A member of the National Executive of the Communist Party of Australia examines some of the basic issues of Australian foreign policy.

THE REALITIES of Australian foreign policy are expressed not in fatuous statements of intent by Prime Minister Gorton about Australian leadership in Asia, but in the actual situation in which Australia finds itself as a result of 19 years of Liberal Party government.

Australia's subordinate and satellite position in the United States' aggressive and provocative policy in Asia, has, of course, been accepted by successive conservative governments, a United States presence in Asia being envisaged by them as wholly desirable irrespective of the tragic suffering and devastation inflicted on the Asian peoples, and especially the people of Vietnam.

A majority of the Australian people has been won to support this policy by the repeated assertion that Australia, in this way, is being protected from "aggression from the north", "communist aggression", "a row of falling dominoes" and the like. The rising likelihood of US change of tactics following the Vietnam debacle, has been underlined by the statements of Mr. Laird that the US is prepared to accept communists in the government of Vietnam.

The new Australian slogan in the changing situation is "Leadership in Asia." However, the projected new course, though it may tickle the palate of Australian commercial and financial interests, needs to be seen in perspective against the hard economic and political facts. It is true that Australian monopoly interests are already operating an expansionist "forward", economic policy in Asia and the Pacific. Existing assets (tin and rubber in Malaya, Carpenters, Burn Philip etc. in the Pacific islands) are being supplemented by fresh penetrations of Australian capital. Australian Consolidated Industries is developing holdings in Singapore and Malaysia with projected further penetration into New Guinea; whilst Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia is expanding into the Solomon Islands.

The Prime Minister, J. G. Gorton, addressing the seminar entitled "Australia 1980", held in Sydney in February 1969, and including 350 representatives of Australia's leading financial and
industrial institutions, gave a clarion call for further expansion in Asia. There is no doubt of the direction of the thinking of Australian monopoly and of the government which speaks for it.

These concepts are an expression of the national paranoiac and profit-seeking drives of Australian imperialism. They fail, however, to take account of other factors; the growing domination and takeover of the Australian economy itself by the mammoth US combines (12-15 per cent of all manufacturing, concentrated in the key areas, metals, oil, etc.) and also the rapidly expanding economic and political power of Japan in S. E. Asia and Australia.

The growing erosion of Australian economic independence has evoked some demagogic utterances from Prime Minister Gorton and calls for greater Australian equity in foreign investment; but in practice Australia, unlike Canada, India and other recipients of foreign investment capital, has established neither policy nor public authority to regulate or control it.

The Vernon Report which recommended such controls was rejected out of hand by the Menzies Government. As a result “overseas investment in Australian companies between 1950 and 1967 exceeded $5,000 million, and our indebtedness has increased by $4,600 million. This does not take account of the value of real estate sold to overseas investors, nor of the increase in the value of assets owned by overseas companies” (New Directions In Australian Foreign Policy Ed. Max Teichmann — Australian Pelican edition p. 206).

As to the economic effectiveness of unrestricted foreign investment in promoting economic growth the position in Australia could well be contrasted with that of Japan, where foreign investment is largely in the form of fixed term loans, without the surrender of national assets. In the respective countries the growth in national production per head per annum for the period 1955-65 was: Australia 1.8 per cent; Japan 8.1 per cent.

The Australian economy is very small compared with that of Japan, now the third industrial power in the world after the USA, and the USSR, with a population of 100 million people, a gross national product six times as great as Australia’s and growing at a much faster rate.

Recent statements by the US State Department calling for regional pacts (Japan, India, Australia) have made it clear that the direction of the “new” United States thinking about Asia, is that Japan should be the fulcrum of its anti-China policies and should develop its markets and spheres of influence in S. E. Asia and Australia.
Development of Aspac and other machinery of economic coordination, together with the penetration of the Australian economy by Japanese interests are the first fruits of this trend.

The pending withdrawal of Britain from S. E. Asia has intensified the process; Lee Kuan Yew having bluntly stated the intention of his government to transform Singapore into a "Japanese factory" as a substitute for the special economic advantages derived from Singapore's position as a British base.

Even a role for Australia of junior-partner to Japanese imperialism is evidently not regarded seriously in Japan, where the US proposed regional pact concept met with a cool reception. Japan is well enough satisfied with the present arrangement by which Japanese industry is fed by Australian metals and other raw materials. More than 20 per cent of all Australian exports now go to Japan.

Australia's satellite status further complicates its position in another direction. The incredible F111 agreement with the USA and the integration of Australian with US armaments resulting in heavy foreign procurement payments and consequent balance of payment difficulties have already created serious problems for the Australian economy; and angry and anguished demands (fruitless in the main) for greater access to the US market to correct the economic imbalance. At the same time the economic consequences of the American Alliance have been to restrict the expansion of mutual trade between Australia and the greatest potential market in the world — the People's Republic of China.

"Forward Defence"

Against this background the policy of "forward defence", has involved Australia in the futile and mischievous intervention in Vietnam, and to an undertaking to station a token-force in Malaysia-Singapore after British withdrawal in 1971. This is not merely an absurd pretension to the exercise of a non-existent power — a power too onerous for Britain to maintain: it is an irresponsible and dangerous piece of diplomatic showmanship, intended to placate the Malaysian government and satisfy US demands for action by its allies in conformity with the general lines of US policy: the maintenance of the status quo in Asia, which of course involve "counter insurgency" actions, the containment of China, and the promotion of the economic interests of the "western world". In fact, Australia's military presence in S. E. Asia despite disclaimers by the government can have meaning only if Australian forces are intended for use in "counter insurgency" action, to repress movements against the corrupt, reactionary, often semi-feudal regimes
of military dictatorships that have the support of the US government in S. E. Asia.

However, in addition to the basic question of the great democratic national liberation movement which is sweeping across Asia like a flood, there are special problems in SE Asia in which Australia becomes inevitably involved by its military presence in that area. There is the relationship of Indonesia to Malaysia that has already led to military conflict between the two nations; the sharp tension between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah; the internal economic and political problems in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. In Malaysia the communal problem of Malays (49% of the population) Chinese (37%) and Indians (11%) is endemic. The privileged political position of the Malays and the Chinese dissatisfaction and resentment, must, inescapably lead to a sharpening of the conflict and to internal dissension and civil strife. [This was written before the recent upheaval—Ed.]

The thinking of the Australian Government expressed by the new External Affairs Minister Freeth in his first public statement, that Australia's was a “police” role in S. E. Asia, is both absurd and criminally dangerous. That Australia, a minor, ethnically European nation in an Asian environment with extremely limited military resources, should, in the name of “defence”, place itself in such a position reveals the bankruptcy of the government in its approach to a valid foreign policy that serves Australia's national interests.

**Paranoia and Xenophobia**

A visiting observer has described Australia's image abroad as that of a “fascist racist and militarist” community. Open and covert support for the racist policies of South Africa and Rhodesia by the Australian Government, the fact that Australia is the one “western” nation assisting in the atrocity against the Vietnamese people, the discriminatory “white Australia” migration policy and the record of Australians in their relations with Aborigines and New Guineans certainly lend color to such a description.

A racist, white-supremacist attitude towards Asia has been a deep rooted national prejudice over a great part of Australia's history. The deliberate use of the prejudice further to debauch and deprave the Australian consciousness has been part of the political stock-in-trade of all Liberal governments since 1949.

In the contemporary world a pre-condition of an aggressive foreign policy is the creation of an aggressive or at least permissive public opinion and the curbing of democracy. Hence the promotion of an atmosphere of an arrogant white supremacy or at best paternalism, blended with anxiety and fear — fear of communism,
fear of China, or even fear of undefined perils from Asia, amounting to a national phobia. It has been relatively easy in this atmosphere to mount an attack on democracy that both curbs resistance to government policy abroad and intensifies anti-Asian hysteria at home. Regulations and restrictions directed at these ends have been erected into a system: restrictions on and penalties against the trade unions through the penal powers; the use of the Crimes Act against dissenters; the conscription of Australian youth and imprisonment of those objecting to the bestiality of Vietnam; the use of telephone-tapping and of ASIO — the formal apparatus of a police state.

The success of the corruption of opinion is best measured in the widespread acceptance of the immoral concept of "fighting them there, rather than here", expressed most clearly in a speech by Menzies on April 1, 1955.

It would be a sorry day for the security of Australia if we were driven to defend ourselves on our own soil.

The arrogant, chauvinist assumption of the right of white Australians to determine what action they should take on the soil of Asian peoples, was made more explicit in a statement both on economic and political terms by Sir Garfield Barwick, then Minister for External Affairs: (Sydney Morning Herald, February 4, 1967):

While it is handsome to talk about Asia having its future determined by Asians, it must be remembered that we have an interest as well as other Western countries in this area.

These prescriptions for continuing intervention and war in Asia have nothing to do with Australian security. As Mr. Gordon Barton, founder of the Australian Reform Movement stated (S.M.H. Nov., 16 1966):

There is no Asian country, including China, which has or is likely to have in the next 20 years a logistic capacity capable of transporting and maintaining armies of the magnitude required to make a successful attack on Australia, assuming a defence structure within this country of comparable strength to that of say, Sweden or Switzerland.

The deception and corruption of Australian opinion is necessary to mask the true aims of Australian reactionary policy.

The Asian Revolution and Australian Policy

The policy of the Australian Government vis-a-vis Asia is based on support for the political assumptions that also determine United States policy; in a word on opposition to any serious change in the status quo.

Consequently it stands opposed to the burning issues of Asian politics; in particular, land reform in the context of freedom from foreign domination.
The feudal or semi-feudal structure of land tenure in most South-East Asian countries results in the economic and political domination of the numerically small landlord class, the grinding poverty of the peasant, the presence of millions of landless peasants who have no place in the economic structure. Talk of modernisation of the South-East Asian economies without the necessary first step of land reform is an exercise in self-deception and futility.

To support as the Australian Government does, the existing regimes in S.E. Asia is to support 16th century social systems. Economic aid from the developed countries, as is clear from the experience of the United States in Vietnam and Laos does not reach those in need, or promote economic progress. The greater part is diverted to swell the assets of those holding economic and political power. “Aid” in these circumstances becomes patronage and promotes corruption, parasitism and dependency without raising living standards or leading to any modernisation of the economy. In fact, it has a contrary effect, in strengthening the economic and political power of the ruling juntas and reducing the possibility of reforms that are centuries overdue.

In the words of one of America’s allies, Ohina Mosayoshi, chairman of the Policy Research Committee of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, in a warning to the USA on its Vietnam policy:

As a result of the China incident we gained an unpleasant understanding of the limits within which military action can be successful, when a foreign army allies itself with the elements opposed to land reform in the villages of a backward country. The French achieved a particularly keen understanding of this same point in Indo-China and Algeria. (From the paper by Gregory Clark at a Sydney Peace Conference Oct. 11-13, 1968, included in The Asian Revolution and Australia).

The Asian Revolution becomes a communist led revolution to the extent that other national forces fail to undertake the fundamental changes needed: in particular land reform and the securing of national independence.

When non-communist political trends pledged to basic reform combine with communists in a united movement a National Liberation Front arises representing the interests and ideologies of the overwhelming majority of the population1.

The National Liberation Fronts are what they say they are; political and national coalitions to win basic political and human rights for their people.

1 It is worthy of note that despite its enormous electoral advantages the Thieu-Ky Government gained the votes of only 17% of the adult population in South Vietnam; and to maintain itself even with half a million US troops in support, felt obliged immediately to imprison or sentence to death many of its leading electoral opponents.
The Australian Labor Party once held to this view. In 1951 before both the Liberal and Labor Parties became addicts of the American Alliance, the then leader, J. B. Chifley, stated:

I hope that statemanship in the years ahead will ensure that Australia shall not attempt to refuse or be a party to refusing to the peoples of Asia and the East the right of self-government. No doubt we shall be told that under such conditions these countries could be dominated by communist influences ... The point I wish to make is that it is quite foolish for people to go around the country expressing the belief that all the trouble that is taking place in Asia and the East is due to communism.

The real driving force behind the movement in the East today is the desire of Eastern peoples for self-determination and self-government.

A painful contrast to Chifley's realistic and progressive assessment is provided by Gough Whitlam's — "clear and hold' policy in Vietnam — a policy objectively of opposition to the self-determination of the Vietnamese people, a policy of collaboration with United States imperialism and the government of landlords and militarists in Saigon.

The corruption of the policy of the Labor Party flows basically from its acceptance of the subordinate role of Australia in the U.S. alliance, its support for Anzus and Seato, and its substitution for the relatively independent foreign policy of the Chifley-Evatt period of one approaching bi-partisanship with the Liberal Party.

There is no evidence in statements by Mr. Whitlam that he understands the significance of the movements ranging from the continuing struggle of the Hukbalahaps in the Philippines to the popular movement in Laos, Thailand, Burma — in fact in every S.E. Asian country.

Nor has there been from either the Liberal or Labor Parties any recognition of the role of Indonesia. The Holt Government gave the impression that it welcomed one of the most terrible pogroms in history — the extermination of from 500,000 to one million people by Indonesian reaction in 1965-66. The ascendency of an extreme right-wing militarist clique has been presented in defiance of the facts as ensuring greater security for Australia.

The future relations of Indonesia and Australia are too serious a matter to be determined by anti-communist prejudice or by ignorant opposition to the progressive forces of the Asian Revolution.

Foreign Policy and Australian Independence

Australia is both undergoing an economic takeover by United States and Japanese interests and also pursuing its traditional role as part of the predatory, aggressive interventionist imperialist world, which has earned for itself the hatred and distrust of the
Asian peoples. That this was neither necessary nor inevitable was shown by the Labor Government when H. V. Evatt was Minister for External Affairs. Much was done to disperse the atmosphere of fear and mistrust and lay the foundations of mutual confidence with S.E. Asia. Evatt's policy was one of championing the right of the Asian people to independence. Australia's sponsorship of Indonesia in the United Nations which provoked Menzies' hysterical outburst ("the ecstasy of suicide") gained respect for and a large measure of confidence in Australian goodwill in Asia. At the same time whilst remaining within the British-American system, Evatt adopted a distinctly independent Australian position on a number of issues even to the point of rejecting United States demands for a U.S. base on Manus Island.

Australian policy towards China is perhaps the most notable example of the sacrifice of Australian national interests to the political expediency of the American Alliance. In 1950-51 both the Labor and Liberal Parties had adopted the policy of recognition of China, and the Menzies Government had actually commissioned the search for an Embassy headquarters in Peking before policy was reversed under pressure from Washington.

The hard facts of economic life have compelled a de facto relationship with China but the absurdity of non-recognition and exclusion of China from the United Nations continues.

United States aggressive policy towards China, economic embargo, naval blockade and attempted encirclement through Korea and Vietnam, has been the basic factor in the continuing instability in China and Eastern Asia generally. The refusal to recognise China's place and its normal and legitimate right as a great nation to a position of influence in Asia and the world has been a massive provocation against China and against world peace.

Australia has added its quota to the provocation by the establishment of an Embassy in Taiwan whilst continuing, in its own despite, non recognition of the People's Republic of China, which is now fourth in the list of Australia's export-trade partners. Any rational policy based on Australia's real interests and on peace and stability in Asia demands a reversal of the current policy.

Continuation of present policy can result not only in further militarisation but to increasing influence of the nuclear-armament lobby which already includes the D.L.P., powerful forces in the Liberal Party and scientists such as Professor Titterton and the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Sir Phillip Baxter.

The United States base at North West Cape for the direction of nuclear missiles against the U.S.S.R.; and the Pine Gap installation
for a similar purpose against China and the highly secret Woomera spy installation have already made Australia a high priority target in the event of general war.

Nuclear armaments in addition to imposing a crushing burden on the economy would initiate a nuclear arms race in this area, without in any real sense adding to Australian security. The small nuclear armament that Australia could afford would have little if any “deterrent” value, and would gravely increase insecurity. The further erosion of Australian independence involved in the circumstances of the Woomera deal has even resulted in protests from the normally servile Australian press. Australia is moving rapidly into the position of a military satellite of the U.S.A. with all the risks involved in that situation, but with negligible voice or influence in policy.

For Co-operation and Peace

A foreign policy meeting the needs of Australia, based on co-operation and peaceful relations with Asia has to begin with a recognition that the Asian revolution is already changing and will continue to change the face of Asia, and that at least neutrality, and better still support, is in the long term interest of this country. The defeat of the United States in Vietnam is only the most recent example of the failure of a policy based on resistance to the great social and political transformation occurring in Asia. This has already been recognised by millions of people in the U.S.A. whose efforts have forced the Nixon Government to accept the fact of the U.S. defeat, and the failure of its policy.

The Australian Government, whose whole position was built upon continuing United States intervention in Asia, has demonstrated its bankruptcy by failing to give support to moves for peace in Vietnam, and even appearing to the best of its ability to oppose them.

The Communist Party of Australia, which has consistently supported the Asian Revolution and condemned the American alliance has also recognised the bond between Australia and the forces in the U.S.A. opposed to imperialist aggression by their country.

In a declaration at the 1967 Congress, the C.P.A. declared: Australian insistence on respect for the principles of non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other peoples and the preservation of peace can only assist the strong emerging democratic forces in the USA who support these concepts and oppose Washington's present policies. Given a radical change in US policies, good relations with the great and creative American people can benefit the Australian people.

The abandonment of an imperialist, interventionist role requires the scrapping of the aggressive Anzus and Seato treaties,
which, in any event are meaningless for Australian security. It requires a different relationship from the semi-satellite and infantile dependency upon “great and powerful friends”; and an assertion of a position based on national maturity and self-respect. Such a change presupposes the growth of a public opinion which rejects the anti-Asian phobias and racist arrogance of the past. It necessitates an acceptance of Australia’s place in the Asian world: and not merely as a projection of European imperialist power in that area.

The political struggle to bring about the necessary transformation of opinion is the cardinal issue of Australian life today to which all questions are secondary. This is recognised by the radical right with their emphasis on a militarist-fascist state, suppression of internal opposition and a policy of nuclear armaments and anti-communist, anti-national liberation intervention abroad.

However, with effective leadership by the combined forces of the Left the already considerable movement for a basic change of policy within the unions, churches, amongst intellectuals and students, and within the A.L.P. itself, could lead to rapid developments. It was foreign policy as much as domestic issues that took President Johnson within four years from the position of winning an all-time record majority for the Presidency to one where he was unable to attend his own Party’s presidential convention. Of no little importance in this respect is the growth of opposition and resistance to the National Service Act; in essence a criticism and rejection of the government’s foreign policy.

There is also a growing opposition to the blatant racism of the white Australia policy; and serious disquiet at the slow and niggardly promotion of self-government, and the postponement to the distant future of independence for New Guinea. The beginnings of a racial and national independence struggle on Australia’s very doorstep could well be the catalyst of policies incubated in white chauvinism and racial superiority. A policy of co-operation, really substantial economic aid without political strings and the rapid development of political independence for New Guinea could be the starting point for a new relationship with Asia.

Given the present relationship of political forces and the state of public opinion, the achievement of such a policy is no small task. But it is the principal political task in Australia today and one which the Left must tackle with intelligence, resolution and perseverance.

2 At United States’ insistence the mutual guarantee against “aggression” in the Seato treaty was limited to “communist aggression”. Hence it provides no guarantees against, for example, action by Japan or Indonesia.