DISCUSSION:

DEMOCRACY — ESSENCE OF SOCIALISM

THE ARTICLE by Franz Marek — "The Structure of the Stalin Mythos" appearing in the June-July issue of the ALR cannot be ignored by any Marxist. Its great value lies in the fact, that it provokes thought and re-appraisal of the main issue which divides Marxists today, internationally and within many countries including our own. Nor does it lose stature because of the fact that the writer includes himself in the army of Marxists who for some decades, accepted distortions for facts.

The need to defend the new Socialist Republic from attack, the rise of fascism, the titanic sacrifices and combat during the second World War, the revolutionary upsurge following it, all combined to divert the development of socialist theory and practice to the defence of one country, the USSR. Rigid censorship and the resulting lack of information strengthened the acceptance of the "Mythos". The exposure of the Stalin Terror from within the Soviet Union, broke the spell and from then on Stalin's interpretations of Marxism-Leninism have been questioned and challenged.

More questions, analysis, research and criticism will continue until Marxists everywhere return to the essence of socialist ideology — an ever-expanding democracy — the development of the individual, and respect for him as a member of society.

It is not sufficient today that these questions and criticisms be answered by some dogmatic statement about "bourgeois influence" or "the penetration of imperialist saboteurs", and in many cases the concocted "enemy of the people". Why is it that today, almost 52 years since the October Revolution, a rigid censorship (a fact which I consider to be well established) prevents the Soviet people from reading the opinions even of Marxists from other countries? Has this article of Franz Marek been published there?

Have I (for 56 years an industrial worker, with a brief interruption of 3 years unemployment, and now in receipt of our generous old age pension) now become an agent of the capitalists because I have read it? In seeking the answer to Soviet censorship I can only conclude that a small group of decision makers fear their own people and place what they consider to be the interests of the State above socialist principles.

We recall that Lenin described proletarian dictatorship as a thousand times more democratic than bourgeois dictatorship. Why? Because he was primarily concerned with developing democracy and because he had to negate suspicion and revolt against the very word "dictatorship".

Following the October Revolution Russian Marxists were faced with the colossal task of feeding a starving, illiterate people, through periods of counter-revolution and war, and increasing production became the primary and essential task. But today in capitalist Australia few people would deny that we have solved the technical problem of production sufficient to
provide every citizen with a comfortable life.

The problem of equitable distribution remains, and this is closely linked with rising demands for democratic control, participation in management expressed in worker strike action, student demonstrations of a great variety, acts of defiance against bureaucratic authority, in the slogans for Worker Power, Student Power, Black Power. Surely this question of democracy is the starting point along the road to socialism — and the goal.

Neil Gow.

Stalin's Heirs

"There is intense suspicion and scepticism of the Soviet Union" — a key judgment in a comprehensive survey of students, Negroes, young radicals, the New Left in Communist Party USA's Political Affairs, March-April, 1969.

The central problem for all communists, the first principle and slogan, is international communist unity. International unity will remain an empty dream until the present CPSU leadership can win that great (though not well-based) confidence, the primary certitude communists and other progressives once reposed in the Stalin government.

Where is the confidence in Australia among the youth, academics, humanists? Among the million Aussie workers in the recent strikes and demonstrations? The overwhelming majority in the splendid Left Action Conference expressed, in effect, actual mistrust. Disappointed with Soviet leaders, vast numbers of activists have turned to the false gods of Mao, Trotsky, Debray, Marcuse.

Internationalism demands fundamental changes in several spheres of Soviet home and foreign policy, as follows:

Limited Sovereignty: Traditionally the theory and practice of imperialism, domination of big powers over the smaller; the latter acknowledge the authority of the former to determine policy on basic issues. Australia is becoming a good (or bad) example. Through economic penetration, bases, etc., our country is declining towards semi-colonial status, a "client state".

John Foster Dulles, denied the right of any non-socialist country to remain neutral, e.g. Nehru's neutralism was "immoral". Related to this question, but in a splendidly different way, the USSR Constitution (Article 17) grants the constituent Soviet Republics the right "freely to secede", i.e. to become independent of USSR.

Limited sovereignty doesn't belong to socialism; the concept is repugnant. The term is a misnomer, an undialectical contradiction; compare with "good fascism", "revolutionary reformism", "cacophonous melody".

Elitism: Refers to intellectuals who now subscribe in various ways to the earlier notion of "managerial revolution". CPSU's leaders become today's most prominent elite; they are anarchist-type "heroes" who lead the "herd". Their chief error is lack of trust in the creative power of fullest socialist democracy, and therefore the harsh censorship, paternalism and repression. Soviet citizens are tender-minded children who must be protected. This is dangerous nonsense.

The Soviet people have fought, within living memory, three great revolutions. If they are ignorant and gullible the fault is entirely that of Stalin and his successors who have blotted out Lenin's vision of enlightened socialist society "where every kitchen maid learns to run the government."

We laugh at Mao's miracle-working thoughts, but in certain aspects of foreign affairs and some ideological
problems Soviet citizens are just as misinformed as the Chinese. In this regard Brezhnev is a "hero" like Mao; Soviet and Chinese people know only what they are permitted to know.

Misinformed! Ask the Soviet troops what kind of welcome they were told to expect when entering Prague and the "welcome" they did receive from the hostile populace.

Misinformed! Take religion today. Even RC reactionaries, the traditionalists, acknowledge the mounting drift away from religious belief, not just because of the Pill or celibacy but fundamentally due to the advancing power of philosophical materialism plus social criticism and actual rebellion against the old order (see, e.g. editorial SMH, 8/4/69).

But the latest Soviet text, Fundamentals of Dialectical Materialism p8, proceeds serenely: "Clericalism is gaining influence steadily as Imperialism's political and ideological weapon" (!).

Human Face: The Czechs didn't for a moment deny the prodigious social advances in most of everyday Soviet life—guaranteed employment, culture, sport, dedication to peace, aid for Vietnam, etc. — humanism and democracy manifested in a thousand ways. Nothing like it in capitalism; what can be more human than expropriation of the capitalists? The reference was only to Stalinism, absence of the human face "at the top".

The 20th CPSU (1956) Congress made its shattering impact. How could such evils and crimes exist in the Party of Lenin? But in time the revelations came to be accepted, in increasing degree and in non-communist circles too, as an honest effort to undo the horrific past. Khruschev later (1958) claimed that there wasn't a single Soviet citizen in prison for political beliefs. But gloom is again descending.

The five Soviet writers best known in the West—Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn and, now, even the "hard-liner" Sholokhov — are under ban or interdict of some kind.

The pattern of imperialist propaganda against marxism has decidedly changed in the past decade. From endlessly "refuting" Marx's Capital and Lenin's Imperialism the emphasis has shifted largely to ethics, meaning marxism is "naturally" anti-democratic and repressive.

The pet argument is that in his early writings (the 1844 Manuscripts) Marx projected a wonderful future for man, the winning of his true human essence, and so on; but he denied these in later theoretical and programmatic works...

The point: It is hard to counter these charges when imperialist publicists are so often provided with reports of inhuman Soviet gaol conditions, or a Brezhnev policeman laying down the law to Czech workers (see quotation from Rude Pravo in The Australian, 18/6/69), or the latest abomination of sentencing dissenters to detention in lunatic asylums. It was "easy" for communists in the Stalin period — the charges were summarily rejected as false, inventions... That won't work any more.

CPA, CPSU Democracy compared: On the Czech events the Communist Party of Australia has provided for free open discussion; it has been an enlightening and exhilarating experience. With the CPSU, censorship and gaoling. We expect, we have the right to expect, 52 years after October, ten times greater democracy and freedom than in capitalism.

Democratic forms (majority rule, etc.) are essentially the same in all social formations, from the slave-owning aristocracy of antiquity to the present — it makes for maximum efficiency
to advance the economic and political interests of the particular class.

But historically there is one constant. To acquire knowledge there is no possible substitute for exchange of opinions, the free play of conflicting ideas, for criticism, and not a gracious acceptance of criticism, but providing, arranging and organising it. Here the CPSU leaders have failed. They won't listen to other voices, only to the echoes of their own.

“Our (Soviet) ideology is stagnant”—thus Academician Peter Kapitza, addressing the presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences (28/2/69. See ALR No. 4). Urging Soviet philosophers and others to enter directly into the ideological struggle in the West, in capitalism, he said:

“Our ideologists will lose the privilege they have in our country where the censor preserves them (!—LHG) with care from contrary views (!!—LHG). In the impending struggle this will not be so. There all will be judged by open criteria.”

The indictment is absolutely damning!

I. Harry Gould.

POLITICAL MYTH—OR MIRTH?

THE LEFT ACTION Conference called upon the Australian masses to discuss workers' control. Australian realities and objective conditions appear to have been glossed over with the spirit of romance, emotions most dangerous to all strata within the working class.

Adventurism leads to the serious mistake of underestimating the class enemy. This exploiter of the people will use all means he controls to smash organised challenge to his economic and political power.

Workers' control therefore can only be established by the fundamental law of the class struggle, by winning socialism. The modern day conditions of the Australian working class and its relationship to the class struggle have not changed in fundamental principle from the so-called old methods of previous days.

On the contrary, the ruling class, not by new methods or tactics, but using the old tried and tested successful means of the State, its resources and apparatus, have been able to control and tighten the grip on the Australian people. In such circumstances the class struggle has sharpened.

The standard of living on one hand appears higher and the people accept the direct participation in the dirty Vietnam War. However there has been no advance in the standard of living, the sharpness of the class struggle has increased the exploitation of the Australian people by state monopoly capitalism.

Standards of living and exploitation can only be measured in correct marxist principle by comparison of the value of labor and maximum profits. It is true that luxury items such as cars, refrigerators, television, etc. are available. It is also true housing and land is available, but at what price in regards to labor?

The working wife, the two job husband. The increased labor hours in relation to the purchase of commodities. The decline of Social Services and Security. Increasing taxation, inflation, the record national hire purchase debt of $93 per head of the population. These are Australian conditions. These are the objective conditions of an advanced capitalist economy.

An economy which is controlled by a ruthless class of exploiters, of national and foreign capitalists, who have the full support of a reactionary gov-
Workers' control is a romantic catch call slogan; it will appeal to many. To the majority who have worked in various movements, REALITIES are the principle for the correct methods to advance the conditions of the Australian people.

An adventure in workers' control could very well follow this example. The crew of a ship, preferably a passenger liner, have taken over the vessel and declared this ship is now going to be run solely for the workers' benefit. This would include all those associated with the running and maintaining of the vessel. There is not enough time or space to list all the organisations necessary to successfully run a ship.

However the profits from the venture are to pay wages, build flats, give social security which society does not. In other words a small pocket of socialist workers, dreaming of UTOPIA.

But back to our venture—cargo, fuel, stores, tugs, etc., etc., all just happen to appear. Oh, yes! there's the example of the Government Transport Workers, of not collecting fares. To keep up with them, our vessel S.S. WORKERS' CONTROL will conduct world cruises, and not collect fares.

Where is the State apparatus while all this is going on? The Government condones it, the armed forces stand by, the police disappear, the ruling class do not even apply to their court, so no more penalties. Is there any need to go further?

Workers' control, in my opinion, is seriously being confused with a very old tactic of staying below in a mine or remaining in a factory during a strike. The French workers used this tactic in their recent struggles. The lesson from this experience is that many other factors must be established before there can be a political takeover of the establishment.

For principle in accordance with the marxist-leninist thesis, the working class can establish workers' control by eradicating the exploiters and their supporters, then establishing a socialist state. This can only be achieved by the working class under the leadership of a marxist-leninist party, implementing correct policies. Building the party, developing an organisation to win the support of all strata of the class, for the final victory over capitalism.

This challenge is the property of the vanguard, that being the Communist Party. The responsibility is the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dangers and setbacks for the victory to a socialist Australia are the responsibility of the vanguard to meet.

Conclusions on experience which one must draw are neither new nor old, nor are there new phenomena in this era. Of course we have entered the technological revolution, which will have subsequent effects on the social, economic, political life of the people.

Adventurism is always a danger to the working class, and is erroneous in the light of marxist-leninist principles. The responsibility to the Australian working class is to build the Communist Party, challenge the society and prepare for the final victory. This is the challenge of our era and it cannot be answered by MYTH or MIRTH.

Tom Supple
Vice President Sydney Branch Waterside Workers Federation.

ONCE AGAIN ON CIVILIAN MILITARISTS
THE LETTER by "professorial fellow" T. B. Millar in ALR Aug.-Sept. 1969 criticising Dr. J. D. Playford's article
“Civilian Militarists” will not fool anyone who knows Millar’s views from public lectures and seminars, nor anyone at the Australian National University who has followed the activities of the “Strategic Studies Institute”.

Dr. Millar is an ex-Duntroon lecturer. That is his affair. Why attempt to cover it over? More important, Dr. Millar is a regular visitor to the Department of Defence. He has been seen there on a number of occasions taking notes from the very lips of high officials of that Department. Whether or not this information is “off the record” or “non-classified” is beside the point. The outlook and close liaison of Millar and defence department as shown in published work is justly described as “alliance parfait”.

If Millar says his group have “no interest” in “counter-insurgency warfare” as he claims, he is misleading your readers. In fact a series of seminars were held on this topic and guerilla warfare at the ANU with the active support of his group. Vietnam in particular was discussed, with papers by leading “threat experts”.

Millar claims that the opinions and publications of his Institute and its members are objective and academic. This is not so. His own work is always premised on the “threat” of China’s millions and of the Soviet navy’s “aggressive” presence in the Indian Ocean. His reaction to a recent scholarly paper on the Pine Gap base by an ANU academic bordered on the hysterical, with the usual claims of “left wing” bias, etc., etc. Meantime, in articles in the Canberra Times Millar attacks the Americans for “letting down” the Saigon regime, and always makes a point that special arrangements must be made for the personal protection of the war criminal, Ky.

The fact is that the setting up of the Strategic Studies Institute was strongly opposed by many ANU academics, notably by those who are members of Canberra’s Quaker community. No democratic Faculty or Board decision was made. The Institute of Strategic Studies was imposed from the top, after private negotiations with the Ford Foundation.

Amongst its publications, only the work of Arthur Burns on games theory as applied to international relations could, in my view, be classified as “objective”. That is not necessarily an end in itself. Clash of opinion and a non-objective case can also serve a useful purpose but Millar cannot hide in a thicket of “objectivity”.

The idea that any academic can freely use the library and publications facilities of the Strategic Studies Institute is most doubtful. Already articles submitted for publication are being heavily “edited” and delayed on the grounds of “left-wing political bias”.

Professor Boulding of the USA, visiting the ANU, suggested the setting up of an Institute of Peace Research. His advice was ignored in favour of a system based on Millar’s “special relationships” with the Defence Department. We have nothing comparable with the Swedish Institute of Conflict Resolution and similar American bodies.

B. J. McFarlane.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE WOMEN GONE?

AFTER READING Australian Left Review 3/1969 I am reminded of one of those objectionable quotations about Australia being a land of “scentless flowers and songless bird.” We could add to that “and no women live”, if we based our judgment on left-wing publications in general. The names of three women are mentioned briefly – Prime Minister Mrs. Meir (Israel), Marjorie Knight (Aberdeen University) and Dame Zara Holt, now Mrs. Bate.
At least one woman rated a mention, so perhaps we are improving.

In these days of a resurgence of publications about women, from our modest *Girl Fridays in Revolt* (Australia) to *The Better Half*, with subtitle *The Emancipation of the American Woman*, by Andrew Sinclair (published in England, year 1960), surely we could spare a paragraph to describe something of the way of life or attitude of mind of Australian women of the Left, past or present.

For those men who still quote smugly that woman's place is in the home, it might be of interest to point out that some modern American women took them at their word and returned to the home, with some very interesting results. On page 355 in the chapter headed "The New Victorians" (historical not geographical) we find the following: "Victorian traditions still rule the proper place of women in business and in the home. The exception points up the rule."

Yet women do own now two-thirds of the wealth in private hands in the country. They have not earned it; they have married it and have been left widows. In 1960, there were eight million widows compared to two million widowers. The new widows were as rich and independent and powerful as the only free women in colonial days, the first American widows. Their numbers were augmented by a horde of divorcees, whose alimony gave them all the freedom of the widow before the death of their husbands. Indeed, as the death-rate declined, divorce arose as the solution of an unhappy marriage.

For those who think that all that has no bearing upon conditions in Australia, it is worth pointing out that women in the home are dependent on the wage or salary earnings of the men, whether the wife has to slog, as she sometimes does, harder than the husband-wage-earner or whether she lives the life of a pampered pet on the profits earned by her businessman husband. That is the pattern everywhere in capitalist countries.

The point of very special interest is the fact that husbands seem not to live too long under these conditions. One Australian Fulbright scholar, visiting and employed in USA found that in one school all the men teachers had at least two jobs. A few of them had three. In almost all cases the wives had decided that their place really was in the home and some of them were underemployed domestically or had "expanded their care of their children and their homes to take in the slack of the superfluous hours."

In the decade before 1960, the American population growth was four times that of Great Britain, three times that of Italy, one and a half times that of Japan and nearly that of India. For the upkeep of all that with appropriate status symbols, the American male had to work on a scale which would have given apoplexy to the mildest of our trade union leaders in Australia.

All this may appear less than intricately theoretical and not specially likely in Australia, but like Bernadette Devlin in the British House of Commons, it is a speech from the heart.

The plea behind it is a fiery one of solidarity among both sexes and for a deeper understanding of each other's strivings and difficulties.

The enslavement of women can have its repercussions on the men. Talking of slavery, Marcus Aurelius once wrote: "One cannot touch pitch and remain undefiled. Slavery eventually engulfs the master as well as the slave." That may not be an exact quotation, but the urge for freedom, justice and the right to develop our faculties to their fullest extent is something common to
both men and women — even in Australia, where our Equal Pay campaign was a polite squeak.

MRS. E. B. WILSON

A REPLY TO CRITICS

JACK HUTSON and Ann Curthoys both contest certain views I hold — or rather that they believe I hold — in the last *ALR* (4-1969).

1. A leaflet was distributed advocating non-collection of fares as a strike form in a major Sydney bus depot during the strikes over Clarrie O'Shea and the penal clauses. It certainly was not laughed out of court as Jack would suggest.

2. The idea of “occupation” as a form of strike is being raised by militants in a number of struggles, especially in Brisbane.

3. I don't accept that there is some unique “Australian road to socialism” (what is it? a “peaceful” road?) and therefore can hardly be expected to accept a specifically “Australian” form of workers' control . . . I am however quite willing to hear what this “Australian” workers' control is and discuss it on its merits. It is Jack who is vague and unspecific on this point. If that it “dogmatism”, I plead guilty.

4. I do not believe or “assume” that all trade union officials are bureaucrats. On the contrary, there is a very small but very significant minority who are not and who are grappling with the whole question — not sweeping it under the carpet . . . As for avoiding the union apparatuses like the plague — well, even the plague can be overcome and it is often necessary for the doctor to work at close quarters with the patient. But all precautions must be taken not to get the disease . . .

Finally, the Workers' Control Forum pointed to a number of quite distinct positions on workers' control and self-management. I think it is fair enough to say that a whole grouping, particularly among union officials said that workers' control was not an issue to be fought out now (they want to relegate it, like socialism itself, to holiday occasions) or, alternatively, that the unions have always been fighting for workers' control and so can continue in the same old way.

The point is, of course, that workers' control and self-management, both as a strategy and tactic, are very relevant issues today because they link up with the lack of power the workers have and begin a real struggle, outside the framework of accepted union demands and tactics against the dictatorship of the boss and bureaucrat and the State.

Ann Curthoys does my argument in *International 7* an injustice when she simplifies to one of “advocating election of a Labor government” so that the workers who are going to support Labor will go through the experience of a Labor government and then turn to the Left. It is surprising to be accused of “sanctioning the parliamentary system” when I went to some lengths to stress the need to concentrate the main fire in elections on exposing the sham of parliamentarianism and at the same time, and more important, on developing a model of socialism which, based on self-management, would have more democracy than our present system.

How does she propose to answer the question of ALP workers who ask if we support election of a Labor Government? Is it sufficient to simply go ahead and denounce Labor reformism, to say that one is as bad as the other? That smacks of a disastrous “social-fascism” theory that can only alienate and not convince. Certainly, the task is to build the revolutionary socialist party with a mass audience.
Ann Curthoys does not really begin to tackle the question of how to do so, other than simply stating it. As for the lack of a coherent theory encompassing self-management, the technological revolution, etc., perhaps it's that she just doesn't understand it?

DENIS FRENLEY.

ANOTHER REPLY

ANN CURTHOYS in ALR No. 4 1969 seems to assume that Laurie Aarons' paper at the Left Action Conference is a program. Aarons, Laver, Freney, Gould, Heffernan, O'Neill, Carmichael and Clancy all spoke, relatively briefly, on the topic: Strategies for Social Change. It would be too much to expect a program from anyone in the circumstances and certainly unreasonable to expect it from one or two but not all. All offered programmatic points, some more than others, but none had the opportunity to offer more than trends and possibilities, though often they did so quite clearly.

It may be possible to assume that with co-operation and self management as a basis for a new balance of central planning and local initiative there would be more central planning, but most people would surely find little difficulty in seeing that it means less.

The problem of making the changes that would lead to "relations in which the control of a person can never be taken from him" is not solved by simply stating what is considered to be inadequate in a paper by Laurie Aarons (unless one offers viable alternatives). Nor is it much use proclaiming as non-issues those issues that truly exercise the minds and actions of many people. If proportional representation were presented as a final solution to man's problems it would be ridiculous, but electoral reform is a real issue in South Australia and Northern Ireland and it would be a democratic advance to end gerrymanders.

The defeat of Gorton (which means the election of Whitlam — there is no other alternative) would not be a great advance either, yet until Gorton is rejected by the majority there is little hope for profound social advance unless one assumes that this can be done by a minority who would then, presumably, impose self-management. Saying that Whitlam is the only alternative to Gorton does not preclude the necessity to support left candidates (some in the ALP as well as outside), but neither should such support create the illusion that a left government is possible now. One may legitimately refuse to support any candidate for a whole number of reasons but as an alternative strategy it's about as useful as voting informal. The problem is to develop socialist consciousness. A labor victory can, though it may not, contribute. A Gorton victory, on the other hand, will certainly strengthen conservative consciousness.

As for the notion that only direct control has meaning one must ask how, in a complex society, this is to be achieved, and what happens on the way to that achievement? We cannot return to the village, and even modern versions of communes must face the problem of delegating powers, unless their participants refuse to benefit from any machinery or utility outside the capability of their control.

It might be more useful to strive to make the form and content of elections democratic, as part of the process towards self-management; but if one wants to abandon all forms of elections one must offer real alternatives.

JIM STEVENS