

CHAPTER THREE

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CPA-ML: 1971-77

Before the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 Chinese foreign policy portrayed the Soviet Union as a counter-revolutionary lackey-cum-accomplice of the USA. From the late 1960s, however, the Communist Party of China saw Soviet power waxing while that of the erstwhile number one enemy waned. It adjusted its emphases accordingly.

The adjustment involved three main periods, each drifting into the next. After Czechoslovakia CPC propaganda spoke of Soviet social-imperialism (socialism in words, imperialism in deeds). It held that the two superpowers contended and colluded with each other for world domination and was more or less even-handed in its denunciations of the USA and USSR. Between 1971-6 the contention between the superpowers was pushed to the fore and their collusion faded from the picture. The particular menace posed by Soviet ambitions received increasing emphasis. In 1976 the USSR explicitly supplanted the USA as enemy number one.¹

The PRC's mounting preoccupation with the Soviet Union was accompanied by a rapprochement with the USA, a rapprochement more far-reaching than suggested by a literal reading of Chinese propaganda. While faithfully echoing each revision of Chinese policy, the CPA-ML was initially blind to the diplomatic subtleties involved, and remained manacled to its virulent anti-Americanism.

¹ Cf. PR: 18 February 1966, pp. 5, 20-21; 25 October 1968, p. 8; 18 September 1970, p. 7; 14 January 1972, pp. 16-17; 22 June 1973, p. 18; 8 August 1974, p. 11; 28 May 1976, pp. 29, 31; 15 July 1977, pp. 4-10.

A 1972 Australian Communist article testified poignantly to the party's lack of discernment. The article was ostensibly devoted to a defence of China's new foreign policy priorities. Yet it defined the primary international contradiction as that 'between U.S. imperialism and the world's people', a formulation abandoned by the CPC three years earlier.²

When Australian opposition leader Snedden returned from China in 1973 claiming that the Chinese wanted a U.S. presence in Asia, Hill's reaction was as ill-advised as it was withering: 'All thinking people in Australia know that Snedden is an ultra-diehard reactionary ... In addition he is an incompetent fool'.³

This dysfunction, however, was largely attributable to the CPA-ML's ingenuousness. The party was oblivious to the pro-American undercurrent in Chinese diplomacy. Amidst an avalanche of evidence that China was moving away from its former revolutionary zeal⁴ the

2 'Peaceful Co-existence: The Leninist Principle ...', AC, no. 50 (February 1972), p. 29.

3 V, 26 July 1973, p. 8. For Snedden's comments see, for example, Australian, 18 July 1973, p. 11.

4 See, for example: Terrill, pp. 148, 157, 186, 196-7; Lin Piao's report to the ninth CPC congress in PR, 30 April 1969, pp. 31, 34 and cf. Chou En-lai's report to the tenth congress in PR, 7 September 1973, p. 24; Adie, p. 24; Knowles, pp. 16-17, 24; Carlos Rossi, 'China's Foreign Policy: A Critical Appraisal', in Alternate News Service, no. 59 (20 June 1976), pp. 15-20; Stephen FitzGerald, 'Impressions of China's New Diplomacy: The Australian Experience', China Quarterly (hereafter abbreviated to CQ), no. 48 (October-December 1971), pp. 670-71; AFR, 29 May 1972, p. 2; National Times, 2-7 August 1971, pp. 1, 16.

CPA-ML registered only the familiar: the sustained anti-American and apocalyptic tone in official Chinese statements.⁵

An inability or refusal to countenance any but official Chinese sources, and an insensitivity to the implicit message behind the rhetoric in such sources, are recurring themes in the study of CPC/CPA-ML relations. In the early 1970s one party member, in conversation with Hill, noted with approval the major shift to the right in Chinese foreign policy. Hill said that no such shift had taken place. York comments that the party was notable for its 'amateurism, lack of skill and lack of talent ... Often it took months for them to realise the inevitable implications ...' of Chinese policy.⁶

This evidence suggests in part that despite his frequent visits to China, Hill's discussions with Chinese leaders were conducted in reassuring generalities. It took the CPA-ML some time to wake up and accommodate itself to the increasingly pro-American implications of Chinese policies.

The Chinese preoccupation with the USSR, on the other hand, was unmistakable, and the CPA-ML quickly synchronised its concerns with China's. In 1972 Vanguard warned that Soviet imperialism was reaching out to Australia. 'The danger', it cautioned, 'should not for one moment be underestimated'.⁷ The following year the superpowers were depicted as 'twin devils', and a seminal Australian Communist article announced that anti-Soviet and anti-American

5 E.g. PR, 7 January 1972, p. 8.

6 Interviews with: former member C; York, 13 January 1982.

7 V, 12 October 1972, p. 1.

struggle were equally important.⁸

Soviet and American flags now burnt side by side at Maoist demonstrations.⁹ The CPA-ML's student members and supporters, still the most visible and ardent wing of the party, successfully moved the adoption of an anti-Soviet plank in the platform of the Australian Union of Students.¹⁰

By 1975 superpower rivalry and the attendant danger of world war were firmly established as the pivotal themes of Chinese foreign policy. The mechanical transposition of this perspective to Australia produced a bizarre analysis of domestic political developments.

Vanguard pontificated: 'At the root of the chaos and upheaval in Australia lies the contention and struggle between the superpowers ...'¹¹ The struggle for Australian independence was now defined as a broad united front against both superpowers, and its success was presented as vital if the nation was to avoid embroilment in the threatened war between them.¹²

By attempting to swaddle the Australian body politic in the off-the-peg gown of superpower contention, the CPA-ML produced some particularly outlandish political fashions. Amongst the most exotic was its explanation of the dismissal of the Whitlam government by

8 V, 26 April 1973, p. 1; 'Soviet Social Imperialism Endangers Australia', AC, no. 56 (February 1973), p. 44.

9 This practice was instituted in 1974 and became a ritual for the remainder of the 1970s. See [Albert Langer], 'Soviet Flag is Now the Flag of the Class Enemy', V, 25 July 1974, pp. 2-3.

10 V, 27 February 1975, p. 7.

11 V, 7 August 1975, p. 1.

12 V, 8 May 1975, p. 3; E. F. Hill, Imperialism in Australia: The Menace of Soviet Social-Imperialism, p. 134.

Governor-General Kerr in 1975.

Interpretations of this event differ. It has been variously described as an unavoidable measure aimed at resolving a constitutional imbroglio, a blow of dubious legality struck by the Australian establishment at a reformist government and the final act of a conspiracy hatched by the media, the conservative opposition and the American Central Intelligence Agency.¹³

Initially, the CPA-ML attributed the 'semi-fascist coup' to a desperate ruling class petrified by popular opposition to growing economic hardship.¹⁴ Vanguard highlighted the chanting of anti-American slogans by demonstrators protesting Kerr's action.¹⁵ A week later a front-page article introduced the notion that 'a powerful motive' in the coup was the American need 'to meet the challenge to U.S. control of Australia (and elsewhere) that is coming from the imperialist Soviet Union ...' Yet an editorial on the same page claimed that the coup was provoked by the economic and political crisis of Australian and world capitalism, and made no mention of the superpowers.¹⁶

The ensuing weeks saw the coup ascribed to domestic exigencies and superpower contention, sometimes alternately, sometimes simultaneously. In the midst of this exegetical muddle, however, the Whitlam

13 For an overview see Michael Sexton, *Illusions of Power: The Fate of a Reform Government*.

14 'Defeat Fascism', special supplement to V, 13 November 1975. The supplement was a two-sided leaflet produced for mass distribution.

15 [Duncan Clarke and John Herouvim], 'Great Fighting Spirit of the People: To Pussyfoot Now Could Bring Disaster', in *Ibid.*

16 V, 20 November 1975, p. 1.

government was increasingly represented as having been favourably disposed to Soviet imperialism.¹⁷

The line finally adopted in 1976 postulated a remarkably rapid metamorphosis. In 1973 Vanguard had portrayed Whitlam as a fawning American puppet. Parliamentary obstruction of his legislative programme was attributed to the stubborn opposition of reactionary diehards to even mild reforms.¹⁸ Yet when the same forces instituted a parliamentary manoeuvre which unseated him, Whitlam's demise was ascribed to his hobnobbing with the Russians.

The Whitlam government was sacked, wrote Hill, 'because that government took up a mildly anti-U.S. position in favour of U.S. imperialism's rival, Soviet social-imperialism'.¹⁹ Another party publication showed even less restraint:

Only the publications of the Communist Party of Australia (M-L) exposed the real reason for the dismissal of Whitlam, U.S. imperialism's anxiety over the growing challenge to its domination of Australia by the Soviet Union. Whitlam ... was developing many and varied contacts with Soviet social-imperialism and thereby encouraged an extension of Soviet social-imperialist influence in Australia ... It was primarily Whitlam's association with Soviet social-imperialism that prompted the real masters of the country to act.²⁰

The CPA-ML's determination to knead the reality of Australia into the mould of superpower contention was breathtakingly unabashed.

17 The confusion can be followed in V: 20 November 1975, p. 8; 27 November 1975, pp. 1-2, 8; 4 December 1975, p. 6; 11 December 1975, p. 3; 18 December 1975, pp. 1, 8.

18 See, for example, V: 25 October 1973, p. 5; 25 April 1974, p. 1.

19 E. F. Hill, The Great Cause of Australian Independence, p. 54. See also ibid., p. 122 and id., Australia and the Superpowers, p. 104.

20 Introduction to E. F. Hill [John Herouvim (ed.)], A Guide to the Writings of E. F. Hill, p. 1.

Its attitude to the construction of the Newport power station in Melbourne provides an excellent example. In 1972 the station was designed to 'serve the growing number of American and other foreign monopolies' in the area. In 1974, 'U.S. war aims' were behind it. By 1976 Newport's construction was attributed to the effects of 'superpower contention'.²¹

Indeed, superpower contention seemed to be behind everything, including government spending cutbacks, declining wages, uranium mining, teacher unemployment and the timing of the 1977 federal election.²² When academics Eysenck and Jensen visited Australia, the left unanimously stigmatised their educational theories as racist. The CPA-ML condemned their theories in an article entitled 'Jensen, Eysenck Visit a Product of Superpower Contention'. Incredibly, not a solitary mention of superpower contention was to be found in the article.²³

The responsibility for this ludicrous preoccupation with superpower contention, which proved so inimical to the party's credibility, cannot be traced to Chinese counsels. More likely it was a product of the CPA-ML leadership's desire to demonstrate that they were more royalist even than the king. Indeed, Duncan Clarke would often return from his regular visits to the Chinese embassy less prone to explain everything that happened in Australia by reference to superpower contention or the mounting influence of Soviet imperialism

21 V: 30 November 1972, p. 1; 5 December 1974, p. 1; 28 October 1976, p. 4.

22 V: 12 February 1976, pp. 3-4; 19 February 1976, p. 1; 4 November 1976, p. 8; 10 March 1977, p. 7; 27 October 1977, p. 1.

23 V, 29 September 1977, p. 10.

on the Australian ruling class.²⁴

Regardless of this, as China came to identify the USSR as the driving force in superpower contention, corresponding shifts occurred in the CPA-ML's domestic emphases. The Soviet imperialists became 'even more dangerous than the U.S. imperialists. They are on the offensive. U.S. imperialism is on the defensive'.²⁵

Although Soviet influence in Australia appeared negligible, argued Vanguard, 'that should not for a minute lead anyone astray. SOVIET SOCIAL-IMPERIALISM IS VERY ACTIVE.'²⁶ Hill reminded his readers that the British and Americans too had 'comparatively small beginnings' in Australia.²⁷

The familiar Maoist jargon was stripped of its anti-superpower attire and clad in the latest anti-Soviet fittings from China. 'Superpower contention', which had stood for global rivalry between mankind's two main enemies, was now used as a catchphrase for Soviet expansion and the defensive posture adopted by the United States in relation to it. 'The united front' remained, but its target was now Soviet social-imperialism. 'Australian independence' was still the immediate aim, but the main enemy in this struggle was now the Soviet Union. U.S. imperialism, to be sure, still had to be fought; but not in ways which could be manipulated by the USSR for its own sinister purposes.²⁸

24 Interviews with current member B (13 March 1983) and former member D. The writer's experience confirms this observation.

25 [John Herouvim], 'Understanding the Nature of Soviet Social-Imperialism', in Hill, Imperialism in Australia ..., p. 141.

26 V, 16 October 1975, p. 1, emphasis in original.

27 Hill, ... Superpowers, p. 82.

28 See, for example: id., The Great Cause ..., p. 88; 'Class Struggle is the Key Link for Us', AC, no. 77 [mid-1976], p. 53. Also V, 7 October 1976, p. 1; 4 November 1976, p. 1.

In its eagerness to demonstrate the rapid headway which Soviet imperialism was making in its penetration of Australia, the CPA-ML even discovered Russian fifth-columnists in the upper echelons of Australia's establishment. For Hill, the meaning of the National Country Party's interest in Soviet-Australian trade was patent: 'they have thrown in their lot with Soviet social-imperialism'.²⁹ When newspapers controlled by the Fairfax press conglomerate criticised hawkish elements within the American leadership, Vanguard detected the ominous significance of these articles. While it allowed for vacillating loyalties, is noted that the Fairfax press, 'as a whole ... has supported Soviet social-imperialism ...',³⁰

Party activists trained their sights on new targets. They broke up meetings addressed by Soviet diplomats and academics, protested at Soviet trade exhibitions and demonstrated outside the offices of 'comprador' Australian companies which traded with the USSR.³¹ The Soviet menace was even mentioned in leaflets directed against McDonald's hamburgers and Disneyland's cultural imperialism.³²

The Maoist leadership of the Builders Labourers Federation, in its continuing disputes with the Building Workers Industrial Union, stressed the pro-Russian orientation of that union's leadership.³³

29 E. F. Hill in V, 14 October 1976, p. 3. See also id., The Great Cause ..., pp. 122-3.

30 V, 8 September 1977, p. 12.

31 See reports of demonstrations in V: 22 April 1976, pp. 3-4; 7 October 1976, p. 6; 12 May 1977, p. 6; 9 June 1977, p. 8; 20 October 1977, p. 9.

32 The leaflets were quoted in V, 22 January 1976, p. 4 and 3 June 1976, p. 4. They were written and distributed by party members and supporters. Cyclostyled copies of the originals are in the writer's possession.

33 E.g. V, 11 August 1977, p. 9.

Several stages were involved in the CPA-ML's transition to this new line. The transition was accomplished by the gradual insinuation of the new priorities into the pages of Vanguard. The paper unfolded the changes step by step. This process was consciously aimed at acclimatising members, over a period of time, to positions which the leadership had already adopted. The process is described by a former party member: 'After a while you began to pick up on little suggestions made in Vanguard and then you'd realise this was the beginning of something big'.³⁴

Manifestations of Soviet activity in and around Australia were assiduously marshalled to establish the deadly menace facing the nation. The party pointed to Soviet tourist liners in Australian ports, the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean and Soviet fishing and oceanographic vessels prowling Australia's coast.

The Soviet Union proposed a joint Australian-Soviet radio communication facility; trade relations were booming; the Moscow-Narodny Bank was involved in land development projects in New South Wales and Queensland, and was the main intermediary in the Whitlam Government's furtive negotiations for overseas loans; Soviet ambassador Basov 'covetously' referred to the mineral-rich Pilbara region as 'a pearl in Australia'.³⁵

All this information was selectively gathered and publicised by Vanguard. The paper became obsessed with cataloguing even the

34 Former member B. Exactly similar comments were made by former CPA-ML member H, (taped interview, 24 August 1982).

35 See, for example, Hill, Imperialism in Australia ..., pp. 110-111 and V: 4 September 1975, p. 1; 22 January 1976, p. 5; 29 April 1976, p. 7; 30 September 1976, pp. 6, 8; 22 September 1977, p. 11.

most innocuous Soviet activities in Australia. The danger of Soviet imperialism permeated the whole paper and thus the consciousness of those who relied on it for information and inspiration.

Party publications used a combination of explanation and admonition when addressing those Maoists who still encountered difficulties in adjusting to the changing line. Doubters were reminded that transfigurations in the international balance of power were invariably reflected in Australia, and that the ideological level of those who were incapable of keeping up was suspect.³⁶

The party's organisational structure facilitated the rank-and-file's assimilation of the changing line. Contact with the party's leading bodies was rare, forums for internal party discussion unheard of. Canvassing of party matters outside one's cell was strictly forbidden. Vanguard was the main centripetal element in party life.³⁷

The shared adherence to Vanguard's line was therefore the foundation of party members' sense of community. The party's very clandestinity served to emphasise to members that they belonged to something special. In this context, strictures against inter-cell contact were regarded as a measure of the party's seriousness.

Members' dependence on Vanguard for political guidance was attended by a corresponding rejection of non-party sources of information. 'Without any real pressure one voluntarily imposed blinkers

36 E.g.: V, 3 June 1976, p. 2; 'Soviet Social-Imperialism is the Greatest Menace to Australia', AC, no. 85 (September 1977).

37 Interviewees were unanimous on these matters. See also: [Flo Russell], p. 7; 'The Building of a Marxist-Leninist Party', AC, no. 11 (March 1965), pp. 4-6.

on oneself', explains York.³⁸ The knowledge that the Australian devotees of the Maoist world outlook were small in numbers was all the more reason for them to huddle together. Believing Vanguard was itself an act of fellowship.³⁹

Moreover, the CPA-ML prided itself on its strictly qualified and selected membership.⁴⁰ To be a party member was to be a person of a special mould, privy to insights which were, for the moment, denied to the masses.⁴¹ Vanguard was the repository of these revelations. To reject its line was to forfeit one's claim to being special, to lose the family in which the truth of one's views was seen as self-evident, to be utterly and irrevocably orphaned in a world which regarded one's opinions as extreme or idiosyncratic.⁴²

The commonplace pressures for conformity operating within any organisation or belief system also served to secure acceptance and internalisation of the anti-Soviet line. Most members were accustomed to following the party line and wanted to believe what

38 York interview, 3 February 1983. This self-blinkering is a common practice among communists. (See, for example: McDonald, p. 149; Mortimer, p. 117; Turner, 'My Long March', pp. 120-21.)

39 This sense of belonging is also dealt with in: Ibid., p. 105; Upward, p. 71; Sharpley, pp. 112-13.

40 Hill, ... Superpowers, p. 68. See also Some Ideological Questions, pp. 7-8, 16-17.

41 McEwan (pp. 24-5) makes a similar point regarding his outlook while a member of the CPA. In declining an offer of CPA-ML membership, it was not unheard of for party sympathisers to plead their unworthiness. (Interview with former member D.)

42 These matters are also dealt with in: McEwan, pp. 24, 62-3, 85, 118; Upward, pp. 14-15, 33, 52, 174-84 passim; Turner, loc. cit., pp. 125, 129, 139; id., 'The Long Goodbye', in id., Room for Manoeuvre ..., p. 143; Fairbairn, p. 60.

Vanguard said. Rejecting the party line could entail losing friends, social contacts, the respect of one's subordinates in the party hierarchy and even institutional positions. The potential consequences of pursuing one's misgivings were daunting. One could be cut adrift from the embattled minority which had provided one with a frame of reference, joining instead the pusillanimous ranks of those who fell off the chariot of history every time it hit a bend in the road.⁴³

Further, party members were steeped in the need to subordinate their personal interests to the revolutionary cause. The organisational expression of this was the principle of democratic centralism, in which the decisions of the party's leading bodies were binding on the party cells and members.⁴⁴

Membership of the CPA-ML entailed acceptance of a self-elected, self-perpetuating leadership. The members' loyalties had to be particularly durable, their confidence in the leaders almost inexhaustible. Each day of continued membership was a reaffirmation of the member's unquestioning trust in his or her leaders.⁴⁵

43 In accounting for their continued loyalty to an ever-changing party line, most interviewees raised these sorts of considerations. Similar points are made in a letter from Barry York to Ted Hill, 22 February 1981, in writer's possession.

44 Amongst countless examples are: Some Ideological Questions, pp. 1, 5; 'Being a Revolutionary is a Full Time Job', AC, no. 62 (February 1974), pp. 29-30; Hill, Australia's Revolution ..., p. 40. The importance of democratic centralism in communist parties can also be gathered from: Upward, p. 80; Sharpley, p. 50.

45 Deference to the leadership is another communist tradition. It is mentioned by McEwan, pp. 96-7 and Upward, pp. 165, 178.

It was clear that the party's anti-Soviet clamour was further isolating it within the Australian left. But, when all was said and done, why should members of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) be perturbed by isolation? Hadn't the party been isolated since its foundation because of its insistence on the inviolability of Marxist-Leninist principles? In many ways Australian Maoists gloried in their isolation. Being 'out front', as the very name of Vanguard signified, was nothing new.

In any event, the notion of isolation was regarded as an extremely relative one by people who felt that they were actuated by an outlook shared by a quarter of mankind. Vanguard repeatedly presented its analysis of Australian events as congruent with the Chinese appraisal of world developments.

Party members accepted China's foreign policy. A typical attitude is described by York, who points out that he saw China as

a genuinely socialist country which had scholars, diplomats in other countries and the knowledge and expertise to gather information and interpret it from a socialist viewpoint. So the conclusions that the Chinese would arrive at on international matters would be far more accurate than those I could arrive at ... In other words my attitude was, 'Well if they say it I'm prepared to go along with it'.⁴⁶

Non-Maoists' sympathy for China was not as blinkered, and certainly did not automatically extend to the CPA-ML. Still, China retained considerable prestige among people who felt a diffuse disenchantment with Australian society. It provided a co-operative contrast with Australia, unblemished by soulless technology-worship and consumerism. To many the PRC seemed to be genuinely persevering with

⁴⁶ York (interview, loc. cit.). A very similar attitude was expressed by Bennetts (30 July 1983).

a successful utopian experiment, the underlying idealism of which provided an inspiring counter-model to the rat-race, economic instability, cynicism and corruption of western society.

Viewed against the background of this fund of sympathy and goodwill towards China, the devotion and respect of those with a heartfelt political commitment to that country is even less surprising. This commitment naturally extended to China's foreign policy, which was seen as being correct by virtue of being Chinese. The CPA-ML, which bore the CPC's stamp of approval, was naturally regarded by its members as being ideally positioned to interpret Australian events in the light of this policy.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHINESE DOMESTIC POLICY AND THE CPA-ML: 1971-76

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had dealt a devastating blow to the CPC's right wing. The 'capitalist-roaders' nonetheless proved remarkably resilient, and a see-saw contest for power between the moderates and radicals raged within the Communist Party of China throughout the mid-1970s.¹

Three major mass campaigns dominated Chinese domestic politics during this period: the criticism of Lin Biao and Confucius; the study of the dictatorship of the proletariat; and the struggle against attempts to reverse the 'correct verdicts' of the cultural revolution. These campaigns were presented as life-and-death encounters with domestic capitalist elements who, by their very nature, would never be reconciled to defeat. At stake was China's continued adherence to the socialist path.

A recrudescence of the style and tone of the cultural revolution emerged: 'What joy it is to struggle with heaven!', exalted Peking Review. 'What joy it is to struggle with earth! What joy it is to struggle with man! Certainly communism will be realised amid struggle!'²

1 The terms 'moderates' and 'radicals' are employed here for brevity's sake. For informative interrogations of the divisions within the CPC leadership see: Andrew J. Nathan, 'A Factionalism Model for CCP Politics', CQ, no. 53 (January-March 1973), pp. 34-66; John Bryan Starr, 'From the Tenth Party Congress to the Premiership of Hua Kuo-feng: The Significance of the Colour of the Cat', CQ, no. 67 (September 1976), pp. 479-88.

2 PR, 22 March 1974, p. 13.

Like the cultural revolution which preceded them, the three mass campaigns were explicitly aimed at preventing capitalist 'retrogression'. CPC propaganda lashed out at the reactionary Confucian virtues of moderation and self-restraint, and denounced those who dwelt on the need for stability, efficient administration and technical expertise.³

For the CPA-ML this propaganda was reassuringly familiar. Australian Maoism had been quite literally born and bred on Mao's theory of continuous revolution. Its precepts were a central theme of the Chinese polemics during the Sino-Soviet cleavage, and were repeatedly taken up by the CPA-ML.⁴ This theory held that after the victory of socialism an incessant ideological struggle was required if the multifarious pressures towards capitalist restoration were to be stemmed.⁵

3 A fairly comprehensive grasp of the Chinese radicals' views can be acquired from Selected Articles Criticising Lin Piao and Confucius (2 vols) and the following pamphlets: Yao Wen-yuan, On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique; Chang Chun-chiao, On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie, (for extracts see Appendix III); Marx, Engels and Lenin on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. For the moderates' side see the appendices in 'Chi Hsin', The Case of the Gang of Four, pp. 201-95.

4 E.g.: PR, 26 July 1963, p. 20; 'Lessons of China's 15th Year of Socialist Successes', AC, no. 8 (November 1964), p. 8.

5 For a representative exposition of Mao's views see Mao Tse-tung, 'Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee', in Stuart Shram (ed.), Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed - Talks and Letters: 1956-71, pp. 188-96. Useful scholarly treatments of Mao's ideas include Chiou, Maoism in Action ..., pp. 45-65 *passim*; Klaus Mehnert, China Today, pp. 186-94; Steve Reglar, 'Mao Zedong's Theoretical Legacy: The Gang of Four and Differences in the Post Mao Leadership in China', in AAISAG (eds), China in Transition: Where to Next?, pp. 70-76 *passim*.

In 1973 the CPC's tenth congress confirmed and extended the power of the Shanghai radicals who had spearheaded the cultural revolution. The criticism of ultra-leftism which had been unfolded in the wake of the cultural revolution now itself came under attack. The anti-Lin and Confucius campaign contained back-handed attacks on Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, the most securely-entrenched and powerful of China's moderates.⁶ By late 1974 the GPCR was no longer referred to in the past tense, but was described as an on-going revolution aimed at opposing and preventing revisionism.⁷

The moderates nonetheless exerted a steady countervailing pressure, the effectiveness of which was not as immediately obvious as the efforts of the radicals, given the latter's control of the CPC's main propaganda organs.

In 1973 Deng Xiaoping, former CPC General Secretary and erstwhile 'number two capitalist-roader' was rehabilitated. By January 1975 he was sitting on the CPC's top body, the Standing Committee of the Politburo. In the same month China's 'parliament', the National People's Congress (NPC) met. It reiterated the vision of China as a powerful, technologically-advanced nation by the end of the century, a plan first adopted by the NPC in 1964 but shelved during the cultural revolution.

'The four modernisations' - of industry, agriculture, national defence and science and technology - preoccupied the moderates,

6 E.g. PR, 15 April 1977, p. 29. One scholar, while acknowledging that the anti-Zhou analysis of the campaign had wide currency, offered a dissenting view. (Merle Goldman, 'China's Confucian Campaign', CQ, no. 63 [September 1975], pp. 435-62.)

7 E.g. PR, 8 November 1974, pp. 6-9 passim.

just as 'class struggle' preoccupied the radicals. Both catchphrases were indispensable parts of the Chinese communist lingua franca and their use was incumbent on all factions.

But while the pages of Peking Review in 1975 were weighted heavily towards class struggle, inside China the moderates' star was rising. A salient illustration was the incarceration of unruly radicals, former shock troops of the cultural revolution, during that year.⁸

Their release the following year was equally significant.⁹ The pendulum swung back to the radicals, its momentum rendered all the more irresistible by Mao's personal intervention. 'You are making the socialist revolution', he admonished,

and yet you don't know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party - those in power taking the capitalist road. The capitalist roaders are still on the capitalist road.¹⁰

The recalcitrants who were obstructing the continuation of the GPCR were now identified as 'those capitalist-roaders who were exposed and criticized during the Cultural Revolution ...'¹¹ One 'unrepentant capitalist-roader' in particular was alluded to. On 7 April 1976, following a large pro-moderate demonstration in Beijing, the man in question, Deng Xiaoping, was once again stripped of his

8 L. Ladany, 'Condemning the Gang of Four', Social Survey, vol. 27, no. 1 (February 1978), p. 16. During a CPA-ML tour of China in 1977-78, in which the writer participated, Chinese officials repeatedly cited 1975 as the year of a concerted counter-attack led by Zhou Enlai. This is corroborated by a diary of the tour kept by Peter Vodicka which is in the writer's possession.

9 Ladany, loc. cit.

10 Mao Zedong, quoted in PR, 12 March 1976, p. 4.

11 PR, 19 March 1976, p. 9.

posts. The relatively unknown Hua Guofeng's appointment on the same day as Premier of the State Council and First Vice-Chairman of the CPC was presented by the western media as a compromise measure adopted by a deeply divided leadership.¹²

The CPA-ML's response to the developments sketched above was conditioned by an outlook as myopic as it was self-imposed. Basing itself entirely on official CPC propaganda, which was dominated by the Chinese radicals¹³, the party was buoyed by the apparent inexorability of Mao's triumph over the capitalist-roaders. Where other observers saw a tug-of-war between radicals and moderates, the CPA-ML saw only the rout of the latter.

This ineptitude is hard to understand. The CPA-ML had been repeatedly embarrassed by its inability to read between the lines of Chinese propaganda, yet it obstinately refused to entertain the analyses offered in 'bourgeois' sources.

Towards the end of 1966 Hill had scoffed when told by a CPA-ML CC member who had returned from an extended stay in China that Liu Shaoqi was the 'number one capitalist-roader' in the CPC.¹⁴ In 1967 Liu's theory of self-cultivation, the cornerstone of his book How to be a Good Communist, was still being promoted by the CPA-ML. Hill's informant, of course, was right and soon Vanguard was

12 For a typical example see Canberra Times, 13 April 1976, p. 2. Stimulating scholarly discussions are: Bill Brugger, 'Conclusion', in Brugger (ed.), pp. 253-79; Jurgen Domes, 'The "Gang of Four" and Hua Kuo-feng: Analysis of Political Events in 1975-76', CQ, no. 71 (September 1977), pp. 473-97.

13 Brugger, loc. cit., pp. 267-8, 270-71; PR, 21 January 1977, pp. 14-17.

14 Founding CPA-ML CC member, 24 March 1983.

busy denouncing Liu and his theories.¹⁵ The party's inability-cum-refusal to grasp the connotations of Chinese foreign policy, discussed in the preceding chapter, is a further illustration of its ineptitude and obstinacy.

It would appear that the party leadership was familiar with academic and journalistic accounts of divisions within the CPC in the mid-1970s. However, although bitten more than once, the CPA-ML had not yet learnt to be shy. Party publications repeatedly dismissed such accounts as 'bourgeois nonsense' and 'rumours and scandal-mongering'.¹⁶

In the event, much of the bourgeois nonsense and scandal-mongering proved quite perspicacious. Viewed in this light, there is considerable irony in Hill's remark in 1970 that his many mistakes had taught him 'to be careful in making absolute statements'.¹⁷

The cock-sure tone with which the CPA-ML dismissed China-watchers' analyses is eloquent of an inability to grasp Mao's ideas and method beyond the level of platitude.

Mao's majority on the CPC CC at the beginning of the cultural revolution had been unsteady¹⁸ and the three mass campaigns conducted

15 Self-cultivation was promoted in Some Ideological Questions, p. 17. It was denounced, along with Liu, in V, 18 May 1967, p. 3.

16 'Great Advance of People's China', AC, no. 54 (October 1972), p. 25; V, 15 April 1976, p. 5. Cf. National Times, 27 October-1 November 1975, p. 36.

17 V, 8 October 1970, p. 5.

18 Mao Tsetung, 'Speech to the Albanian Military Delegation (May 1, 1967)', in Joint Publications Research Service, Miscellany of Mao Tsetung Thought, reprinted in BCD ..., vol. 3, no. 1 (February 1983), p. 17.

by the Chinese radicals in the mid-1970s clearly demonstrated that the deep rifts obvious during the cultural revolution were by no means healed.

For Mao Zedong the class struggle under socialism was a dynamic, tortuous and epochal process. The journey to the classless utopia of communist society was fraught with the constant danger of capitalist restoration.

The CPA-ML yielded to none in its repetition of these Maoist tenets. But its practice suggests that they were understood as Platonic categories, canons in a catechism rather than insights into the dynamics of socialist society. It is easy to become glib about 'life-and-death struggles' when they occur endlessly, and on the whole Australian Maoists viewed China as monolithic. The capitalist-roaders were there, to be sure, but Chairman Mao had them well under control.

Vanguard 'hailed', 'saluted' and 'rejoiced in' each and every twist in the Chinese domestic power struggle.

When Lin Biao was designated Mao's successor in the CPC Constitution¹⁹, Vanguard eulogised him.²⁰ Party bookshops were adorned with posters of Lin, on his own and standing beside Chairman Mao. Little yellow books of quotations from Lin Biao adorned the shelves.

Then Lin vanished from public life. While the international press speculated about the meaning of his disappearance the CPA-ML, in a literal case of 'here today, gone tomorrow', expunged all traces

19 PR, 30 April 1969, p. 37.

20 V, 11 June 1970, p. 1.

of Lin Biao from its bookshops.²¹ After official Chinese announcements that Lin had died in a plane crash following an abortive coup attempt, Vanguard described him as 'nothing but a cheap lickspittle for US imperialism and Soviet revisionism ...',²²

Deng Xiaoping's rehabilitation was treated similarly. As it was unaccompanied by any fanfare in China, Vanguard made no official statement endorsing Deng's re-emergence. He simply took his place amongst the Chinese leaders repeatedly quoted in the paper.²³ Deng's re-purging in 1976 was not such a low-key affair. Accordingly, the CPA-ML responded with a cable of support to Mao Zedong and the CPC CC.²⁴

Nor did the CPA-ML restrict itself to endorsing and applauding the changing CPC leadership line-up. It republished Chinese communiques and statements and effusively welcomed the mass campaigns waged by the Chinese radicals.²⁵

Moreover, Vanguard's exhortations to study and learn from Chinese material were unremitting. The documents of the tenth CPC congress were deemed worthy of study 'by all Australian revolutionaries'. Another article said that the Peking Review had published 'a series of particularly fine articles' on criticising Lin Biao and Confucius,

21 As testified to by the writer's personal experience and that of Rob Bennetts (15 April 1983).

22 V, 7 February 1974, p. 1.

23 E.g. V, 1 August 1974, p. 8.

24 V, 22 April 1976, p. 1.

25 See, for example, V: 6 September 1973, p. 8; 14 February 1974, pp. 7-8; 24 October 1974, p. 5; 30 January 1974 [mislabelled: actually 1975], p. 1; 20 February 1975, p. 3; 15 April 1976, p. 5.

which everyone should read.²⁶

According to Vanguard the Chinese campaigns enriched the whole gamut of Marxist-Leninist theory. 'Our Australian revolutionaries must learn from the Chinese revolutionaries', wrote the paper.²⁷ Consistent with past CPA-ML practices, 'learning' was construed as the mechanical transplantation of Chinese concepts and terms quite alien to Australia.

One Vanguard article, after urging readers to study the material published in the campaign against Lin Biao and Confucius, dealt with Australian union spokesmen who advocated the settlement of strikes by arbitration. Such people, it said, were disciples of Confucius. 'They want the workers to ... restrain themselves and meekly beg before the tribunals of the bourgeoisie, that is, "return to the rites ..."',²⁸ The Australian Communist, addressing itself to the question of intellectuals in the revolutionary movement, characterised one ex-Communist intellectual's supercilious attitude towards the workers as 'true Confucianism'.²⁹

The abiding cultural revolution emphases of Chinese propaganda underpinned the CPA-ML's unyielding militancy and zeal through the mid-1970s. The party's strategic and tactical profile was grounded in Mao's often-invoked maxims that 'revolution is the main trend

26 V: 24 January 1974, p. 3; 14 February 1974, p. 6.

27 V, 19 June 1975, p. 3.

28 V, 28 March 1974, p. 3.

29 'Intellectuals and the Revolutionary Movement', AC, no. 69 (February 1975), p. 5.

in the world today' and 'class struggle is the key link'.³⁰

The CPA-ML's Marxism was, above all else, a theory of action. Vanguard carried the militant style and posture of the cultural revolution into the 1970s. Taking the hard line was seen as simply the Maoist way of doing things:

The example of the Red Guards, particularly to the younger people in the party, was one that we never forgot. We were keen to remember phrases from Mao such as 'it's right to rebel' and 'bombard the headquarters' which called forth militant actions, that advocated us being out front ... Our style was very much in the mould of the cultural revolution.³¹

The question of 'complete independence from all imperialism' remained 'the essential immediate question in the real politics of Australia', and the CPA-ML described itself as 'the only Australian patriotic party ...'.³² The defiant national self-assertiveness with which party propaganda was infused interlocked with the 'new nationalism' of the Whitlam years, acquiring 'much greater respectability' than had seemed possible in the late 1960s.³³

Parliament continued to be regarded as 'simply a talking shop' and 'a figleaf for coercion'.³⁴ Armed revolution was seen as

30 'Revolution is the main trend' comes from a statement by Mao, 20 May 1970, in PR (Special Issue), 23 May 1970, p. 8. Cf. 'Revolution is the Main Trend', AC, no. 66 (July 1974), pp. 21-8 and no. 67 (September 1974), pp. 22-30. 'Take class struggle as the key link' was a central slogan of the anti-Deng campaign in China. Cf. 'Class Struggle is the Key Link for Us', AC, no. 77 [mid-1976], pp. 47-58 and 'The Key Link is Always Class Struggle', AC, no. 80 (September 1976), pp. 87-90.

31 Former member A.

32 E. F. Hill, The Great Cause ..., p. 79; V, 22 January 1976, p. 6.

33 Van der Kroef, p. 111.

34 E. F. Hill: Revolution and the Australian State: A Socialist Analysis, p. 94; The Great Cause ..., p. 36.

indispensable if Australian society was to be fundamentally altered.

'The perspective for Australia is that all struggle must flow into armed struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of imperialist domination and for the establishment of an entirely new democracy', wrote Hill.³⁵ Thus when Aboriginals armed with rifles and spears occupied a remote mining airfield Vanguard was ecstatic.³⁶ The photograph of the armed blacks appeared time and again in Vanguard and other Maoist publications.

The depiction of orthodox trade unionism as 'a major prop of capitalism in Australia' remained a consistent theme of party propaganda.³⁷ Hill had first systematically tackled this question in 1965, and the struggle against 'tame cat' trade unionism had taken off in earnest during the cultural revolution.³⁸ When Ford workers in Melbourne rejected union strike settlement proposals in 1973 and attacked company buildings, Vanguard acclaimed their

35 Id., Australia's Revolution ..., p. 141. See also id., The Great Cause ..., pp. 127-8. Cf. Häggman, p. 9. The concept and term 'new democracy' were taken from Mao. (See Mao Tse-tung, 'On New Democracy', in SW, vol. 2, pp. 339-84.) According to one interviewee, when Hill wrote of armed struggle he 'was writing ... for overseas consumption'. (Founding CPA-ML CC member, 10 March 1983.)

36 V, 22 January 1976, p. 5.

37 Hill, loc. cit., p. 34. See also id., Looking Backward: Looking Forward - Revolutionary Socialist Politics Against Trade Union and Parliamentary Politics and Australia's Economic Crisis - The Way Out, pp. 58-9.

38 E.g.: 'Old Forms of Trade Unionism Must Be Thrown Of [sic]', AC, no. 35 (May 1969), pp. 38-9; Lew Hillier & Harry Bocquet, Which Course for Workers? Class Struggle or Class Collaboration?, June 1970. Cf. Häggman, p. 10. For a contrast with the orthodox Australian communist attitude to trade unionism see L. L. Sharkey, The Trade Unions, esp. pp. 11, 13-14, 35, 41, 86. See also D. N. Rawson, Unions and Unionists in Australia, pp. 108-9.

actions in a front-page article entitled 'A Wonderful Example'.³⁹

Blanket approval was given to any militant outburst. The tame, ritualistic nature of May Day marches was scathingly attacked in an article calling for 'a militant, defiant May Day ...' Vanguard praised GMH workers who staged a sit-in, Maoist students who drove reactionaries off campus and broke up conferences attended by agents of imperialism, and demonstrators who defied police orders to march only on the footpath.⁴⁰ It gloried in the smashing of windows belonging to U.S. companies and scornfully rejected allegations of Maoist thuggery. It endorsed Maoist-led industrial sabotage and physical attacks on union officials at a Chrysler automobile plant in South Australia.⁴¹

The outrage provoked by the sacking of the Whitlam government provided fertile soil for the planting of Maoism's militant seeds. Commenting on one demonstration against the Governor-General, a Vanguard editorial said:

The moans and howls about the violence of the demonstration against Governor Cur show the terrible fear of the ruling circles of people's violence ... We welcome the demonstration and the so-called violence ... Violent means must be used against violent reactionaries. The greater the people's violence the more likely it is to be successful in combating reactionary violence.⁴²

39 V, 21 June 1973, p. 1. See also the CPA-ML pamphlet Learn From the Ford Strike.

40 V: 10 May 1973, p. 4; 21 June 1973, p. 3; 13 September 1973, p. 4; 15 August 1974, p. 7; 27 February 1975, pp. 5-6.

41 V: 15 May 1975, p. 3; 10 July 1975, p. 4; 12 May 1977, p. 3; 30 June 1977, p. 3; 21 July 1977, pp. 1, 5; 4 August 1977, p. 12.

42 V, 17 June 1976, p. 1, emphasis in original.

For the CPA-ML these actions were undertaken and endorsed within the perspective of imminent revolution unflaggingly postulated by the party since its inception. According to Vanguard Australian capitalism was on the brink of collapse⁴³, a rather sweeping assertion which, however, looked temperate beside the paper's claim that Australia's salvation depended on the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist).⁴⁴

The CPA-ML had always been able to rely on the attraction of its furious activism to 'those who wanted to DO things'.⁴⁵ Members recruited during the mid-1970s cite the party's uncompromising militancy and its concentration on action as the Maoist attributes which they found most appealing.

They were drawn by its total rejection of capitalism and its emphasis on the destruction of the system, root and branch. Despite the re-orientation discussed in chapter two, the CPA-ML still offered a heady dose of revolution very alluring to red-hot radicals impatient with half-measures and sterile, ineffectual theorising. Moreover, its programme for independence suggested that the party had made a down to earth and systematic Marxist analysis of the obstacles to the Australian revolution. The Maoists, in short, appeared 'fair dinkum'.⁴⁶ For its part, the CPA-ML declared its ranks open to

43 E.g. V: 29 August 1974, pp. 1, 8; 17 June 1976, p. 1.

44 V, 9 October 1976, p. 1.

45 Taft, p. 9, emphasis in original.

46 Interviews with: current members B (22 August 1982) and A (10 December 1982, 3 April 1983); former members B, A, D, F; Peter Vodicka, (taped interview, Melbourne, 18 February 1982). Cf. interview with a former Swedish Maoist in Häggan, p. 13.

'all those who earnestly accept revolution'.⁴⁷

During this period, according to York, the party also attracted a pathologically militant group which he describes as 'Maoists who want to be Maoists':

They were imitators, a strata which had missed what I would call the really intense period, the period of real politics, and who were attracted to the established Maoist groups by reputation. It would have been o.k. had they been involved at a time when the political climate enabled Maoists to exist with some relevance ... but in the post-1972 period ... the Maoist rock-throwers were people who wished they had been around earlier, who had missed out for various reasons and who had become weird caricatures.⁴⁸

The new recruits entered the fray with the fervour characteristic of all novices. Vanguard both spurred and vindicated their militancy.

Although Melbourne remained the hub of Maoist activity and influence the CPA-ML was no longer confined to Victoria. By 1976 its newspaper had grown from a four-page fortnightly into an eight-page weekly and it supported a nation-wide network of seven bookshops.

Student Maoists had considerable sway at the Universities of La Trobe (Melbourne), Flinders (Adelaide) and New South Wales. The prodigious activism of its youth members secured for the party an influence far greater than its numbers (probably about 600-800) would suggest, while the unquestioned prerogatives of the leadership within the party organisation and the didactic tone of Vanguard ensured that party members thought, spoke and acted in unison. Moreover, the party's rigorous recruiting standards meant that for every CPA-ML member there were at least two strong and usually active sympathisers outside its ranks.

47 V, 13 November 1975, p. 1.

48 York interview, 3 February 1983, York's emphasis.

The CPA-ML also retained a significant power base in the trade union movement, the mainstays of which were the federal Builders Labourers Federation and the Melbourne branch of the Waterside Workers Federation. Further, Maoists exercised an important, sometimes decisive, influence among car workers, teachers, maritime workers and public transport employees and had a visible presence among Telecom workers, metal workers and the ACT Trades and Labour Council. Control of Melbourne's community radio station 3 CR provided another important power base.

The CPA-ML's presence, to varying degrees, carried weight in most of the campaigns undertaken and supported by the Australian left.⁴⁹ As long as the radicals remained ascendant in China, Australian Maoism continued to bear the militant, zealous, millenarian imprimatur of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

49 This sketch of the extent of the CPA-ML's influence has been assembled from a reading of numerous Maoist, non-Maoist and anti-Maoist publications, including a host of leaflets, rank-and-file bulletins and internal documents in the writer's possession. Among the few secondary sources in any way worthwhile are: Nation Review, 9-15 May 1975, pp. 771, 774; Angus McIntyre, 'Australia', Yearbook on International Communist Affairs, (1975), pp. 277-82; Direct Action, 30 September 1976, p. 6; Advertiser (Adelaide): 10 September 1976, p. 1; 20 September 1976, p. 5; News Weekly: 16 June 1976, p. 7; 23 June 1976, p. 6; 30 June 1976, p. 4; 1 September 1976, p. 4; 29 September 1976, p. 7; 20 October 1976, pp. 4, 6; Keith Richmond, 'Minor Parties in Australia', in Graeme Star, Keith Richmond & Graham Maddox, Political Parties in Australia, pp. 365-6.

CHAPTER FIVE

'ONE'S NATURAL ASSUMPTION': THE SPLIT IN AUSTRALIAN MAOISM

Mao Zedong died on 9 September 1976. The Chinese press kept warning about the danger of capitalist restoration.¹ On 6 October Jiang Qing (Mao's widow), Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan - the 'gang of four' - were arrested. With China's most prominent and powerful radicals removed, Hua Guofeng was appointed Chairman of the CPC.

The CPA-ML had repeatedly backed the radicals.² Consistency required that their incarceration be condemned. Indeed, it initially appeared that the first dissonant note in the party's relations with the CPC was about to sound.

Pamphlets by Yao and Zhang, the gang of four's theoreticians, were shifted to positions of greater prominence in the party's Melbourne bookshop.³ Vanguard reprinted a pro-radical article by Ted Hill.⁴ While CPA-ML members waited for an official statement from their party, Hill convinced the leadership - most of which wanted to issue a statement supporting the gang of four - to wait until he had visited China.⁵

1 E.g. PR, 3 September 1976, pp. 5-7.

2 See, for example: V, 19 February 1970, p. 4; Hill, 'Speech ... to Melbourne Memorial ...', pp. 22, 29.

3 Current member B, 13 March 1983.

4 E. F. Hill, 'Chinese People Struggle to Consolidate Proletarian Dictatorship', V, 28 October 1976, pp. 3, 8. First published in V, 24 June 1976, p. 3.

5 Document by E. F. Hill circulated within the party leadership and read by the writer and current member B. (Interview, loc. cit.)

Hill did not arrive in China until December 1976. By that time, the CPA-ML was already committed to support of the new Chinese leadership. This commitment was contained in a Vanguard editorial published on 4 November and written by Hill on 27 October in London, en route to Albania, after he had read the official Chinese denunciation of the gang of four.⁶

The decision to perform this precipitate volte face was thus taken by Hill alone, oceans away from the rest of the party leadership and on the strength of a demonstrably self-serving official Chinese article. Given the party's history, the prospect of an open rift with China would have appeared catastrophic, and this partly explains Hill's eagerness to clutch at the arguments advanced by the Chinese press.

At a banquet in his honour in China, Hill reiterated his condemnation of the 'Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao anti-Party group' and his endorsement of Hua Guofeng, whom he described as a leader 'of great Marxist-Leninist stature ...'⁷

When Hill returned to Australia, therefore, the party's new position was a fait accompli. 'We never had a real opportunity of debating', says O'Shea, then a party vice-chairman. 'It was the Chinese party decision and we were expected to accept it.'⁸ Welded to Hill's leadership in the crucible of the Sino-Soviet split,

6 E. F. Hill: V, 4 November 1976, p. 1; Class Struggle Within the Communist Parties ..., pp. 1-2. Also, People's Daily, Red Flag and Liberation Army Daily editorial departments, 'Great Historic Victory', 25 October 1976, in Great Historic Victory, pp. 8-16.

7 PR, 10 December 1976, p. 7.

8 O'Shea interview.

the party leaders acquiesced, some more readily than others.⁹

Eleven years earlier Ted Hill had written: 'The days for blind acceptance or blind loyalty are over. Things must be thought about independently.'¹⁰ This statement provides a useful contrast with Hill's assertion, in a pamphlet justifying his acceptance of the new Chinese leadership, that 'one's natural assumption ought to be that the Chinese Party is correct ...'¹¹ The monolithic conception of 'the Chinese Party' disclosed by this statement betrays an astounding ignorance of Mao's writings on the presence of the bourgeoisie 'right inside the Communist Party'.

Most party members, with varying degrees of conviction, rallied around Hill and the party leadership. But for others the gang of four events seeded the clouds of long-standing dissatisfaction.

The leading dissident was Albert Langer. Critically-minded and steeped in Mao's theory of continuous revolution, Langer saw in Chinese developments the actualisation of Mao's warnings that capitalist restoration was a real possibility:

As an orthodox Maoist I always took what Mao and the Maoists were saying very seriously and therefore was not in the least surprised when it turned out to be perfectly true. My identification was with the revolutionaries in China, the 'Gang of 4' etc. and not with whatever happened to be written in Peking Review.¹²

9 See decisions of the enlarged meeting of the CPA-ML Political Committee, V, 24 February 1977, p. 1.

10 V, vol. 2, no. 39 (August 1965), p. 3.

11 Hill, Class Struggle Within the Communist Parties ..., p. 10.

12 Albert Langer, 'Why the Cultural Revolution was Defeated', in AAISAG (eds), China in Transition ..., p. 90.

The gang of four question acted as a catalyst. It united in opposition to Hill's leadership those Maoists who for several years had been disenchanted with various facets of their party, viz: its authoritarian structure; its inane preoccupation with Soviet imperialism; the 'bourgeois nationalism' of its independence policy; its dogmatic and uninspiring propaganda; its automatic, unanalytical calls for militancy and its parroting of Chinese foreign policy. The ranks of the oppositionists were further swelled by the brazen cynicism which underlay the proclamations of loyalty to the new Chinese leadership and the viciousness with which the party responded to those who questioned the new line.¹³

'Intra-communist conflict', Rex Mortimer once wrote, 'is invariably bitter and sordid'.¹⁴ The dissidents were reviled as 'Trotskyists and other bourgeois elements' and 'a handful of enemies ... windbags and humbugs ...'.¹⁵ Slandered as Soviet agents and described as 'scum' in inner-party circulars, the apostates were

13 Fifteen anonymous CPA-ML members (including past and present CC members), 'Letter to all Members, Central Committee/Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)', [Melbourne], cyclostyled, 29 May 1977, in writer's possession. Also interviews with: current member B (loc. cit.); former members C & G; a former CPA-ML CC member (taped interview, Melbourne, 18 April 1983); York (3 February 1983). See also Appendix IV.

14 Mortimer, p. 123.

15 V, 24 February 1977, p. 7; [E. F. Hill], 'History Has No Mercy for Those Who Desert to the Enemies of the People', V, 22 September 1977, p. 3.

isolated and removed from the CPA-ML.¹⁶

Following a statement by Hill that 'all the riff-raff will be exposed and driven out of the revolutionary movement',¹⁷ Langer was publicly assaulted by several of Hill's supporters, an event described by Vanguard as 'this relatively trivial incident ...',¹⁸

Tellingly, the first schism within the CPA-ML was triggered by events Chinese. Although Hill lost about a hundred members - including the majority of the younger people on the Central Committee - he retained the loyalty of most Australian Maoists.

This loyalty, however, leaned heavily on Hill's and the new Chinese leadership's assertions of the continuity of the policies of Mao Zedong in China. The subsequent course of Chinese developments rendered such assertions increasingly untenable, and lent all the more credibility to Langer's stinging polemics.

The association between Ted Hill and Albert Langer is a microcosm of the elements which made Maoism a force on the Australian left. Theirs was an unlikely marriage from the beginning, yet they had much in common. Both excelled in their academic careers; both were drawn to China by its tenacious and inspiring fidelity to revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. Each represented the most outstanding example of his type: Hill, the hard-line Comintern Stalinist par excellence,

16 Most interviewees active in the party during this time supported Hill and opposed Langer. However, when interviewed, all subjects agreed on the sort of treatment meted out to the dissidents. See also 'Zugzwang', p. 10. Pertinent documents in the writer's possession include: an untitled letter of protest on his suspension from party membership by a former CPA-ML CC member, [Melbourne], 4 December 1977; an untitled speech by the writer to a meeting of CPA-ML members and close associates, [Melbourne, mid-1977].

17 E. F. Hill, in V, 17 November 1977, p. 3.

18 V, 1 December 1977, p. 1.

the archetypal 1930s communist; Langer, the rebellious campus Maoist of the 1960s, eyes set defiantly on the future.

Yet they were destined to be Australian Maoism's odd couple. Ships in the political night, they parted ways when the context which had made their association possible passed out of existence. Central to that context was China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

CONCLUSION

Thirty years before the CPA-ML was formed, two traditions had become rigidly entrenched among Australian communists: one was the tradition of obedience to a leading foreign party; the other was the rigorously-disciplined compliance of the party membership with its leaders' decisions.

These traditions constituted the twin pillars of the CPA-ML's reflexive and fawning subservience towards the Communist Party of China. They were inculcated into those who swelled the party's ranks from the late 1960s, most of whom were young in years, political experience, or both.

The CPA-ML's very emergence is attributable to a foreign development, the Sino-Soviet split. The China link was umbilical, and in many ways the CPA-ML's raison d'etre. Reflecting on the party's history, a former member says: '... it was a branch of the Chinese party ... and it saw itself in those terms. No matter what else it was doing it had never, ever broken away from that'.¹

In trimming its sails to the Chinese wind, the CPA-ML produced a grotesque parody of Maoism. Mao's slogans, tactics and policies were wrenched from their Chinese context and grafted onto Australia. This betrayed an inability to assimilate the creative flexibility with which Mao approached his own society, and it produced some particularly bizarre Australian political hybrids. The preoccupation with China, and the mechanical transplantation of Chinese foreign and domestic policies to Australia, was eloquent of the dogmatic

¹ Former member D.

rigidity and political dependence which hamstrung the Communist Party of Australia before the Sino-Soviet split.

There is no evidence that the CPC required the CPA-ML to so crudely and slavishly adopt and eulogise the former's policies. On the contrary. Even before the Sino-Soviet split, CPA cadres had found Chinese admonitions to study the concrete situation in Australia a refreshing contrast to the inelastic orthodoxy of the Soviet party.²

Rather, the CPA-ML appears to have been desirous of more guidance than the Chinese were disposed to provide. Hill illustrates the point:

I recall once making a suggestion to Chairman Mao about the Chinese Communists writing something on parties like the Labor Party. He was quite courteous about it, but he said China never had a Party like that; it is Australian Communists who should write about it.³

If anything, as suggested in chapter three, Chinese tutelage militated against the CPA-ML's adoption of caricatures of CPC policies.

In 1980 Beijing Review quoted a Vanguard article for the first time in two years. Significantly, the article was an editorial exhortation to Australian Marxist-Leninists to concentrate on Australia and not be obsessed with Chinese developments. One party member interpreted this 'as a polite non-interfering attempt to drop a hint ...'⁴

2 Sandy, p. 90; McIntyre, 'The Training ...', pp. 415-16.

3 E. F. Hill, in V, 20 May 1982, p. 3.

4 'Our Revolutionary Arena is Australia', V, 17 July 1980, p. 1, reprinted in Beijing Review, 25 August 1980, p. 12; Barry York, letter to Ted Hill, 13 December 1980, in writer's possession, p. 2.

The act of disavowing the policies of the CPSU, to which they had been loyal for so long, suggests a capacity for independent action among the CPA-ML leadership. The leftier-than-thou positions adopted by the central figures in the party's foundation were not a product, but rather the basis, of their attraction to the Chinese side in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Yet after 1977, as the CPC systematically repudiated the cultural revolution and the Maoist axioms which had inspired it, the CPA-ML obligingly fell into line. A more thorough reversal would be difficult to imagine. 'We are more a Party of automatons', observed York in a letter to the party chairman, 'responding immediately to every change in Chinese policy ...' Party members fell away in droves.⁵

We need to account for the actions of those within the CPA-ML who were prepared to jettison the principles which their party had unswervingly upheld. Obviously a multiplicity of interwoven factors is involved.

One explanation is particularly suggestive. A small and isolated party, steeped in the logic of subservience, has a compelling need for an overseas patron to confer the illusion of substance on it. When those who formed the CPA-ML broke with the CPSU they rushed headlong into the comforting embrace of another patron. Thus they never overcame their reliance on some form of alien association to provide them with kudos and security.

The period of the Sino-Soviet split and the cultural revolution was a time of political and diplomatic isolation for the CPC. The

5 York, letter, 22 February 1981, p. 7. For an account of the CPA-ML's post-1977 fortunes see Herouvim, 'Politics of the Revolving Door ...'

CPA-ML was one of the few western parties to support China. Until 1971 'China's only political contact with Australia was a warm relationship with the Communist Party led by E. F. Hill ...'⁶ The two parties shared a self-righteous sense of mission which was reinforced by their isolation and fueled by the political and social turbulence of the late 1960s. These factors served to obscure the essential unnaturalness of a close relationship between a great power like China, and a relatively inconsequential sect like the CPA-ML.

As China discarded the ultra-left attributes of the 1960s it outgrew the friendships which accompanied that period. China's diplomatic re-emergence was attended by a downgrading of relations with Marxist-Leninist parties and third world liberation movements.

Although the ramifications of China's changing priorities for Australia's Maoists were clear, the CPA-ML was stricken with the blindness of those who, as the proverb has it, will not see.

A prominent historian of Australian Communism, Alastair Davidson could not have been more mistaken when he speculated in 1973 that 'we can expect the CPA(M-L) to meet some success as Australian relations with China become closer ...'⁷ In fact, the period of increasingly friendly Sino-Australian relations throughout the 1970s coincided with the party's growing irrelevance to both the CPC and Australian politics. While the CPA-ML had rendered a number of quasi-diplomatic and other services to the PRC, as shown in chapter one, it was never a diplomatic surrogate of any stature in China's foreign policy considerations.

6 Stephen FitzGerald, p. 673.

7 Davidson, 'Australia', p. 412.

As a force on the Australian left the CPA-ML is now defunct. Although the most palpable evidence of its decline emerged after the downfall of the gang of four, its political decomposition should **really be dated from the early 1970s. It was then that the conjuncture** presented by the ebbing of the ultra-left tide most pressingly demanded a re-evaluation by Australian Maoists of where they were heading. The party's failure to undertake such a re-evaluation is not surprising. It is doubtful if the question 'where are we heading?' was asked in the first place.