Marx
Centenary Edition
On Marx and Marxism: Cairns, Marginson, Roe, Stephens & Taft
Disarmament
Franklin Blockade & Kemira Stay In
Marx and Marxism

To mark the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, ALR has invited several people to give their own perspectives on Marx and marxism. Five contributions are published in this edition.

Bernie Taft
Toni Stephens
Jim Cairns
Simon Marginson
Julius Roe

Features

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Broad Left, Narrow Left
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Photoessays

Kemira Stay-in Strike
Franklin Blockade

Profile

Beatrix Campbell and Stuart Hall

Briefings

ALR welcomes contributed articles and reviews within the framework of an open concept of Marxism. Contributions should be typed, double-spaced, on A4 size paper or smaller. Manuscripts which are not clearly typed and easily legible will not be considered for publication. Unused manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Maximum word length for articles is 4,500 words and reviews 1,500 words. Further participation in the feature Marx and Marxism is sought. Up to 2,000 words will be welcomed. Copy for the Winter issue 1983 closes on April 30th.

ALR apologizes for the confusion caused when the December Issue 1982 was mistakenly marked as No. 83. The issue was in fact Issue No. 82.
The March 5 election marked a significant shift in the terrain of Australian politics, a shift which provides new possibilities for progressive advance, and for the left. But for these possibilities to be realised, the left must develop a strategic response based on a careful analysis of the trends revealed by the vote, and of the objective possibilities opened up by Labor's victory.

The main results of March 5 were: a decisive defeat for hardline conservatism; a clear mandate for Labor's program of economic revival and social reform; and, with Labor governments federally and in four states, the opening up of Labor's best chance for 40 years to carry out its reform policies and strategies in both the federal and state arenas. All this means that the coming period will see the best test for decades of both the possibilities and the limitations of Labor's policies and approaches for tackling basic social problems.

Other important trends included the election of several new ALP women including in marginal seats; the mandate for Labor to stop the Franklin dam; and the strong vote for Aboriginal candidate Neville Bonner in Australia's most racist state, Queensland. The election of several new women MPs is a further step to destroying the myth that women can't win difficult seats. It also reflects the growing importance of women as an independent electoral force by which he can swing in large numbers to parties which offer them a better deal in job opportunities, child care and social rights.

The election result was, above all, a stinging defeat for the hardline conservatism preached (though not always practised) by Fraser and Howard. Not only was their government soundly defeated but the hardest liners of all were savagely dealt with.

West Australian voters wiped out the WA Liberal "dries", who thought Fraser was too wishy-washy in his support for the "free market" and the "right" of the wealthy to avoid tax. And Queensland Liberal voters swung heavily to Aboriginal and ex-Liberal Senator Neville Bonner, whom Queensland Liberal hardliners had dropped from number one on their ticket, thus prompting him to stand as an independent.

The Fraser government was the first conservative government in an advanced Western democracy to apply the hardline monetarist policies of Milton Friedman as a pro-capitalist solution to the recession of the mid-1970s. This economic policy was accompanied by a conservative offensive aimed at making workers and the poor pay for the crisis, at dismantling some of the welfare state, and at aggressively promoting conservative values of "free enterprise", individual self-interest, "the market", and conservative versions of "the family" and "the nation", as the main principles on which to base an economic and social recovery. (The left must develop a strategic response based on a careful analysis of the trends revealed by the vote, and of the objective possibilities opened up by Labor's victory.

The consistent anti-union campaign by conservative politicians and the media has had a lasting impact which unions can ignore only at their peril. Unions should seek to turn this feeling round and direct it at the real causes of the capitalist crisis by more actively and more imaginatively promoting themselves and their policies.

And while individual unions must firstly look after their own members, they should overcome the traditional tendency to interpret these interests in narrow, sectional ways which so often make them appear as no more than sectional groups scrabbling for their own interests first, last and always. Decimation of Unity between unions have done great damage in this respect. The ACTU/ALP accord on economic policy provides considerable opportunities for widening the horizons of the whole union movement. The left should take up this challenge, especially among rank-and-file union members who constitute the only force which can ensure the accord's full implementation, and its extension in progressive directions.

The left can take special heart from the defeat of Fraser's hysterical fear campaign against unions, communists, the ALP's accord with the unions on economic policy (a "socialist manifesto", screeched Doug Anthony) and against Labor's alleged "socialism" in general. The election showed that these bogeys and tactics are not as effective as they once were. However, the left should be concerned that part of the reason for the failure of anti-communist and anti-socialist scaremongering is that many people believe the socialist left is no longer a relevant force in Australia.
The defeat of hardline conservatism, and the present severe crisis of the conservative parties (especially the Liberals), does not rule out another swing of the political pendulum back to conservative parties in the next three to seven years, as happened in West Germany on March 6. If Labor does not deliver the goods, if it gets crunched and snowed by the crisis of the system, then a swing back to the rich right rather than further left, is the most likely result.

It will not be easy to prevent this happening and, given the present limited clout of the left, we should not underestimate the objective possibilities for preventing it. However, the left can try to develop a strategy which has the best chance of building independent progressive mass movements and expanding the influence of socialist ideas in the new situation opened up by Labor's victory.

Such a strategy should centre around active intervention by the labor and progressive social movements to ensure the implementation and extension of Labor's reform policies, rather than sitting back and leaving it all to the government, or just criticising from the sidelines.

The movements should mobilise to defend Labor's progressive policies against conservative attack and undermining, as may soon happen over the Franklin dam. They should also push for the earliest possible implementing of Labor's promises and campaign for Labor to extend and improve its policies in progressive directions.

The building of movements around these aims would in itself shift the political balance to the left, and would also increase the possibilities of developing mass understanding of the need for more basic changes than the Labor government currently stands for. Such mass understanding by broad masses of people will only develop through their experiences of how well or otherwise Labor's policies work — and how convincing or otherwise they find the left's arguments for a more radical approach.

The left's arguments should be convincing at two levels. Firstly, in suggesting immediate policies and intermediate strategies for dealing with the current crisis. (This includes an alternative economic strategy.) Secondly, in projecting an alternative "vision of the future" — an outline of the sort of society we want, its aims and its ideas and values.

This cannot be done in abstraction, but only in connection with the various mass movements, each of which have thrown up their own "visions of the future" based on their particular concerns. Equally, the various movements need an overall social vision to enable them to form an alliance to achieve a radical social change in all their interests.

The central issue for the moment is the economy which, of course, is connected with other vital issues in ways that are not enough talked about.

Labor has inherited an economic mess, of which the projected $9.6 billion deficit for 1983/4, and GMH's claimed $130 million loss and plans to retrench 1,400 workers are just two obvious examples in Labor's first week. It would have been difficult anyway for Labor to carry out its promises, but now Prime Minister Hawke and Treasurer Keating are indicating that many policies cannot be delivered, at least for now, and that Fraser's wage freeze may have to be extended.

The outflow of $2,500 million in the week before the election, and Labor's 10 percent devaluation three days after the election (nothing the speculators $250 million), shows how Labor can be pressured by the owners of private capital. BHP, Australia's largest corporation, early this year also shifted $2,500 million around the globe — to buy up Utah. If the recession, the minerals boom and the policies of the Fraser government. The movement and in the wider community, if the recent Labor victory is anything to go by. However, such a policy holds both great promise for Labor and poses serious problems for the left in times of recession.

The agreement challenges prevailing left fears of ineffectiveness on am over the passage into the process of managing capitalism, while offering possibilities for effective intervention to defend and extend social gains and the interests of the labor movement.

The "worst case" scenarios, the agreement promises disaster, allowing the Hawke government to exact wage restraint while stalling on social wage trades off or on the implementation of effective union inputs into planning and industry development.

Supporters of the accord stress that the agreement could also expand the role of trade unions, giving the labor movement a direct input into the processes of planning and policy development which so far have only responded to Labor resistance after massive campaigns to apply external political and industrial pressure.

Implicit in the "worst case" view is the notion that the agreement in some way replaces or pre-empts struggle and union campaigns to defend living standards. But the accord also offers a possibility to rebuild the cohesion and co-ordination badly eroded by the effects of the recession, the minerals boom and the policies of the Fraser government. The agreement also offers the opportunity to develop mass-based campaigns in support of broader class issues through a deep involvement in government planning and spending policies.

Bob Hawke's policy speech correctly said that the "first and foremost" issue is "the right of every Australian to a job". Yet even Labor's difficult aim of creating 500,000 jobs in three years will only lower unemployment "by a couple of percent", leaving it at 8% in three years' time, assuming no further economic decline. It is most unlikely that the right to a job can be achieved if the "free market" is left unchecked and uncontroled.

No one expects the Hawke Labor government to adopt socialist solutions — that is neither its platform nor its mandate. But it should be expected to adopt the necessary measures to control capital to the extent necessary to implement its election promises. And Labor's "socialisation aim" still does say: "The Australian Labor Party is a democratic socialist party and has the objective of the democratic socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange, to the extent necessary to eliminate exploitation and other anti-social features in these fields.

— Brian Aarons, 15.3.83.
However, the accord guarantees none of this. And, confronted with the harsh economic realities of 1983, the agreement's greatest attraction for many will be its promise of wage restraint and inhibited industrial action. Unless the labor movement intervenes decisively in the discussions that will forge Hawke's new consensus, the ACTU accord will be interpreted to guarantee the agreement could be at least one supported it — with to oppose the package, and at quarterly wage indexation.

By far the section of the agreement which holds the greatest potential for the labor movement concerns industrial development and planning. "Both the ACTU and the ALP support as a priority the institution of a planning structure which will determine the way in which the national economy will generate growth on a sustained development basis," the accord says.

Consultation is a key factor in bringing about changes in industry. This consultation will be extended to industry, company and workplace level," the accord says. While the potential for intervention is clear, such a program is also a clear challenge to the labor movement.

To operate effectively in such a system of consultation, the labor movement at all levels must have access to information from company accounts; it must be able to interpret that information independently of the company accountants; there must be provision for a delegate system rather than the token "worker representative".

This last point is crucial otherwise workers on such bodies are tied up with secrecy provisions, divided loyalties and are effectively isolated from those whose interests they are supposed to represent.

It is a great challenge — and a substantial breakthrough — for the labor movement if it is able to escape the limitations traditionally imposed by Australian industrial relations institutions which were specifically designed to deflect mass participation and demobilise the working class (e.g. Arbitration). It will be no less a challenge to the labor movement.

For example, while the ALP has already rejected the promise of wage restraint and inhibited industrial action (e.g. Arbitration). It will be no less a challenge to the labor movement.

However, despite these obvious problems and contradictions confronting the establishment of such a consultative system, Australian unions have decided to risk it.

If effective consultation is to be achieved, workers must become involved. The potential for such rank-and-file participation is wide open. But it would be necessary, firstly, for the unions to ensure rank-and-file workers were involved and, secondly, to ensure such involvement is effective by giving whatever technical and expert assistance is necessary to ensure the workers to understand and intervene in the processes. Allowing a worker or two on a planning council can be an empty gesture if the worker or union official is not trained to understand the way the company works.

Unfortunately, the low level of participation by rank-and-file workers in the formulation of the agreement does not give rise to optimism that workers will be involved in the agreement's operation.
To reject such an agreement on purely ideological grounds would have meant an impotent isolation for those unions.

However, as the recent statements from the Prime Minister have indicated, the agreement is open to very wide interpretation and much of its value will be decided when the actual mechanics of the accord's operation are developed.

— Martin Peers.
To mark the hundredth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx, *Australian Left Review* invited several individuals to write about Marx and the impact of his work on them as people and as political activists. ALR aimed for a wide cross section of viewpoints from the relatively inexperienced to seasoned campaigners, from confirmed enthusiasts to informed critics. In this edition ALR publishes articles by Bernie Taft, Toni Stephens, Jim Cairns, Simon Marginson, and Julius Roe. ALR hopes to continue the series in future issues with a view to developing further discussion around Marx and the relevance of his ideas to Australian society in 1983.

"Marxism is Open Ended"

BERNIE TAFT

The impact of the Great Depression of 1929-33 on the heart and mind of a young lad growing up in Germany was bewildering. Poverty and fear were all around me. The growth of nazism, which I experienced directly in the classroom, was frightening and puzzling. There were hundreds of unanswered questions.

When, at the age of 14, I first read *The Communist Manifesto*, it was an eye-opener. There, it seemed to me, were the answers to what was troubling my young mind: the causes of the depression, poverty in the midst of plenty, the rise of fascism — it was all explained by the materialist conception of history.

Simplistic as my understanding of it was, it nevertheless provided an orientation, a way of explaining the world — and a pointer to changing it.

Indeed, the materialist conception of history that Marx elaborated and which is his lasting contribution to human history, is now largely part of our understanding of the course of social life and of the motor of historical development.

It is accepted — at least partially — by many people as a matter of course, even if they are often not aware of it. History is no longer explained solely or mainly by the actions of kings or queens, generals or great personalities. The underlying social conditions, the level of economic development, is generally acknowledged as a basis or at least a part of the cause of historical development.

It is this explanation of the motive forces of history and the analysis of the existing social system which is the core of "marxism".

Naturally (and this is very much in accord with Marx's own conception), he was a product of his own period and was conditioned and limited by his time and circumstances. Those who elevate him as standing above and therefore outside of history, who deny his human dimension, do violence both to him and to his teachings.

It does not diminish his stature to note, 100 years later, that there are areas of social life that Marx did not encompass or, at that stage of history, could not adequately foresee or give due weight to.
To briefly sketch some of them:

* Marx clearly underestimated the force of nationalism. Its power, even after the displacement of the capitalist mode of production, has surprised all those who, in the marxist tradition, believed that its force would diminish. In fact, the opposite has occurred.

* The corrupting influence of power and the problems that arise from it were not foreseen by Marx. But this phenomenon adds a whole new dimension to the problem of the structures and organisation of a socialist society.

* The role of women in human history and in society was not adequately understood by him or his contemporaries. This is so, despite Engels’ relatively progressive attitude for his time.

* At their stage of history, Marx and Engels did not face the problems of the finite nature of our resources and the destruction of our environment in the way that we do today, with all its implications.

* Naturally, Marx and Engels did not see the development of the Third World in both its specific problems and in its impact on the whole world and the revolutionary process.

N

ot only were Marx and Engels inadvertently products of their own period, but they saw themselves and their views in this light. They regarded “Marxism” as open-ended, developing and evolving over time. Marx objected to the rigid, fixed interpretation of his views, to the point of once declaring that he was “not a Marxist”.

He and Engels developed and changed their opinions as life unfolded and new circumstances arose. Note, for instance, Engels’ introduction to *The Class Struggles in France 1848-50*, written in March 1895, a few months before his death:

The mode of struggle of 1848 is today obsolete from every point of view.

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And further:

* History has proved us, and all who thought like us, wrong. It has made it clear that the state of economic development on the continent at that time was not, by a long way, ripe for the removal of capitalist production.

* Basing himself on the experience of the Social democrats in the 1870s and ’80s, Engels said they .... supplied their comrades of all countries with a new weapon, and one of the sharpest, when they showed them how to use universal suffrage.

* He went on to say:

The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried on by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of the complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long persistent work is required ....

He goes on to say:

* The irony of world history turns everything upside down. We, the “revolutionaries”, the “rebels” — we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and revolt. The parties of order, as they call themselves, are persisting under the legal conditions created by themselves. They cry despairingly; .... legality is the death of us; whereas we, under this legality, get firm muscles and rosy cheeks and look like eternal life. And if we are not so crazy as to let ourselves into street fighting in order to please them, then nothing else is finally left for them but themselves to break through this legality so fatal to them.

Marx and Engels, despite the sharp and often harsh polemics, were capable of changing their views. They wrote differently at different times and in different circumstances. The body of work that they left behind is wide enough, varied enough and even contradictory enough to be interpreted in different ways by those who set out to do this. Yet, to turn their writings into a kind of biblical text, with a future that only they can interpret, is quite contrary to the materialistic conception of history. But this is what has happened.

The “correct” interpretation of marxism was a feature of the Third International, and especially of the stalinist era. Within the Communist Party, it was a very dogmatic and mechanistic interpretation of marxism that we imbied in those days. There was little encouragement to read marx’s own historical writings; rather, the emphasis was on approved interpretations. Stalin quoting what Marx and Engels said at various times against opposing interpreters, is quite contrary to the materialistic conception of history. But this is what has happened.

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But curiously, the “return to Marx” which, in the West, followed the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and Khrushchov’s denunciation of the “cult of Stalin” in 1956, produced a new crop of theorists, many of whom, though different, were equally rigid and one-sided in their interpretation of marxism. The marxist tradition remains important for the development of an adequate socialist theory. If the ongoing historical process of reshaping the world is turning out more complex, more difficult, more painful, and often different from what we imagined — this is what we should expect if we base ourselves on the marxist tradition.
What relevance does Marx have in 1983? The social and cultural changes that have occurred since Marx’s death and particularly in the accelerating pace of modern industrial society cry out for a philosophy of struggle and change that is based on the real concrete conditions of 1983. Such a philosophy must analyse and integrate new forms of struggle and provides the basis for new strategies to bring about social, political and economic change. Socialists can’t afford to rely on defensive dogmatism when we’re confronted by radically altered circumstances and conditions. Rather new ideas and creative analysis should be an integral part of the socialist movement.

It is essential that socialist thought be characterised by a sense of flexibility and responsiveness which is essential if our ideas are to remain relevant to the society and an increasing number of people.

Marx was the founder of the modern socialist movement, a great revolutionary of exceptional intellect whose work remains a resource of outstanding value. But he was not a god. A materialist, he would not have wanted his writings turned into scripture. An anti-dogmatist, he did not try to force new data and new realities into old formulas and, in the last decade or so of his life, radically altered some previous standpoints, including those contained in Capital.

Of course, there was the long period of stalinist orthodoxy which had its origins in the establishment by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and within the party itself by Stalin himself, of an ideological and theoretical monopoly which was a key part of the apparatus of bureaucratic control. But how could many of Marx’s present day followers who reject this approach still tend towards deification?

With unintended irony, Marx may have given part of the answer in his own summation of religion: Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.

— (Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, FLPH, Moscow, p. 42.)

Thus, the difficulties of the socialist movement in the last half of the 20th Century seem to have led some Marxists to conceive of Marx’s theories as a total explanation of capitalist society’s workings and the prescription for its processes of change, to treat one or another version of these theories as a kind of security blanket, contact with whose comforting surface is essential to their mental equilibrium.

Another part of such a miscasting of socialist theory is the continuing influence of the conceptions of science prevailing in Marx’s day. These held that fundamental laws existed, acting somewhat in the manner of the mainspring of a clock as the underlying cause of all the following phenomena, however complex the intervening mechanisms.

Knowledge was to be gained by cutting things up, understanding the parts, then the whole by reassembling them.

The prevailing “evolutionism” also entailed a belief in inevitable progress and pre-determined stages of development.

But living systems may not readily be approached in these ways, nor is any pattern of development in them so certain. A rain forest, for example, must not only be studied in its separate aspects of soil, climate, the various species present, etc., of which one is ultimately extracted as the main determinant. It must also be studied as a whole, as such.

If this is so with the ecology, how much more is it likely to be the case in society, which involves consciousness and the social dimension as well as the biological?

Apart from these considerations, in practice events in the postwar period have produced enough surprises to chasten anyone with pretensions to possessing “the key to history”.

Marxists, in fact, have not been significantly more successful than others in predicting the actual course of economic development, however many brilliant analyses have been made after the fact.
Forecasts of what actual social/political consciousness would emerge from a particular economic period, or period of history in general, have been even less impressive. In many cases, marxists have had to learn more from others — for example, from feminists and conservationists — than they have been able to teach (which is not to say that all of them have learned).

Since politics operates largely in the realm of social consciousness, there is nothing worse than basing one's political strategy and activity on what ought to be according to some theoretical prescription, instead of what that social consciousness actually is.

It is to advance, not retreat, to reject a conception of marxist theory which has time and again put us in that position. It will help solve one of socialism's main problems — bringing its theory and ideology closer to what people actually encounter in their political experience.

Engels said:
Modern socialism is, in its essence, the direct product of the recognition, on the one hand, of the class antagonisms existing in the society of today between proprietors and non-proprietors; between capitalists and wage-workers; on the other hand of the anarchy existing in production.

— (Anti-Duhring, first sentence)

That is, the movement for socialism was the response, the solution to those problems which were tearing at people at that time.

But if we give up the view that marxism does, or should, or will (if reinterpreted yet again) provide us with a unitary theory, a total explanation, a formula for prediction — will that not stop us from "getting it all together in our heads" and leave us all at sea?

Not if we reject that expectation, and use our theoretical resources to help us "listen" more to practice instead of thinking that theory somehow can dictate to reality how it must behave.

To what social facts, then, has modern theory to particularly relate?

We could — should — say also that, modern socialism is the recognition of:
* the hierarchy of authority and bureaucracy which deprives people of control over their own lives, and of the inadequacy and restrictedness of present forms of democracy.
* The dangerously disturbed relationship between humanity and the rest of nature (ecology, resources, uranium, etc.).
* the subordination of women, which permeates and puts its stamp on the whole character of social, family and personal as well as economic life.
* racial and national oppression — in Australia, first and foremost of the Aboriginal people — and in the world of the poor and weak nations by the rich and strong.
* the undermining of independence, self-determination and all-round economic development (of even quite strong as well as small and underdeveloped nations) by the great multinational corporations, hampering, also, the development of the internationalism needed to tackle current problems which are increasingly global.
* the threat of unimaginably destructive nuclear war.

Socialism today, to be effective, must be the recognition of these problems (the list of course does not pretend to be complete), and show that it is the solution to them.

It would be naive, in the light of the experiences of socialism internationally up to the present, and practically ineffectual, to hold that all the rest must be subordinated to the first two stated by Engels (it won't happen) and/or to hold that once those are solved, solutions of all the rest will be caused to follow (that won't happen either).
The above are not merely separate planks nailed together to make a platform. They are organically interconnected laterally as well as vertically, if one can put it in that way, though not an ordered hierarchy.

For example, the struggle against the threat of nuclear war is (may be) also a struggle for national independence (Australian bases; US domination of Europe, etc.). It has links with the struggle to extend democracy so that people have more say in foreign policy. It intimately enmeshes with the demand that social needs come before profits. It is an internationalist movement. And how would the ecology survive a nuclear holocaust or even a future based on nuclear power? Etcetera.

The struggle for women's liberation is a particularly urgent expression of the need for people to have control over their own bodies and lives. It is linked with putting social needs before profits, and to the actual social priorities to be established when that general principle is realised.

The struggle to protect the ecology embraces a view of the responsibility of present generations to future ones (a particular case of giving priority to social needs); of the concrete meaning that should be given to “material abundance”; of the kind of development which should be allowed or disallowed and of its relationship to jobs. And less tangible, but profoundly important, the influence on humanity's self-understanding of accepting itself as a part of the rest of nature.

So one could go on, but that may suffice to illustrate the point. It is, of course, true that the majority of people engaged in one or other of those concerns — from the organised labor movement to the conservationists — do not yet generally see these connections, and that there may be conflicting currents within and between the various movements.

But the connections exist (they are not an invention of the socialists).

The role of socialists is not to seek to establish their own movements separate from the ones spontaneously generated by modern life. It is rather to forge their own total vision and use it to promote the understanding of others, and to use their organisational skills to bring them practically closer together.

But the "total vision" of socialists in the sense used here is under-developed. This is a major reason why the socialist movement in Australia is still small and itself lacks cohesion. It does not present itself to the people sufficiently as the confident and assertive bearer of new, regenerative social philosophy (a "new commonsense" to use Gramsci's term).

Yet every successful movement in history for radical social change, whatever the form of its pronouncements (religious, theoretical, directly political) has had as its basis of appeal to the mass of people, a social philosophy to which they responded; one which represented recognition of real problems capable of some degree or other of actual solution in the conditions prevailing, and which they came to regard as their own.

As the worker-soldier follower of the Bolsheviks said just after the revolution, in answer to a hostile group: "... what (Lenin) says is what I want to hear, and all simple men like me." (quoted by John Reed in Ten Days That Shook the World, Chapter 7.)

Among the most important realities socialists in Australia face is the fact that the struggle for socialism here is a long term task.

This is not so evident, except for those capable of monumental self-deception, that it may seem trite even to state it.

But simple acceptance of a fact we can't get around is not enough. The crucial questions are: how are we, in this long haul, to:

* maintain an individual and collective confidence and belief in what we are doing? — maintain morale, commitment, cohesion?

* make our activity now really meaningful in relation to our objective, not just a carrying-on-in-hope operation?

* possess and project the combative and assertive spirit required by the seriousness of the crises of our society and necessary to attract new adherents?

Aboriginal Land Rights Protest during Brisbane Commonwealth Games. October 1982

CLAS AND MOVEMENT

PETER MURPHY

AUTUMN 1983
Almost everybody poses these questions in one way or another, though some do so only to themselves, perhaps fearing that their loyalty might be queried if they did so openly.

Others admit to the existence of these difficulties, but nurture for their own sustenance the belief that one day it will all change very quickly, in this sense living mostly in an imagined future.

Things certainly may change quickly, as history shows. And today there is more "inflammable material" in world politics, as Lenin once put it, than ever before. More and greater dangers loom.

But we cannot build soundly on the basis of events which we cannot predict and whose nature we cannot know. Nor should we assume that upheavals will all necessarily be in our favor (dangers of a resurgent fascist-type right exist in a number of countries). Still less can we assume that upsurges will necessarily be "the eve of the revolution" a la storming of the Bastille in 1789 or of the Winter Palace in 1917, which many have taken as being typical of revolutionary processes.

I don't think any sober historical examination sustains such a view. In Spain, Italy, Germany, for example, and on other continents, there were upheavals and violence aplenty, but no sudden transformation from feudalism to capitalism.

The struggle for socialism in countries like Australia may well be protracted in that sense as well as in the length of time taken.

But if we accept this, we still have to deal with the very real problems posed above concerning cohesion, maintenance of morale and relating our activity now to our objective.

First, and most important, as already stated, is for socialists to develop a coherent, offensively oriented social philosophy as already indicated.

Second, is to adopt an "interventionist" strategy to bring the socialist objective and daily practice closer together.

This means more than just intervening and fighting on the issues of the day. All except those avowing ivory tower or ghetto politics accept this.

It is rather intervening in the belief that intervention can, and with intention that it should, to one degree or another change both thinking and power relations in society.

It means expanding, without setting preconceived limits, the range of issues considered of proper socialist concern — including issues which have been traditionally excluded as impossible to influence, too laden with "absorptionist" poison, or of proper concern only "after the revolution".

Investment policies, what can be demolished or built and where, what trains should run, what industries should exist, the social wage, measures furthering liberation, are just some of the issues that spring to mind.
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Intervention strategy embraces the view that more is possible than simply hoping that socialist consciousness will somehow develop from the experience of fighting for reforms which are in themselves of little other consequence.

It is the view that intervention can enhance the actual power of the working class or sections of it (or other strata) and reduce that of the capitalist class, in structural/institutional as well as ideological terms.

Similarly, women can change some actual power relations with men, conservationists can actually push back some destructive assaults on the ecology, etc.

In other words, without taking it too far, and while pointing out as the CPA Program does that this cannot be transformed into belief in a general "gradualism", intervention means to a certain extent creating essential elements of the new society "within the shell of the old". It is the view that the new is not all in the future.

Socialists generally acknowledged that elements of capitalism grew within feudalism. But many rejected that possibility in regard to socialism and capitalism, on the grounds that these societies were too different, whereas feudalism and capitalism both feature rule by minorities and exploitation of the majority.

But interventionist strategy also bears on this point, involving the very definition of our objective.

We now speak of self-management socialism, not simply of socialism. This "socialism without an adjective" traditionally meant (some references to mass involvement notwithstanding) that "the government" — now a "workers" one — takes over the direction of society. Direction which, under capitalism, is performed by capitalists organising production, and by governments which both "do the capitalists' will" and also restrict or supplement them, and the market, in the interests of the system as a whole. And in backward, semi-feudal societiesreplace the feudal and mandarin-type classes which ensure some sort of social cohesion in a sea of petty and often locally self-sufficient production.

The limitations and often positively repellent aspects of this "government" or state socialism, with the ruling communist party forming its unshiftable core whatever its faults or degree of corruption and whatever the desires of the people, are now abundantly clear.

Above: Coburg residents combine with ARU to protest over inadequate train services, February 25, 1981. Lower: Victoria Street residents combine with BLF to halt Sydney property development.
Certainly, if that is what we offer as our "vision" socialism will not be just a longterm objective but, for countries like ours, an ever unattainable one.

Socialism took this narrow conception of its aims, and this bureaucratic government form not only because of economic underdevelopment in the countries where capitalism was overthrown. Or are we to believe that bureaucratic dangers or the subordination of women automatically and progressively diminish in high technology societies? I don't know where. Possibilities of pushing back bureaucracy and old conceptions certainly expand in these conditions. But so do various means of preserving and strengthening them.

Socialism took this form also because of the lack of ideological development of the working class. And a big working class can be ideologically underdeveloped as well as a small one. I would say ours in Australia is.

It took this form also because of certain theoretical conceptions held by revolutionaries, particularly concerning the directness, rapidity and degree of determination of consciousness by economic relations of production.

Having taken over necessary social functions which the working class at the time was unable or not permitted to perform, the government-CP set-up became consolidated into a system by the new self-interest involved in preserving such control.

So interventionist strategy is not only a recognition of certain necessities and possibilities of our situation in this period of the struggle against capitalism. It is also an essential virtue in assisting the working class to develop, within capitalism, the capacity to "self-manage" the new society, and to establish other new social relations.

But who, or what, is this "working class?" Arguments over its definition go back a long way and tend to recur. For example, the argument that the "point of production" is not only important (with which nearly everyone agrees) but is the ultimate determinant, frequently with the corollary that the struggle within the factory or industry over the division of the product between workers and bosses is the class issue.
Thus, although the “working-class-in-itself” forms the great majority of the population, there are in ideological and political terms many “working classes” separated by different histories, interests and perceptions. These exist objectively as well as being heightened by the self-interested efforts of the capitalist class and its ideologues, and the state.

Use of rhetoric about “the working class”, “class issues” and “class struggle” in these circumstances may therefore be even more empty and misleading than usual. Among other things, it ignores the way in which issues such as the Gordon-below-Franklin dam, or those concerning women’s liberation, cut across conventional or traditional class lines.

To a crucial extent, this needs to take place within capitalism. Otherwise, though there may be at some stage a different society arising from a conjuncture of circumstances, it will not be self-management socialism. It will not be a society where women and other oppressed groups are liberated in terms which they themselves identify as meeting their needs. It will not be a society in which humanity restores some sort of harmony to a dangerously disturbed relationship with the rest of nature. And so on.

How far the Australian working class is from being yet “a class for itself” is manifested not only by the strength of conservative and non-socialist thinking within it, but also by the degree of its segmentation and internal divisions.

New issues have also been raised by the very expansion of the working class. In Russia in 1917 the working class was less than 20 percent of the population, and though segmented internally to one degree or another, it had a manifest identity distinguishing it from the other classes and strata of Russian society — for example, from the peasants and civil servants.

In Australia, on the other hand, and other economically developed societies, the working class is 80 percent or more of the population. So, while it is manifestly differentiated from farmers, small business and professional people etc. the political, cultural and social division within it are no less notable in the political life of the country.

We have opted for a wide definition of class, as witness our program. We have defined it thus for a number of theoretical reasons, including Marx’s view (set forth in the Grundrisse) that with the increasing entry of science into production, and all that involves regarding education and other non-point-of-production social activities, direct labor time would lose its pre-eminence in the determination of value.

We have also opted for this wide definition so that we should know in practice to whom to address ourselves. Whom we are trying to motivate, to influence, to win.

But, however defined, we do not regard the working class as being, just by existing, a dynamic or political, especially socialist, entity. The real issue is the development of its consciousness and activity to remake society and to remake itself in the process.

To use the rather graphic words of Marx, to define it is to recognise it only as “a class in itself”. Only to the extent that the dynamic, ideological, political dimension is present does it become “a class for itself”. That is, to the extent that it takes the road of struggling for a new society in which it shall manage—and in which therefore no permanent, separate stratum of managers will exist—and in which will be incorporated other, new social relations.
Far from being exceptional or likely to go away, even in present conditions when economic crisis tends to focus attention in one direction, such problems and conflicts are likely to be typical of many struggles in which socialists will be involved from here on.

This is why the CPA Program speaks at such length of the necessity of building coalitions and alliance for socialism.

Traditionally, coalitions and alliances have been terms referring mainly to relationships between the political representatives of different classes. For example, between those of the working class and middle class or peasantry, urban and rural capitalists, etc.

This element still remains, and many modern movements stretch over a number of strata and classes. But most importantly, the coalitions and alliances we are trying to build are largely between different segments of the working class. Different sections differently motivated, as stated earlier, because of their different histories, situations and perceptions, all now under impulsion from the various acute contradictions of modern society.

The coalitions and alliances of which we speak are thus both of social forces, especially including different sections of the working class, and of issues.

The third thing is for socialists to reconsider, and be more open-minded about their own relations among themselves and with others, especially with socialists in the Labor Party and those with no particular party or group allegiance.

As well as recognising the need to increase their strength by coming closer together, involved also is recognition of the fact that politics and the way people relate to politics and political parties is changing.

It is noticeable, for example, that many are more critical and mobile in their political allegiances, or even consider themselves to be "outside" politics. This latter feeling could increase dramatically if the powers that be, unable to reverse the growth of a permanent army of unemployed (both those recognised and unrecognised in statistics), succeeds, in more or less permanently "marginalising" them, pushing them permanently out of the mainstream of society.

It is not immediately apparent how this might be tackled, though I believe that for socialists to see themselves and act as the bearers of a new social philosophy, to become much more a moral force is a large part of the answer.

How to bring about a regroupment of the avowed socialists who are in one way or another directly "in" politics is also a confidence that they will is not misplaced.

REFERENCES

1. Recent research has thrown new light on the last decade or so of Marx's life which has previously been regarded by most biographers as rather unproductive and displaying declining powers. For example, Marx did not complete or prepare for publication volumes 2 and 3 of Capital. And although it is acknowledged that he read enormously and wrote 3,000 pages of notes on this material he did not integrate his results into his earlier schemes. (In particular, he came to the view that the Russian peasant commune could, under certain conditions, become the starting point for a transition to socialism without Russian going through capitalism.)

2. "The forces already exist in Australia whose directions..." (Dec 4, 1981), entitled "Renewal of political and the renewal of the PCI": "... even if to a lesser extent than in other countries of the Western kind, the fact that also in Italy a division has begun to show between considerable strata of the population and the parties must make us reflect..."

3. "Here (in reactions to the abortion referendum and the new upsurge in the peace movement) lies the proof of the need for a renewal of the parties and of their ways of engaging in politics, if it is intended to avoid the growth of a difference which can become very dangerous to democracy's destiny..."

4. "It is necessary to make up our minds to understand that politics is today called upon to consider as its direct task... also the solution of those problems which stem from the development of people's existence and the relationships between people and between these and the structures of society and the political system which today marks this society. This is in the current, particular, social, cultural and moral context..."

5. "... not only must that restrictive conceptions of politics whereby it becomes reduced to relations, games and skirmishes between parties, between the majority and the opposition, be overcome, and all ends there, but also a traditional concept of social struggle and social existence must be overcome... A concept according to which only those masses, those organisations and those movements which express needs and demands of an economic-trade union kind are considered worthy of attention..."

"We remain convinced that, in order to renew ourselves and to induce the others to renew themselves, we must maintain the characteristics which make us different, above all, we must organise on new themes and big mass movements..."
Karl Marx and the challenge of the Eighties ...

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Autumn 1983
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AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW 83
Two of the most important influences in my life — disappointingly (as a feminist) they were both male — were Jesus Christ and Karl Marx. The effects on me, at different times in my life, were similar while at the same time taking me in different directions. Both worked on my sense of justice and abhorrence of discrimination and oppression, but while the message of Christ was to develop a higher morality, to "feed the hungry and care for the dispossessed", Marx asked the question "why are people hungry when others have more than their needs; why are so many dispossessed while others have the possessions of kings?"

For me, ultimately, marxism was much more satisfactory as it provides the conceptual tools to analyse the sources of oppression and discrimination, to understand why the oppressed consent to their expropriation, and in this understanding to seek ways of changing such a system.

The capitalist state plays a critical role in shaping social and political life in order to enhance the continued expansion of capitalist production and social relations. The manner and scale on which the state performs this role under capitalism is historically specific and distinct from any previous social formation. While the economic level is the determining factor, the social relations which characterise such societies cannot be sustained and reproduced at the productive level alone. These must be articulated through all levels of the social formation — economic, political and ideological, and increasingly in the apparently unproductive spheres, through cultural apparatuses. This ensures a more effective means of social order than that of the enforced social discipline of a more coercive state, for here this discipline appears to be the result of the spontaneous consent of each citizen to a common social and political order.

It is important, of course, not to slip into "conspiracy" thinking; in order for the conditions of the capitalist mode of production to be reproduced whole terrains of social, moral and cultural activity have to be developed and reshaped to its needs through the political and ideological superstructures. This ethical function of the state is in terms of a relationship to the potential presented by the development of the productive forces.

Western democracies are well adapted to this complex exercise of hegemony through political representation, freedom of expression of public opinion, formal representation of subaltern social groups, and equality of citizens before the law. In democracies where the working class has won formal representation, popular consent as the basis of the state is, however, reversible as the capitalist state cannot remain securely founded on that legitimation while at the same time taking severe measures to contain any threat to its foundation. The state must therefore continually shape the consent to which it, in turn, refers itself. This is particularly important at the ideological level where ideological elements which do not have an intrinsic class character acquire a class character by being organised into specific discourses by a fundamental class.
Contradictions remain nonetheless, and in a moment of open class conflict, gaps open up to signal a crisis in the hegemony of the ruling class. This, an interpretation of the crisis is ideologically constructed in the interests of the dominant classes to win popular consent to its foundation in reality, through such mechanisms as the media, education and the judiciary. By consenting to this view of the crisis, however, people also consent to the measures of control and containment necessary in this version of reality.

As an example, the recent swing to the right in western democracies, notably Britain, the USA and Australia, specific to this historical conjuncture, can be understood, not as a reflection of a hegemonic crisis but rather as a response to it. In these new political and ideological configurations it is no longer a question of the popular-democratic struggle of the left confronting political forces committed to conserving traditional ideologies in the face of threats to its economic power. Rather, the right has thoroughly renovated and reformed itself and now constitutes a new active political force emphasising more traditional petty-bourgeois ideology, the virtues of the free market, competition, elitism, and individual initiative, while denigrating state intervention and bureaucracy. It has also successfully attempted to mobilise the diverse forces of backlash against trade union militancy, the women’s movement, minority ethnic and racial groups, and permissiveness, in favour of more conservative and essentially regressive ideological themes such as authority, law and order, the family, nationalism and possessive individualism. Its economic policy which seeks to curtail the economic intervention of the state by restructuring industry through the operation of market forces, relies on its new comprehensive populist ideological and political offensive, thus undermining working class resistance to its policy of rationalisation which is reversing the structural achievements of the labour and democratic movements. This combination of right laissez-faire economic strategy with reactionary and authoritarian populism seeks to resolve the crisis by mobilising a new expanded social base embracing sections of the middle classes, the petty-bourgeoisie, the working class, together with key elements of big capital.

A fundamental danger with the advent of the right is that with this defence of free enterprise and individualism, democracy itself is being redefined in order to neutralise its potential antagonism within the capitalist order. The hegemonic thrust of the intervention of the radical right is marked by its global character which has effectively condensed a wide range of social and political issues and themes under the banner of social market philosophy. The radicalism of this form of intervention has, therefore, set new terms for the political struggle where the reconstruction of a popular force on the left is intrinsically linked with the struggle to expand and transform the forms of popular struggle.

Many of the social contradictions thrown up by the development of monopoly capitalism have produced new political subjects, e.g. feminists, ecologists, anti-nuke activists, etc. which groups, while being clearly anti-capitalist, do not have a necessary class belonging, and have therefore not been taken up by the left as an important terrain for the political struggle. A new, active concept of socialism is on the agenda which requires a conception of new forms of political representation of a more broadly mass and democratic nature.

It is in the struggle for democracy, as in the young Marx, based on the existing system of forces that the struggle for socialism must be waged. The struggle for democracy, however, cannot be limited to the narrow sphere of legal rights or parliamentary representation because formal democratic institutions do not in themselves guarantee real freedom or popular control; rather popular-democratic struggle involves the establishment and maintenance of social conditions in which such freedom and control can be realised, through the radical reorganisation of all manner of social relations. True democracy can only be effectively pursued with the support of a broad-based mass movement.
Istvan Svabo’s Oscar winning film, MEPHISTO, was shot from the script he wrote with Peter Dobai from Klaus Mann’s novel. The cast featured Klaus-Maria Brandauer, Rolf Hoppe, Gyorgy Cserhalmi, Krystyna Janda, Ildiko Bansagi, Karin Boyd, and Tamas Major, and Lajos Kottai was the camera person. Szabo’s previous film CONFIDENCE was premiered in January 1980 and in February won a prize at the West Berlin Festival. Shown at the festival was another Szabo film, the West German production DER GRUNE VOGEL (The Green Bird), which has yet to be seen by Hungarian audiences. In this interview, first published in the Autumn 1983 New Hungarian Quarterly, Istvan Zsugan talks with Svabo.
Q: Klaus Mann's Mephisto was published in Hungary in a single edition in 1957, and it met with no particular response, only a few people read it. How did you happen to choose that particular novel?

A: As a matter of fact, the novel first appeared in Hungarian as early as 1945, but actually I didn't discover it myself, but the producer who asked me to make The Green Bird drew my attention to it.

Q: What was your West German film about?

A: The Green Bird is a love story, and it is about compromises. I hadn't yet completed Confidence when a series of my films was shown in Federal Germany, and that prompted a West German producer to ask me to make a film with him. He came to terms with our Intercorcent, and after we completed Confidence in Hungary, we shot The Green Bird. It was financed by private capital in extremely simple circumstances, and that, I think, went a long way in teaching us, the cameraman Lajos Koltai and myself, how to work under restricted conditions. We undertook to shoot the film for a given budget, and the producer simply had no more money at his disposal. So whenever we felt the need to change something during the shooting, we had to find the cost out of the basic budget at the expense of other scenes. I may say with some irony that we were bound to learn how to build a house out of exactly the material and money originally available for it.

Q: Do I detect a touch of resignation or malice in what you are saying?

A: I have no reason for malice or resignation. The film was given the category Besonders wertvoll, which counts as the highest artistic category in Federal Germany (meaning that it is advertised as an "especially valuable" film), which was obviously pleasant news for both of us.

Q: Let's return to the story of Mephisto.

A: When I read the book, I took to it immediately, since I saw in it the possibility for an extremely exciting film. This was even though up to then I had never made a feature film based on a literary source, only from my own scenarios. For a long time I had wanted to find out what it felt like to be a director, in other words, what it felt like to make a film where you use your energies not in drawing up words, dialogues and situations, but exclusively in the production. And Klaus Mann's novel also coincided with an old conviction of mine that you cannot or, rather, should not, make a film from a truly perfect literary work, where you have a masterpiece; the most perfect possible statement of its message is the book itself, so you only have to read it. In my opinion more suitable raw material for a good film is in a literary work which in its conceptual material is exciting and original enough but for some reason is still not a first-class literary work.

This Klaus Mann novel deals with an extremely exciting and instructive subject, but the treatment lacks permanent value. It simply narrates events, often just sketching them, without any real conflict of fully developed characters. And when the story arrives at what the plot considers as the most significant historical phase, Klaus Mann can only rely on his imagination, as he wrote the novel in 1936 in exile. The story is about the life of a highly gifted actor, who begins his career as a member of a small-town company. He is in strong sympathy with the leftwing movements in Germany in the second half of the 1920s. His friends are also leftwing-minded intellectuals, and so he often takes part in artistic and political actions, in which he can also assert his exceptional talent. He soon gets to Berlin, where his stage career is increasingly successful and he continues to support leftwing movements. Then Hitler comes to power, he becomes frightened and thinks he must get out of the country, but he is called back by his adoring public, and after that, with a clever adaptability, he soon wins the sympathy of the Nazis. He becomes the protege of one of the highest National Socialist leaders, and his career soars upwards irresistibly. He becomes the manager of a theatre and later is appointed as the Intendant of the state-run theatres. He is fully aware of what he is doing, but always fabricates ideologies for himself to explain his acts, not only to justify himself but to consider himself the protector of human values. His story is one of those works which illustrate different versions of the relationship between the actor — or the artist in general — and power.

Q: What you say seems to indicate that the story is one of those works which illustrate different versions of the relationship between the actor or the artist in general — and power.

A: This film is not about actors, nor about the power versus artist relationship. The film wants to portray a single character. It wants to speak about the existence of characters or, rather, bad characters, or more exactly still, of the bad sides in many people, which drive them to push themselves to the fore at any cost, under any conditions, to make themselves successful. It is a natural thing to feel secure and well if one is being loved and recognised. But to acquire everyone's love, everyone's support, the affection and support of every political regime, every political group, and in order to achieve that to be en garde night and day, to make oneself adaptable by the second to manoeuvre to find out the latest direction to turn in, to eternally examine which way the wind blows — this is a dangerous thing.

The protagonist of this film is one of those people who are always supported and accepted by everyone, only able to live successfully and in success, only willing to walk on the sunny side of life, and so his really exceptional talent and positive value can be put at the service of any evil interest. He allows the bad side of his character to rule his decisions. Yet because his abilities could make him an essentially valuable man, he is in eternal doubt and often despises himself. But his doubts, his self-contempt and his nostalgia for the good are not strong enough to overpower his desire always to be in the limelight, to get success, to get to the top, so he explains his steps to himself, he's always ready to fabricate a self-answering ideology.
Q: Klaus Mann’s book and the film take place in a specific historical period and place, the Germany of the 1920s and ‘30s. What do you think makes the analysis of that specific historical period timely?

A: What we wanted to analyse or characterise was not the historical period but this specific character. And I think the historical situation outlined in the novel can illuminate such a character with the sharpness of a spotlight. As the example is exact, it allows a sharp and exact analysis of the character. Those were extremely hectic years, with sudden twists and situations which obviously made it possible and necessary to make choices. Since then history has produced scores of situations in Europe and throughout the world in which this individual story could take place. It is still doing this even today, you just have to open a newspaper or watch the news on television. In our half of the century events speeded up greatly and one has to cope with many different situations in a single lifetime as a normal state of affairs. So it is small wonder that in such a world an attitude similar to that of our protagonist has become rather general, whatever the contents. And if that is the case, it must be pointed out, it must be analysed.

Reviewing my film Confidence, you wrote that I seem to want to deal with public therapy in my films. I felt surprised by the term which was not sure to be meant as a recognition, because I felt that I myself had been unable to formulate my endeavour as exactly that. The expression became a challenge for me, it put into words what I would like to do to deal with public therapy. This film also would like to do just that. And the technique of therapy is to identify the disease of the character, to call attention to the forms of its appearance: to make certain features of the protagonist sympathetic so that the viewer can identify with him, and when his emotions are changing towards the hero with whom he has identified himself, when he comes into opposition with his own earlier emotions and prejudices, when he discovers similar traits in his own character — that may be of some help.

And although in the film the phenomenon occurs in the area of grand politics, and so we have discussed here its forms of appearance only in that context, the disease itself can be found in smaller communities, in the teaching staff of a school, in a factory, an office, anywhere where petty group interests enforces themselves, by making use of talents which want to prevail always and at any cost, while always wanting to feel secure and protected, and always, under all circumstances, accepted.

Q: In other words, if I follow you correctly, Mephisto is trying to be a portrayal of careerism.

A: No! This is not simple careerism. This is the portrayal of the permanent state of readiness of a gifted man, to be able to exert himself at any time and in any situation, and if he is offered a role by history for which his humanity is insufficient and he still accepts it, even his talent will turn against him.

Q: I would like to return to the historical period you have chosen. What do you think may be the reason for the international fashion for recalling the period — Cabaret or The Serpent’s Egg — to name but two obvious examples.

A: I cannot assess the reasons, but it is certain that fashions in themes have never been accidental. The European bourgeoisie seems to have lost their sense of security because of the history of recent years. They are ill at ease and tired of terrorism, economic crises and failures, the changing and uncertain political order. There are many who think, and indeed argue, that someone should come, a “strong hand”, who puts his foot down and makes order. This situation in Western Europe therefore shows a superficial resemblance to the Germany of the 1920s and ‘30s. There must be something, perhaps the atmosphere, which gives rise to certain associations, to similar public feeling, and that might explain this thematic vogue. But from the point of view of our film, I don’t consider this typical or of interest at all, and this part of the analysis is so utterly superficial on my part that I’m almost ashamed of it.

Q: Let us return then to your career. Your first three films, The Age of Daydreams, Father and Love Film, were described by critics in Hungary and abroad as subjective, lyrical autobiographies of your own generation; later they ascertained that with your 25 Fireman Street, and particularly Tales of Budapest, you intended to expand the sphere of depiction into an allegorical and social autobiography; while the extremely restricted psychological drama of the two characters in Confidence came from a need for a definite change of theme and style. What considerations influenced those changes?

A: Incidental changes in style are never deliberately prepared as a result of a determination, they are more the natural consequences of changes that take place in the world around us, consequences which I myself only register subsequently. Although I’m only thinking about this now that you’ve raised the question — and so I’m improvising — I feel that in the early 1960s, when I started film making, and by and large up till the early 1970s, I, and not only myself but all of us, were interested in the human relations of great historical characters, of course. I forget our experience was of the high historical combinations which we ourselves had lived through; and this experience we shared with our audience. So we justly felt that we had many things to tell each other about this common experience. And so, by and large up to the mid-70s, we thought our main task was to draw conclusions from those experiences and to sketch the ideas which followed from them. That was followed by a relatively long and calmer period free of historical tempests. Now it is already also in the past, and it brought the problem of everyday living to the centrestage, later still the problems of the individual: human relations and personality. We even had time left to deal with what happens if two people love each other, but .... or one loves the other, and .... or again, the other cannot stand the first, but .... So we started to speak in detail about the problems of private life.

Q: Does that mean that you consider it logical, a natural development, that both in the cinema and in literature we’ve come to a period which is usually called by the critics the phase of privatisation?

A: If the crop of a period, as a whole, makes up such a picture, there obviously must be some natural development behind it, and I’m also sure that when people are occupied with vital problems of existence, private troubles don’t take priority. Now it seems the world has once again come to such a phase — and not only our little world in itself but the whole wide world around us — now we feel again to our cost what a large extent of our own life is determined by the movements of the world, so that once again we are paying attention to the effects of more comprehensive steps too .... What I want to say is that although in each case I myself decided the theme and the scenario which I used in my films, yet I have to see how basically and directly my choice of subjects, all my steps have been influenced either by the world at large or the microcosm around me. To tell the truth, I think that every really successful work contains, along with the tiny movements of the microcosm, the mysteries of the great historical spheres of motion, and we as film makers are always trying to approximate a completeness in that sense. However, this is very hard to achieve, and it is not merely a question of intention or will, or lofty goals — unfortunately.

— Istvan Zsugan.
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Above: Life member of the Miners Federation, Fred Moore, opens the Kemira Embassy at the surface of the Kemira Pit. Below: Stay-in miners at the pithead.
Above: Glenda Roach tells the mine manager what he can do with dismissal notices miners' wives received in the mail. Below: Stay-in miners Shane Williams, Kevin Donohue and Don Martin entertain themselves 5 kilometres underground during the stay in.
Len Fox's latest book, Broad Left, Narrow Left, marks his 50 years in the progressive movement. As an anecdotal autobiography of that period it offers a great deal to the uninitiated reader of socialist history. But to those who seek solutions to the present state of the left in Australia, the book whets the appetite, but ultimately disappoints.

Fox himself encourages perhaps unfair expectations by the reader when he writes in the foreword:

"What is difficult is to write a balanced account in which the Left is seen as it actually was — a group of fallible human beings who at times did the right thing and at times the wrong thing, who scored up some successes and some failures. This involves taking a critical and self-critical attitude to events in which one was personally involved — and if criticism is difficult, the self criticism is even more so. But the task needs to be done, because the Left has played an important role in Australian life in the past fifty years, and will continue to do so in different ways — in the future. And it will be better if we base our future not on myths, but on facts.

Certainly Fox does seek to provide a balanced account — a task in which he is remarkably successful. But somehow it falls short of doing much more than presenting the facts. The how and why of this breadth and narrowness is left unelaborated.

Broad Left, Narrow Left starts in Vietnam with Len Fox and Mona Brand teaching English to the Vietnamese shortly after the 1954 revolution. The title is aptly captured by the description of the way the Vietnamese dealt with broad social forces. This is contrasted with the way the Communist Party of Australia leadership at the same time handled Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th CPSU Congress.

Growing up in the depression, the Egon Kisch affair, Dimitrov's United Front, the fight against fascism, Spain, the phoney war, Thomas and Ratliff, the CPA under fire from Menzies, the Red Army enters the war, the NSW Labor Party, writing for the revolution, the Cold War, Mary Gilmore, Paul Robeson, Stalin and Khrushchev — all these and much more come under attention.

And it is a lucid, attractive tale that he has to tell. One which is accessible to and will provide the opening to a rich labor history for the uninitiated. A tale which records the many good and not so good achievements of a brave band of sincere, even if, at times, naive fighters for social change, justice and peace. People such as Ralph and Dorothy Gibson, Bill Wood, Jack Blake, Nettie Palmer, Arthur Howells, Maurice Blackburn, Stan and Vera Deacon, to name but a few. Throughout the book, Fox gives little pen portraits of personalities, large and small, which record for all time something of the flavor of the movement over fifty years.

While Fox paints glowing pictures of socialists like unionist Jim Healy, poet Bart Adamson, and Domain speaker Paddy Drew, he also writes of such people as "Redbeard" whose "very personality, individualistic and intolerant and dogmatic, is the reverse of socialist principles".
The left movement in Australia has produced a number of biographical works in recent years. They include John Sendy's *Comrades Come Rally*, Ralph Gibson's *One Woman's Life*, Stan Moran's autobiography, Edgar Ross' book *Of Storm and Struggle*, the *Tribune* series of 1980 on fifty years of struggle, and the two volumes of the *Communist and Labour Movement Conference Journal*. These are, of course, all different in their perspectives and of varying quality. But they all start from the biographical standpoint and the emphasis is on events, people, colour, activity and movement rather than seeking to develop an analysis of the overall state of the left in the post-1917 period.

Sendy's book and, subsequently, his small pamphlet *The Communist Party of Australia — History, Thoughts and Questions* do attempt in their latter stages to make such an analysis and to suggest some possibilities for the future. But, having been written shortly after the events they analyse and which led to Sendy's withdrawal from the CPA leadership, the book and the pamphlet have been unfairly treated. Some left bookshops resisted carrying the book for political reasons. Accordingly, it produced a more limited discussion on the direction of the Australian left than Sendy had hoped for.

_Broad Left, Narrow Left_ should not face such opposition, and also comes at a time when the Communist left is very open to discussion about its future.

In academic circles, various articles and several books have been written which seek to analyse the left. But, generally, these examine the past with neither a feel for the movements themselves, nor with an eye to the future. For example, Roger Coates wrote in *ALR* No. 82: "The lack of a solid history of the Australian labor movement constitutes a great gap in the intellectual whereabouts of the political left in Australia. And until somebody comes up with something more comprehensive and complete, Hagan's _The History of the ACTU_ may be default serve the purpose."

When Fox's book arrived, I grabbed it and read it in one sitting. Here was a participant of long experience who had a friendly but critical view of the traditional left organisations and was seeking to examine the essential questions of Australian politics: how the left could relate to the mass, how left parties such as the CPA could relate to the mass working-class party, the ALP, how to form a broad alliance, how to avoid sectarianism, etc.

These are the very questions which are confronting the CPA and the left movement today. As economic recession deepens and the Fraser government continues its relentless restructuring of wealth and power, the labor movement's need for a united response becomes more and more urgent. Moreover, it also becomes clear that the lack of a united and broad perspective throughout the whole period of the Whitlam years and the early Fraser years, i.e. from 1969 onwards, has placed the labor movement in greater difficulty in facing the deepening crisis of 1983.

For the traditional left party, the CPA, its two splinter groups (the CPA-ML and the SPA), and even for the tiny trotskyist groupings, 1983 is, or should be, a period of reflection and challenge. In recent years, one has seen the SPA seek a level of united action with the CPA only to split asunder with the clash between practitioners and narrow-minded ideologues. Similarly, the CPA-ML split into many parts as the impact of domestic Chinese policies was felt in its internal ideological debate. Recently, the remnants of the CPA-ML — the Hill grouping — also sought talks on united action with the CPA. Even among the tiny trotskyist groupings there have been splits in recent times between dogmatism and a search for a greater unity.

Throughout the left, genuine people are searching for a direction which can lead to a stronger movement for social change precisely at the time and because of the existence of conditions domestically and internationally which force people to take a stand. Narrow ideological positions may appeal to some sections of the left — particularly to those who count the growth of the left movement in ones and tens. But it is increasingly being said that the left needs to find the means to relate and communicate to the thousands and millions of people who do not see socialism as contributing to a better life.

Events in Australia among the three sections of the once united CPA have led Fox to comment "I find it difficult to be enthused by these Party (CPA) members of reflection and challenge seem to be restricting it to unity of socialist groups only, who appear to be looking back to restoring such unity as once existed with people committed to narrow Moscow or Peking lines."

It is, however, clear from the emerging internal discussion in the CPA that some people at least have much broader conceptions of reformation of the left — reformation not realignment, or regroupment.
The left’s re-examination of sixty years of activity since the 1917 revolution is not confined to Australia. In Italy, Spain, France, Holland, England, Japan, Mexico and elsewhere, this examination has been going on apace in recent years — particularly since the events of Afghanistan and Poland.

The Italian Communist Party wrote, after the imposition of martial law in Poland:

One must therefore take account that the phase of development of socialism which was initiated by the October Revolution has exhausted its driving force, just as the phase which saw the birth and development of the socialist parties and trade union movements of the Second International became exhausted.

British socialist literature has been full of examination and debate on the role of the party, its future and its relationships to the broad alliance. The Socialist Register, Silver Lining and Marxism Today have all dealt with these issues at length.

Recent attempts of the New American Movement and the Democratic Socialist Organising Committee to merge are another reflection of the same phenomenon — the left seeking to come to terms with the realities of the 1980s.

For the English-speaking left — Australia, New Zealand, England, Canada and the United States — that means overwhelmingly conservative governments with a large degree of mass support, a small organised left largely split, and in a very defensive ideological position.

Eric Aarons writes elsewhere in this edition of ALR about this question. Indeed, a lively debate is beginning within the CPA about the prospects of socialist growth in Australia and the CPA’s role within those prospects. Bob Connell took up some of the issues facing the left in Australia when he published his pamphlet Socialism and Labor, An Australian Strategy in late 1978. Since then, two issues of Labor Essays have dealt with some of these issues and the CPA has, of course, published its own strategic program Towards Socialism in Australia, as well as other publications such as A New Course for Australia.

Alongside these writings have been important political initiatives of which the AMWSU social wage campaign and the Save the Industry campaign of the Victorian branch of the Australian Railways Union have not been the least important in developing a new strategic orientation for the left. These practical initiatives have much to do with the activity of communists and seek to find new ways to attack and overcome the ideological barriers that encircle the left movement.
But nevertheless, one should note that Connell was able to write a pamphlet about the future of socialist activity in Australia without specific reference to the CPA. This could reveal that Connell is a sectarian, blinkered supporter of the ALP left. On the other hand, it could reveal that Connell, an influential member of the ALP left in this country, believes that socialist activity must increasingly relate to the mainstream of Australian life and that the CPA and, presumably, the rest of the traditional left, is increasingly trapped by objective and subjective conditions outside that mainstream.

Throughout his book, Len Fox makes small forays into deeper discussion of these questions only to stop and recommence the descriptive narrative. For example, he discusses communist united front activity in the Movement Against War and Fascism during the 1930s. He remembers a priest, Rowan MacNeil, telling him that he had decided to join the Presbyterian Church, not because he believed one hundred percent in all its beliefs and practices, but because to him it seemed the best body to work in — and a man who wanted to do something towards a better world couldn’t do it on his own, he needed an organisation to work in. Ralph Gibson, MacNeil added, had decided to work in the Communist Party. Fox comments:

In the 1930s there were a number of people who wanted to find an organisation in which they could join with other men and women in doing something about the evils of depression, fascism and war. The Labor Party at the time was, to a large extent, dominated by powerful Inner Groups which were not only doing nothing about these evils but were shouting abuse at those who tried to get something done. Some of the Labor Party groups and some church groups were covertly or openly pro-fascist. It was not strange that the Communist Party, whatever its weaknesses and limitations, appealed to many of these people as a body in which they could work.

In the post Viet Nam war days, a number of young people made a similar decision and joined the CPA — it appeared to them to be the best organisation at that time through which to work for socialism that was Australian in origin, democratic in nature, and capable of responding to the new challenge of feminism and the environment.

It has recently been said that socialism has not had a mass expression of popular support in this country since the bank nationalisation struggle of 1947-49 and that 1980s conceptions of socialism are essentially linked to visions of socialism in existing socialist countries. Certainly, at a time when economic crisis is greater than at any time since 1933 and nuclear destruction never seemed nearer, the left in this country is weak and embattled. But, as Fox notes:

The good thing is that everywhere are small groups of people actively concerned with social problems — the war danger, the environment, rights of minorities, racism, harmful advertising, colonialism, unemployment, poverty and other issues — doing their bit in a small way but an important grass-roots democratic way.

The next period will see how the left will reflect on the past 60 years of experience as it faces up to the challenges before it. Some will seek to recreate the advances of the 1930s by much the same praxis. Others seek a new direction by finding suitable organisational forms through which to work with vastly increased numbers of people around the new ideological challenges of a democratic socialism appropriate to the world of the 21st century. The challenge will be to find the way to give cohesion and ideological focus to the activities of the many small groups of people.

As this reflection proceeds, it is useful to remember what American socialist Al Richmond wrote some time ago: "the important point is not to arrive at retroactive judgments of what the left should have done. The point is to arrive at a better understanding of what needs to be done now." Broad Left, Narrow Left is a contribution to that process.

Philip Herington was a student radical who joined the CPA in the 70’s. He worked as Vicotrian Secretary of the CPA until last year. He is presently a teacher.
I like Marx, have to say, "I am not a marxist". But if it were not for Marx I could not be what I am. If it were not for Marx I may never have seen the power and the importance of the real, the materialist, and the importance of work in determining what a person is. Unless one begins with the materialist conception of history, one may always remain an idealist — a man of the idea, a super man, a man-god, a patriarch.

It was not until Marx that the supremacy of idealism was critically rejected. Before Marx it was not the material world that determined what was, or what happened. The real world, things, people, labor, were all a reflection of the idea, of great men, of the supreme god. All the rest, people and things, were inferior, suppressed, distorted, merely to be used. Men had unlimited power over women, the power of life and death, the significance of which Engels noticed more than Marx. Men had all this power, but they created a god and claimed it had come from him.

It was inevitable that idealism and its elites would be opposed and diminished. But they remain powerful in the twentieth century. They are behind every suppression, every discrimination, every anti-life force.

But materialism grew fast. It is the idea, an idea alright, that it is not the idea that is supreme. To materialism, ideas reflect reality. It was really the renaissance that began to enthrone materialism. It was the materialism that believed that man could "create the world", and that science was the materialist way of looking at the world — science is the idea that becomes more and more an accurate reflection of the world.

It was Marx who gave renaissance materialism a political significance. He showed that power was based in people, people in classes, and that the material form of capital and the means of production were the result of exploitation by the ruling class of the working class. No matter how much marxism became revised, rejected, attacked, demolished — and it was done in every generation — no matter how many forms of neo-marxism there were to be, idealism and its super-men and super-gods were ever more on the defensive. Never again could people, classes, labor, and the means of production be ignored if power was to be explained at all. The lowest and the poorest of people were granted a place in history reserved before only for heroes and great gods. After Marx, the substance of history became the everyday lives and needs and labors of human beings. They have remained so ever since.

But Marx saw that it was all a matter of human consciousness. The consciousness of the working class of its own suppression, of exploitation and alienation. But Marx saw, too, that the consciousness the working class did have was false consciousness. How was false consciousness to be replaced by true consciousness? How did the working class acquire false consciousness?

Now we must be careful here. Consciousness can be irrational, especially the ruling false consciousness. How was the materialist conception of history, which assumes rationality, to deal with the irrational which seemed to dominate the working class and probably the ruling class too? Were ideas determined by the material, by the economic? Or could something go wrong? The materialist conception of history could not deal with the problem of irrationality.
The prophecies and expectations of power for the working class did not work out. Where revolutions have occurred, the working class did not obtain power. 

War was the significant example of human irrationality and the working class died in wars by the millions. Working classes, having failed so much, the colonial or black races came to be seen as the revolutionary class, not the white ones. Then the "instinct of revolt" was found, not in the working class, but in the "great mass", those millions of non-civilised, disinherit, wretched and illiterate. Violence was seen to have a "cleansing effect", and Engels decided that "it is precisely the wicked passions of man — greed and lust for power — which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serve as levers of historical development". At the end of 1893, Engels had come to see that "history is the cruellest of all goddesses, and she drives here triumphal car over heaps of corpses, not only in war, but also in 'peaceful' economic development". How could history be seen any longer as the rational architect of proletarian success? Where were the "new societies" which were "pregnant in the old"?

But perhaps Stalin proved the most disturbing example of the irrational for marxist theory. It was decided in 1956 that it was slanderous to assert that the Stalin personality cult was due to the Soviet system itself. Stalin's irrationality arose from personal traits of character. He could not be explained by any rational economic or materialist interpretation of history.

But if a single individual could shape the character of society and project into its law, literature, and everyday life his own sadism, so that none could rise or talk freely or honestly, if several millions of people could be imprisoned, and many tortured and killed, as Khrushchev claimed, and no one has denied, what then had happened to historical materialism and to the power of the working class after the revolution? Either the "cult of personality" arose from the irrational character of single individuals, making historical materialism false; or it arose from society itself, in which case socialist society was responsible and could be so again.

This problem remains within marxism unresolved, but marxists have split up into a myriad of views as a result.

It has become clear that power or character structure of individuals or classes is not the result of economic experience or of the way the means of production are owned or controlled. Ideas are not simply the result of materialist or economic conditions. False consciousness dominates and false consciousness is irrational in materialist and economic terms. Power and ideas are not an economic or materialist experience; they are a psycho-somatic experience or process which results critically from the suppression of human organic functions, in which the economic may play a significant part, and ownership and control of the means of production and the classes are a result of it.

Power is inevitably and inherently unequal because a majority of the people are made powerless and inert, while a minority who inherit patriarchal power or, as in most cases, with a decline in patriarchal inheritance, acquire power by obsessive drives for it so as to compensate for more traumatic suppressions and contradictions in their own lives. Power cannot be obtained, or changed, by a powerless and inert majority class merely by setting up parliaments, any more than be revolutionary overthrow of the owners of the means of production. Democracy remains a system in which productivity is high enough to allow a permissive society; and revolution leaves the means of production controlled still by the patriarchal class in a system too low in productivity to allow the permissive society to develop. But it will.

If the world is to become conscious of itself, Marx is essential but not enough. In simple terms, there has to be a synthesis of Marx and psycho-biology. Economics and history are not enough. Materialism as well as idealism — both are a dualism and a split — have had their day. As Einstein decided: "We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive." And in the Soviet Union no less than in the United States.

Together, idealism and materialism have left the human species facing an imminent threat to its survival. If we can synthesise Marx's history and economics with biology and psychology we can see the world as it is, and begin to find ways to "create" man, and ways to deal with the universal problem of irrationality. We can begin to build a society which is, as Marx stated the aim, "an association in which free development of each" proceeds harmoniously with "the free development of all". There is a law of mutual reciprocity but it is discoverable in biology and psychology not in economics, war, violence, materialism or politics. They are part of the disease, not a prescription for cure.
The international upsurge in the peace and disarmament movements has been strongly reflected in Australia. But, as the recent election showed — the Australian movement has not developed sufficient political clout to impose disarmament as an issue for our major political parties.

But the movement’s experiences themselves suggest ways that can lead it towards becoming the irresistible force necessary to rid the world of the nuclear threat. Movements will always be pluralist by nature and cannot be confined to any one set of slogans. Between the slogans and their realisation there will be many partial measures if existing opportunities, even limited opportunities, are not taken up and acted upon, the movement will condemn itself to ritual. The greatest challenge lies in convincing people that they can take effective action against the threat of nuclear war as part of a movement to gain control over their own lives.

President Truman and his associates promised vaudeville shows on the stage of the Bolshoi and fashion parades in the Kremlin while bullying a people who had suffered 20 million dead. And such offensive behaviour was often done in the name of God. Truman wrote of atomic weapons in his diary: It is an awful responsibility which has come to us. We thank God that it has come to us instead of our enemy. We pray that God may guide us to use it in his ways and for his purposes.

The nuclear disarmament movement is, by definition, less than 40 years old. We now know that there were scientists and politicians who queried the decision to use the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but most people did not know of the existence of the weapons or the debate on their use. Even those who did know could only guess at the possible effects.

Detail of this new weapon was shrouded in mystery even after it was used. Wilfred Burchett, then a war correspondent, was on Okinawa on August 6, 1945. The radio news spoke of a big new bomb, so Burchett travelled to Hiroshima to investigate. Thirty days later, the first report of that bombing was published in the London Daily Express. His story, The Atomic Plague, described how people, apparently uninjured, continued to die mysterious and horrible deaths. The sub-heading said “I write this as a warning to the world.”

Burchett returned to Tokyo in time for a press conference given by high-ranking officers of General MacArthur’s staff on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Burchett’s story of radiation sickness was specifically rejected, he had fallen victim to Japanese propaganda. Atomic mis-information had begun.

At the time, many people believed, and some still do, that those two bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved lives. It is much more likely that United States strategic planners were giving a demonstration to the Soviet Union, and these were the first shots of the next war — till now avoided.

The Soviet Union was an ally — one which had made great sacrifices and earned much admiration. The early United States atomic policy was perceived by many as part of the “roll back communism” strategy which was done with all the lack of finesse that derives from unchallenged power.
The United States' nuclear monopoly had been broken in 1949. As the gap between Soviet and US nuclear potential diminished, so did the diplomacy called "atomic threat".

Those were the days when we spoke of atomic bombs; the hydrogen bomb came after 1949, as did the term nuclear. There was also a fascination with the possibilities of nuclear energy and the hope, now largely dispersed, that the peaceful atom would solve problems and bring the world to abundance. There is a difference between breaking a nuclear monopoly and an unimpeded arms race. A theory of mutual deterrence may have made some sense when each side could retaliate decisively. But it makes little sense to go on and on. A deterrence theory requires the ability to destroy the other side once (even twice) but not four or five, or fifteen times. The contending arms race greatly increases the possibility of nuclear war by accident or misunderstanding, and gives credence to the view that the real aim is to find a weapons system which can guarantee that the other side will be wiped out before it can retaliate.

When the United States monopoly was broken, its strategists knew of other ways to contain the Soviet Union. These included an enormous financial burden, the diversion of resources and technology, offer of special status. The special status factor has dominated world politics for several decades. It is an offer to the Soviet Union that, if it could not be number one, it could at least be one of the top two and that all fundamental questions would be decided by the two superpowers.

The key factor was the idea that we of the West were basically democratic and had to be armed to protect our way of life while our enemy was basically totalitarian and peace was a catch-cry for slavery. By and large, that dichotomy between democracy or disarmament, as E P Thompson has pointed out, was a wave that rolled along very successfully for more than 20 years. Disarmament activists would often be greeted with a shout of "Go back to Russia". Many events fuelled such concepts, and while it is beyond dispute that the United States began and continues to lead the nuclear arms race, it is pointless to deny that all nuclear states bear some responsibility for the present situation.

This is not a question that can be relegated to the past. If the movement is perceived as pro-Soviet it will not be politically effective. This is a sensitive question. As more people become conscious of the role of United States installations in this country there is a logic in concentrating efforts on their removal, but a one-sided view of disarmament will not diminish the fears of the many people who believe that the peace movements want the West to be defenceless. One cannot overcome this problem by adding a few slogans about the Soviet SS20 weapons and calling for their removal from Europe.

Events of the last 20 years ought to make it clear that atomic diplomacy has served the United States very well in its efforts to contain colonial revolution and to maintain neo-colonialist regimes in its sphere of influence. It has also served the Soviet Union in maintaining a certain level of cohesion in Eastern Europe. If, at the time of the British atomic tests at Maralinga, we in Australia knew little of
the dangers of atomic testing, the scene was changing rapidly in the 1960s. The Cuban missile crisis raised mass understanding of the fine line on which the world walks. In some cases it also brought an appreciation of how the Russians must feel, surrounded by NATO missile sites, when the Americans became so stroppy about a site geographically close to them. And everyone seemed to be testing — a lot of them in the Pacific. The British kept their nuclear capacity, to continue as a great power as much as anything else. As it became clear that British nuclear capacity was not fundamental, a new movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), was formed, and with it the concept of unilateralism.

The main thrust of the disarmament movement has always been for mutual, verified arms reduction. Unilateral measures are usually seen as a means of moving towards that goal. Unilateral measures are not an option for every country and are not popular with many people (never mind governments) whatever social system those people live under, because there is such a lack of confidence in the positives of the other side. It would not only be wrong but stupid to allow a Fraser, a Reagan, a Thatcher — all of whom favour increasing Western nuclear arms unilaterally — to claim that they are for multilateral disarmament while we in the peace movement are nothing but unilateralists. In the year when the Cruise and Pershing missiles are planned for Europe; when Reagan wants to trade those for the Soviet SS-20s; when the Soviet response has been to suggest that the missiles count must include the British and French arsenals — it makes sense to push for a non-nuclear Britain as part of an overall reduction of nuclear arms in Europe, but this does not mean that all proposals for unilateral measures have equal validity.

Nuclear testing held centre stage in the movement over many years because the Americans and the Russians were testing bigger and bigger bombs and because France and China joined Britain in the nuclear club. China, incidentally, immediately offered a "no first use" treaty, a proposal recently made by the Soviet Union.

The movement against nuclear testing took on a mass aspect in Australia, eventually finding reflection in specific initiatives of the Whitlam Labor government against the continued, and continuing, French testing in the Pacific. France is not a signatory to the Partial Test Ban Treaty. This treaty, signed in 1963, is claimed as one victory for the world-wide movement against testing, as is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1967.
At the time, people thought that testing would stop when, in fact, it went underground; that there would be no further proliferation of nuclear weapons when, in fact, and partly thanks to the “peaceful” nuclear industry, including the Australian uranium industry, some thirty countries now have, or have the capacity to produce, nuclear weapons; some even thought that the Americans and Russians would reduce their stockpiles. By the late 1960s we had all become used to living with the bomb and we came to that period of virtual silence about nuclear weapons which Peter Watkins addresses in his film War Games. In the late 60s, the peace movement had a new concern — the Viet Nam war.

Many aspects of the disarmament movement mentioned here are not specifically Australian but it should be noted that in the first half of the 1960s the Australian labor movement, including an influential section of the parliamentary wing, reflected a growing disenchantment with the United States and Australia’s military arrangements. There was outspoken opposition to military treaties and to bases, to the US war in Viet Nam and with Australia’s involvement, then in its early stages. These matters became election issues — in a sense this was what the movement had always wanted.

Caiwell, then Labor leader, took a strong stand against conscription for the war. But the electorate was not convinced. In 1966 Labor polled its smallest vote in sixty years. This is not a claim that the sole reason for the poor showing at the polls was due to Labor’s policies on such matters, or that such questions should not become electoral issues, but to make a distinction between policies acceptable to the ALP and its members and to the electorate at large, to draw the conclusion that policies are only as good as their mass support and to indicate that the task is still in front of the movement to convince a significant majority of Australians, not least those who vote Labor, that the disarmament movement is not about to leave Australia defenseless, that we are not anti-American, that we do not desire to hand Australia to the Russians.

Of course, it is easy to say that such views are rubbish, as they are; that people who hold them are manipulated by the media, as they are; but that such ideas are widely held cannot be denied and must be taken into account as part of our reality. A movement capable of victories in the arena of foreign policy needs a visible majority in the labor movement and also significant forces from among the Liberals and Democrats.

Given a certain conjunction of forces, such a movement is not impossible, as the Viet Nam years showed. If 1966 was a disaster, considerable change took place in the next few years. The movement against the Viet Nam war really did change public opinion. There were many elements in this, never one centrally directing apparatus. There were religious and moral interventions, industrial strikes and actions, major and minor demonstrations. All were important, not one or the other. The movement was both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, not one or the other. The movement was pluralist in its slogans. The common denominator was the demand to withdraw troops but in every demonstration you could find those who gave support to the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and every shade of opinion through to those who just wanted to “Give Peace a Chance”.

A crucial element was the existence of the American movement. It was clear that in opposing the Viet Nam war, one could not be called anti-American since so many Americans were so obviously opposed to the war too. This factor is, I believe, very important in the Australian context where, by and large, people see the United States as a protector. This factor is significant for the disarmament movement in 1983 given the developments in disarmament action in the United States in the last two years.

Because of the existence of the US “freeze” campaign I do not suggest that we adopt a similar campaign here, not only because the demand for a mutual freeze in nuclear weapons production is really only appropriate in nuclear weapon states but because the word “freeze” offers quite a different image to most Australians. In our case it sounds like Treasurer Howard’s plan for wages. But it is important to project the fact that opposition to the MX missile program, for example, includes a majority vote against it in the US House of Representatives.

So in the 1970s, the movement had its victories but, as always, nothing stands still. A new round of nuclear arms development got under way and it is that which drew the response in the last several years and found expression in Australia in the mass demonstrations of April 1982.

Given that part of the ideological armory of those in the West who demand more and more sophisticated arms is that the Soviet Union has superiority, it may be worthwhile to give the essence of the annual survey (1981) provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).4

First, the trade in conventional armaments is increasing. This is the one boom industry during the world recession. Until 1979, most arms were sold by the United States. By 1981, the Soviet Union had become the leading exporter of major weapons. The policy of restraint in arms sales initiated by President Carter in 1977 was revoked in mid-1981 by President Reagan. At this level both sides contribute to the arms race.
When it comes to nuclear arms, each side claims the other side is trying for some kind of first-strike capacity, while declaring its own objective to be solely defensive. SIPRI estimates that the Soviet Union has more launchers than the United States (2504 to 1919) and the total explosive power of Soviet missiles and bombers is 4 1/2 billion tons of TNT against 3 1/2 billion tons for the USA, but the United States has more nuclear warheads (9540 to 8802). SIPRI comments:

It is hard to make any sense out of statements that one side or the other is inferior or superior in strategic weaponry. The margin of overkill is so large that such statements have no meaning.

Nuclear weapons testing continues. SIPRI reports 49 nuclear explosions in 1981. Of these, the USSR conducted 21, the USA 16, the UK 1 and France 11. China did not test in that year. SIPRI comments that the rate of testing is increasing and that there has been no downward trend in any year since the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed in 1963.

The centre of attention in 1983 is theatre nuclear weapons in Europe. In this case, both the USSR and the USA put forward widely differing estimates of their respective strengths. SIPRI claims:

A reasoned judgment is that, whether the comparison is limited to missiles, or whether it includes aircraft as well (where the problem of deciding what to include is much more difficult) the Soviet Union appears to have a superiority in long-range theatre nuclear forces in Europe of about 2:1.

The European disarmament movement, quite logically, believes that the way to a more sane situation is to seek reductions of existing weapons on the Soviet side and the exclusion of new missiles from the US, thus the campaign against the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles and for the dismantling of the SS-20s.

In March 1982, the Soviet Union announced a freeze on the deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles in the European USSR. More recently, the Soviet Union has offered to link withdrawal with a calculation which involves counting in the nuclear missiles of France and Britain. Significantly, SIPRI has made the following calculation:

The status quo ante and a rough matching of Soviet missile systems with those of the UK and France could be obtained by limiting the number of SS-20 launchers to their end-1981 number; however, this would have to be accompanied by the elimination of all SS-4s and SS-5s.
The movement against uranium mining, which began primarily with ecological considerations but soon made the link between uranium and nuclear weapons proliferation. This finds reflection in twice-yearly national meetings of key sections of the anti-uranium movement organised in the Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia (CNFA) and the Australian Coalition for Disarmament and Peace (ACDP). The CNFA has done much to raise consciousness about the dangers inherent in so-called peaceful nuclear energy, nuclear accidents and accidental war.

The movement for nuclear free zones, which has involved local community organisations and has found expression through decisions by municipal authorities to declare their region nuclear-free. This form of organisation has since been taken up, with considerable extent, in the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

The concept of nuclear free zones has given impetus to the movement for an independent and nuclear-free Pacific. This is a vital movement because, in this one region, are all the elements of a nuclear society — uranium mining, nuclear-waste dumping, nuclear-weapons testing, testing of delivery systems, deployment of new nuclear weapons. All the nuclear weapons states are involved at one level or another. Here, the fight to be nuclear free also poses the question of colonialism, the right to independence, the right of indigenous peoples to land rights.

The proposal for an Indian Ocean Zone of Peace has not had the same attention as the movement in the Pacific but is of particular relevance to Western Australians. An outline policy by the Labor Opposition for a nuclear-free Southern Hemisphere, although short on detail, suggests that the question of nuclear-free zones will continue to be an important element in the Australian disarmament movement.

The US military bases and installations: an extensive education campaign beginning on Suitable Piece of Real Estate and the commissioning by the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament (AICD) of the film Home on the Range have helped develop a growing sense that while United States bases remain in Australia this country will be a strategic target. Some also realise that these bases are a real threat to others.

There is also a growing awareness that the enemy is not easily identified. For many years the enemy was China according to various Australian governments. Indeed, for some twenty years we were told that Red China would be coming to get us but when alliances changed that threat dissolved overnight. Given the geographic position, the Russian threat is harder to justify.

The influence of non-alignment: This is hard to quantify but the existence of the non-aligned nations arose, in part, as a response to nuclear strategies and the existence of the bloc division of the world. It was the non-aligned nations who were responsible for the first United Nations Special Session on Disarmament which helped to give impetus to the ACDP. In 1979, more than one million people demonstrate for disarmament in New York four years later at the second Special Session.

During the Whitlam years real efforts were made by the government to forge links with the non-aligned movement. Australia sent official observers to meetings of the non-aligned nations. The conditions for the non-aligned movement are that you oppose the bloc division of the world, do not belong to a military alliance involving either super power and do not allow foreign bases on your territory.

It should be said here that the peace and disarmament movement in Australia is, by large and non-aligned, not just in terms of seeking greater independence for Australia or in understanding that the bloc division of the world limits the rights of all small and medium powers, but in being non-aligned politically both within an Australian and a world context.

The earliest post-war peace movements did start from the beginnings of the World Peace Council (WPC) but, as can be seen, the publication of A-Informal and for most of the movement today there would be no agreement with that body's stance on some key questions. The Australian Peace Committee (APC) was formed in 1975 as the Australian affiliate of the WPC.

For the non-aligned peace movement there is no way that Soviet ties became a dominant factor in the non-aligned peace movement. In Afghanistan, however, where Soviet military presence in Poland or elsewhere can be justified, even if it is understood, any more than the US pressure on Nicaragua or presence in El Salvador can be condoned. In this context, the Australian movement actively opposed Soviet nuclear testing. When, in 1961, the Soviet Union broke an informal moratorium on testing, this was done even by people who were, by and large, sympathetic to the Soviet Union.
There is a view within the Australian movement that the way to disarmament is simple. All we need to do is stop uranium mining, get rid of the US bases and get out of ANZUS. I see these as long-range aims but they are by no means simply achieved. Undoubtedly one could avoid the effects of the present recession if one won the lottery, backed all the winners at the races and picked the correct numbers in Lotto, but the chances are rather remote.

The point is that one should not confuse moral positions or ultimate aims with policies. Even those who agree that the danger of nuclear war is real will always want to know how nuclear disarmament can be achieved. And people do choose to work in different ways. There is no one "correct" way to work for disarmament. There are appropriate organisations to join if one wants to put major emphasis on stopping uranium mining or give priority to the campaign against the United States bases, and there is always room for more organisation, especially at the level of local communities, if public opinion is to be mobilised against the arms race.

Those who believe that an essential element for a successful movement is a change in policy of political parties should work in the party of their choice, and while no one would deny that political parties respond to what is going on outside in the community, those in political parties should not demand that the disarmament movement should give its main attention to changing particular party policies. In the case of the Labor Party, this matter is expressed in contradictory ways; first, that the movement ought to be in advance of the Labor Party with the aim of showing that party that it ought to take a higher profile and second, that nothing should be done to separate the movement from the Labor Party. There are, of course, many graduations within these two views. In a very real sense, people expressing these ideas are not talking about the Labor Party as an organisation, but how to change public opinion and achieve a reflection of that changed opinion in political parties. In my view, there will always be "advanced" views and actions and movements which place priority on breadth. Both have a role in changing and mobilising public opinion.

Those who have come to understand the dangers of nuclear war sometimes conclude that all those people who do not come to marches or demonstrations or special church services are indifferent, or worse, blind to the realities. I think that most people do know the basic facts about nuclear war. What they do not know is what, if anything, they can do. Many are wary that if we take disarmament initiatives, the other side will not, that is, that we will be in greater danger without, say, the US bases than with them.

*Left and Opposite page: 40,000 Victorians march in the People for Nuclear Disarmament Rally in Melbourne, April 1982*
There is a need to produce well-researched, factual material on the arms race as, for example, is done by the Victorian Association for Peace Studies. Technical data is a good basis from which to argue against further escalation of the arms race, in support of the United States freeze campaign or for a cut-back in nuclear arms by half, but such data does not impress everyone and can increase the feeling of powerlessness in the community. When people are told that there are enough nuclear weapons in the world to kill everyone four times over (or fourteen times, or seventeen times) their common sense tells them that you can only be killed once.

Many people are burdened with the everyday problems of living. It says little to a single parent on a pension, to an unemployed person, to a process worker engaged in fairly mindless work for rotten pay, to people who can’t pay their mortgage, or their electricity bill, that the greatest problem facing them is nuclear war.

Unless the disarmament movement speaks to such people about their problems and connects that to the arms race, the movement will grind to a halt. The arms race is the biggest factor in distorting the economies of many countries and the world cost of the arms race is mind-blowing. But this should not be so translated in Australia as to assume that what is spent in this country on defence can be used to solve many local problems; indeed, it is likely that if Australia came out from under the United States defence umbrella more would need to be spent on conventional defence.

In any case, we ought to be sensitive to the employees of the defence industry and the uranium mining industry. And since we are the people who want change, it is our responsibility to develop workable ideas for alternative employment and we also need to take account of people’s fears — even if we think they are irrational.

But most of all, since the disarmament movement is actually addressing itself to the need for effective arms control we should keep the concept of control firmly in our minds. If people feel incapable of controlling everyday aspects of their lives they will certainly feel helpless in the face of the nuclear weapons industry and the threat of nuclear war.

So it is crucial to pose actions which do not seem unreal and which may bring results. People won’t accept that they can change the world but they may agree to help change the mind of their member of parliament or convince their local councillor to take a decision in favor of a nuclear-free zone. Yet many people do not even know the name of their MP, and this lack of knowledge is not confined to the politically inactive. It is certain that changes in party policies will not take place until representatives at all levels are made more aware of public concerns including our concern that the risk of nuclear war is growing.
Until now there has been no comparable activity in Australia to the referenda on the arms race held in a number of states of the United States in 1982.

Australian constitutional provisions do not allow for questions of public interest to be placed on the ballot paper during a state or national election, but the Tasmanian Wilderness Society has offered a form of this when it developed the “no dams” write-in with considerable success. It should not be beyond the bounds of possibility to plan local opinion polls, especially in those areas where this question is hotly debated.

It would also be of value if a Labor government was encouraged to offer referenda on several vital topics, for example on a policy to deny access to ships or planes capable of carrying nuclear weapons unless the particular foreign power publicly committed itself not to bring nuclear weapons into Australia even temporarily. It is not easy to carry a referendum in Australia, but such an approach would bring the issues of nuclear war directly to the public, awareness would be heightened and, if carried, the usual conservative disruption of a new policy would be circumvented.

Similarly, the question of foreign military bases ought to be tackled consistently at a number of levels. Few people who oppose the existence of the bases have become conversant with the information presently available about them, including the dates when they are up for review, or the conditions under which they can be terminated. 1975 might have ended differently if the question of the renewal of the Pine Gap Treaty had been up for public discussion and debate. This is not intended as a request to those who oppose any foreign base to list that, but to suggest that many ways must be sought to take the movement beyond its present state. The value of public debates lies in the possibility to inform and convince large numbers of people. It is those who stand for the status quo who like silence and promote secrecy.

As in all public debates, not everyone will come to the same conclusions. One of the difficulties of the disarmament movement and, perhaps, all movements for change, is the fear of activists that they are “selling out” if they make proposals which fall short of their ultimate goal. Yet all the proposals which have led to the new developments in the disarmament movement, especially the campaign against the new missiles in Europe, and the freeze campaign in the US, are limited to specific demands for arms control and fall far short of disarmament, but they can be steps to disarmament.

In that context it may be that a future Australian government could be persuaded to negotiate unilaterally with those countries, especially the Soviet Union, to whom the US bases in Australia are directed. This might lead to some interesting proposals for a trade off. It might start the process leading to the eventual removal of bases.

Although President Reagan still tries to picture the disarmament movement as a Kremlin plot, there are many signs that the movement is being taken seriously. Disarmament negotiations are under way again and a variety of proposals are being made by both the United States and the Soviet Union. As is to be expected, both sides usually make an initial response that the proposals of the other are “propaganda” but while they are talking there is hope. Our hope lies in mobilising public opinion. This is no easy task since those lobbyists for a continuing arms race include many scientists, technicians, military planners, military hardware manufacturers and government bureaucrats, all of whom, for reasons of power, profit or prestige want to continue the upward spiral.

But it is easier now than in the past to make an impact on public opinion because it is clear enough that the 40-year search for nuclear superiority does not increase security. Everyone who thinks about it, including some military planners, understands that if the United States develops new weapons systems then the Soviet Union will shortly follow suit. This has been the history of the nuclear arms race from the beginning so that, today, we are all less secure than in 1945. The immediate aim is to call a halt. As George Kennan writes:

The effort to control and abate the nuclear weapons race is not, after all, a favor we are doing the Russians any more than it is a favor to ourselves. It is a dictate of the security and survival of all Western civilisation. Let us first meet that dictate. The next can come afterward.

Perhaps a priority ought also to be given to a comprehensive test ban treaty since that would make it almost impossible for the nuclear weapon states, or the would-be nuclear weapon states, to develop new and more deadly weapons as they could not be certain of their performance.

There are plenty of initiatives which can be taken and if they are taken the movement may become the irresistible force which finds the way to move the seemingly immovable object — the nuclear arsenals around the world.

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4. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) was founded on July 1, 1966 by the Swedish Parliament to commemorate Sweden’s 150 years of unbroken peace. The funds are provided by the Swedish Parliament. The Institute is independent. Its operations are the responsibility of an International Governing Board. The material which follows comes from the SIPRI yearbook 1982 which documents developments in world armaments and disarmament in 1981.
6. Home on the Range is a 60-minute documentary by Gil Scrine. It won an award at the 1981 Sydney Film Festival.
7. The Australian Socialist is the fortnightly journal of the Socialist Party of Australia, a pro-Soviet communist group.
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Mavis Robertson has been an activist in the disarmament movement for more than thirty years. She is a member of the Management Committee of the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament (AICD) and is a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party of Australia.
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TED HOPKINS is a poet with strong views about his work, art and culture and its relationship to the society which sets the context in which it is produced. LOUISE CONNER of Melbourne spoke with Ted recently about his ideas with particular attention to the National Gallery in Canberra which boasts a collection of his poetry which was presented to the gallery by the large corporate sponsors of cultural events, Phillip Morris.
The National Gallery seems to form a "Holy Trinity" with the High Court alongside, and the War Memorial across the lake. It is so isolated on the shore with its long ramps and no bus stops, nearby train services or walking promenades.

Both the High Court and the Gallery represent a process of sanctification. The High Court, for example, is so surprising. It's all so massive yet all it houses are a few small courts and a few chambers for judges to undress and dress up in. The National Gallery, of course, has a lot more substance but it still creates that sense of smallness, that feeling of the insignificance of the people who live nearby or visit it.

But inside the Gallery there's lots of corners that break down that external structure. Different levels are reached by ramps, so it's a little like an excursion tour. It adds to the feeling of the ascendency and elevation of the works. You wander through observing the great works until you reach the top.

You mentioned that paintings were hung really high and that it gave you the impression that it was all about to ascend into heaven. Paintings are usually produced to be viewed at eye level, so does this mean that looking at the collection becomes almost an adoration?

Certainly. The whole gallery is about the sanctification of art. About one specific area of art which is "the canvas", "the masterpiece". It is an area of painting that was conservative and reactionary from the very first moments of royal patronage. Privileged people were able to pay skilled people to represent their lives in a glorified fashion. We still have a system of patronage and there is still that idea of the masterpiece.

We are always being told that there is something extra special about these great works; that one has to bend down in front of them; that they can never be touched; that millions of dollars must be spent to keep them in exactly the same state because at the moment they were painted they were inspired.

What will be the effect of a National Collection?

The National Gallery, I think, will take on a certain sort of art representation which will free the regional galleries for more interesting options. On the whole, it represents only one area of art — the painted piece and a few sculptured items.

A major factor in favour of a National Collection is that it is probably one of the only places in Australia for the documentation of art. And in some ways that is what I think it should be. Not so much the place to represent Australian culture with a monolithic gesture: "Australian Art is this".
Not many people in Australia have questioned grants and funding. We've had this idea that the arts need support from the government and that's true because the majority of artists don't have a market value. In that way, artists are the same as housewives — they work for no, or little, financial return to provide things that society thinks are valuable. But quite often all that a grant does is pay enough for you to buy canvas or get a book printed, but it still means you are working for nothing.

But what about the Australian section? Many people liked the Australian section, but one person complained that, once again, it was put at the top, that is, last. But the top floor where the Australian collection is housed is a lot more intimate. You're very close to the work because it gets narrower as you go round.

Is it better that you see overseas works before the Australian — does it place them in some international context?

I don't think it should be viewed that way. I don't like the way that you are guided around and not just left to pick up on what you like, when you like. But what I'm saying about the Australian collection is that it's more cohesive and more intimate in the way that it is displayed. It did seem to fly the gamut of artworks should be too. If people could just flossick their way through in the way they want and make up their own minds ....

Can you explain the Phillip Morris Collection?

It's a collection of Australian art over the last ten years, paid for by the Phillip Morris Company. You see, patronage still exists. Instead of having royals and aristocrats we now have corporate entities with tax concessions to fund the arts. It is a great disappointment to realise that the future of the gallery depends on this idea of patronage. The arts and artists are there to serve their masters. The same thing is happening that has happened in sport.

People wanted to include a piece by BUGA-UP in the collection. It didn't get in, and, of course, the speculation was rife that it wasn't included precisely because it was the Phillip Morris Collection.

The collection wasn't actually part of the opening exhibition, it was shown away from the gallery. It seems like the new chums have to put down a track record before they can get into the gallery. They're waiting for the opinion polls to ordain the work so that it can step up to the next grade.

But some of the best things being done in art are not in that area that is being patronised. The best records, for example, are coming out through small independent labels and a few of them filter through to the top.

But the art that you're talking about is almost "uncollectable". It is art that relies on the moment. It can't be collected and then represented to an audience that hasn't participated in its production.

I think it can. But what we have is a reactionary system of production and that extends to curators, as well; to their ability and knowledge to put things on display. If the reverence is for the masterpiece, then that's what people are spending millions on to purchase, trade and charge people to see. And the curators' training and attitudes are reinforced because that's where the employment is.

I think we can document and display lots of works but we've got to be a lot more inventive. My work, for instance, is useless as a display piece because it is a collection of poems in a teledex. If it is going to be displayed it should be on the front counter where people can really look through it.

Do the National Gallery and the Phillip Morris Collection do anything to reduce elitism in art?

No, the opposite. It is very much about producing elitism. But what it will do for many artists is to give them a little more leverage in demanding a greater share of grant budgets. They'll have a little more muscle to get grants and do what is traditional and obey the laws of patronage.
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As a researcher, writer and activist over the last dozen years in the student movement and the union movement, I have become progressively less interested in symbolic identification and more concerned about the practical use of ideas. The influence of Marx has increased. Originally, in the heady days of the new left — we sometimes thought that the "realm of freedom" had already arrived — that influence was second-hand and dimly perceived during collective actions. Later, the inter-tendency struggles in the student unions demanded individual theoretical knowledge, and my political development was influenced by marxist writers such as Mandel and Lenin. It was only after that that I started to read Marx directly.

In common with most activists I had been repelled by various "academic marxists" and tended to extol practice at the expense of serious theoretical work. I now think that was as great a mistake as to pursue theory to the exclusion of practice. Further, the primary unsolved problems are not practical (even organisational!) but theoretical.

It is difficult to trace the influence of Marx in one's political work because sometimes prior experiences were confirmed by the ideas, while on other occasions the reading was assimilated first, changing actions as a result.

Marx's work is an essential starting point in analysing any economic issue, useful in political matters and provides a methodological aspect of all inquiry. Sometimes it contains complete arguments of immediate relevance. The "wages cause inflation" argument is convincingly refuted in Chapter 50, Volume 3 of Capital, for example. (Some of our contemporary "Marxists" would do well to read it.) The Grundrisse anticipates the automation of production and the elimination of labour from the production process. Marx's critique of Adam Smith resembles the necessary, and so far unwritten, critique of Milton Friedman. Marx is an essential starting point in the development of new bodies of theory and new syntheses, such as the unwritten political economy of education and the unwritten (notwithstanding Brian Fitzpatrick and the early Intervention writers) "development of capitalism in Australia".

I have no sympathy with those who abandon the labour theory of value, without replacing it with a superior theory, and call themselves Marxist. This is the crucial achievement, uniting Marx's starting point (labour) with the mathematical logic of the production process. The unity of science and ideology. Chop out the science, and Marx is left as a sort of ethical humanist who disliked low pay and occupational injuries, but didn't understand what was really happening. Which means that we can't either.

I am continuously attracted by the rigor and objectivity of Marx's argument, and its anti-dogmatic nature. Marx confirms a practical political lesson of my student work; that there must be no division between what is politically desirable and intellectually correct. Otherwise we render our goals separate from our actions, making those goals utopian. The separation of means and ends is really the separation of science and politics. And people are not fools; if their leaders lie to them it becomes apparent. Consciousness is deadened by these processes.

In the First International, says Lenin:

By uniting the labour movement of various countries, by striving to direct into the channel of joint activity the various forms of non-proletarian, pre-Marxist socialism (Mazzini, Proudhon, Bakunin, liberal trade unionism in England, Lassallean vacillations to the Right in Germany, etc.), and by combating the theories of all these sects and schools, Marx hammered out a uniform tactic for the proletarian struggle of the working class in the various countries.
An open ideological struggle, and striving to establish unity on a conscious basis is not sectarian but the opposite. Sectarianism is one of our single great obstacles, leading to barren exchange of slogans rather than argument, setting up divisions that are social rather than political. I have met good activists and thinkers in every left tendency, bar none — when they behaved as if their interests were based on those of the movement and not of their own group.

The passage from Marx that had the greatest effect on me when I read it was in the third of the Theses on Feuerbach:

"The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice." 

This sentence provided the necessary extension of the feminist insight "the personal is political" by placing it in an historical context. "Liberation is an historical and not a mental act" (German Ideology). The power of the women's movement to induce a deep internalisation of its principles in women and men was greatest when the movement also drew those same women and men into external political campaigns. Radical oppositional politics makes you sharply confront yourself, and each other. The "personal is political" by itself maintained the internalisation process, but permitted the abandonment of practical politics by many who retreated into privatisation and various ghettos. Many people I knew took that sort of step at the end of the new left era; later many women comrades did the same. But the women who stayed in politics, pursuing the fuller principle in the Theses tended to reveal a deeper political commitment than men. In my experience in Victoria, women activists carried the student unions and the teacher unions from the mid-seventies on, more particularly at the grassroots level. How many new activists now undergo such a thorough politicisation?

I can think of at least four reasons for maintaining a classical marxist "optimism". Firstly, although the means of technological destruction are established, so are the means of the elimination of want and drudgery. Secondly, while the hegemony of conservatism in Australia seems stable, history shows that shifts in stability can occur sharply. Political upheaval is occurring in both capitalist and post-capitalist countries, the developments in the latter being the more exciting and significant. Thirdly, we should never lose sight of the potential that human beings can show when they start to become political and break out of the cycle of oppression and repression. It is certain that in the future such changes will occur in people that we know, and possibly whole groups of people.

Fourthly, and more personally, I have been able to gradually accumulate knowledge and confidence through the processes of experience and study. The more one understands, the more one is able to assess what is determined and what can be changed through individual or collective activity. This knowledge maximises our freedom and our power to make history. As Marx said: "Freedom is the appreciation of necessity". The road to socialism and beyond has been characterised as a continuous journey from necessity to freedom. As I gradually develop more control over the forces that govern my own life, and a little further knowledge of how to influence history, I sometimes sense this transition from necessity to freedom in my own existence. It is the source of optimism.

Lastly (and the location of my own work reminds me of this) there is another passage from the Theses:

"It is essential to educate the educator."

I believe that this dictum applies to political activists and our anti-theoretical political parties as much as it does to teachers or researchers, and that the "education" of the "educator" must be both practical and theoretical.

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory, but is a practical question. (We) must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power ... of (our) thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question.

It is necessary to be revolutionary intellectuals, and all activists have the potential to assume that role.

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

Marx did.
Are we facing a new Cold War? The blusterings and sabre rattlings of the Reagan Administration together with its sinister activities in the Central America would indicate that we are already in one. But what about the Russians? Do they also have their nuclear hawkes and their worst-case theorists? The balance of the world's forces has substantially altered since the 1950s. The People's Republic of China, a wild card in the world power game, is now a major nuclear power. The non-aligned movement has developed and expanded its influence and the anti-war movement seems to be riding the crest of a popular wave of concern. But the existence of an increasing number of volatile smaller states possessing nuclear capacity means that the Cold War of the 1980s could be more unstable and menacing than the sterile power plays of the 1950's. In this article a controversial argument is put forward that the policies of both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. is determined by self-interest as interpreted by their social and military elites.

KEN ENDERBY

The election of Ronald Reagan marked the culmination of a concerted campaign by those on the extreme Right of American politics to refreeze their nation's relations with its principal adversary, the Soviet Union, and to return the world to the Cold War atmosphere of the nineteen forties, fifties and sixties. And despite the monumental changes which have taken place if the world since the Cold War was at its height, the campaign has met with spectacular, if temporary, success — at a governmental level at least.

What factors have brought about this decisive shift in political thinking in America, a development which has undoubtedly propelled the world closer towards the nuclear precipice? What is the Russian attitude to the new political climate? And more fundamentally, what is the nature of the so-called "New Cold War" and how does it relate to the original Cold War and to the period known as detente? All these questions require answers if we are to devise a phenomenon which now directly jeopardises our future security.

In the view of America's hard-liners (the so-called "hawks"), there is nothing particularly new about the New Cold War. They see it as simply a return to the sensible policies which a well-meaning but naive America chose to abandon after ignominious defeat in the Viet Nam War. The Soviet Union, they argue, "duped" America into believing that cooperation was possible, while relentlessly pursuing its plans for world domination. Paul Nitze, co-founder of the hawkish Committee on the Present Danger, and currently a senior Reagan foreign policy adviser and arms control negotiator, expressed this myopic world view in Foreign Affairs journal: "The Kremlin leaders do not want war; they want the world. They believe it unlikely, however, that the West will let them have the world without a fight." Nitze and his colleagues believe that most of the world's ailments are attributable to the Soviet Union: "For example, it appears probable that the Red Brigades in Italy, the assault on the Mosque in Mecca, and the seizure of the American hostages in Iran were supported and perhaps instigated by agents of the Soviet bloc."

The fact that there is no hard evidence for such allegations is irrelevant, for the hawks base their case largely on recent examples of Soviet military involvement in Angola, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. And it is this concept of a ruthless and relentless communist expansionism which has, they claim, forced the United States, to adopt a tough, uncompromising and interventionist stance of its own.

To give these men their due, one must certainly agree that the Soviet Union has been responsible for many dangerous and provocative actions. But the Soviet Union has always acted in this fashion, and a brief glance through the pages of American history will show that the United States has behaved no differently (in fact its behaviour has been considerably worse). Rather than being a decisive factor in reinvigorating the Cold War, Russian actions have merely served as a pretext to justify a shift in American foreign policy whose roots lie elsewhere. It must be remembered that the invasion of Afghanistan took place fully two and a half years after American hawks began calling for a tougher, more militant stand against the Soviet Union. If anything, the Russian decision to re-establish control in that country by military means was encouraged by what was undoubtedly perceived as a dangerous and provocative change in American foreign policy. It is no coincidence that the invasion took place
just two weeks after the NATO decision to deploy Pershing and Cruise missiles in Western Europe. These missiles will, for the first time, give NATO the option of initiating a devastating nuclear strike against military targets in the Soviet Union, a development which will, ironically, in the event of a crisis, give the Russians a strong motivation to destroy these missiles before they can be used. The Russians tried very hard to forestall deployment of these weapons, offering to freeze production of their own SS20s which were then only very few in number, but no American response was forthcoming.

The point which needs to be made is that the New Cold War has done nothing to curb the Russians — they are still in Afghanistan and Ethiopia (and Eastern Europe) and look like remaining there for some time to come. Indeed, there was never any possibility the United States could do anything to change Soviet policy by adopting a confrontationist stance. The overriding lesson of the 1950s is that posturing and proselytising are entirely lost on the adversary during a climate of tension and conflict. In fact, ironically, Soviet adventurism was at its peak during the period of maximum American diplomatic and military coercion (1947-1953). The times when Soviet co-operation has been most forthcoming have been during partial thaws in the Cold War. The Partial Test Ban Treaty and a whole series of similar agreements were signed in the 12 months following the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, before Kennedy and Khrushchev were both removed from office. Similarly, SALT emerged during the early days of detente, a period when the Soviets dramatically increased the quota of Jews permitted to leave the country. Now, with the refreezing of the Cold War, the number leaving has been reduced to a trickle.5

Mounted Pershing 1 missile in West Germany

Has this lesson simply been lost on the hawks? In many cases the answer is probably yes; however, men such as Paul Nitze have been close to the seat of power for a long time (Nitze himself was a senior foreign policy adviser to President Truman, and chaired the committee which produced NSC-68, the blueprint for the Cold War), and for all we might dislike them and disagree with them, we must give them credit for intelligence and cunning. These men are acutely aware that the Cold War serves as a vital instrument in the exercise of American power. And, as we shall see, the roots of the New Cold War lie primarily outside the orbit of the superpower military confrontation.

Nonetheless, that confrontation is still the basis of the Cold War world order, and it has become so widely accepted that it is now believed by most people to be both permanent and inevitable. The division of the world into two armed camps is nowhere more evident than in Germany, particularly since the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. According to the unending stream of propaganda emanating from both camps, the world is undergoing an ideological struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil (of course which superpower represents which forces depends entirely upon whom one chooses to believe), and smaller nations must take shelter beneath the ideological and military umbrella of the one superpower, for fear of being engulfed by the immutably aggressive designs of the other. So the argument goes.

In order to meet the seriousness of the threat as it is presented to the public, each superpower has deployed a gruesome array of sophisticated weaponry, and stands poised to rain unparalleled destruction on its adversary at what is literally a moment's notice. An arms race of this magnitude is unavoidable given the nature of the Cold War, and the great tragedy is that this arms race will undoubtedly destroy us unless the Cold War can be rapidly and permanently terminated. Again, most of the hawks are well aware of this, as evidenced, by their admission of the ultimate need for nuclear disarmament. The Reagan administration has proposed a Soviet-American arms reduction of one-third of existing strategic nuclear stockpiles. But because it publicly argues that the Soviets can never be trusted to keep their word, the administration has a very convenient excuse for giving disarmament negotiations only perfunctory attention. The problem is that the short term benefits derived from prolonging the Cold War are perceived as being more important than the long term advantages of superpower co-operation. And so leaders cling to an antiquated and dangerous world order which at least promises certainty, if not security.
Brezhnev's Russia is represented by power, privilege, and a holiday house on the Black Sea. The Russia most of its citizens know is represented by petty corruption, shortages of consumer goods, and a society of existential freedoms. Similarly, Ronald Reagan's America is symbolised by corporate power, fabulous wealth, and a 700 acre ranch at Santa Barbara; while that of millions of its citizens is symbolised by rampant crime, corporate corruption, and social injustice on a scale only understood by those who are involved in the great cities of urban America. The fact that the American citizen had no better choice for President than that between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan is ample evidence that his/her political influence is, in practice, little better than that of his/her Soviet counterpart. The American elite discovered long ago that democracy was no threat to privilege as long as it remained ineffective.

In America's case, the Cold War has been absolutely essential for the pursuit of its foreign policy goals. A good example of this is the CIA-organised coup which toppled the government of Guatemala in 1954. The real reason the United States chose to take this illicit action was because the American-owned United Fruit Company objected to the Guatemalan government's decision to expropriate unused company lands and redistribute them to landless peasants. But the Eisenhower administration was not prepared to accept the overthrow of a democratically-elected government in the name of preserving United Fruits land holdings. The American people have never held the free enterprise principle to be absolutely sacrosanct, for leaders, actions in the name of "peace" was fought to enable America to break free economically from Britain. Consequently, Eisenhower "sold" the coup to the public as necessary in order to prevent Guatemala from going communist (the public, of course, was never told the CIA was actually behind the coup, merely that the new Guatemalan government should be pro-American and economically highly effective, for a radically left-wing Guatemala raised the spectre of Soviet troops and nuclear weapons in the western hemisphere, a development which would pose a military threat to the United States. And so the Cold War preserved United Fruits' lands and has kept Guatemala in a state of extreme poverty ever since. The same can be said of a dozen other nations in which the United States has exerted its political, economic and military muscle to topple "unfriendly" regimes (Iran, Brazil, Indonesia, Ecuador, Zaire, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Viet Nam, etc.).

Similarly, when the Soviets wish to extract political reforms in Eastern Europe, they justify their actions by raising the spectre of American "imperialism" and its concomitant military threat. The Soviet people are understandably sensitive about invasion from the West (having lost over 20 million people in the last World War) and are quite prepared to support their actions in the name of "peace." In reality, of course, the Soviet elite is unwilling to permit any real freedom in the Eastern bloc for fear it might spread to the Soviet Union and destroy its system of privilege.

And so the Cold War has evolved as a means of accomplishing both of these things. In most cases it is a competition between two ideologically different social systems which, in essence, exist in pursuit of somewhat similar domestic goals. The world has been divided into two "spheres of influence" so that each superpower may effectively control what it deems as its own. This is not, of course, to imply that the Cold War has not been a contest of the superpowers in developing this world order, despite the fact that Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin were all well aware of what they were doing when they agreed on the principle of "spheres of influence" at the Yalta Conference in February 1945.
Rather, the system evolved as a result of unilateral actions taken by each of the partners in the Grand Alliance. Roosevelt was intelligent enough to realise that the Russians had legitimate fears about a reunited and rearmed Germany, and would expect to be adequately compensated if they were to accept a world order in which virtually the entire globe would be an American sphere of influence.

Despite later denials by the Truman administration, the evidence is quite conclusive that Churchill and Roosevelt sacrificed Eastern Europe to the whims of the Soviet dictator. There was little else they could do, given the fact that Soviet troops occupied these countries (many of which had fought loyally for the Nazis). The United States and Britain had control over the areas which were of economic importance (Western Europe, Greece, Japan, the Middle East). As far as they were concerned, Eastern Europe was of little interest (except for Romania, which had American-owned oil fields) and was a small price to pay for a free hand in the West.

The Russian reign of terror in the East was preceded by a British and American reign of terror in the West, particularly in Greece where the left was very strong. Stalin demonstrated his ruthlessly counter-revolutionary nature by abandoning the left in the West, and by even admonishing Tito for giving aid to the Greek communists during the Civil War. The Cold War began as a ruthlessly trade-off, with the superpowers sacrificing the ideals they publicly espoused in pursuit of the greater goals of "national security" and "national interest" (the Russians pursuing the former and the Americans pursuing the latter).

Of course, following the death of Franklin Roosevelt and the departure of his clique of foreign policy advisers (Stimson, Wallace, Hull), the inexperienced and overconfident Harry Truman chose to overturn the carefully evolved postwar plans of his predecessor, and return American policy to the ideals of Woodrow Wilson. Truman firmly believed in the policy of Open Door — that no corner of the globe should be closed to American economic penetration. Given the predominance of American economic power (America was responsible for half the world's industrial output and half its financial reserves in 1945), the Open Door principle was tantamount to a global sphere of American influence. And, naturally, a Soviet sphere of influence was quite incompatible with this world view. But, as Roosevelt had been acutely aware, like it or not, there was nothing America could do about the Soviet sphere, short of armed conflict which, of course, was totally out of the question.

Despite the rapid deterioration of superpower relations after the inauguration of Harry Truman, Czechoslovakia still managed to maintain its independence until February 1948 when a domestic crisis induced President Beneš to dissolve the government and hand over power to the communists. In fact, with the exception of Poland (whose London-based government refused to co-operate in any way with the Soviet Union), none of the Eastern European states lost its independence until well into 1946, when it became clear to Stalin that the United States had reneged on its promise to exact reparations from the Western sectors of Germany. Reparations threatened to impede the economic recovery of the three Western-controlled sectors of Germany and, more importantly, threatened to increase the appeal of socialism. By 1946, the preservation of the capitalist world order had become a much higher priority than the preservation of good relations with the Soviet Union. Russia’s economic reconstruction was the last thing the Truman Administration wanted to hasten.

And so Stalin was left with little option (at least as he saw it) other than to make the eastern Axis states pay for some of the damage caused to Russia during the war. The Soviet sphere of influence became a sphere of control — a political reality which has changed little to this day. The solution was brutal, but far from inevitable. Finland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Manchuria and Northern Iran were all defeated or occupied by Soviet troops and are all independent today. They owe their freedom not to the West, but to a unilateral Soviet decision to relinquish power (which they could very easily have consolidated, had they so desired). If there is a way to ease the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe, it lies not in the perpetuation of the Cold War, for it was the Cold War which was responsible for the Soviets seizing control in the first place. Rather, it lies in a gradual thawing of the diplomatic freeze and in a return to friendly, non-confrontationist relations.

It must be very doubtful that American political leaders (with the exception of President Reagan) seriously believe that bellicose rhetoric can be of any help to the people of Poland. If anything, such rhetoric merely encourages the continuation of repression, for a decision to abandon Poland would appear to the world as a sign of Russian weakness in the face of American resolve. Such a decision would also set an unacceptable precedent, giving the United States the impression it could get whatever it wanted by simply pushing hard enough. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that the American government seriously wants the repression to cease, for if it did, it would be much harder for the hawks to paint the Soviet Union in the image of the instable aggressor. Similarly, it is unlikely the Soviets seriously want the United States to pull out of Central America for to do so would rob them of a veritable propaganda goldmine. Where would they be if there were no visible signs of US militaristic imperialism?

Grandstanding in the name of “freedom” or “equality” has become a staple method by which both superpowers reinforce the stereotyped images of the Cold War. They play on human nature, on our desire to identify who we are as individuals and as nations by who we are not. If no international “bad guy” existed, we couldn’t possibly be the “good guy”. The superpowers have both used this principle of “bad guy—good guy” exclusion” to unify their diverse ethnic populations.
MORE COLD WAR

PETER KENNARD
The invasion of Czechoslovakia destroyed many illusions the international communist movement had about the nature of Soviet ideology. Previously, loyal communist parties condemned the Soviet action, and set about redefining their relationship with that country. Similarly, the Viet Nam War brought the United States condemnation from its NATO allies and brought millions of previous apathetic citizens out into the streets to protest their government’s policies. For the first time ever, American democracy was beginning to work and was threatening to inhibit the elite’s ability to exert American power around the globe to protect its economic interests.

Both superpowers were facing ideological crises, and needed a breathing space to rebuild their domestic consensus and to reassure their allies that they were still the “good guys”. What emerged was a convenient mechanism for pursuing the self-interest of their respective elites. Nevertheless, the superpowers have been having increasing difficulty keeping their citizens and their allies in line. This became a particularly serious problem in the late 1960s when the United States was napalming Vietnamese women and children in the name of “freedom”, and when the Soviet Union was shooting Czechoslovaksians in the name of “peace”.

T he “crisis of democracy”, as the Triatleral Commission came to call the problem, became alarmingly clear in 1976 when Angola fell to the Cuban-backed marxist MPLA.19 The Ford administration desperately pleaded for sufficient funds to prolong the civil war, but the Senate refused, seeing no purpose in continued American involvement. The marxist forces had guaranteed not to interfere with Gulf Oil’s drilling operations (in fact, Gulf’s operations were currently being guarded by Cuban troops!), so there was no threat to American economic interests.20 The real threat was that a leftist victory might set a precedent in Africa and start a veritable chain of social upheaval among the world’s most deprived nations, particularly those upon which the United States depended for cheap resources and energy (Nigeria, Zaire, Zambia, Rhodesia, South Africa).21 Ford and Kissinger were primarily concerned with demonstrating to the world that America was still willing and able to defend its interests.

But detente ended when the right wing of American capitalism realised that none of these goals was being realised. Rather than permitting America to rebuild its domestic consensus in support of intervention, accommodation with the Soviet Union was making it harder to portray that nation as the cause of all of America’s international problems. The concept of the “international communist conspiracy” had lost its credibility now that America was fraternising with the “enemy”. The Senate investigated the FBI and the CIA and began to curtail their power to operate as subversive organisations. Even the power of the president was reduced with the introduction of the War Powers Act in 1973.

Another major factor at work was the desire by Western multinationals to break into the lucrative Russian market. The American corporate elite has never given up hope of one day reintegrating the Soviet Union into the world capitalist economy.17 The multinationals hoped that, through the increased contact detente would allow, they could set up factories in the Soviet Union and take advantage of its cheap, state-controlled labour (conditions they would love to have in the United States). They also expected the volume of trade to rise dramatically. The Triatleralists, particularly Henry Kissinger, hoped that the Russians could be “bought off” from supporting national liberation movements around the world in exchange for easy access to much sought-after Western technology.18

A
Warsaw, Poland, in May 1982. Police disperse crowd with water cannon

Unfortunately, however, a great deal has changed since the Cold War was at its height. In the first place, America's allies are no longer as compliant as they were. Many have been frightened by the militant rhetoric emanating from their hegemonic ally. Large numbers of young people simply don't believe the Cold War propaganda any more. Peace movements are growing rapidly and are exerting considerable influence on government policy in Western Europe. The new awareness is even starting to spread into Eastern Europe. Romania recently witnessed peace marches in which 300,000 people participated, calling for nuclear disarmament by both the superpowers. This call was reiterated by the Romanian president in December 1981.

The allied nations are beginning to realise that their interests and those of their "protectors" are not necessarily the same. This is particularly the case in the Third World, where American allies are being ruthlessly exploited and plundered. Their populations are realizing in increasing numbers that their enemy is not the Soviet Union, or Viet Nam, or Cuba or any other communist bogey, but is, in fact, the capitalist system itself and the multinational corporations which own their economies, buy the allegiance of their corrupt elites, and support whatever repression is necessary to keep the resources and profits flowing. In South Korea and the Philippines, for example, the American military bases exist not to defend these countries from enemy attack, but to defend American economic interests from internal rebellion and revolution.

This is the principal reason the Cold War warriors have been calling for a major new build-up in armaments. The United States already has many times more strategic nuclear weapons than it needs to adequately deter the Soviet Union from attacking either the American homeland, Europe or Japan. What it lacked in the mid-1970s, however, was a large, well-armed, conventional force, trained in the tactics of counter-insurgency and ready to be sent to wherever American interests needed defending. This gap has now been filled by the Rapid Deployment Force, an airborne strike-force of 200,000 men which will serve to project American power to all four corners of the globe. The RDF's formation was publicly justified as a response to the invasion of Afghanistan. However, the decision was actually leaked to the press at the beginning of 1978, almost two years before the Russian action. The hostage crisis, which gave the American public a stark view of their nation as a "helpless giant" in the face of Third World nationalism "gone mad", was brilliantly orchestrated to elicit a flag-waving, guns-blazing, "nuke 'em till they glow" response. The Carter doctrine of explicitly threatening to resort to the first use of nuclear weapons as a means of defending American interests in the Middle East marked the spectacular climax of a campaign which began three years before. It is a testament to the power of the American elite that a man who came to power promising nuclear disarmament and the continuation of detente, should have finished his political career by initiating the largest peacetime armaments build-up in American history.

The tragedy is that the lesson of Viet Nam is still as valid today as it was a decade ago: revolutionary movements cannot forever be dealt with by resort to arms. It is only natural that people will choose to fight to better their lives when faced with gross deprivation (and especially when surrounded by opulence). American interests will remain under threat as long as that nation supports the institutions of repression. Similarly, the threat to communism in Eastern Europe will remain as long as the Soviet Union refuses to grant the kind of political and economic reforms groups like Solidarity are demanding.

The answer to the world's current problems lies outside the realm of Cold War politics. It lies in the restructuring of the world political and economic order towards a more equitable distribution of the planet's resources. It lies in the realisation that all peoples have the right to a decent, dignified and free existence, and that nations are more than just spheres of influence to be used, abused and cast aside. The Cold War has become a dangerous anachronism which stifles the very changes necessary to ensure the survival of civilisation. It must be ended rapidly or it will end us.
The Trilateral Commission is an international organisation of European, Japanese and American businessmen who believe that excessive competition between Western nations is weakening their hold over the economies of the developing world. They are particularly disturbed by the demand for a New International Economic Order. Their members include Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, David Rockefeller, Cyrus Vance, Bzigniew Brzezinski and a large percentage of the American business elite.

19. In 1975 the Trilateral Commission published a book entitled The Crisis of Democracy (New York, 1975) in which it suggests that American democracy was becoming far too democratic for its own good: "... the effective operation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and non-involvement on the part of some individuals and groups" (p. 114). These groups include, of course, leftists and peace activists. The book concludes: "We have come to recognise that there are potentially desirable limits to the indefinite extension of political democracy. Democracy will have a longer life if it has a more balanced existence." (p.115). This is really just a subtle way of saying that democracy is tolerable only so long as it is powerless to affect the decisions of the nation's traditional ruling elite.


21. Half of America's coal comes from Zaire, a nation where one-third of the population is undernourished, and where food aid is sold off to the wealthy dictator Robert Mobutu's uncle. 97% of the world's known chrome reserves are in South Africa and Zimbabwe. South Africa (including Namibia) has 86% of the world's platinum, 64% of its vanadium, 48% of its manganese, and 40% of its gold. Only the USSR is more self-sufficient in minerals than South Africa. See Barnet, The Lean years, ch. 5.

22. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara estimated (in 1967) that the United States needed only 400 deliverable strategic nuclear warheads to deter a Soviet attack. The U.S. currently has 25 times this number of such warheads, as well as 50 times as many tactical nuclear weapons.


24. For detailed discussion on recent developments in nuclear policy, see K. Enderby, "The Logic of Madness: The Origin and Meaning of Nuclear Policy". For further detail on the Rapid Deployment Force, see Michael T. Klare, "Is Exxon Worth dying For", in The Progressive, July 1980.

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Recommended price $12.95 (paperback).

Noel Butlin is well known for his work on Australian economic growth in the late 19th century. Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, basically within a Keynesian framework, he emphasised the vital role of government-assisted immigration and government borrowing and investment in the process of capital formation and economic growth — even using the term "colonial socialism" to describe the Australian economic system of that time.

I would prefer the term "colonial governmentalism" (coined by W. Pember Reeves in his State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand). "Socialism" is a misnomer for the main means of production remained in private hands, production was geared to private profit, and regulated mainly by market forces, and there was nothing resembling a planned economy. Indeed, the role of the government was clearly to serve capitalist interests by building up the infrastructure that they needed to operate profitably, above all the transport and communications network. There was nothing "proletarian" about the state — parliaments were monopolised by the colonial bourgeoisie — and if late 19th-century Australia was a "working man’s paradise" it was only because the pace of growth was so rapid that full employment was the norm, despite assisted immigration.

But there is no doubting the importance of the phenomenon, whatever name one chooses to attach to it. According to Butlin’s estimates, from 1860 to 1890 public investment accounted for about 40 percent of all capital formation. There can be little doubt that Australia experienced very rapid growth in this period in large part because colonial governments, by deliberate action, raised the rate of investment well above that determined by free market forces. Since it was financed by overseas borrowing they were able to do it without placing any heavy demands on current incomes in Australia. At a time when the crudest laissez-faire dogmas have again become fashionable, and the current economic stagnation is widely blamed on the strangulation of private initiative by "big government" it is useful to be reminded of such basic facts of economic life.

In the present work Butlin and his co-authors have focused on the role of the public sector in the 20th-century Australian economy. While mindful of current political debates and academic arguments about the proper role of government, they have sought to avoid entanglement in them. Instead, they have tried to give these debates some "real grounding" in the evidence of this historical record but have left the "lessons of history" to others to draw out. While this is preferable to the a priori dogmas on this point common among theoretical economists, it means that the book is disappointingly inconclusive. The book is explicitly written for fellow academics rather than the general reader and thus in the opaque language that is assumed to be obligatory on such occasions. This is a pity, for some important points which deserve to be known by a wider audience emerge in the course of their discussion.

At the start they reject the conventional measures of the "size of government", such as the ratio of public spending to gross domestic product (GDP) or public employment to total employment. These give no real indication of the economic impact of government which may be felt through regulation of private enterprise as much as through direct public action, and through the patterns of revenue-raising as much as through the level of expenditure. The authors argue that government’s relatively constant share of GDP and employment obscures important shifts in the nature of government’s role. They try to clarify this by focusing on the way in which government action has altered patterns of decision-making, resource allocation and the distribution of income and wealth.
One of the central themes of this book is "the decline of colonial socialism" after 1930. In the first three decades of the 20th century, Australian governments (the state governments were still more important than the federal government in many ways) pushed ahead with investments in rail, trams, roads, water and sewerage, port and harbor facilities and electricity supply at a time when private investment tended to stagnate. The result was that by the 1920s, governments were responsible for around 50 percent of capital formation in Australia. But from the 1930s, this figure fell slowly to about a third, despite large investments in telecommunications and air transport in the post-war years.

There are a number of reasons for this "decline of colonial socialism". Partly, it is a reflection of the fact that the railways were the backbone of 19th-century public enterprise, and since the 1930s they (and public transport generally) have lost ground to the private car and the truck. Though an increasing amount of public investment went into urban areas the basic rationale of much government action at this time was the importation of labour and capital and the provision of infrastructure to accelerate rural development. But by the 1930s, the dream of "Australia unlimited" was crumbling into dust as low prices, high costs, poor markets and heavy debts ruined the marginal farmer and rolled back the limits of settlement. By contrast, post-war settlement was centred on urban manufacturing and did not require such extensive public infrastructure. Assisted immigration was revived to provide an expanding workforce, but public enterprise was not.

The "decline of colonial socialism" was also the result of more directly political considerations. The very prominence of public enterprise in Australia before 1929 led many to blame it rather than the private sector for the Great Depression, with the result that the greatest crisis in the history of the capitalist system led to an upsurge of laissez-faire rhetoric and the deliberate winding back of direct government action in favour of "free enterprise" — especially by the Menzies government in the 1950s. As Butlin, Barnard and Pincus point out, this response to the Depression contrasted with that of most western countries.

An underlying reason for this decline of government action was that "colonial socialism" had always depended on overseas borrowing. These funds dried up in 1930 leaving the Australian economy exposed to a crippling burden of public debt at the same time as the private sector slumped. This severely limited the possibility of pushing ahead with more public enterprise: the government had to squeeze already depressed local incomes to pay for the triumphs and follies of the past and was in no position to undertake new ones. Whereas previously the relation between public enterprise and local business interests had been, in the author's words, "supportive" they now became "adversary". While the Labor Party's fury was directed against "debt slavery" and "overseas financiers" and that of the UAP/Liberal Party (whose backers often had close connections with British financial institutions) against "big government", they converged on ensuring that this particular pattern of development would not recur.

For the liberal true-believer, however, the real paradox of the story is that the erosion of "colonial socialism" did not usher in the laissez-faire paradise. Instead, it spawned an unprecedented expansion of government regulation of the private sector at all levels and an increasing centralisation of political authority as Canberra asserted its dominance over the states. The gulf between the rhetoric of "free enterprise" and the actions of Liberal governments became wider than ever.

Government intervention in the workings of the private sector began essentially with Arbitration at the turn of the century and was extended by attempts to build up local manufacturing through tariff protection and import substitution. In turn, it helped stimulate the organisation of private interest groups and their attempts to influence government policy. The result was, by the interwar years, what the authors describe as an "intimate confluence of public and private action and decision-making". The slogan "protection all round" reflected an increased awareness of a symbiotic relationship between manufacturers, rural producers and wage-earners and a consciousness of the need for political accommodation of these groups.

World War II precipitated the decisive shift in power from state governments to the federal government and was followed by conscious efforts (inspired by the wartime experience and Keynesian theories) to ensure stable growth by budgetary manipulations, monetary controls and import quotas. It also saw the consolidation of large-scale enterprise in industry and of centralised business associations. Government regulation of the private sector thus grew hand-in-hand with the cartelisation of the economy and the influence of organised business in government. "From this development", the authors sum up, flowed the extension of monopolistic practices of almost every...

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sort, with greater or less active assistance but almost always with legal permission given by the federal and state governments. Thus, we see that, liberated from the fetters of "colonial socialism", "free enterprise" embraced not the spartan ideals of competition advocated in the textbooks, but the patterns of private monopoly, restrictive practices and government regulation typical of advanced capitalism.

The third major trend discussed by Butlin, Barnard and Pincus is the growth of welfare and social services. The authors find the common belief that this has involved redistribution of income from the well-to-do to the poor to be a "curious myth". It was never intended to do this and there is no evidence to suggest that it has. The public welfare system was designed in the manner of a compulsory insurance scheme, benefits being financed by taxing lower-income brackets. As the authors put it, public welfare has operated as "a self-supporting system, organised through coercive taxation, of wage-earner provision of protection for their kind". In a sense, Fraser's introduction of taxation on unemployment benefits is the logical conclusion of the whole trend. As for the expansion of education and public health services, the major beneficiaries have been the better-off rather than the poor, and since the 1950s the trend has been towards publicly guided private delivery of these services rather than direct public provision. Whatever benefits may have flowed from this, redistribution was not one of them. "Underlying Australian attitudes," they conclude, "there was comparatively little concern with equity."

Butlin, Barnard and Pincus have made a valuable contribution to Australian economic history and to discussions on the role of the state in a capitalist economy. It is a pity that they restricted themselves to the descriptive level and did not try to explain more fully the patterns they identified. If they had done this, since they observe that orthodox theories of public finance were of little use in their investigation, they would perhaps have found it necessary to take the concept of "capitalism" seriously rather than treating it as just a catchphrase for the book's title.

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THE FATE OF THE EARTH,
by Jonathon Schell.
Published by Picador/Cape
$5.96 at the International
Bookshop.

THE EARTH’S FATE

This volume reprints three articles on
the nuclear dilemma from the New
Yorker. Their appearance in such a
journal helps explain the growing
opposition to the nuclear arms race in the
United States. While atomic scientists
may have first sounded the alarm in 1945,
it is now being echoed throughout the
scientific, media, and religious worlds.
Schell’s book helps to carry their message
to non-experts whose response will
ultimately be decisive.

The first part of the book, “A Republic
of Insects and Grass”, outlines the
probable effects of a large-scale nuclear
exchange. Schell recognises that most
people shrink from the unimaginable
horror of a holocaust but he leads the
reader “through the valley of the shadow
of death” with great skill. One is actually
compelled to go through it.

It helps the reader to get through this
chapter by the revelation that some of the
effects of nuclear war border on the
ridiculous. Thus, while the notion of “the
economy” will be meaningless for the
unlucky survivors, just one of the multi-
kiloton weapons detonated 125 miles
above Omaha, Nebraska, will generate
an electromagnetic pulse capable of
crippling all the unshielded computers
from Mexico to Canada.

The only new data which could be
added to Schell’s study relates to long-
term effects on climate. Frank Barnaby,
talked on the ABC’s Science Show
on August 21 last year, estimated that
1,400 million, or about one quarter of the
earth’s population would die from
starvation in both hemispheres. The
clouds of dust and smog would obliterate
the sun for months and food production
would be reduced to near zero in the main
food-producing regions. This opinion is
supported by Joseph Rotblat, Emeritus
Professor of Physics at the University of
London who is one of the leading figures
in the Pugwash Movement.

Both American and Soviet authorities
agree that a full-scale nuclear exchange
would mean the end of civilisation, if not
the end of the human species. But insects
are unusually resistant to radiation and
the roots of many grasses survive
underground for considerable periods.
An earth deprived of most of its
sterrestrial species, strange insects and
grasses would settle down to a new
cology.

In The Second Death Schell
introduces the notion that the
destruction of the species implies that the
countless numbers of the unborn, who
can perhaps look forward to happiness in
a better world, are also to be eliminated:
He writes: “To kill a human is murder,
and there are some who believe that to
abort a foetus is also murder, but what
crime is it to cancel the numberless

multitude of unconceived people? In
what court is such a crime to be judged?”

He goes on to point out that by
extinguishing the species we also destroy
all cultural heritage and, in a sense,
betray the efforts of humanity over
millions of years. Among Reagan’s
supporters are a few Christian
fundamentalists who suggest that the
nuclear holocaust is the Armageddon
threatened by God in the Bible. Schell
replies that this view “arrogates to
ourselves not only God’s knowledge but
also His will”. He adds that Christ is
believed to have died to save the world,
not to destroy it.

I found the third section of the book
“The Choice” less satisfactory. While his
philosophic insight continues to be
perceptive — the holocaust would
certainly mean the end of war since there
would ultimately be no-one to fight it —
his command of history falls short.

While it is popular in some quarters to
equate the policies and much of the
behaviour of the United States and the
Soviet Union, and much suggests that
Schell takes this view, I do not believe it
can be supported by history which is a
good deal better than much of the
scientific data that Schell draws on. The
evidence that the first use of the atom
bomb had little to do with WWII and
much with the preparations for WWIII is
compelling. As Schell has pointed out
earlier, “overkill” is senseless and
irrational but he does not point out that
the continued arms race makes sense to
those who profit from it, and to those
who hope to break the Soviet economy
with massive arms spending. This is
certainly understood by both the US and
Soviet leaderships, and I believe, by
many in the USSR and Europe. Until it is
equally understood by the peoples of the
US and her not-so-reluctant allies, I fail
to see how Schell’s support for so many
admirable goals will make the necessary
progress.

The book is certainly a powerful
addition to those in constant use in the
peace struggle. It has been
enthusiastically received by the reviewers
cited on the back cover. I would,
however, warn that, in many places it is
very tightly argued and those not used to
such material might tire after the first
hundred pages. I had to read some parts
three or four times and found a pencil for
notation useful. But it will certainly be of
use in invading areas still to be reached by
the peace movement.

Jack Legge was a professor in the
science faculty at Melbourne
University until his recent
retirement.
became a political activist during the late 1960s and early '70s. The struggles of this period around Australian involvement in Viet Nam, draft resistance, feminism, apartheid, tenants' action, Aboriginal land rights and protection of the environment, helped to bring about changes in attitudes in Australian society as a whole.

These struggles were dominated by optimistic and idealistic politics. In an atmosphere of full employment, one could believe that if you fight boldly enough and shout loud enough you will win. I was aware that capitalism has many resources to maintain itself and that many people who criticise the system are not prepared to risk losing the security and identity it gives them. But those who said "the movement must have our leadership" or "you can't do that, you'll get arrested or alienate people", I thought were conservatives. I thought that Marxists were among those followers of ideas that had failed.

The struggles of that period exposed how conservative many of those who called themselves Marxist had become. The women's movement was particularly important in this respect. I gradually realised that many of the things thrown up by the movements of this period were essential to Marxism, not contrary to it. For a start, Marxism is about revolution, class struggle and organisation, and not about "theoretical practice". Successful tactics for socialism will not be based on analysing the limits placed on us by existing society. They will be based on an analysis of past and present from the point of view of the possibilities for a fundamentally different society.

Many Marxists had repudiated Stalinism — the substitution of leadership by the workers for leadership by the party, and the artificial division between socialism in the superstructure and the base. They recognised the distortions the hostile capitalist world and economic backwardness produced in the USSR and elsewhere. However, I felt that it must be a fundamental failure in Marxism that led to lack of concern for the environment, democracy, workers' control, an end to sexism, and protection of human rights.

I thought the problem was Marx's economic determinism. To assert that production was the motive force in history seemed to make democratic questions secondary. This was illustrated by Lenin's argument in The State and Revolution that the state simply exists as an instrument of class rule, during the transitional stage of proletarian rule, over the remnants of bourgeois society. The state is directed at the class enemy and then, under socialism, when classes cease to exist, so will the state. My feeling was that the state couldn't just be defined away — institutions under capitalism developed in some ways independently and unevenly. They have an ability to survive even after the purpose and logic for their present form, the capitalist system, has gone. As the women's movement clearly demonstrated, the struggles for socialism to date have done very little to liberate women from their position as second class citizens. The same resilience applies to what Marx called commodity fetishism — the tendency to downgrade all relationships and achievements to their money value. Similarly, many "Marxists" argue that technology and science (like the family and the state) are neutral and that problems only arise because of misuse of science by the bourgeoisie. I felt that certain technologies were bad in that they made work meaningless or necessitated over-centralised control or had other undemocratic social features.

I came to realise that the view that production is the motive force in history is consistent with seeing democratic power, an end to sexism, and harmony with the environment as central to socialist struggle. The problem with the "Marxist" views discussed above is that they are based on a narrow view of production. Marx explored the relationship between both subjective and objective factors — the aim was not to exclude the subjective. Capitalism not only leads to unfair distribution of wealth but it also holds back the productive and creative forces of society (e.g. all the waste, advertising and bad planning).
The managements of public transport systems have worked together with the roads lobby to make public transport less efficient. Public transport workers know how to run a better system. The task has been to put that alternative together and to encourage people's confidence that improved public transport is worth struggling around.

Despite the fact that defence of working conditions depends upon defending public transport, it was difficult to get the issue taken seriously. Trade union militancy, when confined to traditional tactics around economic demands, doesn't develop socialist consciousness. Rhetoric against the capitalist system from left leaders often gets a good reception during these struggles but there is no change in attitudes or actions. To change this, our strategy was — build an independent rank-and-file organisation, an informative and widely read rank-and-file publication, new tactics which challenged the employers' rights (non-collection of fares, leaflets to passengers, ignore regulations), and build links with community and public transport action groups.

One of the things that convinced me of the need for a political organisation armed with a scientific analysis of production was a study I made of the Broken Hill miners' strike of 1919. The strike lasted for 18 months, the miners were politically organised, and hoped to inspire the formation of one class-conscious anti-capitalist union in Australia. The strike achieved the 30-hour week underground, and compensation for industrial diseases. Their syndicalist political aims were defeated by arbitration, trade union bureaucracy and the growth of worldwide capitalist organisation which could thwart a strategy for socialism based simply on trade union militancy. Syndicalism could not match the political power of the state aligned with international capital. In this case, the Hughes government and the Collins House group of companies, and their international financiers, were developing a cartel (to replace the Germans) for world control of lead and zinc. The government was a willing tool. Through the government, coded telegrams were sent at the beginning of 1919 from London to Australia asking that production be limited so as to maintain the lead price. The reply from Australia was that this could be done because industrial troubles were expected in May which was, in fact, when the great strike began. The progress of the dispute and its eventual settlement was closely related to fluctuations in the price of lead.

In the face of a recession generated by the multinationals and their relationship to governments, we need a scientific analysis, as well as commitment and organisation. Marxism and marxist organisation have this role to play.
PHOTOESSAY

FRANKLIN BLOCKADE

Autumn 1983
Left: Arrested demonstrators are loaded on board police boat at Warners Landing after blockaders attempt to halt the movement of the first bulldozers onto the banks of the Gordon River. Opposite page: After arrest, being loaded onto police boat for processing. Below: Protest theatre.
Everyone can expect that, in the year 1984, much will be written about George Orwell and his predictions.

One person who does not intend to leave the debates about the future, or the present, to Orwell is Beatrix Campbell.

Campbell, who is visiting Australia to participate in activities to mark the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, is presently completing a book due for publication early in 1984.

If Orwell is best known for his uncanny and gloomy predictions for 1984, he is also well known for The Road to Wigan Pier. Campbell has written The Return to Wigan Pier.

An act of inspired commissioning by the Left Book Club in the 1930s involved the despatch of Orwell, then an angry young man, to the hinterland of industrial England. He was an old Etonian, a former member of the Indian Imperial Police, an International Brigader during the Spanish civil war, a journalist and a self-confessed "revolutionary snob".

His mission was an "urban ride" among the people and places of the great depression of the 1930s. The Road to Wigan Pier is an eyewitness account of how the other half lived.

Orwell was an exile from his own class. He shared its taste, but declared himself against its interest. He became an explorer amidst an exiled class, the poor, who seemed to him to be stranded in their satanic situation, seeing socialism as simply more money and less work. In short, they stank, but he was on their side.

He measured precisely their incomes, their homes, their food, their work. But this was more than simply a sociological survey of poverty — his book scrutinised the socialist politics deemed to be these people's salvation, and found it wanting.

Britain is now living through a new depression. This time the traveller is a woman, a secondary school girl, a northerner and, like Orwell, a journalist and a socialist; but unlike Orwell, Beatrix Campbell is working class and a feminist.

She has made a return ride to the people and places on the hard edge of the recession. She has visited hostels, refuges, deprived housing estates and townships destroyed as the economy is destroyed.

Just as Orwell divided his project between data and polemic, so Campbell monitors the actuality and reviews the political theory and practice available to its subjects.

But where Orwell assumed a single working class, Campbell sees several, divided by skill and sex. Where he saw a symmetrical family, she sees instability. Where he saw a single socialism, she sees many. Men held centre stage in The Road to Wigan Pier. Women are in full view in the new Wigan Pier.

Campbell, who was born in 1947, has worked for Morning Star, Time Out and City Limits. She helped establish one of the earliest socialist-feminist journals in Britain, Red Rag, and has contributed to History Workshop.

She co-authored, with Anna Coote, the best seller, Sweet Freedom. A bibliography of Stuart Hall's work fills many pages. The diversity of topics is amazing — Politics, crime, the media, photography, pop culture, ideology, education, racism, democracy, the labour movement and marxist theory have all received his attention.

Stuart Hall was a Rhodes Scholar of the University of the West Indies. He graduated from Oxford and then taught in Secondary Modern schools in London. His knowledge of racism is not a matter of theory.

As part of the early "new left" he helped found Universities and Left Review and became the first editor of New Left Review.

Subsequently, he became Director of the Centre for Contemporary Social Studies at the University of Birmingham until taking up his present appointment as Professor of Sociology at the Open University. He is widely regarded as one of the foremost marxist scholars in Britain today and as a brilliant polemical speaker.
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