attempt to oppose Lyons' policy in 1938.

Indeed, this newspaper, as the Bulletin said, was the most influential of the opponents of appeasement, because of its past, and because of the public to which it appealed. P. Heydon attests the intense interest and debate the editorials roused. According to him, Sir Norman Kater had McClure Smith ostracised in his club, the Union.²

¹ The editorial board comprised S. McClure Smith, F. Cutlack, R. Foster and T.I. Moore. Interview with Professor T.I. Moore, cited. He stressed that the views of the staff were predominantly liberal.
² Interview with P. Heydon, cited.
The interest so roused did much to negate, in New South Wales, Lyons' desperate desire to suppress discussion. The other major opponent of appeasement, 'the Watchman' on the A.B.C. could always be censored. The Sydney Morning Herald, however, could not be silenced, and the respect it commanded among responsible people in the community ensured that the case against the appeasement of Germany was at least heard.

It is clear that the policy of Britain had a large influence on the Australian press. It made the reluctant Age support the involvement of the Empire in Europe, and the reluctant Herald and Telegraph support the Munich Pact. Loyalty to 'the Motherland', the needs of Australia's defence, and their class alignments had taught the Australian newspapers to support the foreign policy of a British conservative government.

A clearer indication of the real attitude of the newspapers to the appeasement of Germany is seen in their remarks on colonial redistribution, especially the surrender of New Guinea. In November 1937 the Age agreed with the Herald that for the sake of a general settlement in Europe the matter should be at least discussed, although both newspapers discounted in advance the German arguments. After Munich the West Australian favoured giving all nations equal and open access to colonial raw materials and development, but feared that to give Germany colonies of her own was strategically dangerous. The Sydney Morning Herald would not even consider the possibility of returning colonies, and stressed the danger of a militaristic power holding territory near Australia. By that time, only the Argus and the Age could consider Australia abandoning her hold on New Guinea. The newspapers, indeed, rightly feared to give Germany a base near their ill-defended
country. If she did not use it herself, Germany might give it to Japan. Arguments about the well-being of natives therefore hid deep-seated misgivings about the nature and intentions of the German regime. When events made these strong, the newspapers regarded the return of New Guinea as out of the question. ¹

Australian newspapers were still not fully committed to involvement in European affairs. Isolationism as a sentiment was still widely held, but Hitler's aggressions shocked editors into considering European matters. Chamberlain's attempt to appease Germany, in so far as it would, if successful, have kept Australia out of war, was supported. Quite widespread doubts appeared, however. In this the newspapers mirrored opinion held by government members, and, one suspects, by a majority of the population which supported the government. Only those people or newspapers who had more knowledge of and interest in Europe, or who were particularly concerned with the honour of Britain and the Empire, or who had some knowledge of the strategic results of appeasement, felt called to oppose the policy.

An exactly similar pattern is seen in the editorial opinions of the R.S.L. magazines. R.S.L. members had military experience, were concerned with the Empire, and knew Europe. On the other hand, the organisation had been developed to meet specific needs within Australia, and not to comment on or attempt to influence foreign policy. Most of the R.S.L. magazines were parochial in their

interests. Moreover, support for a conservative government came naturally to them. Thus most magazines ignored the Anschluss, and accepted Chamberlain's policy until 1939. Even then their comment was restrained.

Three magazines, however, were different. The Duckboard expressed fears after the Anschluss that Germany was about to make a bid for the hegemony of Europe, and was clearly disquieted by the Munich settlement. Disraeli had brought back peace with honour, but Chamberlain's pact resembled peace at any price. However, it joined the others in defending the settlement on the grounds that Britain was militarily unprepared.

The Queensland Digger and the Listening Post stand apart from the other magazines. Both persistently and bitterly opposed appeasement, and abused Chamberlain. Thus the Queensland Digger described Chamberlain's Anglo-Italian Agreement as 'puerile', and predicted that such a method would never succeed with bullies. 'Pip Tok' in the Listening Post denied that Chamberlain had 'sold the pass' since that implied receiving something in return. Chamberlain had given it away.

1 As Austen Laughlin put it, 'a house organ concerned only with back-scratching reminiscences of the past'. Mufti, 1.4.36(11).
3 Duckboard, 1.6.38(5), 1.7.38(7), 1.10.38(3), 1.11.38(5-6), 1.3.39(7).
4 Queensland Digger, 1.8.38(2). Listening Post, 15.7.38(23).
Both magazines were horrified by the Munich Agreement. Czechoslovakia was to be dismembered and at the mercy of her enemies. Another democracy had been betrayed, and the Axis won another victory without cost. British prestige could fall no lower. 'We are paying the penalty for placing timid old men in high and responsible positions.... In a very little time, we may look for more demands from Germany'.

The Listening Post wondered if the agreement had merely postponed a bigger and bloodier war. Whatever else could be said, it was not a peace with honour. Moreover, the attempt to appease was useless, for Germany respected only force.

It is all very well to talk about magnificent sacrifices for peace - at the expense of others - ...but there must come a day when the limit has been yielded.... The longer that day is postponed, the harder it will be for Britain or any other Power to assert even the most fundamental of rights, the right to exist. A dictator's appetite grows with feeding.

Both magazines continued to demand a firm policy until the outbreak of war in 1939, and accordingly supported the guarantees to Eastern European States and alliance with Russia.

It seems likely that the Queensland Digger and the Listening Post expressed in a possibly exaggerated form

1 Queensland Digger, 1.10.38(1-2).
2 Listening Post, 17.10.38(3), 15.11.38(4) - quotation. The same article described Chamberlain as a 'senile statesman'. It was reprinted in Queensland Digger, 2.1.39(4-5).
3 Listening Post, 15.4.39(3-4), 15.5.39(13). Queensland Digger, 1.7.39(1).
the feelings of the R.S.L. in their States. The language of the magazines was so unrestrained that if either of the State bodies had harboured any doubts they would have been obliged to take notice. Moreover, the official policies of the movement suggest that if most magazines said little about foreign affairs, they did not therefore support appeasement.

There was to begin with a continuing interest in defence needs. The Annual Conference of the New South Wales Branch had demanded universal military training and conscription of the whole resources of the country in 1937. The Listening Post in the summer of 1938-39 threw itself whole-heartedly into defence matters, advocating conscription, but vigorously supporting the government's recruiting campaign. The State President of Queensland warned of the dangers to Australia, and called for members to take part in anti-invasion precautions.1

A similar unanimity is seen over the possible return of New Guinea to Germany. The 21st Annual Federal Congress in 1936 opposed the idea flatly, and the Queensland and West Australian State Congresses reaffirmed this opposition. The magazines in both these States appear to have reflected official feeling when they strongly supported Hughes' stand and demanded that the government should make its policy clear.2

Finally in March 1939 the Bureau of F.I.D.A.C.3 in Paris declared its bitter disappointment with the German

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1 Reveille, 1.10.37(31-2). Queensland Digger, 1.2.39(3).
2 Listening Post, 15.12.36(11), 15.8.39(38). Queensland Digger, 1.6.37(25-6).
3 See p.104.
moves and requested its various members to support their respective governments. The editor of Fidac Review in Australia, H.W. Dunning, condemned Hitler's actions and put his organisation at the disposal of the government. Thus the ex-servicemen's peace movement had been forced by events, of which Prague was the culmination, to abandon hopes of appeasement and support a common front against renewed German aggression.¹

Although few people read editorials, and even fewer read the R.S.L. magazines, the views expressed in these places probably represented those held by many people in the Australian community. They would have supported the government, known little about Europe but followed the British lead, but nevertheless disliked the lack of honour in the agreement, and had no great hopes for the future. As in England, there was opposition to Chamberlain's policy, not only from the left, but also from those who held in high regard the honour and prestige of England, and who feared for the strategic consequences of the Munich Agreement.

¹ Listening Post, 15.6.39(4-5). He declared that the organisation had been prevented by its sense of justice from opposing the Anschluss and the return of the Sudeten Germans, but that Prague had revealed German intentions. Mein Kampf was clearly seen as an accurate prediction of German aims. The victories of the returned soldiers of the first world war were threatened by Hitler's 'insatiable desire to dominate the world'.
CHAPTER IX

Communists and Catholics

Catholic-communist hostility, seen during the Abyssinian crisis, reached its height during the first eighteen months of the Spanish civil war. It was then that Catholic apologists came most openly to defend Hitler as a possible bulwark of Europe against communism, and communists most vehemently to denounce the British government as a supporter of 'fascism'. The series of crises that began in March 1938, however, forced each group to modify its ideas. Faced by the mounting tide of Hitler's aggression, communists and Catholics alike by September 1939 felt obliged, at least temporarily, to support the war of the Western Powers against Germany.

This chapter is an attempt to trace the way in which the paths converged. It begins by studying the changes of opinion in each group separately until the outbreak of war, and then discusses how far the attitude of the erstwhile opponents was in fact similar.

The Communist Party, which regarded the continued Italian and German intervention in Spain as a lesson that the only safety lay in collective security, was very worried by the Anschluss. The small nations, like Gadarene swine running down the slope, were increasingly abandoning the collective system. Moreover, the Anschluss had serious strategic and political implications. Czechoslovakia was
threatened, and Mussolini, by accepting a strong power to the North of Italy, had been bound more firmly to the Axis. Hitler's triumph was the result of the sabotage of the League and collective security by the British Tories, who still wanted to engineer a war between Germany and Russia. Their policy, however, was mistaken, for Britain and France could not avoid fighting an aggressive Germany. The only sensible plan was to end appeasement, and provide collective security for small and great nations alike - not sacrifice the smaller ones in the hope of buying off attack. The British Empire should therefore join France and Russia in guaranteeing Czechoslovakia.¹

The Communist Party once again attempted to rouse public protest, partly to force the government to support Czechoslovakia, and partly to train 'the masses' in direct action. It therefore staged the usual demonstrations and meetings. When the police tried to break up a procession with banners in Pitt Street, Sydney, on 23 September 1938, a crowd of 'more than a thousand' watched the resultant melee, which held up traffic for thirty minutes. The front organisations were again useful for appealing to, and exaggerating, public opinion. Thus they circulated in New South Wales a printed card of their demands to be signed and sent to the Prime Minister.²

¹ Communist Review, April, May and August 1938. Workers Weekly, 15.3.38, 18.3.38, 22.3.38.
² Argus, 24.9.38(1). For the activities of the Front organisations, ibid., p.9 [International Peace Campaign], also 22.9.38(13) [Victorian Council Against War and Fascism], 29.9.38(13) [International Peace Campaign], SMH, 20.9.38(15) [Australian League for Peace and Democracy]. The crisis probably developed too quickly for the communists to organise their campaign, mass petitions, etc., but an increasing use of the technique of bombarding the government with letters is evident during these years.
The Czechoslovakian crisis only made communists more convinced opponents of appeasement. They compared Hitler's care for the Sudeten Germans with his apparent indifference to those in the Tyrrol. They declared that he was only using paid agitators to seize a key strategic country, which would add important war industries to the Reich, and facilitate an attack on Russia through Poland. Appeasement and isolationism were useless. 'Our own fate, whether we like it or otherwise, is linked with that of the Czechs and the other democratic peoples'.

The Workers Weekly therefore immediately attacked the terms suggested at Berchtesgaden as 'a ghastly betrayal of peace and democracy'.

If the terms are forced on the Czechs, some of the greatest barriers to the Nazi plans are almost automatically removed. The Czech pact with the Soviet Union goes, the Little Entente vanishes, the Czech Republic ceases to be a force, France loses the leading position in Europe, and Italy...becomes a mere Nazi vassal state....Chamberlain is not securing peace, but the certainty of war for the British peoples under the worst possible conditions.

They would not be the final Nazi demands.

Communist reactions to the Munich Pact were therefore bitter. They insisted that Hitler would destroy the weakened Czechoslovakia, and foretold future aggressions. The Communist Review feared that colonial appeasement would follow, including the return of New Guinea. As for internal policy, the communists redoubled their efforts to influence

1 Workers Weekly, 13.5.38, 2.8.38, 13.9.38 (quotation). The Communist Review, July 1938 thought that the so-called 'May crisis' proved its case.
2 Workers Weekly, 23.9.38.
Len Fox, in a pamphlet entitled 'The Peace to End Peace' argued that the A.L.P., because of its policy of isolationism, was no alternative to the government, but that the industrial section of Labour had adopted collective security, and that communists should therefore work for the acceptance of trade union policy by the A.L.P.¹

The demand for an alliance against aggression continued during 1939 with special reference to a Pact with Russia. Chamberlain's new policy after the German occupation of Prague did not convince Australian communists. Although their first reaction to the guarantee to Poland was favourable, they soon began to wonder if there were not loopholes in the wording to enable Chamberlain to avoid action. Moreover, what communists wanted was not a series of piecemeal guarantees to probable victims of aggression, but a comprehensive system of collective security, which would include Russia. This last was the most insistent demand of the Communist Party from April to July 1939.²

Communists vigorously supported the Russian case in the discussions. They blamed Chamberlain for any delay. He sought an unequal alliance, whereby Russia was expected to help the Western Powers, without any reciprocal


assistance if she was herself attacked by Germany. This was the reason for the refusal of Britain to guarantee the Baltic Republics. Chamberlain was at his old trick of attempting to turn aggression eastwards. Moreover, he had deliberately delayed progress. Whereas he had rushed to meet Hitler himself by air, he could not spare even a Cabinet minister to conclude a defensive alliance with the Soviet Union. Despite communist protestations that Russia was strong and did not need the pact, or that Hitler was turning to the Middle East, their concern at the possible turn of events was obvious.¹

Communist writers discounted German claims against Poland as merely cover for more aggression, but hoped that the Poles would put up a formidable resistance, despite the absence of natural barriers and modern equipment. However, they had warned Poland after Munich that she would be next on the German list. They now blamed her for helping in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and declining to ally herself with the Soviet Union.²

Communists, indeed, regarded the government of Poland with disfavour, as fascist in style and repressive towards the workers and various minorities. They saw the movement of the Red army into Europe as one of 'liberation'.³ This attitude predisposed them to accept the complete reversal of policy in the Russo-German Pact.

³ Workers Weekly, 28.3.39.
The Workers Weekly portrayed that agreement as Hitler suing for peace in Moscow, as a victory by Russia against a second imperialistic war, as a move to isolate Japan. R. Gibson assured Argus readers that it did not constitute a threat to Poland by Russia. Despite the double-talk, communist support for the pact clearly revealed their basic motive. As Sharkey said, 'the preservation of the Soviet Union as a Socialist country is the first concern, not only of the Soviet government, but of the entire international working-class movement'.

The Russo-German Pact, however, caused a shock to many communist supporters. Some at first refused to believe the news. A communist publication in Townsville had just attacked the Queensland Worker for quoting Stalin's speech to the 18th Congress as proof that his sympathies lay with the Axis, and that Russia would not join the democracies. The trouble was that Australian communist leaders were cut off by the speed of events from the Comintern, and had no instructions on the attitude they should adopt. They felt obliged, however, to say something — and their remarks in retrospect often look both revealing and naive. At the time, they convinced few of their opponents.

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1 Ibid., 25.8.39. Argus, 30.8.39(5). For Sharkey, Tribune (to which the Workers Weekly then changed its name), 1.9.39(1).

2 See Labor Call, 14.4.39(4 and 14) for some of the confusion that the C.P.A. fell into in Melbourne and Queensland. L. Sharkey remarked 'The working class will look with the greatest confidence to the meeting of the Soviet Parliament on Monday for clarification of the international crisis'. Workers Weekly, 29.8.39(3).
When war broke out the Central Executive of the C.P.A. issued a statement supporting the Polish people, urging the full mobilisation of Australian manpower and resources, and declaring that it was unreal to reject in principle the organisation of forces to fight overseas. They urged fit members to volunteer for any expeditionary force.

The Tribune declared the war on the part of the Germans to be an act of stark aggression, without any justification whatever. Communist support for military measures to aid Britain and France was very strong.¹

Thus the Communist Party of Australia, from bitterly opposing the policy of the British government during the Spanish civil war, suspecting it of duplicity, and being disappointed by its failure to ally with Russia, nevertheless on the outbreak of war, in answer to Hitler's final aggression, supported the Western democracies. It remains to be seen how intense and deep-seated that support was.

Catholics also bitterly opposed the British government's attitude to the Spanish civil war. When Hitler's aggressions began they were far from willing to support Britain and France against him.

The Catholic hierarchy was infinitely less vociferous on Hitler's government and aggressions than on the Spanish civil war. When Hitler's aggressions began they were far from willing to support Britain and France against him.

issue. The Bishops probably felt that the Church was less involved, realised the difficulties of Catholics in Germany, and were misled by the German bishops' weakness towards Nazism. Their major motive, however, was probably antipathy to communism, which led them to gloss over the evils of Hitler's regime and favour appeasement. The wording of Archbishop Gilroy's pastoral letter on the Day of Thanksgiving after Munich implies that he accepted the Pact at its face value. Mannix was unusually silent during Hitler's long series of aggressions. He threw himself into the Peace campaign in 1939, and at the big rally in Melbourne on 28 May, declared that all the justice was not on one side, and that the totalitarian states were doing some fine things. This was after the German occupation of Prague. On the outbreak of war he criticised the idea of a pact with Russia, gloried in Franco's victory, and declared that Mussolini's Italy was one of the main agencies for peace, and one of the hopeful spots of the world. The old man's ideas do not seem to have changed much, nor were his eyes yet open to the character of his favourite ruler. Other bishops seem to have had similar views. Dr Henschke, Auxiliary Bishop of Wagga, speaking 'as a citizen' at a peace meeting, also in May 1939, defended Chamberlain and the Munich Pact, declared that Hitler had a case in some respects, and that tension was caused by French fears and Russian hate. No bishop appears publicly to have condemned the Axis.

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1 The pastoral letter of the Catholic German bishops in 1933 declared that because of the place authority held in the Church, Catholics would not find it difficult to appreciate the new authority in the State and subordinate themselves to it. Schacht, Account Settled, p.66.

The lower clergy were much more critical of the Axis powers. Dr Rumble declared that totalitarian rule was 'essentially wrong in itself', and that justice would never be done in a State unless the government was chosen by, and representative of, the people. He went on to discuss the Church's difficulties in Italy and Germany, asserting that the Nazis aimed to destroy the Church as much as communists did. His opposition to the internal politics of Nazism appears, however, to have been weaker than that of Eris O'Brien, then a priest. O'Brien felt that Hitler was a pathological case, that his ideals were Pagan and parochial, the opposite of Catholicism and that his success in stopping communism in Germany had been 'grossly magnified...and has served for too long to cloak the excesses which he has perpetrated subsequently'.

Interesting differences again appeared between Catholic newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne. As we have seen, Jackson in Melbourne favoured some form of authoritarian state, and felt that democracy was not efficient against communism. However, he became very concerned with the persecution of the Catholic Church in Germany and found his sympathy for the Nazis lessened thereby. The Advocate published Mit Brennder Sorge and emphasised the 'morality trials' and other Nazi actions from July 1937 to the beginning of 1938. The Sydney newspapers, on the other hand, had never shared Jackson's feelings, although they agreed with him in stressing that

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2 Advocate, 23.9.37(6), 15.10.36(6), 29.4.37(7). ACTS Record no.105 gave the full text. Advocate, 5.6.37(17), 29.7.37(6 and 25), 27.1.38(7 and 13).
the term 'fascism' covered a wide variety of States, and in looking to the conservatives or army leaders in Germany to restrain Hitler.¹

The Anschluss was a terrible blow to Jackson and those whom he influenced. Jackson had long been deeply interested in Austria, and had advocated the restoration of the Hapsburgs, a Danube Pact, and an Anglo-Italian Agreement to strengthen it. This motive lay behind his support for the Stresa Pact, and opposition to British policy in Abyssinia and Spain.² Jackson's concern affected the Campion Society, the Catholic Worker and Catholics generally in Melbourne. Thus the Catholic Worker, like the Advocate, put on the black of mourning after the Anschluss, and became poetic about Germanic Catholic culture, and the tragedy of Austria. Jackson saw very clearly the strategic and political implications of the Anschluss, and was worried by Hitler's claim to be the instrument of divine providence.³ But a kind of

¹ The Freeman's Journal was concerned with interference with Church schools, the new marriage laws, etc., much earlier than the Advocate. In 1936 it even declared that the persecution in Germany was worse than in Spain, and that there was no essential difference between Bolshevism and Nazism. The Catholic Press, although it favoured the corporate system, declared that it disliked fascism.


³ Advocate, 18.7.35(25), 19.3.36(25), 24.2.38(6). Catholic Worker, 4.7.36(1).

⁴ Catholic Worker, 5.3.38(4). Advocate, 17.3.38(17), 24.3.38(17), 7.4.38(6) - 'Bohemia and Moravia, with their three million Germans, lie enclosed in the German "nut-cracker"!', 21.4.38(6) Jackson asserted in the interview, cited, that the speech by Hitler claiming to be the tool of providence was a turning point in Jackson's attitude to him. If so, it was masked by the factors discussed above.
schizophrenia appeared at this time in Jackson's attitude to international events. Hitler was persecuting Catholics in Germany, had attacked Catholic Austria, and was clearly aggressive. But he was the bulwark of Europe against communism, and was also defending the Catholic side in Spain. Moreover Jackson detested the country that Hitler next threatened - Czechoslovakia.

Jackson had long regarded the destruction of the Hapsburg Empire, and the refusal to create a Central European Catholic State, as the greatest mistake of the Treaty of Versailles. For this he blamed Masaryk. Moreover he considered Czechoslovakia to be the centre of freemasonry and liberalism in Europe. It was allied with Russia. Melbourne Catholic organs, therefore, led by Jackson, refused to admit that Czechoslovakia was a State worth supporting, or that such support was in the interests of either Europe or the Commonwealth. Jackson stressed racial division within the country and declared that Henlein's grievances were genuine and his demands moderate. Czechoslovakia would have to become a neutral, federal State.¹

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Melbourne Catholics strongly supported Chamberlain's policy. Jackson in fact blamed the Czechs instead of Hitler, for the crisis, and was desperately anxious that Russia should be kept

¹Ibid., 18.6.36(25), 23.7.36(6), 30.9.37(6), 3.2.38(6), 24.3.38(17), 1.9.38(6) - 'It is madness to suggest that Europe should be embroiled to save this miserable Republic from the disintegration brought upon it by the folly and arrogance of its rulers'; 22.9.38(6). The Catholic Worker forwarded to Lyons a resolution that Australia should not in any circumstances be involved in war. Catholic Worker, 1.10.38(1). The Campion Society appears to have organised others.
out of any negotiations. Although he distrusted Hitler, Jackson was pleased by the Munich settlement. The alternative, he thought, was a war in which either Russia would sweep into Europe, or a Nazi tyranny be established. Neither prospect appealed.¹

The attitude of the Sydney newspapers was different. They were less knowledgeable about, and concerned with, foreign affairs. The Catholic Freeman's Journal had adopted a narrow isolationism. It supported Canada, declaring that continental squabbles were not the business of the dominions, and repeatedly demanded a foreign policy for Australia separate from that of Britain. Its attitude was very similar to that of Lang.²

Neither the Press nor the Freeman's Journal had been very concerned with Austria in the past. The Press misjudged the situation before the Anschluss, and made few, and mistaken, observations after it. The Freeman's Journal was taken by surprise, but appeared only interested in the possibility of religious persecution.³

Nor was the Freeman's Journal very interested in Czechoslovakia. It made a few half-hearted remarks in a similar vein to that of Jackson, but drew no moral. It was no concern of Australia. Indeed,

...it is hard to imagine Britain being involved in a European war if she was strictly intent on minding her own business...a future policy of splendid isolation on the part of Britain would surely appeal to the sober elements in all the Dominions.⁴

¹ Advocate, 2.6.38(6), 22.9.38(6), 29.9.38(1), 6.10.38(1).
² Catholic Freeman's Journal, 2.6.38(25), 20.4.39(23).
⁴ Ibid., 15.9.38(24), 22.9.38(24) - quotation.
The Freeman's Journal accordingly strongly supported appeasement and Munich. Hitler and Mussolini were probably no worse than other statesmen; Britain was unprepared; Chamberlain had at least won a breathing space; and anyway the Germans had a good case against Czechoslovakia.¹

The Press was, to quote Brian Doyle, 'unrepresentative' - it began by supporting Czechoslovakia. It praised Masaryk, emphatically declared that there was a Czechoslovakian nation, gave a calm unbiased account of its early struggles, blamed Hitler for Sudeten difficulties, and opposed any transfer of territory. A complete change occurred on 15 September, when it declared Czechoslovakia to be a synthetic nation, the centre of communism in Europe, and the scene of racial discrimination. Benes was a freemason and a charlatan, whose rise to power was a calamity for his country. Thereafter it adopted the arguments of the other Catholic newspapers, blaming Czechoslovakia for the trouble, and strongly advocating the secession of the Sudetenland. It accordingly defended the Munich Pact, as a lesson to Hitler [sic] and a blow to communism.² What had happened to make the Press change its policy so drastically is not clear, but it is striking enough to create the suspicion that a certain amount of pressure had been applied. It was after all, the official Catholic newspaper in Sydney, and either the hierarchy, or Catholic Action, could very well have objected to its original policy.

¹ Ibid., 13.10.38(24), 3.11.38(24).
All Catholic newspapers therefore supported Munich and appeasement, but whereas the Freeman's Journal did so from the viewpoint of isolationism, and the Press misjudged its significance, Jackson had his eyes open. Despite misgivings about Hitler, he supported the Munich Agreement because he detested Czechoslovakia and hated Russia. Jackson, his prejudices apart, was a shrewd observer of European events.

These differences were revealed in the reactions of the newspapers between Munich and the outbreak of war. Jackson a week after Munich admitted that it had been an escape rather than a victory, but still disliked the alternative of war for Czechoslovakia. If Hitler held to the aims of Mein Kampf, war was inevitable, but there was as yet no proof. Although he noted the increase in German arrogance and the pogrom of November 1938, he could still compare Hitler's regime with British colonial rule, and talk of a happier future for Czechoslovakia. Yet he was uneasy, and again looked for a balance of power system - without Germany - and urged the democracies to build up their strength. His recurrent theme was the desperate need for an agreement between France and Italy.¹

The occupation of Prague was for Jackson, as he now admits, the final turning point. Hitler was establishing his rule over non-German peoples: no neighbour could feel safe. His breaches of faith meant that pacts and agreements with him were a waste of paper. The only possible security lay in becoming so strong that attack would be dangerous.²

¹ Jackson admits that the example of Mussolini becoming more conservative with power misled him. He thought that Hitler too would abandon his irresponsible, revolutionary remarks in Mein Kampf. See also Advocate, 13.10.38(6), 10.11.38(1), 24.11.38(1), 15.12.38(6), 12.1.39(1 and 15).
² Ibid., 23.3.39(1 and 6).
In contrast, both of the Sydney Catholic newspapers, were naively optimistic after Munich. The Press thought that appeasement was working, and looked to an agreement with Italy. The Freeman's Journal on 16 March declared that the war danger was passing. Although the occupation of Prague opened their eyes to Hitler's intentions, neither journal changed its policy - isolationism and neutrality. The Press agreed with the Age that the crisis was only the concern of Eastern Europe. The Freeman's Journal opposed Chamberlain's guarantee to Poland: 'he did not do it in his wisest hour'. Both newspapers admitted that Poland was a Catholic country, but as the crisis clearly developed, their unanimity ended.

The Freeman's Journal reverted to blind faith in the dictators - perhaps they were misunderstood - and isolationism. Any war would be one for trade. Its motive however was probably violent antipathy to the projected Anglo-Russian alliance. It regarded Russia as more evil than the Axis, and as wanting to embroil the Western powers in war, from which she would hold herself aloof. It declared that the Red Army was weak, especially in transport.

The Press, on the contrary, on 25 May, changed its policy once more. It praised Chamberlain's guarantees, declared that the Poles were 'absolutely safe and reliable allies'. It even welcomed Russia's help, but stressed that Chamberlain would not join a United Front, but merely

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guarantee Russia against reprisals! The Press in fact opposed the idea of a definite alliance, and suspected Russia of temporising in order to come to terms with Hitler. However, it emphasised the danger to Danzig, to which it regarded the Poles as having inalienable rights.\(^1\)

Jackson too, although sympathetic towards Poland - it was both autocratic and Catholic - nevertheless accepted Chamberlain's guarantee reluctantly. It threatened to drag Britain and Australia into an area where Britain's interests were remote, and Australia's non-existent. Some such move was inevitable if Germany refused to put limits to her expansion, but he was anxious that the democracies should not, by economic pressure, force Hitler to extremes. The possibility of an alliance with Russia worried Jackson even more. She was more evil than the Axis; her aggression was more serious, her crimes worse. She was the fortress of world revolution, which would be carried forward by her armies. In alliance with her, the democracies faced revolution if they won and treason if they lost. Russia merely wanted to involve Britain and France in war, to enable her to penetrate Europe. Hitler would be preferable. Russia's military potential was small.\(^2\)

This intense opposition to an alliance with Russia was seen in all the Catholic newspapers. They would have

\(^1\) Catholic Press, 25.5.39(22), 22.6.39(22-3), 8.6.39(22-3).

\(^2\) Advocate, 8.6.39(1 and 15), 13.4.39(1), 20.4.39(1 and 6), 11.5.39(6), 1.6.39(1), 25.5.39(6).
as soon allied with the devil. Every possible argument they could devise was put forward against it.¹

In particular all the newspapers declared roundly that war was not likely, and blamed the secular press for maliciously creating war scares. This accusation reached almost hysterical proportions. The *Freeman's Journal* demanded press censorship in the interests of peace. The *Press* agreed, and as late as August 1939 said 'Not a day passes that the cables do not forecast a stroke by Hitler — north, south, east or west, but no wise person loses any sleep over it'. In Melbourne, Mannix accused the press of raising needless war scares, and the *Catholic Worker* repeated the charge. It was in this atmosphere that the Melbourne Peace Rally was held.²

The Russo-German alliance released Catholics from their moral dilemma. They therefore greeted it with intense relief. As the Press said

one fact — for which every Christian should rejoice — stands out clear. Britain and France have been spared the shame of an alliance with the anti-God Russian despot. Mr Chamberlain and M. Daladier can meet the decision for war or peace with clean hands.

¹ The Catholic Truth Society brought out a pamphlet on the subject — ACTS Record no.167, 10 April 1939, *The People's Front*.
² *Catholic Freeman's Journal*, 12.1.39(24). *Catholic Press*, 24.8.39(25). *Advocate*, 6.4.39(1). *Catholic Worker*, 2.9.39(1). The secretariat of Catholic Action had suggested the peace rally. On that occasion 60,000 people saw a parade of 5,000 war veterans through the streets and heard resolutions sent to the Pope and the leaders of Britain, America, France, Germany, Italy and Poland. 3AW broadcast the whole proceeding, 3LO the main speeches. *Advocate*, 1.6.39.
The Advocate added 'Paganism and atheism have joined hands over the body of Poland, and the totalitarian foes of Christiandom stand revealed in the essential similarity which we have long discerned beneath their apparent conflict'. The Freeman's Journal thought that Hitler would rue the day.  

The Russo-German Pact enabled all the Catholic newspapers to support the war with a clear conscience. Jackson, after Prague, had never wavered. Although he had opposed the idea of a pact with Russia, he had agreed that a firm line would have to be drawn against further German aggression. On the Polish issue, he remarked that although he had always felt that there had been injustices in the treaty of Versailles, 'The "remedy" is providing a good deal worse than the disease'. Hitler's new claims would turn Poland into a satellite, whose fate would resemble that of Czechoslovakia. The Press gave a rather simple account of the causes of the war, listed Hitler's sins, and declared that if they did not justify Christian powers removing him, 'civilisation may as well be handed over to the tender mercies of the vicious totalitarian bloc - Bolshevism and Nazism'. The Freeman's Journal did not change its attitude until the German invasion of Poland. It admitted that it had till then still credited

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1 Catholic Press, 31.8.39(24). Catholic Freeman's Journal, 31.8.39(25). Advocate, 24.8.39(1 and 6), 31.8.39(1). The increased danger to Poland does not seem to have been realised by the Sydney press, although Jackson pointed to it clearly enough. There were compensations however. Japan would probably remain quiescent in the Pacific; the communists at home were discomfited. Spain and Italy were offended.
It was widely noted in Australia that the alliance with Russia was likely to offend the anti-communist sentiments of the other Axis Powers. *Argus*, 25 August 1939, p.10.
The ceremony of carrying the bride across the threshold is usually honoured only after other wives, if any, have passed on.

Hitler with some restraint. However it at last recognised the limitless nature of his ambitions and concluded that he had to be stopped by force.¹

By the time of the outbreak of war, both communists and Catholics had been led by Hitler's aggressions into supporting Britain and France. Some comment seems in order on their motives for so doing, and their general attitudes between the wars.

The Catholic Church, led by its newspapers and hierarchy, had been a keen advocate of the appeasement of both Italy and Germany. Jackson's influence in Melbourne is noticeable - not only in his foibles, but also in the fact that his comment was, if mistaken, at least intelligent and informed. In Sydney, however, the newspapers too often revealed a lack of understanding of the significance of events.

The reasons for Catholic support for appeasement are fairly clear. To begin with there was strong sympathy with Italy. This went back to the Abyssinian crisis, and had its roots in the geographical position of the Vatican, reinforced with the anti-English sentiment of the Australian Irish. Mannix' remarks have been noted. Jackson still urged an alliance with Italy in 1939, though not very hopefully. He was late in recognising the chauvinism and bombast of Mussolini, and the extent of his domination by Hitler. So too in 1939 the Press launched forth into glowing tributes to Italy, whose power and

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influence it grossly overestimated. It defended Mussolini's demands against France and even the invasion of Albania, and felt that Italy was a good substitute ally for Russia.¹

Indeed, intense hatred and fear of communism and Russia was a basic motive of Catholics. They were so concerned with the danger of Russian communism to Europe that they were willing to gloss over and ignore the worst aspects of Hitler's and Mussolini's regimes² - until such matters were forced upon their notice. All too often they defended aggression, provided the regime guilty of it opposed communism. They repeated in Australia the propaganda put out by the dictators to cover their ambitions.

As for the internal regimes, Jackson led the way in Victoria in defending fascism, and in particular the corporate State. He influenced the Campion Society, but probably had little impact outside of Victoria. Neither of the Sydney newspapers discussed fascism as much. There was practically no Catholic sympathy with Nazism. Jackson glossed over its evils as long as he could, but never defended it. The Freeman's Journal on the other hand was openly hostile to Nazism, while the Press, as a result of the liberal sentiments of Cleary, even opposed fascism. Using that term to apply to both members of the Axis, the

² The Catholic Freeman's Journal remarked that the persecution of Catholics was unnecessary, since the Church would have accepted the Nazi regime if left to itself. 1.8.35(21).
Press said that it disliked both communism and fascism, because both were totalitarian. 'Catholics are not fascists, and never will be... The Catholic Church will never have to decide between communism and fascism, any more than between burglary and larceny'.

Unfortunately, that was just the choice that faced Catholics in the international situation in the late thirties. They had either to support a stand against Hitler, which, to be effective, involved alliance with Russia, or to adopt appeasement. Catholic spokesmen chose appeasement. Their bitter opposition to the Anglo-Russian talks, and their utter relief when the Russo-German Pact ended them, reveal quite clearly Catholic motives.

When it came to appeasing Hitler in matters unconnected with communism, and nearer home, Catholic dislike and distrust of the regime became more apparent. There had been support for colonial redistribution in Melbourne in 1935. This, led by Mannix, had been concerned, however, largely with the need to provide justice to Italy. Once the Abyssinian crisis had faded into the background, the demand was not repeated, and after the pogrom of November 1938 Jackson specifically opposed it. The Press, on the other hand, had violently criticised the idea from the beginning. In October 1935 it declared that it was of vital importance that the Reich never regain a footing in New Guinea. In March 1936 it declared that the territory was practically a part of Australia, and that any attempt by Britain to hand it to Germany would have similar results.

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1 Catholic Press, 1.9.38(22).
as taxation without representation on the American colonies.
In 1938 it supported Hughes' 'what we have we hold' speech.¹

Faced with their dilemma, Catholic spokesmen went too far in defending the Axis powers, or in supporting isolationism - as the Freeman's Journal did - or in pretending that the danger of war was the result of malicious press propaganda. Newspapers at any time look for sensational and eye-catching news. But to assert, in 1939, that the crises were caused by newspapers, was to lose all sense of reality.

Finally, it is clear that Catholic defence of the Axis Powers, which reached its peak at the time of the Spanish civil war, declined continuously as Hitler's aggressions occurred. No Catholic organ or spokesman would have supported action over Czechoslovakia, however, and it needed Chamberlain's attempt to appease Germany and the Russo-German Pact to enable Catholics wholeheartedly to support Britain and France in the second world war.

The Russo-German Pact, which clarified the position of Catholics, threw communists into confusion. It clearly began a period of stress for the C.P.A. To begin with, it was the direct negation of the policy the Comintern had been advocating for the previous four years. Moreover, it began a period when the Communist Party of Australia,

¹ For Mannix, Advocate, 17.10.35(12), 14.11.35(13). The point was taken up by Jackson and the Campion Society, Advocate, 9.4.36(25). Catholic Worker, 4.7.36(1). For Jackson's attack on it after the pogrom, Advocate, 24.11.38 (1). For the consistent opposition of the Catholic Press, see 3.10.35(22), 24.10.35(23), 19.3.36(22-3), 9.6.38(23).
because it had not received instructions from the Comintern, continued on its old course, and therefore adopted an attitude which conflicted with Russian foreign policy. This led to many contradictions. For example, the Communist Party defended Russia's pact with Hitler, while at the same time supporting the capitalist democracies in their war with him.

The only certainty that the C.P.A. possessed, however, was that Russian policy was 'right'. It therefore continued to defend Russia. Thus it portrayed the Russian invasion of Poland as an occupation of chaotic territory to bring succour to its inhabitants, to aid Russians under Polish rule, and to keep Nazi armies away from the Soviet border. It particularly stressed the welcome it said the Red Army received, and the terror from which it saved the people. The Party treated with scorn the accusation that the Russo-German Pact had included the partition of Poland.¹

A complete change in the attitude of the Communist Party to the war occurred towards the end of September, possibly after it received the cabled account of Molotov's speech, which was set out in the Tribune on 19 September 1939. The internal evidence suggests that the newspaper itself changed its policy on 22 September. On 3 October it declared that the Russo-German Treaty had laid the basis of a lasting peace in Europe. The two powers concerned were then seeking peace. If their efforts failed, Britain and France would bear the responsibility for the war. The Tribune then went on to deny all the tenets of the faith so carefully built up over the preceding years.

It admitted that Hitler's word could not be trusted, but argued that Russian strength guaranteed this agreement. Peace, it declared, would not be surrendering to Hitler, who at Russia's request would probably restore independence to most of the Polish people.\footnote{Report of Royal Commission, Inquiring into the origins, aims, objects and funds of the Communist Party in Victoria and other related matters, 1950, p.56. Victoria, Papers Presented to Parliament, Session 1950-51, vol.2, Tribune, 6 and 10.10.39.}

The governments of Britain and France, however, had at last realised the truth of the arguments communists had been advancing for years. They had no intention of making peace. Communists therefore branded them as 'warmongers' and the war as 'Imperialist'.\footnote{Ibid., 31.10.39.} An article in the Communist Review for December 1939 gave a clear exposition of Lenin's 'Revolutionary Defeatism', and declared 'This war is an Imperialist war, it is a war between two conflicting groups of imperialist powers for world supremacy'. While the author criticised Britain in the article, he made no mention of Germany. Thus the champions of 'collective security' had become, in their turn, the advocates of peace with Hitler.

The obvious questions roused by the change is why it occurred, and whether the earlier policy was sincere. Communist parties have been noted for changing their views at the dictates of the Comintern, but there have been few reversals as dramatic as this. From 1935 communists were among the most outspoken and vehement supporters of collective security - pointing out that every retreat of the allies made the Axis Powers stronger and more arrogant,
that attempts to placate them and discuss international affairs in reasonable terms were a waste of time, and that only a firm united stand would avert a final war in which the democracies were at a military and strategic disadvantage. Then, in 1939, just when the Western powers had apparently learned their lesson, and the time for a joint stand came, a complete reversal of public policy occurred.

The simple answer is that the C.P.A., as other communist parties throughout the world, took its orders and propaganda 'line' from the Comintern, which reflected the vagaries of Russian foreign policy. This was partly a matter of idealism, and partly the result of the internal discipline and structure of the party. To communists, Russia was the one country where the Socialist experiment had been attempted, where a better and higher life was beginning, where the old capitalist system no longer held. The Socialist State had therefore to be protected at all costs. The discipline within the party strengthened the tendency, for its leaders were given authority by the Comintern, which kept a close watch over their attitudes and actions. Those who did not accept this authority were expelled. The outbreak of war is interesting in that it provides an example of a time of crisis when the leadership in Australia was out of touch with Russia, and therefore followed the 'wrong' policy.

In many respects opposition to the war was a more typical communist attitude. It was certainly more Leninist. Communists appealed to and sought to influence the masses, rather than their governments. A deep distrust of capitalist rulers permeated all their thinking. Thus the various
'front' organisations were more in keeping with traditional communist thought than support for the League or alliance with Britain.

Communists, indeed, had long regarded Britain as the arch-Imperialist power. Their suspicion of Britain's rulers, modified for a while, reached almost neurotic proportions during the Spanish civil war. After the Munich Pact, the final defeat of Republican Spain, and the failure of the Anglo-Russian talks, communists placed Britain once again in her old position of arch enemy. But for Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, they felt, no war would have been necessary. They could not believe that Chamberlain really wanted to fight Hitler, or even oppose him by other means. What he really sought was an accommodation, at the expense of Russia. Communists could not accept a war as just which was fought under the leadership of such a man. To them, there was little to chose between Hitler and the British government.

This feeling accounts for communist refusal to support even the meagre defence effort of the Lyons' government. In the opening stages of the Spanish civil war, the apparent moral of the need for the workers to be armed had led the Communist Party to advocate defence measures. However,

1 After the final defeat of the Spanish government, distrust of Britain's aims was increased by an intense bitterness. For the gradual change in opinion, Workers Weekly, 29.3.38, 19.4.38, 10, 17 and 31.3.39 - 'It was these contemptible swine, with their damnable hypocrisy of Non-Intervention, that gave the victory to Hitler and Mussolini'.

2 To them, the Munich agreement was obviously the beginning of a 'Four Power Pact' aimed at Russia. Chamberlain's - and by implication Lyons' - real aim was an alliance with fascism to turn Hitler eastwards.
increasing distrust of the leaders of the democracies ended that policy. After the fall of the Spanish government, communists regarded Chamberlain, not as misguided, but as deliberately and completely evil and 'reactionary'. Such rulers could not be trusted with armaments, for they would use them to repress their own peoples and ally with fascist States. Moreover, communists were convinced that if the dictators were faced by a collective system, they would have to back down. They argued that the economic and military strength of Britain, France, the United States and Russia far exceeded that of the Axis. All that was needed was a strong united stand. The answer to aggression lay, not in rearmament, but in unity.  

Finally, communists had bitterly criticised 'fascism' in the past, but their theory linked it with capitalism, of which it was regarded as the last phase. If Russia therefore made a pact with Hitler, and Russia's borders seemed assured of safety thereby, communists could accept the new policy despite misgivings.

Some members of the party did find an alliance with Hitler difficult to accept. Throughout the preceding years, communist foreign policy had been plausible and idealistic. The changes in 1939 were the first that were obviously caused by power politics. Some members felt that there was no alternative party they could support that was even half right, and stifled their doubts. Others in disgust left the party and joined the small Australian Trotskyist group in Sydney. Most notable of these was

J. Normington-Rawling. But most party members remained in the ranks. J. B. Miles, the general Secretary, while admitting that doubts existed, denied that there was any crisis in the party, and declared that he was quickly able to sweep away any confusion. Lloyd Ross agrees that the party lost few members.¹

On the other hand, the Communist Party in the late thirties had won a considerable amount of sympathy amongst outsiders, especially intellectuals, by its opposition to appeasement, its attitude to Nazism, and its humanitarian appeals. The Russo-German Pact and subsequent changes in attitude alienated these sympathisers, and support for the party in the community in general ended.

Finally, it must be considered how far the Communist Party has been vindicated by events. It is true that communists foretold, clearly and often, the results of the attempt to appease the rulers of Italy and Germany. But they ignored practical considerations; such as the virtual impossibility of getting the United States to abandon its isolationism to the extent of joining an anti-German alliance, and the different needs of the members of that alliance due to geographical factors. They oversimplified the rearmament problem, ignoring both the time necessary before an armaments programme became effective, and the German lead in armaments. They overestimated economic

¹ Lloyd Ross, interview cited. For Miles. Tribune, 5.9.39(2), 8.9.39(2). J. Normington-Rawling had for some years been prominent as a writer for the party journals on historical subjects, and also as an organiser. He attacked the Central Executive for being dominated by the Russian Foreign Office. The 'Communist League' held an emergency conference in May 1940, and delivered the manifesto on the war of the Fourth International. Rawling Collection.
factors, assuming that because Britain, France and Russia were stronger economically than Germany and Italy, they had only to declare firm opposition to the Axis Powers' aggression for the latter to desist without war. Captured German documents, however, suggest that by 1938 Hitler was determined on war, and that the Munich settlement was accordingly a disappointment to him. The alternative to Chamberlain's policy was, in all probability, war.¹

The exact point where Hitler would have stopped, or his generals revolted, will always be debatable, but the occupation of the Rhineland probably provided the last occasion when firm action by Britain and France would have succeeded without bloodshed. Action along the lines communists suggested, however, would have hardly won the approval of the public, but the need to persuade public opinion was another of the practical considerations that the C.P.A. ignored.

But the greatest weakness of the communist position was their implicit trust in the Soviet Union. They refused to admit the equivocal nature of Stalin's policy. Thus

¹ Shirer, Third Reich, pp. 423-4 argues that the alternative to Chamberlain's policy was war, and that Hitler would have lost it. Bullock, Hitler, pp. 471-2 thinks that Hitler was undecided, but also quotes the German generals that war then would have been a difficult one for Germany to win. Schacht asserts that but for the Munich Conference a coup by the army would have taken place. The 'plotters', however, both then and later revealed themselves both hesitant and incompetent. Schacht, Account Settled, pp. 124-5, and Shirer's comments, Third Reich, pp. 411-14. As for the time needed for an armaments programme to be effective, a series of letters to the Communist Review, April to July 1939, showed that some readers did realise the point. Officials, however, ignored it, and Dixon's slogan on rearmament was 'Non-Co-operation'.
the Workers Weekly may have been right in arguing that the Poles were short-sighted and had misjudged their strength. But it ignored the fears of many Eastern European countries of giving the Russians any excuse for entering their territories.

The communist case, in short, was not built upon an assessment of the strategic and military situation, but upon an intense distrust of all capitalistic governments, and a loyalty to the policies of the Soviet Union. Communists were not so much asserting reality as imposing their dogma upon it. The Communist Party 'derived the objective situation from communist tactics - not, as communist theory itself demands, communist tactics from the objective situation'.

Communists had always been dubious supporters of the Western democracies. Even at the time of the Abyssinian crisis they had mentioned revolutionary defeatism. Opposed to both capitalism and fascism they were always likely to turn upon their allies of the moment in the interests of the proletarian revolution. Finally, the immediate communist aim was the peace and security of Russia, and in the interests of this they were willing to abandon all their assertions about the necessity of standing up to Hitler.

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CHAPTER X

Labour - The Retreat From Isolationism

The Australian Labour movement, divided in its reaction to the Abyssinian crisis, had adopted isolationism. Whatever Curtin may have thought privately, he must have realised that this was the only policy that could keep the movement united, especially after the outbreak of the Spanish civil war. Lang's opponents in New South Wales, however, were gaining in strength. Adelaide trade unionists and the Tasmanian A.L.P. opposed isolationism. The A.C.T.U. Conference of 1937 abandoned the policy it had adopted in 1935. Lloyd Ross's suggestion, that the unions began to harden in their attitude to the Axis during the Spanish civil war, therefore seems plausible.

That the change had not gone far, however, was revealed by the response of Labour to the German occupation of Austria. The Labor Daily, now controlled by Lang's opponents, did not give the Anschluss much attention, but felt that collective security was the answer. The Australian Worker, in the past a persistent critic of Nazism, regarded the move as part of a Nazi plan to conquer the whole of Eastern Europe. However, it declared that the only hope lay in the world's workers, and opposed rearmament. The Labour Council of New South Wales, strong for collective security, also opposed rearmament, and a suggestion by a delegate to the New South Wales Trade Union Congress that the A.C.T.U. should set up a committee to consider ways and means of combating 'fascism' was
turned down. In Victoria, Lovegrove and Cameron still alleged that capitalism was the cause of war, and in a debate in Melbourne Trades Hall Council some members would not support even the defence of Australia, on the grounds that to do so would involve conscription and that workers had no reason to fight for capitalism anyway. The meeting, however, did not agree. The Call also explained events in economic terms. Meanwhile, in Federal Parliament, Curtin declared that the situation after the Anschluss was no worse than before and in some respects better.

It is quite clear that neither the isolationists nor the supporters of collective security had yet become practical in their thinking. The latter suffered from the weakness of communist thought. They assumed that Hitler would withdraw his demands before united opposition, that no force would be needed because the presumed allies would have overwhelming strength. They refused to consider the possibility that a collective stand against Hitler might involve intense rearmament and war. Their opponents were equally theoretical, insisting that wars were fought only for markets and territorial expansion, and that there was no difference between capitalist States.  

Beneath the abstract arguments of many Labour supporters, however, lay a deep desire to avoid being

1 Labor Daily, 14 and 29.3.38. Australian Worker, 16 and 23.3.38, also 30.3.38(14), 27.7.38(14). Labor Call, 31.3.38(3 and 8), 7.4.38(1), 24.3.38(1 and 5), 17.2.38(4), 17.3.38(1). CPD 155/543-4. The Adelaide Trades and Labour Council wanted an immediate military alliance to halt fascism, but at the same time opposed compulsory military training. The Times, 2.4.38.
involved in Central Europe. 1 Perhaps for this reason, the Anschluss did not cause any of the differing groups within the Labour movement to change their position. Those who had in the past supported collective security still did so, those who had opposed it continued their opposition. They agreed, however, in distrusting the British government's policy, in fearing that the Australian government would commit itself to it beforehand, and in asserting that there was no cause for Britain to intervene and certainly none for Australia.

The Czechoslovakian crisis, however, obliged Labour to consider more fully the policy of appeasement. The New South Wales Labour Party (the opponents of Lang), the Labor Daily and the Australian Worker favoured a strong stand in support of Czechoslovakia. They declared that the Western allies were stronger than Germany economically, and Hitler would be forced to back down if they remained firm. The allies would thus win a bloodless victory. Weakness, on the other hand, would only lead to further aggression and war, in which England would be faced by a Germany made stronger by Czech military and economic resources. The Australian Worker declared that the capitalist leaders of Europe had got together and callously betrayed Czechoslovakia to protect their interests and prepare a Four Power Pact to attack the Soviet Union. 2

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1 The 1934 Conference of the Victorian Labour Party had passed a resolution forbidding the Australian government to participate in any war arising from, amongst other things, the union of Austria with Germany and the Polish corridor. Argus, 30.1.34(7-8).

Isolationist sentiment was still strong, however. Lang began the Century in May 1938. He did not want appeasement, but to keep out of Europe entirely. He thought that Chamberlain would have done better to have held himself aloof, for he was now pledged to protect the rump of Czechoslovakia. Lang sent a letter to the Federal Executive on these lines, and had his eye on the Emergency Committee of the A.C.T.U.¹ He probably felt that his opponents in New South Wales were out of step with the other parts of Labour, and that he could rally interstate and Federal support for his old policies.

Labour was certainly divided on this issue. On the one hand Forgan Smith thought that Czechoslovakia's borders were not worth a war; on the other Adelaide unionists still supported collective security, and A.G. Ogilvie in Tasmania attacked isolationism, declaring that anybody who thought Hitler satisfied by Munich 'exhibited a tragic lack of understanding'.²

Similar divisions appeared in Victoria. A two-week debate in Melbourne Trades Hall Council ended in a complete stalemate. A motion in favour of the Czechs and two amendments - one sending fraternal greetings to the class-conscious workers of the world, the other, by D. Lovegrove, expressing isolationist and anti-Czechoslovakian sentiments - were all defeated. C. Crofts' remarks were cryptic and pessimistic; J.F. Chappie thought that

¹ Century, 9-30.9.38, 7.10.38. SMH, 17.9.38(11).
Chamberlain had only brought the dangers of war nearer; A. Calwell declared that he had made 'an abject surrender'. Peace may have been saved temporarily, possibly at the price of a worse war later, but some day 'the sops to Cerebus' might take the form of handing colonies to 'monstrosities like Hitler, Goering and Goebbels'. He wondered whether Lyons would then give up New Guinea. Lovegrove, on the other hand, seems to have been blinded by violent opposition to communism. A one-time Catholic, he bitterly criticised Russian policy, and declared that Czechoslovakia was 'a political monstrosity, created from the dismemberment of Austria and Hungary...and an outpost of British and French Imperialism in central Europe'.

The Labor Call was confused, being torn between a Marxist interpretation - that the Nazis were merely one form of capitalism, that Hitler and Mussolini represented deeper forces which controlled them, that they were subject to the will of the people - and a realisation that the cause of this crisis was Hitler's ambition. It admitted that no good could come from dismembering Czechoslovakia. Such action would not solve Hitler's economic problems, nor turn him permanently Eastwards, nor satisfy him. The newspaper tried to avoid the issue for as long as possible, accusing the press of manufacturing war scares. When it was forced to face the situation, it adopted isolationism. After Munich it declared that the betrayal of Czechoslovakia was a Godsend to Australia. It did not want to be 'inveighled into foreign embroglios because of the schemes... of power-crazed dictators'. The time

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1 Labor Call, 29.9.38(1, 2, 7, 8 and 9), 6.10.38(3), 13.10.38(1 and 9). Argus, 1.10.38(9), 24.9.38(10).
bought by Munich might give the workers of the world the chance to influence their governments. Meanwhile, the crisis was not a matter in which the Labor Call either felt the need, or wanted, to be involved. It was content that Czechoslovakia be sacrificed.¹

Such isolationism was echoed strongly by the Federal Party. In May, Senator Collings had implied that the crisis was a European matter only, and Senator Brown had emphasised the economic causes of war, and declared that political systems were irrelevant, and that the Nazis were at least modifying German capitalism. The Federal Executive confined itself to opposing conscription and compulsory military training.²

With widespread isolationism, and a divided party, Curtin took the only possible course. During the crisis he praised Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden, declared that Lyons too sought peace, and therefore agreed that Parliamentary debate on foreign affairs should be postponed. In his official A.L.P. statement on 27 September he urged peace by negotiation (i.e. appeasement) and that Australia had the resources only to defend herself. No troops should therefore be sent overseas, (i.e. modified isolationism).

A section of Caucus, however, led by F. Brennan, was still dissatisfied, and wanted a much more emphatic pronouncement against any participation in war overseas, including non-co-operation even in peace overtures.

² CPD 155/1538 and 1542/31.5.38. Labor Call, 16.6.38(1).
Brennan was a pacifist, a devout Catholic, and closely connected with Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne. He expressed in the Labour Party Catholic dislike of Czechoslovakia and reluctance to oppose Hitler because of communism in Europe. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, he misbehaved in the House, and on 29 September moved from the Opposition front bench to those occupied by the ex-Lang group.¹

Curtin made a public statement denying that the party was divided, and attempted to unite all sections of the movement in support of his statement against sending troops overseas. This compromise - he said nothing about Czechoslovakia, Munich or appeasement - was clearly a reversion to isolationism as the essential minimum on which all could agree. Moreover, it tuned in with the isolationist sentiments of many in the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party, most of the members of which were content that appeasement should be followed, providing they were not

¹ For the Official Statement, CPD 157/236-8. SMH, 29.9.38(11). For a discussion of the dissident group's motives, Argus, 21.9.38(1 and 2). Caucus Minutes, 20, 21 and 27.9.38. From the minutes it appears that the ex-members of the Lang group were the main source of Brennan's support in Caucus. For Brennan's association with Mannix, see N. Brennan, Dr Mannix, Adelaide 1964, pp.88-9, 230-2, 234, 273.
involved themselves. The quarrel was in Europe, between capitalists. Australia should concentrate on her own defence.¹

Labour members were willing to see Hitler appeased, at somebody else's expense, a long way away. That they had few illusions about his trustworthiness, or willingness to placate him nearer home, was seen in the almost unanimous opposition to the return of New Guinea. The Australian Worker had opposed its return on strategic grounds in 1937. In November 1938 it even went so far as to say that on that issue Hughes represented the voice of the Australian people. Labour suspicion of all imperialists, and certainly Hitler, could have formed the basis of a new policy, but such a change would have to be stimulated by events. In fact the pogrom of November 1938 led to resolutions of protest, not only in New South Wales, whose Labour Council could be expected to act in this way, but also in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the A.C.T.U. Executive. The Labor

¹ Labor Call, 6.10.38(1). Curtin himself stressed the weakness of the League, the use of it by British and French Imperialists, and therefore the need for Australian isolationism and defence preparations. Ibid., 27.10.38 (5 and 13). Australian Worker, 9.11.38(10). They would regret a war, but would not join one against Hitler's demands, or to uphold one form of government against another. Other Labour members praised Chamberlain, or thought that the matter did not concern Australia. Ward wanted Non-participation in capitalist wars, Senator Keane peace at any price. Beasley noted, without disapproval, Chamberlain's supposed aim of allying with the Axis against Russia. CPD 157/195-6, 326, 393, 396, 402-4, 411-13, 415-20, also 158/2137-42, 2152.
Call joined the Labor Daily and the Australian Worker in renewing the demand that New Guinea should not be returned.¹

Some intimation of an attempt to grapple with the facts of the world situation, instead of merely repeating old theories, was apparent in the debates on defence in 1939. The issue raised fundamental questions such as whether Labour was willing to co-operate with the U.A.P. in defending a capitalist society, how much should be spent, how the burden should be distributed, and whether the government could be trusted with wide powers. As mentioned before, defence was an easier subject for Labour members to discuss than foreign policy, because there was at least a consensus that Australia should be defended. It was a subject, moreover, in which a little realism could seep into the discussion - a consideration which probably occurred to Curtin.

Despite the opposition of Brennan's group, Curtin persuaded Caucus to accept the Treasurer's proposals for increased defence expenditure. The A.C.T.U. Emergency Committee in a statement on defence policy actually admitted that wars could occur from other than economic causes, and the A.W.U. Annual Convention rejected a motion against compulsory military training, at least partly because some delegates realised the necessity for defence. The same practical attitude was adopted in the A.C.T.U. Conference in March 1939, which criticised appeasement

and supported a scheme of voluntary enlistment. M. Richards, State Labour Leader in South Australia said that the international situation was so serious that the movement had to take its share in defence work, and the Tasmanian Labour Party advocated compulsory military training.¹ It is clear that by the beginning of 1939 many Labour members were giving serious thought to the problems of defence, and that although they made little reference to international events, they were increasingly suspicious of Hitler's moves.

Isolationism, however, was still held by the Lang group, and even more vehemently by some in Victoria. There D. Lovegrove, then President of the Trades Hall Council, declared that social reform was more important than defence preparations, and vacated his chair to oppose the A.C.T.U. defence proposals. The Council debated for two meetings whether to discuss these and only narrowly agreed to do so after the intervention of Crofts. In the sequel, both the motion to accept the defence proposals, and a class-conscious amendment, were defeated. Lovegrove continued his opposition. He wrote an article in the Call criticising the A.C.T.U. policy, and praising the 1935 declaration, which had attributed wars to the private monopoly ownership of the means of production. As President he tried to rule the A.C.T.U. Conference Resolutions out of order. However, the Trades Hall Council, after two long debates, accepted the A.C.T.U. policy.²

² Labor Call, 16 and 23.2.39, 2, 9 and 30.3.39, 6 and 20.4.39.
The divisions within the movement were seen in the Federal Conference, May 1939. The attempt of the South Australian delegation to persuade the Conference to cooperate with other countries against aggression was dubbed 'collective security', but Forgan Smith's amendment denying isolationism and stressing defence, supported by Curtin, was accepted. Curtin, however, repeated his remarks about the need for Australia to concentrate on her own defence, and that they had not the strength to become a police force, or even a salvage corps, in Europe. If war became unavoidable, he declared, they would have to play their part; but that was different from giving undertakings in advance that involved unpredictable risks. He saw no reason to involve the people of Australia in Europe. Despite limitations in Curtin's argument he was clearly groping his way towards a viable foreign policy. A new practical note had crept into the discussion, but Labour had still a long way to go. The following day the Tasmanian motion in favour of compulsory military training was defeated. The meeting was noisy and bitter, the Tasmanians insisting on the practical need to train the young men who were to defend Australia, and in the need to organise for a modern war. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, several delegates privately agreed, but felt that there was a danger of splitting the party. The ghost of the conscription struggles was still walking. By turning down both collective security and alliances, the question of how to counter further aggression, and to avoid war, remained unanswered. Curtin, however, was probably
deliberately avoiding it, confident that events themselves would clarify Labour ideas.¹

The German occupation of Prague had little immediate impact. Labour newspapers did not change their views, and members of federal Parliament still avoided reality. They still stressed the economic causes of war, still opposed commitment, still declared that there was little difference between Chamberlain and Hitler. Curtin at least admitted that the policies of the Axis were the cause of the impending war, but declared that social amelioration was the first priority. The repetition and vagueness of much of his speech, however, raises the suspicion that Curtin had a clearer view of events than he admitted, but refrained from a more challenging statement in the interests of party unity. This suspicion is strengthened by the tone of Brennan's speech, from which it is clear that he still led the isolationist group.

Brennan declared that foreign affairs were of less concern to Parliament than unemployment in Australia. He defended Germany against Gullett's criticism, and declared he would rather give three cheers for it than the U.A.P. He praised the bloodlessness of Hitler's moves, and accepted the German explanation of the occupation of Prague at its face value as a good thing. The affair was no concern of Australia's. The press was warmongering and should be controlled. Several Labour senators also demanded the censorship of the press.

¹
Labour speeches in the federal Parliament reveal a refusal to accept that the country was on the verge of war, and that it was a just war. Members' education, training, background, experience and political theory hindered their acceptance of this fact. Rather than admit it, they blamed the press, or capitalism, or adopted isolationism or defended Germany. Each member reacted in an individual way, and Curtin and others were beginning to see the light. Blackburn was typical, however, when he implied that if a further appeal for peace failed, they could go to war with a clear conscience. One more instance of Hitler's guilt was needed to persuade members.¹

The Polish crisis, culminating in the invasion of Poland, was to provide that proof. Initially Labour was split, however, over the idea of a Russian Pact. The newspapers reacted according to their general political position. Thus, the Daily News and the Australian Worker stressed the military need for a Pact with Russia, declared that the Baltic States should be guaranteed, blamed Chamberlain for any delay, and suggested that he was trying to inveigle Russia into doing the fighting. Those isolationists who were mainly moved by anti-communism, in particular the Catholics, violently opposed the idea of a pact with Russia. The Call, which seemed to reflect this section of Labour thinking, denied that the alliance

was essential. Russia merely wanted to incite a war, to enable communism to spread into Europe. The Red Army was weak. In the *Century*, A.C. Paddison predicted an alliance between Russia and Germany, on the grounds that their regimes, despite propaganda, were similar, and that their immediate military interests would be served by such an alliance. He disliked both parties.

The Russo-German Pact removed Catholic and right-wing doubt, but cut the ground from under the communists and their sympathisers. Thus the *Daily News*, after a feeble attempt to 'explain', avoided any mention of the Pact, and merely gave the official Labour policy. The *Australian Worker* was surprised, worried, and disappointed with Russia. The *Call*, however, declared that it proved the insincerity of Russia, tried to use the issue against local communists, and concluded that it would accept a defensive war. This last was a significant change in the *Call*’s attitude. The *Century* noted the strategic results of the Pact, but Lang's main concern was to use it to win his way back into the A.L.P.¹

In the movement at large, the main interest from June to August seems to have been the opposition to the

¹ It is interesting to note that Paddison was clearly interested in, and knowledgeable about, Europe. His writings in the *Century* implied some form of involvement. Lang intervened with an article declaring that the war that threatened was just as imperialist as the previous one. The next week Paddison put the case for Germany. There is a close similarity between this incident, and the earlier one of the Labor Daily in 1935. See above pp.64-5. *Daily News*, 23.5.39, 2.6.39, 2.8.39, 23.8.39. *Australian Worker*, 7.6.39(1), 5.7.39(6), 2.8.39(6), 30.8.39(1). *Labor Call*, 30.3.39(4), 15.6.39(14), 31.8.39(1, 8 and 12). *Century*, 24.3.39(6), 12.5.39(5), 16.6.39(7), 7.7.39(3), 14.7.39(7), 25.8.39(7 and 8), 8.9.39(9).
proposed 'National Register' - which roused all the old fears of conscription. Nevertheless, this period saw the attitude of Labour becoming gradually more realistic. The Round Table noted, in July, that the subject of the argument had changed from isolationism to the extent of participation. ¹

The German invasion of Poland completed the process. Some still felt that the war was essentially an imperialist one, but nearly all that it was unavoidable. Curtin expressed shock and dismay and remarked that Labour could be relied upon to support Australian and Commonwealth defence. Forgan Smith said that everything possible had been done to preserve the peace, and that they had then to maintain the principles and liberty for which they stood. When the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party met on 5 September, it adopted a statement, prepared by Curtin and endorsed by the Executive as the official A.L.P. policy. This statement repeated the A.L.P.'s traditional horror of war, and belief that international disputes should be settled by arbitration. It declared, however, that resistance to armed aggression was inevitable if attacks on free peoples were to be averted. Facing the reality of war, the party stood by its platform for

¹ For the struggles over the National Register, see Labor Call from June to August 1939. Round Table, September 1939, vol.29, pp.858-9 (the article was written in July). Curtin still criticised Menzies' unconditional support for Britain after the Russo-German Pact, and insisted that there was a difference between opinion about Europe and resources to intervene there. SMH, 25.8.39(11).
the defence of Australia and the maintenance of the integrity of the British Commonwealth.\(^\text{1}\)

In the Parliamentary debate which followed, some members still felt that it was a capitalist war, caused by economic conditions, and the injustices of Versailles. Others, however, squarely blamed German aggression. Curtin noted the German technique; Scullin declared that however much they abhorred war such aggression could not be allowed to continue. The British White Paper seems to have removed his doubts, as those of Beasley. Aylett later declared that whatever the fundamental causes of war in general, there was no doubt of the immediate cause of that one.\(^\text{2}\)

Curtin's stature in the party seems to have grown during the crises of 1938-9. Forde, after Munich, had moved a vote of thanks to Curtin in Caucus which had been acclaimed unanimously. The resolution which Curtin moved on the outbreak of war revealed his political skill. It took the party the furthest it could go without friction becoming intolerable. Yet it was sufficiently vague and flexible to be accepted by all shades of opinion - without any necessarily being fully satisfied - and to enable him to lead the party further when events during the war necessitated it. Thus when Brennan's group tried to order State leaders not to urge the sending of an expeditionary force, Curtin diverted the matter to the Federal Executive,

\(^1\) SMH, 5.9.39(11). Round Table, December 1939, vol.30, p.191. Caucus Minutes, 5 and 13 September 1939. For the Statement, see CPD 161/37/6 September 1939.

\(^2\) CPD 161/14, 18, 37-8, 46, 55, 57-8, 72-3, 103.
merely suggesting that the F.P.L.P. declaration should be supported.¹

Gradually the movement united behind Curtin's policy. The New South Wales Labour party and industrial movement, and the *Daily News*, divided and uncertain over the Russo-German Pact and internal stresses, adopted the policy. Lang, facing the last fight which led to his eviction from the New South Wales Caucus, echoed Curtin's remark and even declared that the whole of their supplies should be made available to Britain. He was still angling for Federal support against his opponents. The *Australian Worker*, which had entered the war much more whole-heartedly than the other Labour newspapers, on 13 September modified its attitude to agree with Curtin's declaration. On 15 September the Federal Executive endorsed the latter, together with opposition to the sending of an expeditionary force, and declared it 'binding on every constituent member throughout the commonwealth'. On 18 September the Interstate Executive of the A.C.T.U. agreed.²

The official policy, initiated in the first instance by Curtin, had won the support of all groups in the Eastern States except in Victoria. There D. Lovegrove, as anti-communist as ever, declared at the end of September that the war was as Imperialist as the previous one, and had been caused, not by opposing political systems but by opposing economic interests. The Labor Call was not finally convinced of the justice of the Western allies¹

¹ *Caucus Minutes, 6.10.38, 13.9.39.*
cause until the Russian invasion of Poland. In the same way the Melbourne Trades Hall Council did not debate the war until the 12 October. By that time, the Communist Party had changed its policy. Sympathisers of the extreme left therefore again joined with emotional Marxists to declare the war an Imperialist one. (J. Coull again wanted fraternal greetings sent to the workers in other lands.) Adjourned for a week, the renewed debate revealed strong feelings. Left-wing isolationists still felt that it was a war with which representatives of the working class should have nothing to do. One speaker denied that resistance to armed aggression was inevitable, and declared that the British Commonwealth, with its suppression of Irish, Indians, Egyptians and Arabs, was public enemy number one. This provoked outbursts from several members, who bitterly criticised the blindness which could see no difference between the Nazi government in Germany, with its suppression of free speech, trade unions, and workers, and the governments of Britain and the dominions, who, although capitalist, still allowed a certain freedom. Members who had previously taken no great part in debates joined with leaders like Crofts and Clarey to pour scorn on the critics of the motion. Tempers were rising. When Clarey declared it was essential to make a stand behind the democracies, he was told by one delegate he ought to be shot — a remark that had to be withdrawn. The motion was carried 'by an overwhelming majority'.

Thus the period from 1935 to 1939 saw the gradual weaning of Labour away from isolationism. The party and movement had adopted that attitude during the Abyssinian crisis, and continued it during the period of bitter division in the opening years of the Spanish civil war. In 1939 they united at last behind the war policy propounded by Curtin and the Federal Party. Whereas in 1935 almost no section of Australian Labour, whatever its views on sanctions, would have supported a war by Britain against Italy, after Hitler's aggressions all the varying units, despite individual doubters, accepted that Australia was inevitably involved in the struggle against Germany. The final transition, that the war was not only unavoidable but just, probably occurred later.1

Isolationism was the almost inevitable result of the history of the Labour movement in Australia, combined with the background and traditional beliefs of Labour supporters. To modify it was bound to take time. None of the possible alternatives was acceptable to the leadership. Collective security was a dream, and advocated by communists. An Imperial Foreign Policy, in the sense that the government understood by that term, was unthinkable. A Balance of Power system was commonly assumed to have been a major cause of the previous war. Appeasement meant being involved

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1 D.W. Rawson, Organisation of the A.L.P., p. 360, suggests that this occurred in 1940, with the attack on Scandinavia and the fall of France. J.J. Maloney, in an interview with the author, 17.3.65, placed it in 1941 with the approach of the Japanese. On such a matter the time of the change would depend on the individual. (The remarks of some members in the Special Commonwealth Conference, 1940, revealed that they were casting off illusions and facing realities at last. Official Report of Proceedings of the Special Commonwealth Conference, June 1940.)
in Europe, and at the same time making concessions to arrogant dictators. As it transpired, the party eventually supported a war based on an alliance, but without the necessary balance of power. If the result, from the point of view of foreign policy, was unfortunate, it was also unavoidable. Party unity was essential if any viable opposition to the government was to be maintained. Labour had seen two near-disastrous splits since 1914, and the struggles with Lang in New South Wales were a running ulcer in the body of the movement. Foreign policy was liable to rouse emotion, just at a time when the movement could least afford it. With Catholics on one side, and communists and their sympathisers on the other, the issues of Abyssinia, Spain, and Hitler's aggressions in Europe were all too likely to be divisive.

This is not to suggest that the bulk of Labour supporters considered these matters either often or deeply. Isolationism, in fact, reflected their basic attitude to European events. However, the wish to avoid war led many to support Chamberlain's attempt to appease Hitler. Such attitudes continued well into 1939, and the occupation of Prague was no great turning point. It needed the German invasion of Poland to convince most Labour members of the inevitability of opposing Hitler by force of arms; it needed the Russian invasion of Poland to sway the Labor Call. Even then, most members probably did not feel any need to be directly and personally involved. Australia, and its defence, remained a nearer concern.

Although in many ways the continued aggressions of the Axis Powers forced Labour men to abandon isolationism, much credit must go to Curtin. His motives and beliefs remain an enigma, and will continue to do so until a definitive biography is written. But throughout the
period he revealed, beneath isolationist utterances, an interest in and knowledge of foreign events. Elected leader just as the Abyssinian crisis broke, he adopted an isolationism he probably did not fully share in the interests of party unity. Cautious during the Spanish civil war, Curtin gained in stature during the Munich crisis. By moderation, carefully biding his time, and letting events speak for him, he gradually led his followers to face the international situation. His stress on defence in 1939 made them consider practical issues; his declaration of official policy on the outbreak of war made them go one stage further. These moves were clearly the forerunners of his more spectacular triumphs during the war - the appeal to America and persuading the movement to accept conscription for service in the area to the north of Australia. Yet in many respects Curtin's greatest service to his party and country was in the inter-war period. At a time when a final disastrous split could easily have occurred, he kept the party together, and gently steered it towards a more realistic foreign policy. Under his guidance, the Australian Labour party executed its retreat from isolationism.
CHAPTER XI

The Australian Public and Germany
March 1938-September 1939

Australian public opinion - in so far as it had concerned itself with European events - had till 1938 regarded fascist Italy as the greatest threat to European peace. In that year, however, it became preoccupied with the mounting aggressions of Nazi Germany. Between 1938 and 1939 only one set of letters dealing specifically with Italy appeared in the newspapers - in the Argus in November 1938. It was significant that only in Melbourne could correspondents be induced to praise lavishly Mussolini's work in Italy and to sneer at Abyssinia. The Campion Society had done its work well. Other writers of letters to the newspapers, however, concentrated increasingly on Germany.¹

Defence of, if not support for, the internal and external policies of the Axis came in Australia from those sections of the community most violently anti-communist, such as Catholic spokesmen and the Bulletin. That journal, as has been noted, was moving to the right during this period, as a result of opposition to communism. The Spanish civil war had made more clear the characteristics of its policy which had been veiled during the Abyssinian crisis. It was afraid that any war would become one in defence

¹ Argus, 18.11.38-23.11.38. Lloyd Ross, interview cited, mentioned how attention was focused on Italy in the earlier period, and that it was only in 1938 that the German menace replaced the Italian one in the public eye.
of Russia, or would open the way for communism in Europe. Therefore in 1938 and 1939 it defended Hitler's Germany and glossed over aggression. At the time of the Anschluss, it supported Hitler's case, and insisted that Australia should avoid all involvement. It repeated this demand during the Czechoslovakian crisis. The Czechs were not worth fighting for. The Germans had real grievances against them, were not aggressive, and were of superior quality. Czechoslovakia should have become a federal State. After the Munich Agreement it was unworried by the possibility of the German domination of Europe. It praised Chamberlain, and bitterly attacked S.H. Roberts for criticising him. It played down and misrepresented the persecution of the Jews, and attacked the Australian press for creating fictitious war scares.1

After the German occupation of Prague, the Bulletin at last admitted that Hitler's word could not be trusted, but still wished to avoid making a definite stand. It therefore wanted prohibitive tariffs against Germany, and British Empire isolationism, not Chamberlain's guarantees to Eastern European States. It still praised appeasement. It insisted that Hitler's motives were partly fear of Bolshevisation; that he had never broken written agreements; that Poland was unworthy of aid; and that Hitler did not want to attack Britain or France.

The main motive of the editors was quite clearly a deep hatred of communism. They used the most bitter invective against Russia, and, rather than defend her, were willing to abandon Europe to Hitler entirely.

Understandably, therefore, the Bulletin expressed vehement opposition to the projected pact with Russia. Typical of its attitude was the headline 'Shaking Hands With Murder'. An alliance with Russia would have been as useless as it was dangerous. Britain, in effect, would have been guaranteeing Russia, which had instituted purges and was hated throughout Europe. No good could come of such an alliance. Russia would avoid her commitments, and take advantage of the devastation caused by the war to spread communist revolution. The Bulletin would rather have fought alone than with such an ally. It still hoped for British Empire isolationism and appeasement.¹

That its basic motive was anti-communism, was revealed by the Bulletin's reaction to the Russo-German Agreement. For the first time the magazine became critical of Hitler. Indeed, it is not clear whether its motive in supporting Britain and France in the war was Hitler's continuing aggressions, or his pact with Stalin.²

The editorial policy of the Bulletin, already discussed, was most striking in 1938 and 1939. Such stir as it caused, however, was probably due to a misunderstanding of the magazine's earlier 'radicalism'. The Bulletin had long discarded that attitude by 1938, and remained solely the champion of a somewhat xenophobic nationalism. It was easy for men who held such a viewpoint, and who hated the very thought of communism, to sympathise with the Axis powers. Far from Europe, they either could not or would not admit the full iniquity of the Nazi regime;

nor could they bring themselves to oppose it, when they saw the danger of the spread of communism into Europe.

The same phenomenon was seen in the group around P.R. Stephensen and the Publicist. This proudly asserted that it was anti-democratic, anti-semitic, and 'anti-Leftist'. It praised Hitler for his race theories, and opposed the admission of Jewish refugees or immigrants into Australia: Jews brought their persecution upon themselves. Germany and Italy were the only countries in Europe which showed progress; Hitler and Mussolini were great and admirable leaders, and the concentration camps were not as bad as they had been painted. The Publicist printed Hitler's speeches to the Reichstag, where possible, in full.

As for foreign policy during 1938 and 1939, the Publicist was unconcerned by the Anschluss, and though at first slightly sympathetic towards Czechoslovakia, declared that the crisis was of no concern to Australia. It realised, and emphasised, the magnitude of the victory Munich represented for Hitler. However, it declared that Britain would have been stupid to fight, that Hitler and Mussolini were 'the great peace-force leaders of Europe', and that Britain was encircling Germany. While it

1 See pp.205-6. The group was considering the formation of an 'Australia First Party' in November 1938, and issued an innocuous manifesto urging an independent foreign policy and Australian control of her defence forces. Publicist, November 1938(4-9). For the manifesto, see the back cover of March 1942 - the last issue before the government interned all the staff.

2 Publicist, April 1939(1-2, 11 and 13), March 1939(1-4 and 9-11), July 1939(4), September 1938(11), August 1938 (16), January 1939(7), October 1938(1-2), June 1939(15-16).
considered that Danzig and Poland were no business of Australia's, the Publicist felt that if Britain declared war Australia would be automatically involved, due to constitutional and legal ties. It accepted the war quietly. It declared that the attempt to provide a moral basis for the allies' action was humbug. The war was simply caused by conflicting interests. ¹

The attitudes towards the Axis Powers adopted by the Bulletin and the Publicist were in many respects similar. The Bulletin still had literary and artistic pretensions, and accepted the structure of Australian society and politics. It was, however, nearer in tone and attitude to the Publicist than to the daily newspapers. The Publicist had been founded with the deliberate intention of awakening Australian nationalism, both political and cultural. Both magazines strongly opposed communism. Both found favour with Catholics.

The Publicist, after mentioning a 'candid but not unfriendly' article in the Advocate on itself, added that from letters it had received, 'It is clear that Catholics have shown a more spontaneous sympathy and understanding of our propaganda than any other section of the community'. It may have been significant that Stephensen spoke weekly over the Catholic radio station 2SM in Sydney. Irish Catholics had been associated with movements for radical nationalism in the 1890s. Their opposition to Britain could lead to criticism of democracy, as happened in some Catholic newspapers. That, together with their violent

¹ Publicist, April 1938(14-6), October 1938(2-3), November 1938(10), December 1938(12-13, 16), July 1939(2-6), September 1939(18), October 1939(1-7).
anti-communism, and occasional slight temptations to anti-semitism, led them to sympathise with the aims of the Australia First Movement.¹

The pro-German tone of the Publicist was so striking that some people suggested that it was subsidised by the German consulate. The magazine carried no advertisements - usually considered essential means of finance. Moreover, 'J. Benauster' (probably J.B. Miles), when answering a set of critical questions, pointedly declined to reveal the sources of revenue behind the venture.² Subsidies might account for the long translations of Hitler's Reichstag speeches which the Publicist printed. On the other hand, Stephensen needed no inducement to hold the views he did, and Miles was rich enough to finance the journal himself without aid. The German consulate was at the time handing out printed material to all the newspapers. Whereas most would ignore it, the Publicist probably found it a convenient means of filling vacant space, especially when the matter was the text of important speeches by Hitler.

The German Consul-General, Dr Asmis, although notorious for attempts to suppress criticism of Germany spent more of his time attempting to put his country's

¹ Ibid., March 1939(4), August 1938(4). For Catholic anti-semitism, see p. 352. Advocate, 13.4.39(25) published a letter signed 'Australia First' declaring that Australia was not even remotely concerned with Poland, which Hitler was not thinking of attacking anyway, and criticising the idea of an alliance with Russia.

² Publicist, March 1939(1-4).
case, and supporting the pro-German organisations within Australia. These last caused some slight stir within the community.

Several Nazi clubs began in Sydney and Melbourne, and neighbouring residents reported that members marched along the main roads singing German marching songs. There were rumours that one of the staff in the German department of Sydney University was an active Nazi, and that Hitler had opened a club in the Dandonongs by radio telephone. The Nazi film, 'The Triumph of Will' apparently made a deep impression on an invited audience of Germans. The Sydney Morning Herald quoted a German newspaper report that there were sixty thousand Germans in Australia, united in support of Nazism. It noted, however, that they seemed to be doing little to influence public opinion, and suggested that many affected Nazi sentiments to protect relatives in Germany.

Such activities inevitably led to opposition. At Kalgoorlie, Italian workers divided into bitterly opposing groups, and an attempt to screen a film glorifying Mussolini was abandoned. In Sydney, the Labor Daily ran a campaign against Dr Asmis, alleging that he had been chief of the German secret police when nurse Cavell was shot, and declaring that the German organisation in Australia was highly developed, and was available as a skeleton army of

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1 Asmis spoke at the Second Annual German People's festival at Clifton, hoping for an alliance between Germany and Britain, and defending Germany's case in the Sudetenland. Argus, 26.9.38(13). He continued his efforts to silence all criticism of Germany - for example requesting the Chief Secretary of New South Wales to suppress a 'March of Time' film. SMH, 13.4.38(13).

occupation. Asmis, as a result, sent a complaint to Lyons. The newspaper was unabashed. It discussed German press attacks on Britain while German ambassadors abroad suppressed criticism of Germany, and produced a cartoon depicting Asmis walking into his office over a prostrate Lyons.¹

Asmis scored one triumph, however. E. Baume, who was a commentator on 2GB and at the same time on the editorial board of the Sunday Sun, had become obsessed by the danger of German subversion in Australia, and highly critical of the Nazis. After Asmis had complained repeatedly to Lyons, the Board of the Sunday Sun passed a resolution that since Associated Newspapers favoured appeasement, it was not right that any editor, even anonymously, should support different views. They therefore forbade any editor in their employ to broadcast. Baume spoke in public of the 'considerable' efforts to remove him, and referred to Hitler as 'the most loathsome swine who ever lived' and Chamberlain as 'grovelling' before him. He was reported to have continued by attacking the Federal government and pointing to the danger of subversion in Australia.²

Less sensational in style, and more concerned with the international scene, 'the Watchman' returned from a


visit to Germany in 1937 with grim forebodings. His listeners were not liable to think highly of Nazism.¹

Australian intellectuals, unlike some politicians, were not afraid to criticise the internal regime of Germany. They noted the religious conflict in that country. S.H. Roberts declared that those who said the domestic policy of Germany was not their concern were misguided, because the nature of the regime influenced its foreign policy. Macmahon Ball, who still said in June 1939 that the Treaty of Versailles had been unjust, and implied that he was unwilling to support a war between rival imperialisms, was moved to support the Western Powers because of Nazi internal rule, and the thought that every victory for them spread that rule further.²

Public opinion, however, changed fairly rapidly in the period between March 1938 and September 1939. Some attempt to trace the changes chronologically is therefore necessary.

The American Consul-General, T.M. Wilson, reported that the Anschluss caused astonishment and genuine shock to Australian opinion. He was probably exaggerating the reaction among the circles in which he moved. When the

¹ 'The Watchman', News Behind the News, 5.4.37, 9.8.37, 16.8.37, 23.8.37. At Home and Abroad, 3.8.37 mentioned that forty new concentration camps were being built.


W. Macmahon Ball, 'Thoughts on the Conflict with Germany', Australian Quarterly, June 1939, pp.9-17.
'Movement Against War and Fascism' urged the people to attend in thousands to protest to Asmis, five men and ten women turned out, watched by forty police. A large crowd, however, gathered to view the resultant street demonstration. The Argus printed six letters, including two by conservatives, who wondered if Chamberlain's policy merely encouraged aggression. The Sydney Morning Herald only printed four letters. Indeed, from written evidence there appears to have been a lack of public interest in and response to the Anschluss. It was the first of Hitler's major aggressions, and could be regarded as merely an occupation of German territory with the welcome of the inhabitants. There was no clear reason why Australia should be involved. Beneath the surface, however, some worry was felt, as was shown by talk of war, discussion of the Singapore base and increased defence estimates, and the quietness of the election campaign in New South Wales. The bulk of the public, however, was not shaken out of its apathy.1

The aftermath of the Anschluss was a renewed debate on the foreign policy to be pursued by the Commonwealth. Intellectuals argued in general terms on appeasement, support for the League, isolationism and the need for a separate foreign policy for Australia. For example, J.C.G. Kevin, in Some Australians Take Stock implied support for isolationism, criticising the opponents of

appeasement in England apparently solely on the ground that their policy would lead to a war from which the dominions could with difficulty hold aloof. Britain should therefore exercise caution in Europe.\textsuperscript{1} Others however, criticised the British government for ignoring the League, or indeed of being responsible for League failure. They wanted Chamberlain to abandon appeasement in favour of a strong League policy, or for the League to concentrate on economic appeasement and develop regional pacts.\textsuperscript{2}

An intellectual attempt to sympathise with the Axis led some to support appeasement. The best example was probably C.E.W. Bean, who as war correspondent and Australian war historian, wished if possible to avoid a further conflict. He had shared the idealism of many soldiers, and also their disillusionment with post-war policies, including the peace treaties. He was therefore willing to give Germany the benefit of the doubt, and to support an honest attempt to remedy legitimate German grievances. In March 1938 he protested that however much they disapproved of German methods, and the thrust to the

\footnote{1}{J.C.G. Kevin, Some Australians Take Stock, pp.219-22, 206-8. It should perhaps be noted that Kevin and the other contributors to this book were ex-patriate Australians in London. Their views did not necessarily represent any section of the Australian population. Kevin's own comments possibly reflected the attitudes of S.M. Bruce and 'Australia House'.}

\footnote{2}{A.G. Colley, 'Australia, Great Britain and the League', \textit{Australian Quarterly}, June 1938, pp.49-56, and A. Murray Smith 'Can the League Promote Peace?', \textit{ibid.}, December 1938, pp.64-9. Intellectuals who disliked British policy on various grounds demanded a separate foreign policy by Australia. This demand had appeared at the 1938 Summer School of the AIPS. A.G. Colley repeated it, declaring that the Australian government had, in reality, no policy apart from support for Britain.}
East, they were not justified in opposing it in every shape. Economic expansion by Germany in that direction was justifiable and even beneficial.¹

The most publicly vocal of opponents of appeasement among the intellectuals was S.H. Roberts. Apart from his best-selling book, and newspaper articles, he also spoke over the radio. His comments on current events contained occasional predictions which were mistaken. For example, in February 1938 he thought that Hitler would not need to annex Austria, because he could control it through his nominees in the Austrian Cabinet, but that if he did attempt to occupy the country, the Austrians would resist. Moreover, Roberts took Hitler's racial theories at their face value as an explanation of his aggressive moves. However, from this wrong premise he drew the right conclusions — that Hitler's ambition was growing and that appeasement would not curb it. In a supplementary chapter — written after the Anschluss — to The House That Hitler Built, Roberts declared 'The apparent British policy of "appeasement at any price" only confirms the Nazi leaders in their analysis and methods'. He stressed that the Anschluss did matter, that it was a prelude to a German drive through Europe and the Middle East.²

Opposition to the idea of appeasement existed more widely, however. The editorial policy of the Sydney Morning Herald, the Queensland Digger and the Listening Post has

already been noted, as has the expectation of a firm British stand by the Melbourne Herald. Sir Joseph Cook wrote from retirement defending the settlement in central Europe, and declaring that to change it would be to abandon European peace as well as Czechoslovakia. If letters to the press are a guide, this feeling was fairly widespread. The Sydney Morning Herald printed a long correspondence which began in May. Letter-writers were highly sceptical of Germany's professed concern for minorities. All except two were critical of British policy. Control of Bohemia would put Hitler in a position to continue his bid for European domination. To delay resistance was merely to make it harder eventually. Bad as war was, peace could be bought at too high a price.¹

In mid-1938, indeed, a fairly strong sentiment against Germany existed in the community. A focus for this was provided by the long-heralded visit to Australia of Count Felix Von Luckner - a German ex-naval commander who enjoyed the pose of the chivalrous pirate of the world war. His tour of Australia naturally roused the left wing, and raised the question of freedom of speech. Demonstrations occurred, especially in Melbourne, where crowds of four to seven hundred people were controlled, with the exercise of some violence, by large numbers of police. His quietest meeting was in Melbourne University International Relations Society, where a small group of students staged a welcome for him. A lengthy correspondence - noticeable for the participation of Catholics - appeared in the Age. E.L. Kiernan, MLC, sent a telegram to Von Luckner deploring the

¹ SMH Letters on 24, 26, 27 and 31.5.38. For Sir J. Cook, 24.5.38(10), 21.9.38(16).
Sydney incidents, and declaring that Australia admired the great German nation. This roused criticism of Nazi rule, which led D.G.M. Jackson to declare that they praised Germany, not Nazism. In June 1938 Melbourne Catholics still saw Hitler as a bulwark against communism, and were unwilling to admit the nature of the Nazi regime. 1

In August 1938 Sir Charles Belcher, returning to Australia for a visit, said that throughout the country he had heard condemnation of Germany and Italy. How widespread such condemnation was is debatable. A short correspondence in the Argus in August revealed that some people were willing to defend Hitler and blame France. In the Age too a correspondent attacked the anti-German propaganda of the Australian press. 2

As August passed into September 1938, the interest shifted from general attitudes to Germany to the more immediate problem of the Sudeten crisis.

Australian intellectuals were divided. P.F. Irvine vigorously defended the dictators. F.W. Eggleston supported Chamberlain's visit to Hitler. Although he admitted, later, that there may have been weakness in the move diplomatically, he felt that Chamberlain was right to do


his utmost to avoid any suggestion of an ideological conflict. Other intellectuals completely opposed the appeasement of Germany. S.H. Roberts criticised The Times' Sudetenland policy. He felt that uniting the area with Germany, on the grounds of race, would lead to German moves against many other countries in Europe. J. McCallum compared Chamberlain's policy with that of Ethelred the Unready, and Professor Alexander demanded, on the grounds both of principle and British interests, a declaration of aid to Czechoslovakia against aggression. Germany, he felt, was using the Sudetens as a lever, and the crisis would recur, even if temporarily patched up. A firm collective stand was needed. The military position was not unhopeful, but it would become so if Germany dominated the continent. 1

To talk of 'public opinion' during the Czechoslovakian crisis, as the Round Table pointed out, would be misleading, since opinion was more divided on this issue than on any previous one. That many Australians supported appeasement is clear, either because - like Labour - they disliked involvement in Europe, or - like the Catholics - they disliked Czechoslovakia and communism, or because they dreaded war. Moreover the traditional policy of the

1 P.F. Irvine, 'Peace and Sacrifice', Australian Quarterly, September 1938, pp.87-92. This was such a crude defence of the dictators, so unlike Irvine's usual style, as to suggest that Irvine had been picked by the editor to be 'devil's advocate'. Irvine was a quiet, self-effacing solicitor, closely connected with the Institute of Political Science and the Round Table. Eggleston, Search etc., pp.338-9. For S.H. Roberts, SMH, 14.9.38(16), 23.9.38(10). J. McCallum, Australian Quarterly, September 1938, p.103. For Professor Alexander, West Australian, 13.9.38(16).
Australian press and ruling classes was to support the British government. But the Round Table, not perhaps unexpectedly, underestimated the opposition to appeasement latent in the community.

The number of letters sent to the Sydney Morning Herald criticising the British policy was striking, as was their similarity to many sent to the Argus - whose editorial policy was to support appeasement. Letters to the Argus were more evenly divided, but almost half feared that Britain had been humiliated, and that war - which would have been better then without the loss of honour and prestige than later - had only been postponed. Many felt that Hitler's 'bluff' should be called. Two correspondents, indeed, bitterly criticised the editorial policy of the Argus itself, and declared that it represented only a small percentage of the people. This, apart from reflecting credit on the newspaper for printing both sides of the argument, suggests that even in Melbourne doubts of appeasement were strong.¹

The Anglo-French proposals were, according to the Round Table, 'a painful shock to most Australians'. (Professor R.M. Crawford castigated the Anglo-French plan as nothing but 'a temporary and dishonourable peace', a

¹ Round Table, December 1938, vol.29, pp.44-9. Letters in SMH, 16, 20-29.9.38. Argus, 17, 20, 23, 24, 26-8.9.38. As for doubts in Melbourne, even the Age had one letter on each side, and the Labor Call printed two articles by the Victorian League of Nations Union that Hitler was pursuing the policies of Mein Kampf and that a strong allied reaction had stopped him in May. Age, 26.5.38(11), 23.9.38(12). Labor Call, 30.6.38(8), 28.7.38(7). More to be expected were the series of letters in the Sydney Labor Daily criticising Chamberlain, 25 and 28.5.38, 2.6.38, 4.7.38, 2.8.38, 22.9.38.
The general reaction was dismay, humiliation, and shame. Such feelings were revealed by newspaper editorials, R.S.L. magazines, and letters to the press. A correspondent to the Sydney Morning Herald asserted that public opinion was hardening against conciliation, and would have supported strong British action. Considering, however, the vast number of people who did not write letters to the newspapers, the Round Table's estimate was probably more accurate.

The general reaction to the Munich crisis was almost certainly a deep concern combined with a feeling of helplessness. To quote the Round Table, most Australians experienced the apprehension and indecision of the ordinary citizen, who felt that events were moving in a direction which he dreaded under the impulse of forces of which he had no control and little understanding.

The tension was immeasurably greater than on any previous occasion. For the first time the imminent danger of war was realised by the mass of the Australian population.

The first reaction to the news of the Munich Pact was therefore a great wave of relief. The Argus and the Age printed a spate of letters praising Chamberlain's 'magnificent feat' and regarding Munich as the result of

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1 Round Table, ibid. R.M. Crawford was Professor of History, Melbourne University where Dr E.H.S. Burhop was Research Officer in Physics. Argus, 23.9.38(13), 24.9.38(9).

2 Whereas at least thirty-five letters were sent to the Prime Minister on the Spanish civil war - during a period of three years - eighty two were sent in two months on Czechoslovakia. Many reflected an intense desire to avoid any commitment.
prayer. Others wrote to the Prime Minister, including two firms who organised their workers to join a telegram of congratulations to Chamberlain. M.F. Dixon, a prominent journalist, recalled later the feeling of relief that spread through the Sydney-Melbourne express when the news was announced at Albury. Eric Baume admitted that for a day or two he joined "the jubilant choir" until praise for Chamberlain became nauseating.¹

The reaction, in fact, was a complex one. Many accepted the agreement uncritically. Others hid secret doubts. A correspondent to the Argus, while praising Munich, wanted preparations in case the agreement was not carried out. The reaction of yet others was shame. McClure Smith told the depressed editorial staff of the Sydney Morning Herald that he felt like adopting American nationality — a remark strangely reminiscent of a correspondent to the Labor Daily. One letter to the Argus declared that a brave nation had been betrayed, while another felt that it was a dishonourable peace due to cowardice.²

Frequent suggestions for recompensing the Czechs, usually in the form of a fund, reveal that some Australians had uneasy consciences. The Argus by 5 October printed thirteen letters suggesting a fund — including five donations — and another urging all Australians to buy Czech goods. It afterwards printed eight more letters on

¹ Argus, 1-5.10.38. Age, 1-12.10.38. Some Age correspondents were incensed that "the Watchman" and others had dared to criticise and belittle Chamberlain. Century, 23.3.62(5). E. Baume, I Lived These Years, pp.213-4.
this subject. The President and Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the League of Nations Union informed the Age that they would inaugurate a fund for Czechoslovakia, and ask Bruce in London how it could be distributed. The Sydney Morning Herald also printed letters of sympathy for the Czechs which expressed willingness to donate to an appeal and suggested that Czech refugees be granted asylum in Australia. The German occupation of the ceded territory soon gave such letters added point. The Lord Mayors of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide - at the request of the Lord Mayor of London - did in fact make appeals. The response was slight - revealing perhaps the unwisdom of gauging public feeling by letters printed in the press. The Sydney appeal, despite strong support by the Sydney Morning Herald, raised only £2,342. An appeal running concurrently for a war veterans home raised £15.11.4. Either shame, or involvement, or the feeling that something useful could be done, was lacking.

The writers of letters to the Argus did not debate explicitly the permanence of the peace which Munich was said to have saved. Instead, most of Chamberlain's supporters assumed that Munich was final or did not consider the matter, while opponents attacked the honour of the agreement more than its permanence. A few however did

\[\text{Argus, } 4.10.38(2), 5.10.38(4), 7.10.38(8), 8.10.38(4).\]
\[\text{Age, } 7.10.38(16).\]
\[\text{SMH, } 15.10.38(4).\]
\[\text{The Argus, } 12.10.38(15)\text{ printed a resolution of Melbourne women to Lyons protesting against the demarcation of the fifth zone, which, they said, handed over 850,000 Czechs to German rule. For the funds, SMH } 14.10.38(10), 25.11.38(10), 28.11.38(10).\]
\[\text{Melbourne's total is missing, but Adelaide raised } £3,280.\]
\[\text{The Times, } 5.11.38.\]
\[\text{The government, it might be added, declined to lead a nation-wide appeal, or even make a grant.}\]
declare that Hitler's promises were worthless. Fewer letters were sent to the Sydney Morning Herald after Munich than before it, but those published were more concerned with the possible permanence of the pact. Senator McCallum, aided secretly by one of the Herald's editorial staff, T.I. Moore, wrote that Munich was a total and unmitigated defeat, which had destroyed utterly the European balance of power. The argument turned on to Versailles, but interest seemed to be flagging.1

Prominent people varied in their opinions. Bishop Burgmann praised Chamberlain's action, but suggested that his supporters had no constructive policy for Europe. Judge Nield spoke of disgrace and ignominy. B.S.B. Stevens, U.A.P. Premier of New South Wales, broadcast on 11 October, and stressed the economic domination of Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe that Germany had gained. He regarded it as the most portentous political event of his generation. The Sydney Morning Herald made much of the speech, and drew the moral that it would be hazardous to assume that more than a reprieve had been won, and at heavy cost.2

Intellectuals too were divided in their attitudes. The unofficial Commonwealth Relations Conference was sitting at Lapstone outside Sydney when the crisis occurred.

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1 Argus, 5.10.38(4). Supporters of Chamberlain outnumbered critics by nearly three to one - but this may merely have been the result of the editor's selection. The Age printed hardly any criticism, but admitted that several people had written defending the right of the Watchman to criticise. The Age however did not print their letters. SMH, 3, 6, 10, 12, 13, 18 and 20.10.38.

Its members were so divided that the reports of its various committees avoided the concrete issue and resorted to generalisations. In the correspondence columns of the Sydney Morning Herald, C.E.W. Bean supported the Munich agreement on the ground that by it Hitler had given up his claim to 'lebensraum'. Hitler would keep his pledge, because the alternative was war, which the German people opposed. He also said that the Versailles settlement and post-war allied policies had been unjust, and had contributed to the rise of Nazism. He therefore favoured the removal of grievances - which he believed would allow an opposition to the Nazis to develop within Germany - while at the same time rearming. A.B. Piddington, on the other hand, was worried by the methods used, and the thought that further appeasement, especially of colonial grievances, was likely. J.M.K. Phillips bitterly criticised the settlement. The British government had ignored warnings of military weakness for years. To recoil from war, though morally upright, meant national suicide, unless the expansionist nations did likewise. He spoke of the England of Elizabeth and Pitt, and implied a lack of honour and courage.¹

The most outspoken, bitter, and possibly influential opponent of appeasement, both before and after Munich, was 'the Watchman'. Few of his scripts survive from this period, but those that do fully corroborate the unanimous testimony of those who heard him. He had felt anxiety for Czechoslovakia after the Anschluss, and declared that

the Sudeten Germans had been stirred up as a pretext for German interference. The Czech government had been hampered by the reluctance of the Western powers to back it. His reaction to the provisional terms of Munich was that the Czechs had acted under pressure. Peace, 'for the time being at least' had been purchased by retreat. He spoke of the misgivings of the British press, 'in spite of the emotional display of relief by those who seemed to consider that peace should be purchased at any price'. A passage implying strongly that Chamberlain had not had a triumph was censored. In the next surviving script, of 24 October, 'the Watchman' was unsympathetic towards European minorities, and wondered at French policy. The whole post-war structure of French security had been destroyed. He attributed French acquiescence to British pressure - even to the extent of threatening to leave France unaided if war came. He foretold more crises, and made an urgent demand for rearmament, especially in the air.¹

'The Watchman' was subject to ABC censorship, and it is surprising that he was allowed to express himself so vigorously. The Age printed letters complaining about him, and suggesting that another commentator be employed in the weekdays.² It is perhaps significant that a broken tape led to the abandonment of one talk just before Munich, that in December 1938 the ABC took 'the Watchman' from his daily commentaries, sending him to cover the bush fires, and that the Commission apparently considered

¹ Watchman, 'At Home and Abroad', 24.3.38, 30.9.38. 'News Behind the News', 24.10.38 - devoted entirely to the European crisis.
² Age, 5.10.38(16), 8.10.38(26). Cf. 7.11.38(10).
cricket commentaries important enough to replace other of his talks. Government pressure was applied against him later, and it would be surprising if it had not tried to silence him then.\footnote{For the incident of the tape-recorder, Argus, 27.9.38(13). A. Sheffield Shield match commentary went over the air during the usual time of the Watchman's broadcast. E.J. Harrison is said to have demanded of W.J. Cleary, Chairman of the ABC, that 'the Watchman' be instructed not to criticise the government. M.F. Dixon, Century, 18.5.62(6). This appears to have been in 1941.}

Once the first reaction of relief had passed, doubts and forebodings began. In many respects, a steady support for appeasement - or at least isolationism - had existed in Australia ever since the Abyssinian crisis. The turning point was in the month after Munich. The immediate and obvious threat of war, with Australian involvement clearly indicated, and a spectacular act of appeasement, was needed to purge the pacifism, misconceptions of the injustice of Versailles, and isolationism of the Australian people. Moreover it was most natural that intense relief at escaping war should be followed by an emotional reaction. This coincided with and was strengthened by Hitler's further moves after Munich - the annexation of all the territories which he had demanded at Godesberg, the treatment of Czechs in the new German territories, the spread of the Gestapo terror, and especially the Jewish pogrom of November 1938.

As Hitler spread the area of his control over Europe a pitiful stream of refugees fled into other lands, taking with them tales of violence and death. Many of these tales were discounted by those who wished to appease Hitler,
and modified as too sensational by the Press. Australians were far from the scene, and ignorant of events. A certain amount of anti-semitic prejudice existed in the community, expressed by Catholic newspapers, who tended to regard Jews as either freemasons or communists, and who resented sympathy for Jewish persecution while so little was made of the troubles of Catholics in Germany. Some vandalism against Jewish property occurred in Melbourne in April 1939, while Sir Frank Clarke, President of the Legislative Council of Victoria, described the refugees as 'slinking rat-faced men', who might want to marry Australian girls, or even 'bring here their own undernourished and under-developed women, and breed a race within a race'.

Theoretical anti-semitism however was confined to the Publicist, and to a lesser extent the Bulletin, although Lang's Century showed strong anti-Jewish prejudices.

There also existed, however, a great deal of sympathy for Jewish sufferings in Germany, the press featured the November pogrom, and the Labour Council of New South Wales, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, and the A.C.T.U. Executive all expressed their abhorrence and condemnation. Yet when


2 Argus, 5.4.39(15), 6.4.39(3). Age, 9.5.39(11). Sir Frank Clarke seemed very concerned by the back-street shops of the clothing trade in Carlton.
it came to admitting refugees, a concern for vested interests, and a lack of understanding of the full horrors of the refugees' plight combined with old prejudice against all foreigners to prevent Australian generosity. Lyons on several occasions rejected suggestions that he should protest and cautiously found out what Britain was doing first. The government insisted on treating the refugees like all other aliens, demanding, it said, a reference as to good character and health, and two hundred pounds in money if not guaranteed by a person or organisation in Australia, and fifty pounds if so guaranteed. It refused S.M. Bruce permission to authorise refugees to enter from Australia House, London, and bureaucratic delays resulted. It was highly satisfied with itself for agreeing to admit 15,000 refugees during the next three years. The Labour opposition was, in general, concerned about the effect of Jewish refugees on employment in Australia, and that no 'colonies' of aliens should be formed, or the factory legislation evaded. This especially affected the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the Labor Call. The R.S.L. in New South Wales was in favour of a rigid quota, in Victoria was worried by the 'influx', while the Listening Post was most unsympathetic. Only the Queensland Digger, due strongly to its hostility to the Italians in Queensland, strongly favoured generous help to bring Jewish settlers to Australia.

Individuals, such as Holloway in the Federal Parliament, showed their concern, and various organisations helped. The Communist Party regarded anti-semitism as a particularly vicious red-herring to divert the workers from bettering

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These regulations effectively excluded most refugees, since the German government did not allow them to take money or assets outside the country.
their conditions. In Melbourne the front organisations vigorously protested against the pogrom, and the 'Council for Civil Liberties' called an Immigration Conference, which was attended by four Protestant Churches, six foreign communities, several Jewish and non-Jewish organisations, and six Trade Unions. In short, although there was much criticism of German actions, and sympathy for the Jews, many Australians revealed a lack of understanding of the full rigours of the refugees’ plight, and some reservations, if not opposition, to allowing or assisting many to enter Australia.1

The main impact of the pogrom on Australian opinion was to increase still further the distrust of Germany that had been growing since Munich. If, as has been suggested, the turning point in public opinion occurred

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1 Anti-semitism in the Century, 21.10.38(1), 28.10.38(9). Labour resolutions against the pogroms, Labor Daily, 19.11.38(6). Labor Call, 15.12.38(10). Argus, 12.12.38(11). For remarks on the government's policy, and A.L.P. reservations, see CPD, vol.158 (index). Concern in Melbourne Trade union circles, with ignorance and prejudice, see Labor Call, 8.12.38(4 and 14), 11.5.39(12), 18.5.39(3 and 6), 25.5.39(5 and 9. For the A.W.U. see Australian Worker, 9.11.38(11). The A.C.T.U. Congress showed great sympathy for the Jews but concern for Australian Labour standards. Australian Worker, 16.3.39(8). That violent prejudice existed in Victoria is seen in the correspondence columns of the Age, July 1938 to June 1939. For the R.S.L. see 'Twenty-second Annual Report R.S.S.I.L.A. of New South Wales Branch, 1939, p.24, Mufti, 1.6.39(3). Listening Post, 15.7.37(2-3), 15.2.39(18), 15.4.39(17). Queensland Digger, 10.5.38(2), 1.9.38(3), 1.12.38(2-3). For the communists, it is noticeable that the only Labour Council which advocated unrestricted right of entry was that in New South Wales, which was communist-dominated. Australian Worker, 5.4.39(14), 10.5.39(14). For Melbourne see Argus, 16.11.38(13), 7.12.38(3). For a typical mixture of pity for the Jews but care to protect Australian interests, see West Australian, 23.11.38(edit.). For an attack by an intellectual on prejudice, see Professor Woodruff, Argus, 9.6.39(18). For moderation, and comments on Australian antipathy to all foreigners, see Argus (edit.), 10.5.39.
during October, by December 1938 a strong dislike of Germany, and increased doubts of the value of appeasement, existed. Even Lyons reacted in this way. In the Argus, Menzies' remarks on Germany roused a second debate, in which those who felt called to write were more critical of Germany. In the Sydney Morning Herald more letter-writers attacked the settlement of Munich, including H. Black, Lecturer in Economics at Sydney University. S.H. Roberts declared that the Munich settlement had abandoned Europe to German domination. Far from saving the world from war, it in fact merely gave a breathing space in which to rearm. There were demonstrations, probably communist provoked, on three consecutive Friday nights outside a delicatessen shop in William Street. The proprietor, a Herr Frerch, was rumoured to be a Nazi agent. A crowd of two hundred gathered on the first night, while on the third a demonstrator enlivened the proceedings by chaining himself to the roof of the building opposite.¹

The clearest and most definite result in Australia of the ill-treatment of the Jews was, however, the end to the debate about colonial appeasement. This had long been favoured, as a reasonable method of relieving tension, by intellectuals. In 1936 C.E.W. Bean had urged in the Sydney Morning Herald that on the grounds of justice and the need to avoid war, such a move ought to be considered. D. Campbell had agreed, with the proviso that the territories remained under League mandate. Bean felt that Germany had been unjustly treated at Versailles,

in that the promises of leniency had not been fulfilled. At the same time C.T. Moodie advocated free access to all colonies, and an effort to satisfy German national pride. Even in August 1938, S.H. Roberts felt that the subject of colonies would have to be discussed. He advocated giving the Portuguese African colonies, after compensating Portugal, to Germany. He did not, however, mention New Guinea.¹ A characteristic of the advocates of colonial appeasement was their willingness to consider the return of territories - provided they were far away. Thus Australians favoured the return of Germany's African colonies - South African politicians thought otherwise - but were very guarded about New Guinea.

As for the public in general, it was more united on the subject of New Guinea than on other foreign policy. The long correspondence roused by Bean in the Sydney Morning Herald revealed that though some were willing to consider the return of New Guinea to Germany, there was also, even in 1936, a considerable distrust of that country, and a reluctance to place either the natives or Australian security at German mercy. The Round Table noted the interests shown, and the strong feelings, but was itself non-committal. In September, 1937, it returned to the subject. This time it stressed the military aspect. There was no guarantee that the return of colonies would make Germany more peaceful, and the strategic importance of New Guinea would make its return, after the understanding

between Germany and Japan, most unwelcome. All but a small minority therefore agreed with Sir George Pearce that it could not be surrendered.¹

The subject appeared again in the early part of 1938 in letters to the press. A few correspondents in Victoria thought New Guinea should be returned, but most were emphatically opposed to the move. The Munich crisis hardened opinion. Even the Publicist, defender of Germany, which had supported the return of Germany's colonies in August and December 1937, had henceforth nothing to say on the issue. Correspondents to the Argus overwhelmingly opposed it, while those to the Sydney Morning Herald demanded that the territory be fortified. A New Zealand judge visiting Australia, and the Round Table, agreed with the impression created by these letters that Australia was ready enough to sacrifice somebody else on the altar of appeasement, but even the best appeasers were inclined to blink over New Guinea. The anti-Semitic excesses in Germany caused opinion to harden....Australia is solid against any return of mandated territory.²

In fact, after November 1938, the issue was closed. Lyons accepted this fact in his public statement. Public opinion had clearly pushed the government into making a stand.

¹ SMH, 7.4.36 to 11.5.36. Round Table, September 1936, vol.26, pp.848-50, September 1937, vol.27, pp.850-55. This latter included the shrewd comment that the press would not be likely to accept the idea of the Melbourne Professors to return the mandates to Germany under strict League control, because Australians regarded the mandatory pledges merely as self-denying ordinances by Powers which had sovereign rights.

As Pearce had said, the return of New Guinea, was 'unthinkable'.

Public opinion on foreign policy, however, was still divided and uncertain in December 1938 and the opening months of 1939. The recruiting drive of the government in December met with an apathetic response. The letter-writers to the *Sydney Morning Herald* still differed in their views. According to the *Round Table* the press may have been formally pro-Chamberlain, 'but faith in the policy of appeasement, never very robust, had been steadily weakened'. The responsibility for both the division and apathy of the public probably rested with the government. The public was understandably confused by the contrast between the obvious darkening of the international scene and Lyons' timidity about any criticism of the dictators, Menzies' travelling the country remarking that 'the elements that made for peace were increasing every day', and Bruce's assistance in the mounting chorus of praise for the Munich policy. Menzies' remarks provoked a critical correspondence in the *Argus* in December, and in February 1939 McEwen's apparent willingness to deport to Germany two German sailors who had fled their ship roused protest. In fact, increasing criticism of British policy was merely temporarily stilled by Bruce's energetic advocacy.¹

Prague finally swept away doubts of German intentions. The *Times'* correspondent thought that Lyons' speech of support

for Britain 'perfectly summed up' Australian opinion, and that even the isolationists were by then convinced of the need for collective action. As we have seen, by no means all the 'isolationists' were so convinced. Lang in New South Wales, and Lovegrove and Coull in Victoria, still held their old views. Moreover the correspondence columns of the *Argus* still contained letters defending Germany. These were highly unrepresentative, and most correspondents declared roundly that Germany sought at least European domination. Some still strove to defend Chamberlain, but most accepted that he had been mistaken and lacking in foresight.¹

The body of opinion most influenced by the German occupation of Prague was that which had followed Chamberlain in his hopes for Munich. With them went those who loyally and uncritically followed whatever policy the British and Australian governments adopted. Perhaps therefore the most significant result of the occupation of Prague was the change in governmental policy. Yet even this was weakened by the continuing faith of R.G. Menzies in negotiation. However, according to the *Argus*, a realisation was growing in every section of the Australian people that no country could be neutral. Dr Asmis, on his return to Germany for leave, said that in his travels throughout Australia he had gained the impression that many

Australians expected a war. It was that feeling which Menzies and others strove to combat.¹

Hostility to Germany was growing. On Anzac Day 1939, a crowd of a thousand returned soldiers, watched by two thousand spectators, gathered outside the office of the German Consul-General and demanded that the swastika flag be pulled down. The fire brigade, forty police, and Major General Gordon-Bennett prevented the excited men from breaking into the building. The incident, which nearly turned into a riot, was probably the results of excitable patriotism, combined with drink. However, the Daily News reported one digger as shouting that they did not mind the old German flag, but objected to the Nazi one. Hostility to Nazism therefore probably mixed with the more superficial motives. Such feelings revealed themselves in spontaneous outbursts. In July 1939, when Hitler appeared on a cinema screen, the audience made such an uproar that the manager called the police. In Perth a well-dressed woman interrupted one of Menzies' eulogies of Nazi Germany by the loud remark, 'Concentration Camps, My God!'²

¹ Argus, 29.4.39. West Australian, 18.4.39(14). C. Martin, standing for the seat of Waverley in the New South Wales bye election, thought foreign policy of sufficient public interest to devote one of his speeches to a strong attack on appeasement. Daily News, 12.4.39(2). For criticism of a belief in the inevitability of war, similar to that of Menzies, see P. Spender in Manley R.S.L. Hall, SMH, 30.3.39(8).
² SMH, 26.4.39(15), 27.4.39(9); editorial 28.4.39. Daily News, 26.4.39(1). Argus, 27.4.39(1). Cf. Bulletin, 3.5.39(13). The German consulate had shown itself sensitive to such days. Asmis had forbidden an exchange of pulpits on Armistice day, 1937; on the grounds that it celebrated a victory over Germany. The Times, 11.11.37. A similar incident, perhaps suggested by the first one, occurred a few days later in Brisbane, when 150 unionists left a May Day procession to demand the removal of the swastika flag from the office of the German consulate. Australian Worker, 3.5.39(13). For the cinema audience and the woman, see Daily News, 1.7.39(1). West Australian, 13.7.39(18).
Opinion amongst intellectuals was hardening. C.E.W. Bean, who had desired a reasonable settlement with Germany, realised after Prague the untrustworthiness of Hitler's promises and the danger of the German domination of Europe. His twin policy was an alliance, including Russia, against further German aggression, combined with another attempt to negotiate a just settlement. He stressed the need for Hitler to accept the principle of peaceful negotiation in the settlement of disputes. Thus to Bean the issue was not the legal status of Danzig, but whether Hitler would abandon the use of force. Professor Bland, however, went further. He criticised appeasement, sympathised with the Czechs, and welcomed indications of a stronger British policy. J.M.K. Phillips, in an address to the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, bitterly attacked those politicians who criticised the new guarantees to Eastern Europe. S.H. Roberts gave a long list of Hitler's broken promises, and declared that the world faced the naked challenge of German aggression. He was dissatisfied with Britain's delay in forming a coalition against further German moves, but welcomed the change in Chamberlain's policy when it came. Danzig, he felt, was not as good a symbol as Prague, but it had to do, for its acquisition would only be an 'interim halt' in Germany's march eastwards. Moreover, to leave eastern Europe to Hitler would only result in postponing war until Britain and France were without allies.1

As mentioned before, academics use the spoken word more than other people, and no attempt can therefore be made to assess the full range of academic opinion. The group was clearly divided, but those who wrote or spoke in public usually expressed doubts of the policy of appeasement. Their effect on the public is not certain. However, they probably added to the growing doubts of appeasement.

Newspaper opinion welcomed the guarantee to Poland. Letter-writers to the *Argus* - although some still sought a peaceful solution and feared Polish intransigence - in general felt that the balance of power demanded that a stand be made before the turn of the Western Powers came. A move against Danzig would be merely a prelude to the strangulation of Poland. The long correspondence in the *Age* was even more significant. In the past, most of the letters it had published had expressed support for the Axis, isolationism, and appeasement. This debate, however, was more evenly divided, and protracted, than usual. Although some writers still accepted the German case, assuming that Danzig was legally German, that all troubles went back to an unjust Versailles treaty, and that all Germans should be under one rule, the great majority declared flatly that the Polish case was better, and that if Poland were surrendered Hitler would not stop his aggressions. They even expressed some criticism and suspicion of Chamberlain. A small group still wanted isolationism from Europe, and disliked the Poles being allowed to decide peace or war. Some further gesture of friendship, these people said, was needed.¹ A significant

¹ *Age*, 4-5.4.39, 15-19.4.39, 5-7.7.39, 10.7.39-1.8.39.
number, however - seeing how vocal the supporters of isolationism and appeasement were in Melbourne - favoured a strong line. The opinion of either the editor of the Age, or his readers, had changed. If this newspaper's correspondents favoured a stand, then Australian opinion was indeed hardening.

A stand against Hitler, however, would not be effective without Russia. In a second long correspondence the majority clearly favoured such an alliance. Very vocal opposition, largely from Catholics, was expressed, however. Much was made of Russian opposition to Christianity, and the debate turned into one on Russian internal policy. The attempts of a few hardy souls to pacify both sides, and point out that Russia's help was needed against aggression on strategic grounds, failed. The editor closed the correspondence. A shorter series of letters in the Argus emphasised strategic necessity, and the tone was much quieter. Indeed, it was clear to any thinking person that Chamberlain needed Russian help if he was to have any chance of halting Germany's aggression in Eastern Europe. Macmahon Ball urged that an agreement be made with Russia, despite British conservative doubts. In Sydney, the Daily Telegraph interviewed one hundred people on the desirability of a pact with Russia. Of the 58 men and 42 women, from among business men, manual workers and housewives, 88 per cent favoured the pact. Many said that if it would prevent war, they supported it. Others were sure that it would make the anti-German alliance strong enough to deter Germany. The response to the poll was probably representative of the community at large, although perhaps more favourable to a pact with Russia than a more general survey would have been. 'The Watchman' at this time accused Chamberlain of trying to get aid without
offering any in return, and in fact favouring the old British policy of turning Hitler eastwards.¹

'The Watchman', indeed, joined the desultory debate on the whole British post-war policy which occurred in different places from June to August 1939. Menzies' remarks, combined with the thoughtfulness natural at a time of approaching war, seem to have caused some reappraisal of foreign policy in the Australian community. In August 'the Watchman' defended the Versailles settlement at length. German actions both before and after the first world war, suggested that in fact the peace treaty had not been unduly vindictive. German claims were invalid, and any peace she had dictated would have been immeasurably harsher. Meanwhile, single letters supporting Chamberlain in the Age and criticising him in the Sydney Morning Herald were paralleled by a longer correspondence in the Argus, in which slightly more than half of the correspondents still supported Chamberlain and his policy of appeasement.²

Such speculation was cut short by the news of the Russo-German Pact. A. Mair, then Premier of New South Wales, still protested that war was not inevitable, presumably following Menzies, but few could have believed

¹ Letters to Age, 1.4.39, 19.4.39-26.6.39. Argus, 26 and 29.4.39, 12-17.5.39, 8-12.7.39, 20-28.7.39. Daily Telegraph, 3.7.39(6). Fifty-two of the men were in favour of the Pact with Russia, three against and three undecided. Of the women, thirty-six were in favour and six against. As for the representative nature of the poll, Catholics were 20-22 per cent of the population. Most would disagree with the pact, and would be joined by isolationists and anti-communists of varying persuasions. The Watchman, 30 May 1939, reprinted Arrows in the Air, pp.33-4. For Macmahon Ball, Argus, 23.5.39(9).

him. S.H. Roberts pointed clearly to the significance of the pact. The general reaction of letter-writers to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, however, was similar to that of the Catholics. They felt that the agreement between Hitler and Stalin proved Chamberlain right, both in that the Munich agreement was a necessary and sound experiment, and that reluctance to trust Russia had been proved well-founded. Many compared the ideologies of Nazism and communism, and declared them similar. Conservative opinion, however, was relieved from the burden of an alliance with a communist power. It rallied therefore to insist that despite Russian treachery, Britain and France had to maintain their firm stand.¹

'The Watchman' - if letters of complaint to the *Argus* are any indication - had continued his bitter criticism of Chamberlain, suggesting that he still toyed with the idea of appeasement, and sneering at Munich. Some sections of the community were still reluctant to face the grimness of the situation, and the inevitability of war. This attitude fed on the public speeches of various ministers. Indeed, one of the letters of complaint against 'The Watchman' was that he had predicted that war would occur. This was printed the day before Germany invaded Poland.² To most people, however, it was quite clear that war was coming, and in a very short time. Once Germany

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² Letters to *Argus*, 30.8.39-2.9.39. Eleven letters were printed, criticising or defending the Watchman.
had invaded Poland, even the optimists realised the worst.

The people of Sydney took the news quietly. The third of September was a Sunday, and thousands who had followed European events through the Daventry broadcasts - relayed over local stations - heard Chamberlain's announcement of war simultaneously with millions of other listeners in Britain and throughout the Empire. Those returning from Church services or pleasure outings gravely read the news in extraordinary editions of the city newspapers. (The first special edition of the Sydney Morning Herald was published soon after Chamberlain had finished speaking.) Melbourne too was quiet. The groups of people reading special editions of the city newspapers in the streets, the cries of the newsboys, and the attention paid to militiamen and sailors were the only signs that anything unusual had happened.¹

The Round Table afterwards attributed the calmness to a feeling of inevitability. During the previous ten days the public had been kept in a state of almost intolerable tension, so that the outbreak of war came almost as a relief. The Queensland Digger also mentioned this reaction. Another sort of relief was admitted by 'The Watchman', who had feared that Chamberlain might let the Poles down. He was the only Australian public figure

¹ SMH, 4.9.39(9). Argus, 4.9.39(7).
who noticed, and disapproved of, Chamberlain's delay in fulfilling his pledges to Poland.  

The principles on which the British and French governments took their stand were widely applauded by all sections of the community. Sir Gilbert Dyett, Federal President of the R.S.L., had assured the Prime Minister of his entire support during the three months prior to the outbreak of war. His reaction was typical. There were, inevitably, individual dissenters. The Marxists in the Labour movement, and the Trotskyists, on the left, were balanced by Mrs Pankhurst Walsh and the 'Guild of Empire' on the right. But there was little sympathy for either group in the population at large. Even the Publicist, the Bulletin and the Catholic newspapers supported the war. Typical of their reaction was that of A.R. Chisholm, an ultra conservative. He admitted that his earlier sympathies for Hitler had been ended by the persecution of the Jews, as well as German aggressions. Despite deep misgivings about the dangers of an ideological war, he felt obliged

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to support opposition to Hitler. Thus for a short time, until the communists changed their policy, there was virtual unanimity amongst the major sections of the Australian population in supporting Britain and France in their second war with Germany in the twentieth century.

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1 For Sir Gilbert Dyett, *Reveille*, October, 1939, p. 4. The letters to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5-9.9.39, bear out support for the war aims of the allies. Mrs Pankhurst Walsh had opposed the idea of a pact with Russia. On Sunday, 3 September, before the news of war had reached Australia, she spoke in the Domain attacking Versailles, and declaring that Britain should not interfere in the Polish dispute, for Danzig was a German city. The crowd was very hostile. Doubtless she would, like others on the right, support Britain once war was declared. In Kalgoorlie, on the same day, eggs, tomatoes and apples were hurled at a communist who criticised Chamberlain, and he was counted out more than once by a crowd which numbered several hundred. The Italians in Melbourne carried a resolution condemning Hitler and supporting Britain. *Daily Telegraph*, 3.7.39(6), 4.9.39(7). *Labor Call*, 21.9.39(5). A.R. Chisholm was Professor of French at Melbourne University. *Australian Quarterly*, September 1939, p. 51.
The cover of the *Listening Post* on the outbreak of war represents the general Australian reaction.
THE LISTENING POST

REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O., PERTH, FOR TRANSMISSION BY POST AS A NEWSPAPER. VOLUME 18 NO. 9

SEPTEMBER, 1939
CONCLUSIONS

This work has attempted to trace Australian opinion on the acts of the European dictators from the beginning of the Abyssinian crisis to the outbreak of the second world war. Two dangers are inherent in such a study. Fear of Japan, which influenced attitudes to European events and world affairs in general, is largely ignored. To a certain extent the picture is thus falsified. For example, the Australian Institute of International Affairs in Victoria was orientated more towards the Pacific than to Europe. Considerations of time and length, however, have led to Japan only being mentioned when she seemed involved in European policies. Secondly, concentrating exclusively on foreign policy may have given the impression that a continuous and lively debate on foreign affairs occurred in Australia in the late thirties. In fact, foreign affairs - let alone European affairs - were by no means a major interest of Australians, except possibly from the time of Munich to the outbreak of war in 1939.

None of the sections discussed here, apart from the League of Nations Union and the Australian Institute of International Affairs, were primarily concerned with foreign matters. The Australian government did not really have a coherent and carefully considered policy - it followed Britain, sought peace and avoided discussion within Australia to enable it to concentrate on what it undoubtedly thought more important - financial and economic recovery from the depression. In the same way, the Labour movement was first and foremost concerned with improving
the working conditions and living standards of its members. Despite the communists and their sympathisers within the movement, the natural reaction of Labour men to foreign affairs was isolationism.

This reaction probably reflected the sentiments of the bulk of the population. It is true that Lyons won elections with the policy of following Britain, whereas the Labour Party, which adopted isolationism as a foreign policy, was defeated. But loyalty to Britain prevented isolationism from being popular. Moreover, the deciding issues in elections were those concerning internal policy, not foreign. It was Lyons' image of sound, responsible finance that put and kept him in power.

Public apathy towards foreign affairs, much lamented by Australian intellectuals, continued in the later thirties. Although, as has been noted, humanitarians, churchmen, intellectuals and various other groups did discuss specific issues, continuing and widespread public debate was lacking. Communists, Catholics and Imperialists — those motivated by loyalty to Britain — had their attention directed outside Australia. The 'League of Nations Union', the 'Spanish Relief Committee', and other bodies were concerned with events abroad. But neither the intellectuals nor the L.N.U. appear to have influenced a wide section of the population. Indeed, the number of diverse organisations gave an exaggerated picture of the interest to be found in the community. Often the same persons provided the leading members of the L.N.U., the Australian Institute of Political Science, the Australian Institute of International Affairs, and the Round Table.

Apathy towards, and ignorance about, foreign events, prevented Australians from understanding the full
significance of many of the crises. Their prejudice against Europe, and their specialised experience, led them to the wrong conclusions. For example, the success of a federal system in Australia predisposed Australians to accept the arguments of those people who talked of the need to make Czechoslovakia a federal State in September 1938, and who blamed the Czechs for intransigence. There was also a failure to understand emotionally the plight of other peoples and nations. This was seen when Jewish refugees wanted to flee to Australia, and the Czechs sacrificed their security at Munich.

Apathy towards foreign events was clearly diminishing during the period from 1935 to 1939. The Abyssinian crisis was the first after the height of the depression that clearly concerned Australia. All the groups studied in this thesis reacted to it according to their traditional responses to foreign events. The United Australia Party followed Britain; Australian newspapers supported their government; the Labour Party adopted isolationism; the communists followed their new line, which happened at the time to involve support for the League of Nations; Catholics, because of the position of the Church in Italy, ignored or defended Mussolini's aggression.

Yet, beneath the surface, division and hesitation was apparent. The Australian government, which had adopted as its slogan 'Tune in with Britain' could hardly do other than impose sanctions, yet its head was a Catholic, and the cabinet was divided. Its members, moreover, had never been conspicuous for faith in the League. Labour, with Catholic opinion in its ranks, and the Lang issue still festering in New South Wales, could only adopt isolationism. The communists, after initial confusion, followed the new policy of the Comintern. The newspapers defended sanctions
with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The bulk of the population, though shocked by Italy's action, did not feel deeply involved.

As a result of the Abyssinian crisis, all except a few incurable optimists abandoned the idea of the League as a practical force in world politics, and the population reverted to its old apathy to foreign affairs. The only tangible result of the crisis in Australia was the separation of the Department of External Affairs from the Prime Minister's Department, and a slight increase in its staff. But the newly separate Department was still too small, too inexperienced and too subject to political pressure to have much influence on the policy of the Australian government in the next three years. 1

Disinterest in foreign affairs returned during 1936 and 1937. Apart from two sections of the community, the Spanish civil war did not have the impact on Australia that it had in Europe or even in America.

The great debate between Catholics and communists may have succeeded in keeping the Spanish issue alive, when it might otherwise have died. The accounts of war in Spain, the photographs, and the knowledge that Germany and Italy were intervening in strength, had some effect. Prejudice against all Europeans could be turned into hostility to Germany and Italy, but a more immediate and dramatic threat was needed to have this affect. As it was, communists and Catholics loudly and bitterly defended

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1 Even in 1941, the Department of External Affairs, according to P. Hasluck, was not only understaffed, but 'very inexperienced, and its handful of officers were, to put it mildly, highly individualistic in the way they went about their work'. Bulletin, 16.10.65(25).
their protagonists, or attacked one another. Neither showed much balance of judgement; neither succeeded in winning much ostensible support from a wider circle than their own adherents. Very few except communists went to join the International Brigades. The 'Spanish Relief Committee' collected a respectable, but not outstanding, amount. The newspapers, after initial interest, said little editorially, although Spanish atrocities continued to be newsworthy. Attention centred rather on the implications of the war on the Mediterranean route.

The editor of Mufti, already quoted, noticed the change in Australian reactions to external events:

Up to the close of 1937 the average Australian deemed himself separated by many thousands of miles from likely wars, and fears of famine and pestilence. There was trouble in Spain, China and Abyssinia, and some rumblings in Middle Europe, but these were matters of concern only for the people unlucky enough to be in countries affected.

The happenings of 1938 have shaken the equanimity of even the most easy-going and casual Digger.  

It needed the aggressions of Hitler to force Australians to become closely involved in the world outside their boundaries.

It is probable that there was a growing interest in foreign affairs throughout this period, begun during the Abyssinian crisis, continued during the Spanish civil war, but receiving its greatest impetus during Hitler's aggressions. S.H. Roberts' book, The House That Hitler Built, was a 'best-seller', and the Daily Telegraph

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Mufti, January 1939, p.3.
talked in October 1938 of the popularity of John Gunther's *Inside Europe* and Douglas Reid's *Insanity Fair.*

The difficulty is to know how widely this interest and knowledge was shared. Probably few Australians had any detailed information on the background to the European situation. The older generation had gone to school before Czechoslovakia had been placed on the map. It was as unfamiliar to them as the names of the new African States are to many people today. Nor would they have had any incentive to learn of it since school, owing to the general tendency to disparage Eastern European States after the war. To most Australians therefore, 'Czechoslovakia' meant nothing, signified nothing. It was indeed 'a far away country of which we know little'. With this feeling went a general fear and detestation of war. Yet, despite the protestations of Labour men, most Australians realised that if Britain went to war Australia would go too. A feeling of helplessness resulted. Far from the centre of the events which threatened a second world conflict, Australians waited for others to decide the issue. The relief that spread through the community when the Munich agreement was signed, mentioned by almost every commentator, is therefore quite understandable. It illustrates both the fear of war, and an ignorance of the significance of the pact.  

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1 Daily Telegraph, 8.10.38 (edit.).

2 This last is seen in the unbalanced eulogies in the letters sent to the *Age* and the *Argus*. See the latter, 1-5.10.38. One writer even suggested that the figure of Christ be erected on the border, another that a commemorative plaque be set up in Prague.
The question arises whether the Australian public could have been brought to accept a strong policy against Hitler, rather than the continual surrenders which occurred. The question is important, owing to the appeals by Chamberlain and his supporters to dominion public opinion, to support the argument that they had no other course open to them. Thus S.M. Bruce, on his visit to Australia in 1939, argued that it was too late to make a stand in September 1938. Such a policy should have been adopted at the time of the Rhineland crisis, but Australian public opinion would not have tolerated it.¹

On close scrutiny, the appeal to 'public opinion' appears less than convincing. Judgement depends largely on the exact time at which a stronger policy was to be adopted. The German military reoccupation of the Rhineland was probably the last incident when firm action by Britain and France would have forced Hitler to retreat. The consequences of such action would have been so momentous as to suggest that Britain and France would have been well-advised to act on their own initiative, and leave dominion Statesmen to do as they thought fit. It was Britain and France, not the dominions, which were to suffer the immediate impact of the resultant war.

However, if the British and Australian governments had desired gradually to win public opinion to support a firmer policy, they would probably have succeeded. In Australia, the government had the numbers in the House,

¹ SMH, 8.2.39(17). Argus, 17.3.39(11). Doubtless Bruce himself passed this view of Australian opinion to Chamberlain. Bruce, however, received his estimates of Australian public opinion from the government - which agreed with British policy - and from visiting Australians of the same class and views as himself.
and was supported by the press and many organs of society. Indeed, the bulk of the newspapers defended appeasement primarily because it was governmental policy, and with evident misgivings. Such a line of action, however, apart from conflicting with the characteristics and desires of government members, would have required active leadership of a kind Lyons was incapable of giving. It was most noticeable that Lyons, in the matter of standing up to the dictators, always followed public opinion, never led it. On matters such as the persecution of the Jews, and the return of colonies, it was public feeling which forced the government to make a stand. Finally, such a policy would have directly conflicted with the policy of appeasing Italy which the Australian government adopted and pursued so vigorously. Accordingly, the government used what powers it had to suppress critics of its policy, and then cited public opinion as a reason for that policy.

Even as late as September 1938, if both governments had strongly favoured a stand against Hitler, they could probably have won the support of the Australian people. The public would certainly have been divided. Catholics and the right wing would have been irreconcilable; Labour almost certainly in opposition. Similar divisions to those during the first world war would probably have appeared within Australia. Yet most Australians would probably have accepted a stand. The Australian public usually followed the lead of its government. Rallying points for such a policy existed in the Sydney Morning Herald, the ill-concealed doubts of the other newspapers, the R.S.L. and W.M. Hughes. Communists had for years advocated a stand against aggression, and intellectuals, although divided amongst themselves, included many who would have agreed.
No such lead was given. In fact, opposition to the Munich policy had to be expressed against the government and all those organs of society which supported it. British and Australian political leaders' apparent lack of faith in democracy and weakness in dealing with the dictators and their representatives may have caused uncertainty and loss of faith in many quarters.¹ In the end, it was left to Hitler's aggressions to educate the Australian public into accepting the second world war. The main result was indeed that a united country entered the struggle. This result, desirable as it was, does not, however, provide a post facto excuse for the leaders of Britain and Australia.

The Australian government, as has been noted, not only followed Britain in September 1938, but did its utmost to urge the British government on to further acts of appeasement, and the Czechs to greater sacrifice. This probably had not the slightest effect on the course of events. If Lyons had urged Britain to declare immediate war, Chamberlain would have been very unlikely to comply. As it happened, the governments of Britain and Australia were of a similar complexion. Their leading members had met one another, and were linked through S.M. Bruce.

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The Daily Telegraph, 17.5.38, 28.10.38 spoke of the habits of the Australian government - official secretiveness, submissiveness towards Asmis, and praise of the dictators - and of the release from a dangerous mood of self-doubt when Roosevelt made a strong speech. Even the Round Table attributed the confusion in the public not only to a limited knowledge of central Europe but also to the absence of a clear lead by Australian politicians. It felt that there was a large section in the population which was uncertain in its attitude to the Munich crisis. Round Table, December 1938, vol.29, pp.44-6.
Australia, in short, provided a convenient reason with which Chamberlain could trump Churchill and other critics, for not taking a different course. However, like Lyons in Australia he took steps to ensure that the sources he quoted adopted the appropriate stand. He is said to have cabled the Australian government and requested that there be no debates on foreign affairs while he was meeting Hitler. The Daily News thought that a request from Chamberlain was behind Lyons' ban on ministerial statements on foreign affairs.¹

The appeal to an 'Imperial Foreign Policy', as the basis of appeasement, can be criticised on other grounds. Too often the phrase was used, certainly by the government in Australia, to hide lack of clear thought in foreign affairs. A.G. Colley was able to show that the standard remarks on Australian foreign policy were in fact self-contradictory.² What the government tried to hide by the appeal to 'Imperial' foreign policy was that it had no policy of its own, and merely followed Britain whatever happened.

The phrase 'Imperial Foreign Policy', to be meaningful, required more than that the Australian government follow the British at times of crisis. At such times, the dominions, because they were far from the

¹ Curtin, Caucus Minutes, 21 September 1938. Daily News, 27.1.39 (edit.).
² Colley deduced four principles on which Australian foreign policy was based,

a) She could not remain in isolation;
b) She should have no overseas commitments;
c) Policy should be based on the aims and ideals of the League of Nations;
d) Complete accord with Great Britain.

He pointed out that only a) and c) were compatible. He felt that in practice Australia had no policy beyond support for Britain. Australian Quarterly, June 1938, p.5.
scene, were obliged to follow the British initiative. For the policy then pursued to be termed 'Imperial', general principles of foreign policy had to be accepted by all members of the Commonwealth previously. Hence Smuts had feared that the collapse of the League would render the Covenant no longer a valid basis for Imperial foreign policy, and the isolationism of South Africa and Canada would lead to an awkward discussion of the constitution of the Commonwealth. The 1937 Imperial Conference avoided this by accepting appeasement as the new basis for Imperial policy. This may have been convenient for the Empire. Unfortunately, it was not a successful policy.

Not only did an 'Imperial' foreign policy need agreement on general principles, it also required adequate consultation between the component parts of the Empire. This was stressed by Menzies himself in London. The Australian government was accordingly embarrassed when Hughes attacked the Dominions Office for delaying information until it was too late for Australia to contribute to any decision.¹

The dominions, to 'say useful things at the right time' during consultations with Britain, needed their own sources of information apart from the British Foreign Office, and public debate within their borders to decide their interests on the basis of that information. Menzies began belatedly the creation of Australian diplomatic

¹ The Times, 28.6.38, 9.8.38. Cf. CPD 157/429. For Hughes, see Age, 9.8.38(11), 10.8.38(13), 13.8.38(15). He had described the Dominions Office as moving like 'a half-baked centipede'. This remark led to Bruce seeing the British Secretary of State for the Dominions Office, and Lyons making a public statement to soothe all concerned.
posts abroad in 1940, but an enlightened public opinion was never encouraged in this period by the Australian government. If there was no debate there could be no criticism. Behind a vague, nebulous policy, the Australian government could follow whatever course it thought best, with the minimum of publicity.

It is open to question whether the Round Table group, and the 'Imperialists' who thought like it, had not allowed themselves to be mesmerised by the idea of the Commonwealth as a kind of spiritual entity. Thus

Our Commonwealth of Nations can only play its full part in determining the great issues now before the world, by pursuing a policy which commands the informed support of all its self-governing communities.¹

There might be some doubt, however, whether an organisation of diverse States can ever adopt a vigorous foreign policy, instead of delaying action, or taking the weakest or most peaceable course possible. Britain, which was most closely involved, would have done better to have led the Commonwealth, confident that the dominions would have in time realised the justice of her cause. Conservative statesmen, however, in both Australia and England, had adopted the ideal of the Commonwealth as their symbol, and could hardly ignore it, or admit that it had fatal weaknesses in a time which demanded swift action. In so far as their excuses were honest, conservative politicians walked in a circle they had created themselves. The strong

¹ The Times, editorial, 28.6.38. (Dawson on occasion did admit that foreign policy was an extraordinarily difficult subject for a scattered set of dominions. The Times, 9.8.38. In practice, however, he did not let such a thought influence his arguments.)
suspicion remains, however, that they quoted members of their own class in each other's lands, and silenced opposition before citing the supposed unanimity of the other's public opinion.

That Australian opinion was not united, or anything like it, has been seen in this work. Strong differences remained till the end between various sections and groups.

To begin with there was a clear difference between Sydney and Melbourne. The Catholic Church in the latter place was more organised and vocal - and more inclined to defend the European dictators. This was probably partly the influence of Jackson, Mannix and the Campion Society. In Sydney the Church was more moderate. Similarly in Melbourne the press was unanimous in its support for appeasement. Sydney had opponents of the policy in the Sydney Morning Herald, the Daily Telegraph and the Labor Daily. Yet, despite this, it was in Melbourne that the Spanish Relief Committee collected its greatest amount, and where the largest demonstrations against Von Luckner and the Montecuccoli occurred. The University appears to have been much more stirred by the Spanish civil war than Sydney University. In short, there was an intellectual ferment in Melbourne that appeared missing from the capital of New South Wales.

The greatest division in the community was between the defenders of the dictators and their critics. Both were minorities in the population. Both attempted to influence the public in general. Of the two, the critics of the dictators were the more successful. A prejudice against the Axis clearly appeared in various incidents and letters to the press. This was fanned by tales of the atrocities in Spain, the November pogrom, etc.
Australia the German Consul-General, Dr Asmis, did not always bring credit to his cause. His aggressive attitude reoused the maximum adverse publicity and opposition.

Some sympathy for the Nazis existed amongst certain politicians, the richer members of the community, the anti-communists and the extreme nationalists. Hatred of communism was taking many of these groups to the right. In the 1890s the nascent Labour movement had been supported by Catholics and nationalists, an unusual combination in the old world, but not uncommon in the dominions. By the time of the first world war, if not before it, they had begun to waver in their allegiance. The Bulletin broke from its old traditions about the time that Hughes and the nationalists left the Labour party. The Catholic Church followed a similar course, hidden by the judgement and moderation of Curtin and other Labour men, who avoided an open split in the thirties. However, Catholic anti-communism - and the organisation begun in Victoria and experimented with during the Spanish civil war - has since led to the formation of 'the Movement' and the 'Democratic Labour Party'. Since 1914 there has been a realignment of forces within the Australian community, which has weakened the Australian left wing, and made society more conservative. The State which in 1914 was amongst the leading countries of the world in providing social welfare, in 1965 lags behind most of the others, and has been ruled for sixteen years by a conservative government, which has increasingly allied it with the anti-communist stand of America. The process was clearly in evidence in the late thirties.
Neither of the two extremes of opinion advocated a sound policy towards Hitler and Mussolini. The Labour party was basically isolationist, and criticised appeasement for that reason, not for the more straightforward one. Such isolationism was, however, impractical, both because constitutional ties and loyalty bound Australian to Britain, and because improved communications and economic links meant that Australia was inevitably affected by any struggle between Britain and Germany. Within Labour, the Catholics allowed hatred of communism to inveigle them into regarding Hitler as an acceptable bulwark against the spread of Russian influence into Europe. The communists advocated 'collective security'. What they really meant by this term, however, was an alliance with Russia. Whether this would have been possible will never be known. But the communists were mistaken in assuming that Hitler would have immediately stopped his aggressions, or that America would have immediately joined the alliance.

In the later thirties the European democracies faced two enemies at once - Nazism and communism - and had not the military power or morale to fight both. Australian Catholics hoped that by appeasing Hitler the western allies could moderate his excesses and save Europe from a war which could only benefit Russia. The Australian left wing thought Nazism the worse evil, and that an alliance with Stalin would halt it without war. They trusted, however, that if war did occur Stalin would not take unscrupulous advantage of the power vacuum that would result in Europe. Both were mistaken. In retrospect, the only hope of avoiding war appears to have been either to appease Germany in the nineteen-twenties, before the
Nazis rose to power, or to form an alliance early in the nineteen-thirties, before Germany became rearmed, and to draw a clear line against German aggression, while appeasing Mussolini. Neither policy was adopted, partly due to weak leadership, and partly due to public opinion, which had derived a very clear set of mistaken lessons from the first world war.

In Australia no major party offered a clear alternative to the policy pursued by the British and Australian governments. In fact, in a subtle way, the A.L.P. confirmed the Australian government in its attitude. Lyons, faced by a divided Cabinet, sought to avoid acrimonious debate in Parliament. After the Abyssinian crisis it was clear that the policy of vaguely supporting appeasement and 'Non-Intervention' was the most likely to keep the Opposition quiet. The government came to adopt the view on sanctions and the League of the A.L.P. At the time of the Munich crisis, Lyons' motives were pacifism, the wish to avoid trouble, and desire to follow Britain. Labour was more moved by isolationism. Yet in practice they both supported the same policy. Both accepted the Munich settlement thankfully. The influence of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party was on the side of increased caution and a continued search for a negotiated settlement. Thus opposition to appeasement lacked political leadership, and critics of the policy lost heart.

The changes in public opinion between Munich and the outbreak of war are comparatively clear, and have been dealt with in Chapter XI. Doubts began about a month after the signing of the Pact. These were caused by a growing realisation of the significance of the terms, increased German arrogance, the harshness in carrying out of the details, and the pogrom against the Jews. The new
suspicion of Germany was revealed by the talk of spy networks in Australia and the consensus of opinion against the return of New Guinea. Hostility to Nazism, however, conflicted with the desire to avoid war, so that there was some tendency to withhold judgement in the opening months of 1939, helped by the remarks of Menzies and Bruce.

Prague ended all doubts of German trustworthiness. In mid-1939 the public was critical of Germany and Italy, and felt that war was coming. It would not join communist demonstrations in large numbers, but willingly gathered in crowds to watch. Sections of it were easily provoked by suspected German arrogance. Nevertheless, Australians did not really want to be involved, and did not support the demonstrations against Von Luckner as widely as might have been expected. The Russo-German Pact ended the doubts of ultra-conservatives, Catholics and Nationalists, and enabled all sections of the public to support the war with enthusiasm.

Commentators were agreed on the unanimity of the public on the outbreak of war. This indeed was in striking contrast to the division and hesitation previously. When Germany reintroduced conscription in March 1935, even 'the Watchman' - later such a vigorous advocate of a strong policy towards Germany - supported Britain's moderation against the French demand for action.\(^1\) In the same way, the German military re-occupation of the Rhineland provoked no antagonism in Australia. All except the communists

\(^1\) CPD 161/42 Page, 62 Gullett, 69 Anthony, remarked on the unanimity of the Australian public and speakers on all sides of the Federal House. For 'the Watchman' when Germany reintroduced conscription, 'At Home and Abroad', 22 March 1935.
regarded it as of no significance. Germany had merely re-entered her own territory which had been unjustly interfered with by the Treaty of Versailles. In 1939, a united country went to war in response to German violation of yet another term in the same treaty. This thesis has attempted to trace opinion between the two extremes, to see how and why it changed. The inescapable conclusion is that it needed all attempts at appeasement, and all Hitler's aggressions, to educate the Australian public to abandon isolationism, realise the full iniquity of the Nazis, and accept the necessity for war.
### APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT AND CABINET DURING THE ABYSSINIAN CRISIS

#### House of Representatives

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N.B. The figures after each name indicate the number of speeches the members made during both debates.

C = Catholic (the Labour parties only are complete).

* = Returned soldier.
APPENDIX A (cont.)

Senate

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THE CABINET

The members of the Cabinet, and the number of speeches they made, are as follows:— (ACP members underlined)

Lyons (1), Casey (1), Sen Pearce (5), Menzies (3), Page (2), Sen Brennan (1), Parkhill (2), Hughes (1), Thorby (0), Sen A.J. McLachlan (2), Hunter (0), White (1), Gullett (0), Paterson (0).

The country party is noticeable for a lack of interest in the whole matter.

The Sydney Morning Herald provided information on its circulation, the other figures come from the Audit Bureau of Circulations, King Street, Sydney. It is unfortunate that not all the newspapers belonged to the organisation.
This table, in an effort to assess the SRC's public support, gives its main sources of gross revenue. The totals accordingly do not tally. Source: six-monthly audited accounts of the SRC, to be found A.N.U. Archives, P.15/13.

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* or - to TOTAL | 728 | 1703 | 1730 | 4197 | 3889 | 2884 | 15131 |

* The first period goes from 9 September 1936-31 December 1936. All the other periods are of six months.

** Most of the SRC activity in this period was in fact confined to New South Wales.
**APPENDIX D**

**MEMBERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT AND CABINET 1937-40**

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<td>* Rosevear J</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spender P</td>
<td>Scullin Rt Hon J</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stacey F</td>
<td>Scully W</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stewart Hon Sir F</td>
<td>Sheehan T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Street G</td>
<td>* Ward E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White Hon T</td>
<td>Watkins D</td>
</tr>
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* Ex-members of the Lang Group.
APPENDIX D (cont.)

Membership of Parliament and Cabinet 1937-40

SENATORS: N.B. Senate as Appendix A until 30 June 1938, then:-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A.C.P.</th>
<th>U.A.P.</th>
<th>A.L.P.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abbott M</td>
<td>Brand C</td>
<td>Amour S</td>
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<td>Cooper W</td>
<td>Collett H</td>
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<td>Gibson Hon W</td>
<td>Crawford Hon T</td>
<td>Arthur T</td>
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<td>Johnston E</td>
<td>Dein A</td>
<td>Ashley W</td>
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|          | Foll Hon H   | Aylett W     |
|          | Hayes Hon J  | Brown G      |
|          | Hays Hon H   | Cameron D    |
|          | Leckie J     | Clothier R   |
|          | McBride P    | Collings J   |
|          | MacDonald Hon A | Courtice B |
|          | McLachlan Hon A J | Cunningham Hon J |
|          | McLachlan J  | Darcy R      |
|          | McLeay G     | Fraser J     |
|          | Uphill O     | Grant C      |
|          | Wilson K     | Keene R      |

Lampe C
Sheehan J M
## APPENDIX D (cont.)

### Cabinets 1937-39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
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| 24.8.37-29.11.37 | Lyons (P.M.)  
|               | Page  
|               | Menzies  
|               | Casey  
|               | Sen Pearce (M.E.A.)  
|               | Sen Brennan  
|               | Thorby  
|               | Parkhill  
|               | Hughes  
|               | Hunter  
|               | Paterson  
|               | Sen McLachlan  
|               | White  |
| 29.11.37-7.4.39 | Lyons (P.M.)  
|               | Page  
|               | Menzies  
|               | Casey  
|               | Thorby  
|               | Hughes (M.E.A.)  
|               | Hunter  
|               | Sen McLachlan  
|               | White  
|               | A Cameron  
|               | Sen MacDonald  
|               | Sen Foll  
|               | Thompson  
|               | McEwen  
|               | Perkins  |
| 7.4.39-26.4.39 | Page (P.M.)  
|               | Casey  
|               | Thorby  
|               | Hughes (M.E.A.)  
|               | A Cameron  
|               | Sen MacDonald  
|               | Sen Foll  
|               | Thompson  
|               | McEwen  
|               | Perkins  
|               | Street  
|               | Sen McLeay  
|               | Harrison  |
| 26.4.39       | Menzies (P.M.)  
|               | Casey  
|               | Hughes  
|               | Sen Foll  
|               | Perkins  
|               | Street  
|               | Sen McLeay  
|               | Harrison  
|               | Stewart  
|               | Fairbairn  
|               | Lawson  
|               | Holt  
|               | Spender  
|               | Sen McBride  
|               | Sen Collett  
|               | Gullett (M.E.A.)  |

**Source:** Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vols. 154, 155, and 159. 
Sydney Morning Herald, 23 October 1937, p.10.
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b) Catholic

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Catholic Freeman's Journal, The, Sydney
Catholic Press, The, Sydney
Catholic Worker, The, Melbourne

c) Communist

Communist Review, The, Sydney
Communist, The
Workers' Weekly, The
Tribune, The

d) Labour

Century, The, Sydney
Labor Call, The, Melbourne
Labor Daily, The
Daily News, The

e) R.S.L.

Duckboard, The, Melbourne
Listening Post, The, Perth
Mufti, Melbourne
Queensland Digger, The, Brisbane
Reveille, Sydney
### Books, Pamphlets and Articles

The material listed here is that which has been of specific value. More general bibliographies can be found in most modern books of reference.

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Almond G</td>
<td>The American People and Foreign Policy</td>
<td>New York, 1950.</td>
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<td>Australian Institute of International Affairs</td>
<td>Australian Foreign Policy 1935-36.</td>
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<td>I Lived These Years</td>
<td>London 1941.</td>
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<td>Bean, C E W</td>
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<td>London 1919. War Aims of a Plain Australian, Sydney 1943.</td>
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<td>Brennan N</td>
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<td>Brogan D W</td>
<td>The Development of Modern France (1870-1939)</td>
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<td>Chester A</td>
<td>John Curtin, Sydney 1943.</td>
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<td>ALP Federal Personnel 1901-54</td>
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<td>De Bono E</td>
<td>Anno XLI, London 1937.</td>
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<td>Dixon R</td>
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<td>Eggleston F W</td>
<td>Search For A Social Philosophy, Melbourne and London 1941.</td>
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<td>Reflections On Australian Foreign Policy, Melbourne 1957.</td>
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<td>From Emnity to Alliance, U.S.- Australian Relations, 1931-41, Seattle 1964.</td>
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