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THE LENIN CENTENARY. It must seem strange to those on the left who have been brought up in the tradition of that body of dogma which became known as “Marxism-Leninism” to realise that Lenin knew nothing about “Marxism-Leninism”. Even the concept of “Leninism” was unknown to him.

That did not restrict the range of his vision. On the contrary it saved him from being squeezed into a fixed and rigid pattern of thought. A serious reading of Lenin reveals a man vastly different from that slanted picture of Lenin which has been handed down through Stalin’s Foundations of Leninism and the Stalin edited Short History of the C.P.S.U. (B) — both the intellectual food of a whole generation of communists. It is that which many understand by “Leninism”.

Editors’ Comments
The real Lenin, as distinct from that of the Stalin mythology, was a man of many facets. He was not afraid to change his views, to adapt himself to new circumstances, to retrace his steps, to admit mistakes—he claimed to have made thousands of mistakes—but also to fight hard for his point of view when he was convinced that he was right. He was the leader of the party that regarded the most open debate and free contest of ideas as normal and essential for a revolutionary party. When the pressure for survival of the revolution in an incredibly backward country, in isolation and beset by the biggest imperialist marauders led to a reduction of this freedom, Lenin immediately looked for counteracting measures.

The last period of his life was one of worry for the future of the revolution in Russia, fear that the backwardness would overwhelm the successful revolution, that bureaucracy would come to dominate. The new apparatus, he claimed, was one which “we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch, only slightly repainted on the surface”. Even if it were true that he saw some of these dangers too late, he saw them earlier than others.

Contrary to the prevailing myths, there is not one but many Lenins, an everchanging even contradictory Lenin. He argued against those Bolsheviks who would not see beyond “the formulas of yesterday”. He held that: “. . . a Marxist must take cognizance of actual events, of the precise facts of reality, and must not cling to past theory, which like all theories at best only outlines the main and the general and only approximates to an inclusive grasp of the complexities of living reality.

“Theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life. “. . . they (Marx and Engels) ridiculed and rightly ridiculed the learning and repetition by rote of ‘formulas’ which, at best, are capable of giving only an outline of general tasks that are necessarily liable to be modified by the concrete economic and political conditions of each particular phase of the historical process”. (Vol. 6 Selected Works.)

In the current controversies between the “new” left and the “old” left, Lenin, one feels, would have seen much that is positive in the “new” left. If the distinction is between simple propaganda and action Lenin must be regarded as strictly “new” left. He believed in action and acted to lead the Russian revolution against the advice of some of his collaborators who had become overcautious, set in established patterns — “old” left, perhaps.

The man who said that “Anarchism is not infrequently a kind
of penalty for the opportunistic sins of the working class movement", would have battled to eliminate the sins of the "old" left of today.

It is not without significance that some of the most serious groupings in the "new" left are groping towards the Leninist concept of an organised party, not necessarily that outlined in What is to be Done?, of a party operating in conditions of illegality and lack of political rights, but nevertheless to a Leninist type of party, in the sense of an organised detachment.

Experience is pushing some in the "new" left to the conclusion that in a modern capitalist state, where the problem for revolutionaries is not simply one of assault on the centre of power as it was in Russia, the need for a strong party with political experience, with a Marxist culture, with prestige among the people, is greater than ever if it is to ensure the triumph of its ideals and aims.

It is a pity that the volume of noise of some of the current celebrations tend to drown the most relevant elements of the Leninist tradition.

B. T.

A PRELIMINARY REPORT: The conference* on Yugoslav workers' self-management held in Amsterdam in January was a washout: it revealed both the futility of the workers meeting in such conferences and what is wrong with the European labor movement. Invitations were directed not only to students and academics but to trade unions and to members of the working class who wished to attend. Perhaps I am naive but I had visions of a cross between the scene at the Winter Palace and the Trades Hall pub, and an earnest attempt by westerners and specially western socialists to learn something in worker self-management. I certainly expected there to be a representative group of workers there, as it was the problems of workers' self-management which was being discussed.

I have attended the meetings of Australian working class parties: I have boozed at the meeting places of socialist intellectuals and

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* Alastair Davidson, a member of the Editorial Board of ALR, now on sabbatical leave in Italy, attended this Conference on behalf of ALR, and with the support of a number of trade unions.
socialist and other workers: I have visited the homes of the bureaucracy of our parties and unions: in all cases I was in a democratic ambient. The party meetings included workers, the booze ups were in the beer gardens of pubs, and the houses were modest dwellings suited to the leaders of the working class. All bore evidence of the necessity for some common culture which could provide a bridge between groups whose daily occupations were so different that there was danger that they would lose touch with one another. All were evidence of a genuine feeling of egalitarianism rooted in the emotions rather than in any cerebral commitment to the workers' cause.

But what did I find in Amsterdam? Long before I left I expressed surprise at the cost of registration; which was $45. My surprise was even greater when on reaching Amsterdam I discovered that all had been billeted in the Park Hotel which is a sort of Amsterdam Hilton, where you don't dare breathe for fear that it might cost you money. I was now quite sure that no fair-dinkum workers would be attending the conference. More of the flavour of the conference could be gathered by the perfect tailoring of the academic gentlemen in attendance; including the Yugoslavs. There was the usual European chaos getting the conference organised and then we were on our way.

It was clear from the outset that there were too many in attendance. The organisers said to me that it was because of the large numbers of student leftists who had wished to come in at the last moment and who (apologetically) could not be excluded. Of course nobody who wished to attend should have been excluded but this was not the real reason for the overcrowding. The real reason was the presence of hordes of well-tailored gentlemen who did not look like workers or even trade union leaders to me, who sat with a conferential air (a compound of too much good food, boredom with the proceedings and half thoughts about how to make that pretty girl over there). These gentlemen, who constituted by far the largest group at the conference, turned out to be representatives of employers' federations and state authorities. The conference, far from being run on the lines of self-management was run on traditional lines by a sort of professional compere who acted as chairman. This gentleman was very proficient in English but he suffered from a tendency of comperes to ingratiate which boded ill for a democratic discussion from the floor. Besides him at the high table were the Yugoslav experts and their respondents, including a number of names well-known in the English academic world and one reformist Dutch trade unionist who actually wrote the best reply.
The Yugoslav speakers themselves contributed to making the discussion valueless by refusing to generalise from their Yugoslav particulars or to discuss the fundamental problems of where power lay. This allowed the respondents and a select few from the floor to score debating point after debating point against them. It was clear too that many of the Western experts wished to turn the conference into a sort of Problems of Communism debate in which sly innuendo mixed with Cold Warriorship to the general detriment of socialism. Professor Peter Wiles was particularly inconsiderate in this manner. The rhetorical questions allowed no replies from the Yugoslavs who clearly regarded much of the proceedings as an exercise in propaganda. Whenever some brave spirit attempted to shift the discussion from “whether the agricultural problem in Slovenia was being coped with adequately”, or some such esoterica to the possibility of applying some Yugoslav lessons in the West, the chairman jumped in obediently and ruled it out of order. All fruitful avenues for discussion were closed almost as soon as they were opened.

By the second day it had become clear that a sort of “old boys club” had started operating. The Yugoslav speaker would speak at length and then, the compere would say: “Now Professor Wiles might care to reply”, and “Now Mr. Hugenberg”, and so on. This effectively limited conversation to those sitting at the high table. Only a few members of the audience were allowed to speak, and they too passed the ball around from one ILO official to another and to a number of employers’ representatives. And did the labor aristocracy and the employers’ representatives hob-nob together!! If ever I was caught in a conversation with them, I almost always got them wrong, mistaking the employers’ representative for the labor leader or vice-versa.

Speakers who got a particularly good speaking time included the Radio Free Europe Man, some Yankee sociologists and senior ILO officials. The expressions on Yugoslav faces were more and more those of repressed anger and misery. One was a fool and as if to ingratiate, informed us that the electrical power complex of which he was in charge had trouble with its workers too, and that it regularly hired the Mackenzie corporation of the US as its management consultants. The already restless student contingent howled the house down at this: evidently they did not feel that they were getting their $45 worth.

On the afternoon of the second day, they finally expressed a class contempt for the proceedings by bursting through the doors in dozens, throwing smoke-bombs and leaflets and demanding the
floor. The organisers stupidly tried to bundle them out — starting a free fight at the entrances, and finally granted them the floor. The students, whatever their origin, now asked a number of pertinent questions:

Why were there no workers in attendance? Was it because the fees had been made so high they were prohibitive? Why was no democratic discussion being allowed? Why was the discussion being kept so narrow and technical that it was worthless?

Finally they asked that as workers they be admitted and that a vote be taken to see if the discussion should proceed on the grounds that they thought fruitful.

You have one guess at the response (the free fight had now stopped and they were in)! Yes, the chairman said that they were out of order, that he refused to listen to them, that no vote could be taken because there was no legitimate motion before the chair. At this he adjourned it all for afternoon tea (afternoon teas can be very effective gags — they were applied to me six times). The audience given its composition was on the whole hostile to the student intrusion and started the usual questions about when the students had last worked, etc.

Afternoon tea did not work this time, however, as after it a motion was put by a Belgian Free University lecturer that they be admitted, and although no vote was taken, they were in effect in. Now began the evidence of reaction’s power to gag dissidents. First, they were asked not to disrupt the meeting and to observe majority wishes that the discussion continue on the lines that it had been. If they were democrats they would do this. They would keep their personal questions for a later time. The students were hoist by their own petard and chose either to leave, have the microphone futilely every fifth or so time, or sit quiet and listen to the conferential bilge which was being handed about. They were too few to outnumber the audience.

So the conference wended its weary and sodden way forward until, thank God, it stopped. It had helped to explain one thing to me: why the European labor movement is so suspicious of elitist theories of the intellectual’s role in the labor movement, like those of Marcuse and Gramsci. Here it is really a necessity for the workers to be on guard against their own intellectuals. This conference was supposed to be one of socialist intellectuals, and the organiser certainly posed as one; so much so that he did not wish to be called "Dr." as the mayor’s representative at the Municipal reception pointed out. Yet this same gentleman had
his tie torn off by the students who clearly recognised in him an old enemy. He did not want his nice conference to be disturbed by a pack of bearded louts. Rather it was intended to be a gathering of gentlemen, who clearly foregathered at similar conferences frequently, to discuss without the stench of sweat and hard toil, the problems of those who labor. Almost like observing a menagerie. Again and again a feeling of superiority could be detected. Everybody’s theories of elites could be perceived in action here and socialists and workers are clearly right to be suspicious of such gangs of European parlour-pinks. Hegemony is doubly effective if it is instilled by those supposedly representing the workers.

A. D.

THOUGHTS ON THE COOK BI-CENTENARY. By the time this issue appears the official celebrations to mark the two hundredth anniversary of Captain Cook’s discovery of the Australian east coast will be under way. The most prominent members of the royal family are travelling from England to Botany Bay to Townsville in a sort of honorific parody of Cook’s voyages; the NSW government is giving away some $60,000 in a commemorative literary competition (and it will be interesting to see who gets the prizes); stamps and coins bearing the likeness of the redoubtable James Cook are being issued; Canberra is getting a new fountain; Queensland a new university. What’s in it for everyone else?

One of the most interesting suggestions so far has been Kath Walker’s: two hundred Aborigines, dressed in black or wearing black armbands, should attend the official party at all its public functions, drawing silent attention to the plight of the Aboriginal people as a whole.

It is indeed a singularly appropriate occasion for such a vigil. It was the arrival of Cook, and of the European civilisation following him, which spelt almost total disaster for the native Australians; a “fatal impact” from which they have never recovered; from which, in fact, they have never been given a chance to recover. The mandate given to the Australian government by the referendum on Aborigines and the census in 1967 has not been acted upon.—At the time of the recent NSW referendum on Sunday hotel trading it was rumoured that the government, anticipating a “yes” majority, had already drafted legislation to be put before parliament. Clearly
the federal government not only had no such legislation concerning
the Aborigines in mind, but in the two and a half years since the
referendum it has failed to introduce any legislation concerning
the Aborigines whatever. It seems to have weathered even the
concerted campaign for land-rights for the Gurindji people at its
height twelve months ago. For it to be constantly reminded of
these still unrequited claims by the Aborigines themselves seems
not merely a just interruption of all the back-slapping and self-
congratulations, but a necessary one. Indeed, against this back-
ground of repression, only one Aborigine for each year of European
domination seems almost a token gesture. I hope that many more
will be there to provide support.

Not only is it singularly appropriate that Aboriginal demon­
strations should accompany the Cook celebrations; but the situation
is also replete with bitter ironies. Cook himself was well aware
of the nature of the people into whose lives he had so abruptly
intruded. "They may appear to some", he wrote in 1770, "to be
the most wretched people on earth but in reality they are far
happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only
with the superfluous but with the necessary conveniences so much
sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of
them. They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the
inequality of condition." The understanding (almost envy) of
Cook’s insights should be allowed to stand as an indictment of all
that the coming of the Europeans has meant to the Aborigines. The
happiness and tranquillity of which he spoke must be measured
against the present day inequalities and degradations if the full
measure of our debt to the original settlers of this country is
ever to be paid.

Another of the apt ironies of the Cook celebrations, perhaps
overlooked by those responsible for the public manifestations of
bi-centennialism, lies in the holing of the oil tanker *Oceanic
Grandeur* and the consequent polluting of the Queensland coast
at the very time that the question of off-shore oil drilling and
pollution was being discussed.

Almost exactly two hundred years previously, a little more than
two hundred miles away, Cook’s ship *Endeavour* was similarly
holed by an unseen coral reef. As a result, Cook and his crew
were obliged to spend some six weeks on shore in northern Queens­
land while the ship was beached and repaired. It was during
this stay near present day Cooktown that Cook, together with the
naturalists and artists who accompanied him, was able to observe
and record the extraordinary flora and fauna to be found in “New
South Wales.” The complete newness and unexpectedness of
much of it can be seen from the early attempts at description. “A mouse-coloured animal, very swift, and about the size of a greyhound”, says the first recorded glimpse of a kangaroo. “About as large as a one-gallon keg, as black as the devil and with wings and two horns on its head”, wrote the sailor who first sighted a flying-fox. The profusion of fish, insects, birds and reptiles; the magnificent and yet (for sailors) frightening nature of the reef itself: these were the things which impressed the men of the *Endeavour* and which they recorded in their journals.

It makes sad reading today. With the greater part of the Barrier Reef facing imminent destruction from the crown-of-thorns starfish, which has bred profusely since the removal of its natural enemies, the holing of the *Oceanic Grandeur* and the consequent oil-slick once more underlines the cause and the need of conservation. The havoc wrought by the starfish is insignificant beside the damage which could result from off-shore oil drilling, as the relatively minor accident of the tanker bears out.

And of course the moral doesn’t end there. The great turtle of the Barrier Reef, profuse in 1770, faces extinction two hundred years later. So too (and it must be said again) does the swift mouse-coloured animal. Recently I have travelled through more than two thousand miles of Australian east-coast countryside and in that time I saw fewer kangaroos than Cook and his men saw in a one mile radius of their little encampment.

The full extent of the crisis facing the natural Australian environment is only becoming apparent. If we look at the way the Aborigines have been treated, however, we should not be surprised by it. It is a crisis which cannot be solved by a few laws prohibiting this or outlawing that. Not until the federal government (and it must be on a federal level) takes account of ecological research and initiates a programme of total environmental conservation of specific areas can we breathe at all freely over the preservation of our national heritage. Such a move should have begun years ago but at least in this year it would be apposite to start amends.

L.N.C.
Interview with Robin Blackburn

What conclusions do you draw from New Left experience so far?

The explosion of left activity of a “new” kind in the past decade represents a profound break with the political style and practice of the post-war left—the “old left”. At the same time it involves the rediscovery of the most militant traditions of the best of the old left, forms of direct action which draw on populist or anarchist traditions. (By “old left” I can refer specifically only to Europe and North America, and primarily to social-democratic and communist parties and some trotskyist groups.) Most of the conventional political activities of the old left failed to touch directly the everyday life of the masses in capitalist society or encourage them to take direct action against the system which oppressed them. The only form of direct action consistently recognised was the conventional industrial strike (the workers go home and do nothing) a form of action whose inherent limitations had already been irrefutably established within the workers’ movement long ago (by

Robin Blackburn, 30, was educated at Oxford and the London School of Economics. He has held academic posts at Oxford and LSE, and lectured at Havana University. He was engaged on economic work for the Cuban government in 1960-62. He has co-edited several books, including The Incompatibles and Student Power, and has been a member of the Editorial Board of New Left Review since 1962, and recently also of Black Dwarf.

Robin Blackburn visited Australia on the invitation of ALR on his way home from a Universities Conference in New Zealand. He addressed meetings organised by ALR in Sydney on February 20, on Trade Unionism and on the New Left.

The above interview was written up for ALR by Alec Robertson from tape recordings of several interviews organised by the Editorial Board during his short stay.
Lenin in *What is to be Done?* and Gramsci in *Ordine Nuovo*: see *New Left Review* No. 51 for some of the latter texts).

The relation of old left formations to society was defined by the use of words — in publications, party documents, slogan-demonstrations, petitions, election campaign and other meetings. Evils, disproportions and contradictions of capitalism were analysed. There seemed to be the belief that capitalism would ultimately drown in a rising tide of socialist consciousness deriving from a combination of socialist propaganda and either a favorable economic conjuncture ("the crisis of capitalism") or a providentially favorable political conjuncture ("peaceful coexistence"). This belief embraced also those seeking a more active relation to the mechanisms of capitalist society through advancing certain "demands" or "reforms" unrealisable within the framework of a stable capitalism (e.g. "structural reform", "transitional demands"). But "raising consciousness" is illusory activity unless popular institutions exist to incarnate that new consciousness and ultimately to smash and break up capitalist power by the hard blows of popular force.

The new left movements (stemming from such movements as CND sitdowns in Britain and through Berkeley, Berlin, France, Italy and Belfast) express themselves through militant action, directly involving the concerned masses of people both in the activity and in control (there is an anti-centralist quality) and with a built-in immediacy that invariably eluded the old left. Particular actions tangibly partake of the liberating impulse. Students occupying their colleges visibly incarnate one dimension of their demand for "student power" and, by extension, for popular control of everyday life in all spheres. Instead of the old parties and trade unions engaged in complex paper manoeuvres we frequently see social forces engaged in direct confrontation with the system—the black liberation movement in the USA; the Irish of Bogside and Belfast who temporarily established popular power within sealed-off "green bases" in urban blocks; the French vanguard occupation of factories in 1968; the first factory occupation in British labor history, in a car factory last year. Exposure of the system and concepts of a future society may be extracted in part from the actions themselves.

Among the new left there can be found new revolutionary perspectives based on these concepts of revolutionary practice but at the same time they lack theoretical perspective. Whether reformist or revolutionary, the condition of new left organisation and ideology is inchoate. As a whole, the new left has learned
to stir things up but has never yet looked like being able to create a serious confrontation with capitalism.

**How do you see the roles of spontaneous struggle and of theory?**

Many would-be marxist theorists in Europe greeted the recent false-dawn of revolutionary activity with an intoxication of ultra-leftism. The tide of popular revolt may have helped to dislodge Johnson and De Gaulle, but it is dubious success to replace Johnson with Nixon. The smooth surface of reformism and revisionism has not been dented and they are unlikely to be displaced until the revolutionary movement is as coherent in its own way as they are in theirs. At present the new left justifies anything it does in agitation and provocation because it wakes people from their passivity. But reliance on spontaneity is as misconceived as was the old left resistance to spontaneous struggle. Spontaneity seen as spontaneous resistance of the masses to capitalism is the most precious thing in the workers' movement. But a spontaneous popular impulse can only overthrow the system if (as Lenin said) the new forms of action are taken up and developed and enriched with theory. No doubt we should be grateful for the real achievements of the past few years: the established order has been shaken a bit, new forms of popular resistance to the system have emerged, some especially oppressed groups have acquired a collective confidence and combativity they previously lacked and it may even be true that the nucleus of a revolutionary cadre has emerged.

But revolutionary theory properly conceived should go beyond this to envisage the concrete possibilities for the further transformation of social relations now accessible to revolutionary practice. That transformation is what constitutes new revolutionary politics; but revolutionary theory must produce the knowledge necessary for such transformation to become possible. Revolutionaries need to know the essential rather than the apparent workings of the social system (without ignoring the appearance). The reality of capitalist society that people live should be the starting point of both revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice; and both can be transformed in the course of acting on the contradictions to be discovered within that reality.

 Armed with the concrete analysis of a concrete situation that Lenin called the "living soul of marxism", the revolutionary should have a provisional conception of the structures of power and of social forces within the social formation. In this sense theory is certainly not confined to critiques of the established society and its ideologics.
We should re-study Lenin's critique of spontaneity, which was directed above all against the notion of the spontaneous self-destruction of the capitalist system itself — for example, against the idea that economic or trade union struggles necessarily lead to revolution or socialism. This gave Lenin the best reason for revolutionaries to involve themselves in the unions. Today, that cult of spontaneity is reappearing in the new version that such groups as the "new" working class, middle strata, intellectual workers could have spontaneous access to socialist consciousness that was denied to industrial proletarians; that they are bound to demand increasing autonomy in their work situation and that this is a naturally socialist demand. But for revolutionaries, revolution must remain a creative, conscious, collective act which cannot be achieved in the twilight realm of ideology nor by relying on bourgeois society to fashion a naturally socialist consciousness. Capitalist society may produce its own gravediggers; but it is up to the latter to slay the monster and inter it in its grave.

Nor should it be imagined for one moment that the established society furnishes ready-made that alliance of the oppressed and exploited which alone can make the revolution. No spontaneous harmony between or within the potentially revolutionary classes can be assumed. Such harmony as is revealed by scientific analysis to be possible must be encouraged by the revolutionaries; real social antagonisms between such classes and strata are generated by capitalism and cannot be dispelled merely by rhetorical talk of "the people". In stressing the importance today of the voluntaristic moment in Lenin's thought it must, of course, never be forgotten that Leninist political practice works itself out through the given matrix of pre-existing contradictions. Nor should it be thought that privileged access to culture and research facilities gives the lonely intellectual in his study the capability of generating a fully adequate socialist theory. Revolutionary theory develops and sharpens in the interaction and dialectic between revolutionary intellectuals and mass activity. The space where it occurs is the revolutionary party without which, in the long run, there will be no cross-fertilisation and accumulation of practice and theory.

What do you think of the general situation of marxist theory today?

In the Stalin period, European marxist theory was driven outside politics for a whole era. From 1923 to 1960 — say from the publication of Georg Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness and Jean-Paul Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason, either culture criticism or philosophical discourse on method became its main
Theory was no longer concerned with making the revolution in Europe and was subordinated to defeating fascism and defending the USSR. Exceptions were Gramsci and Trotsky up to the forties, but working as non-participant observers.

Today, marxism in Europe is returning to revolutionary politics, stimulated both by the new upsurge of left activity and by the work of the most advanced of the culture-critics (such as Marcuse and Gorz) and the philosophers (such as Althusser and Colletti). The picture is uneven. Some writers in the field are doing little more than celebrate the upsurge or adjust it to their own marxist preconceptions. But, given an event like France 1968, what is needed after the lyrical propaganda is a scientific understanding of the relationship of forces between capitalism-imperialism on the one hand and the revolutionary movement on the other, and of the conditions that would permit a decisive change of this relationship.

In the realm of new left practice, one finds various streams of inspiration including the Chinese cultural revolution, Vietnam, Trotsky, the Cuban revolution, but also the anti-imperialist guerrilla war systems of the third world which, setting aside the "big bang" revolution theory, set out to change things piecemeal (like land ownership) while confronting the whole system. But we still have to learn from that section of the old left that renewed marxism and leninism in the course of anti-imperialist struggle which proved that the strategy and tactics of these revolutions is in part more relevant to the revolution in advanced capitalist countries than is the October revolution. This aspect is that they depended on the mass support and participation of the great majority of the population just as revolutions in advanced countries will have to do.

It will also be necessary to make ourselves the heirs of our own European revolutionary traditions, and study the great debates involving Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky, Parvus, Trotsky, Lukacs, Korsch, Gramsci and many others. We must investigate the successes and failures of the movement. And above all the purpose must be to learn from them about the nature of revolutionary practice, of which the supreme exponent in his epoch was Lenin. The premise of all Lenin's writings, the first thesis that is in process of being re-grasped, is the ACTUALITY OF THE REVOLUTION. Convinced, given the historical possibility and necessity of the global overthrow of capitalism in the conditions of imperialism, that revolution was on the order of the day, he devoted himself entirely to its preparation and its victory. Further, Lenin replaced the traditional inevitabilist notion that capitalism would be overtaken by a revolution radiating out from its heart-
lands, by the theory that the break would come at the weakest link of imperialism. These weak links will continue to provide the points of insertion of revolutionary practice, points where the export of capital and war combine to enfeeble the local capitalist class and awaken the masses. Althusser writes well in his essay “On the Materialist Dialectic”* on Lenin’s insistence on the application of revolutionary practice to the only history available to us — the present.

What would you see as the major theoretical problems for marxists today?

There is so much to be done after the long night of Stalin and all that. We must catch up on so many fronts. But I think there would be a high political priority for theoretical analysis of the nature and limits of bourgeois democracy. We have no adequate theory of how it operates and how it ensures the consensus of the population. To this is related such problems as what are the limits to confrontation and provocation-type tactics through which a strategic minority sometimes may help to detonate mass struggle and at other times may produce the isolation and smashing of the vanguard group. Of course, we cannot expect to work out formulae that would provide guarantees, but rather a greater knowledge of the limitations of tactics. In capitalist society we are condemning and rejecting the form of democracy that capitalism rests on — very limited participation by the mass of the population who are mostly silent and atomised. Their activity is limited to voting at an election booth, an activity that is abstracted from other social processes. Of course bourgeois political scientists sometimes get worried if the population is too passive (meaning that the system is not integrating them) — or too active. The Provo and other groups pursuing confrontation tactics have been aiming at forcing the capitalist state to use its monopoly of violence

* . . . the theory of the “weakest link” is identical with the theory of the “decisive link”. Once we have realised this we can return to Lenin with a quiet mind. However much any ideologist tries to bury him beneath a proof by historical analysis, there is always this one little man standing there in the plain of history and our lives, that eternal “current situation”. He goes on talking, calmly or passionately. He goes on talking to us about something quite simple: about his revolutionary practice, about the practice of the class struggle, in other words, about what makes it possible to act on history from within the sole history present, about what is specific in the contradiction and in the dialectic, about the specific difference in the contradiction which quite simply allows us not to demonstrate or explain the “inevitable” revolutions POST FESTUM, but to “make” them in our unique present or, as Marx profoundly formulated it, to make the dialectic into a revolutionary method, rather than the theory of the FAIT ACCOMPLI. (Althusser, For Marx London, 1969, p. 180).
in order to destroy the legitimacy of the main pillar of bourgeois society — the ideological and cultural component which comprises both the ideas used and the condition of isolated relations.

There are many other urgent problems for the development of marxism in the theoretical sense. One with priority would be clarification of the sense in which marxism is a science. There is the debate between those seeing socialism in the humanist way and those seeing scientific socialism. I favor the scientific approach. In the last analysis, socialism is the form of society that resolves the contradiction of capitalist society. Any appeal to humanism — usually ill-conceived — leads to some ideology of supra-historical human nature rather than the marxist concept of a human nature to a great extent historically determined. An appeal to morality is even more treacherous, as morality implies a particular consensus in society and it takes the form of appeal to the established form of society or to the members of the existing society, to seek in the existing structure provision of a better form — a contradiction in terms. Until the acceptable form of society exists, the language of morals is inappropriate.

How would you describe the fundamental contradiction of capitalism today?

The fundamental contradiction within the imperialist complex remains that between the increasingly social nature of the forces of production and the private character of appropriation via the relations of production. For us in the West the key problem is to discover the ways in which this fundamental contradiction is constituted. We know that imperialist wars have had a more revolutionary impact than depressions. We know that the expansion of capital in the metropolitan countries requires increasingly under-development or stagnation or a "structural slump" in the subordinate, "poor" sectors of the capitalist world. The significance of this selective retardation and exploitation of these countries required the lengthy travail of the liberation movements to expose it. But it is not enough for us to cheer on the liberation revolutions. In the homelands of imperialism we must be discovering the constitutive elements of the fundamental contradiction within each sector, each institution of late capitalism. Baran and Sweezy have given some idea of ways in which surplus value is realised. A revolutionary practice can be discerned, for example, in the higher education system, or the "welfare" social service system — both modes of surplus absorption. Every major capitalist nation has its super-exploited and oppressed minority, corresponding exactly to Marx's "nomad" population and "industrial reserve army".
What do you think of the problem of determinism in marxism?

The key formulation in marxism — social being determines consciousness — has perhaps been misunderstood or not properly transferred in the English interpretations. English philosophical tradition shows a concern with an empiricist, causal relation between A and B — “If A, then B”. This has given rise to two sorts of errors: (1) the mechanistic determinism we find among dogmatists, deducing effects in the superstructure from the economic base; and (2) an allied form where, in the face of this dogmatism, there is a turn to Engels’ explanation of how Marx and he had in youth deliberately emphasised the economic moment in society, because it had been neglected and that, in fact, there is an interaction of the superstructure on the base — not just a one-way process but a dialectical relation, and says that only in the last instance does the base determine the superstructure. Such references by Engels don’t really help unless considered together with a better understanding of the original hypotheses of Marx.

All science establishes determinations, but not just “if A, then B”. It sets limits, and contemporary science is searching for meaningful relations between whole groups of properties. In this context, one can think of concepts that Perry Anderson develops in an essay on social structure, where he talks about negative determination.

He notes that a given economic level in society doesn’t necessarily produce any one particular policy or superstructure, but perhaps excludes some policy or form of superstructure. For example, a primitive level of economic development does not permit of a truly socialist form of society. Extending this, one may say that a modern industrial economy excludes anything that can meaningfully be called a feudal form of society. That is establishing determinism in a different sense, in that it limits possible social structures. That’s one approach. Marxism doesn’t so much generalise about the economic base and its determination in all forms of society, but rather about how it operates differently in different historical epochs.

One can ask, too, whether by economic base we mean productive forces or production relations, which may determine in different ways. It may be that negative determination is a feature of the forces of production (level of economic development of society) and that relations of production determine in a rather different sense. For example, there is the Lukacsian notion that in capitalist society specifically you get an overall determination not just from
the forces of production but also from the relations of production and the argument has even been put that it is really capitalism that reveals domination of politics by economics, and that the precise definition of socialism is the suppression of this determination, which is reversed in socialism — politics determining economics. In fact, despite all the weaknesses of development of the various socialist countries, it is still true that policy determines the social structure for good or ill, but politics isn't replacing economic forces. Unfortunately, socialist production relations don't necessarily determine socialist policies; indeed, the reverse.

Another line of research is contained in the Althusser school which promises to be most rewarding. First, the notion of the necessary complexity of any social totality — that all real historical social formations have an already given complexity that cannot be reduced to the simplicity of a single concept, e.g. "capitalism". All real capitalist societies are accretions including pre-capitalist social formations integrated with a capitalist formation, or capitalist formations of a particular type with a particular insertion into the world capitalist system. Capitalism is not the simplified social structure Marx predicted in the Communist Manifesto, written on the eve of the bourgeois revolution which he thought would lead to bourgeois simplification of society with the polarisation of social classes which would in turn produce the big clash between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He argues that Marx in practice, though not always very adequately at the conceptual level, operated a new type of dialectic — materialistic dialectic — in which determination is always over-determination, i.e. that any concrete historical conjuncture is the effect of many social forces that matches the complexity of the given society.

Therefore notions like Lenin's theory of the weakest link or the concept of the law of uneven development corresponds to the complexity of the already given complex totality of capitalist society in imperialism. On the global level, this is not just the theory of multi-causality that is presented by bourgeois sociologists; in over-determination to some extent each cause interacts upon and modifies the effect of each other cause so sometimes, it is said, over-determination is the reflection in each instance of every other instance of social practice. For example, in the Russian Revolution, the terms in which class struggle between the working class and the Russian bourgeoisie and the foreign bourgeoisie in Russia were fought out were probably modified also by the fact that a class struggle was going on in the countryside. So it's not just multi-causality or a gratuitous multi-causal or interactive process of its different sections which wouldn't be far from the Engels formulation.
or, in a different way, from the bourgeois sociologists. What’s wrong with this is its lack of discrimination between the different influence of different causes or levels of operation. This isn’t even a question of what sociologists call a stratified system or of quantifying the importance of the influence of each cause. It’s a question of grasping the structure of the historical process.

Althusser and others have returned to the question, in what sense “in the last instance” the economic is determinant. Althusser says that within a structure we can see both dominance and determinism, at least, and other possible relations between different elements of the structure. To some extent the economic is determinant in the last instance because it always selects what is to be the dominant in the social structure. At certain points in the Middle Ages, in the realm of ideology, the Christian religion was the predominant feature of society, but it can also be argued that economics selected this aspect. It can be argued that in capitalist society, the economic is not only determinant but also dominant. The idea is to produce concepts that translate out away from the simple idea “if A, then B”, into firstly the notion of limits and ranges, and secondly in the direction of different types of determination and domination and the historical theory that determination operates differently in capitalist and pre- and post-capitalist society.

All this just designates areas of research. There is a theory of the combination of elements within a social formation, e.g. what is the predominant mode of production? These are extrapolated from various criteria put forward by Marx in Capital, but not theorised generally by him, e.g., the status of labor in society. All this can be tricky theoretically, but much more rewarding than going back and inverting dogmatism.

In the light of that, why do you think the consciousness of the working class in Britain or Australia, say, is not higher than it is?

I think that generally the answer lies in objective causes that we couldn’t have done much about. I would suggest the most decisive relation has been that between the development of capitalism into imperialism and the predominance of reformism in the working class at the political level. This is much more than a labor aristocracy receiving crumbs from the imperialist table. We have seen, in the case of Britain and the USA, politically feeble labor movements at the period of imperialism reaching its height. However there are also objective changes that will help overcome the situation.
Firstly, the development of the national liberation movement. Its economic impact is well expressed, for example, through the loss of China to imperialism. Politically — and more decisively — there have been successful struggles against imperialism which have raised real alternatives to imperialism. The existence of a relatively peaceful situation in the working class is connected with the fact that imperialist development created a very strong bourgeoisie with powerful means to suppress the working class both ideologically and with coercion; but Vietnam, for example, has interfered with this.

Secondly, there is a rebirth of inter-capitalist competition. Some say this is no longer significant, due to the rise of multi-national companies or the domination of the USA; but we at the NLR are not convinced of this. British society saw the emergence of the labor movement at the beginning of the century around the time of increased competition which faced and threatened British capitalism; militant class struggles preceded World War I. Today the USA is feeling such threats, involving the rise of Japanese and West German capitalism. In the USA there are now forms of class struggle among the most exploited sectors of the working class, the minorities. It is not yet so among the white working class there, which also differentiates itself racially from them, but it should be noted that even working class racism, being more open, is different from the racism of the Establishment.

**How do you see the role and character of revolutionary organisation; or a revolutionary party?**

I believe that the Leninist principles of the revolutionary party are, in their essence, valid today. First, however, we must ensure that we are dealing with Lenin's principles, and not a Stalinist version of “Lenin’s party”. Next is the problem of how we should interpret them in an advanced capitalist country, and further we should enrich them with such socialist theories as those propounded by Gramsci.

At the heart of Lenin’s approach is the notion that such a party should be democratic, though the scope and nature of this quality is not a simple matter. The Bolshevik party was characterised by very vigorous debate, involving the creation of different platforms and estimates without the practice of witchhunts in Lenin’s lifetime, and this helped make the party’s position in society more flexible, and it increased the socialist education of the membership. The fact that Lenin had to fight for his policies, often from a minority viewpoint, certainly helped educate the membership and has given
us the classics of Leninist ideas on the party. The development of polemics in the party is its lifeblood and helps give it flexibility; if there is no such development, then the currents develop outside the party reducing the potential of its impact when it is ready to act.

We recall that Lenin could remain in the same section of the same party as Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev and others with whom he had sharp differences at times. Obviously he valued the multiplicity within the revolutionary ranks, stressing that diversity helped maintain flexibility, fighting spirit and dialectical preparedness. In the party, diverse currents should meet to achieve a common purpose and perspective. The most militant members of other groups should, in the party, reconcile their views and produce a scientific analysis of society in theoretical work that is at the heart of the party's role. Criticism of the leadership may be seen as essential to maintain the vitality of the party's inner life. The party should incarnate the superior, revolutionary organising principle that rejects bureaucracy and top-down control while not, of course, rejecting differentiation of function.

It is true that in post-revolutionary Russia, by the time of Lenin's death, polemics were possible only inside the party, not outside it, leading to a position where everything depended on the CP and whether it continued to follow a particular path, and the character of its leadership. Other institutions of socialist democracy had been weakened or destroyed. There had been already an underestimation of the necessity of vigorous life in the Soviets, and the ideas of workers' control, so strong in 1917-18, had been weakened. Of course, these processes had been bound up with the demands of the civil war and famines; it may be possible to show that decisions made on how the civil war was to be fought — made essentially by Lenin and Trotsky — also weakened the development of the revolution. Maybe this was unavoidable; but with the benefit of hindsight one wonders was it necessary to have so many Tsarist officers integrated into the Red Army, or that it be developed so much towards the model of the bourgeois army and away from the partisan-type model.

Deutscher, analysing the rise of Stalinism, laid very important stress on the influence of the isolation and backwardness of Russia at the time; now we are giving attention also to the numerical isolation and relative backwardness of the membership of the Bolshevik Party, which even at the beginning of 1917 before the civil war slaughter was only 30,000. We must also look at Lenin's writing again to discern the party's ability to co-operate with and encourage the work in other autonomous organisations, such as those operating today in the fields of minority super-exploitation and
discrimination, women’s liberation, youth, etc. The concept here is something quite different from the organisations that were just old-left “fronts” of the CP’s. There should be a genuine relation between the party and other groups and organisations.

A key position in Lenin’s concept of the party was that occupied by the militant-activist definition of a member. Lenin insisted that each member should have the duty, not only to support the program, but to be directly active in the discussion, formulation and execution of policy. This was very different from the German social-democratic party of the time and large revisionist parties of today, with huge paper memberships including a mass of passive “sympathisers”, a continual burden on the activists who have to service them and usually providing a docile block vote for the leadership when challenged, thus encouraging the emergence of a manipulatory elite. A good revolutionary organisation would be one that combines a militant membership with genuine democratic centralism — full democracy regarding discussion and determination of policy together with disciplined unity in action. Only the mass participation of party members can guarantee democracy in the party, just as only mass participation in the revolution can ensure socialist democracy. But inner-party democracy has point only if the party can act in a united fashion on the basis of collective decisions.

How do you see the scientific and technological revolution impacting the situation in the working class?

This seems to me a further development of the productive forces, leading certainly in the capitalist mode of production to new distortions and more acute contradictions. It is true, I suppose, that the changes in the situation in various areas — the media, universities, student revolt and industry — may be linked with the scientific and technological revolution and maybe we need more investigation of the idea of qualitative development in the capitalist structure. However, there is little effect evident, for example, in the expanding services sector and there are limits to the ability of capitalism to integrate the scientific and technological revolution. We have done some work, which is still unpublished, on the role of science in production, but this is a long-term feature of capitalism. It may be that the changes are leading to some rise in accumulation from this source, and having more far-reaching or different effects on the role of man, the worker, in production.

I think too much can be read into the effects of the scientific and technological revolution on the explosion of the higher student population and on student revolt. Most of those involved in the
student revolt come from fields allied with sociology and art, economics to a lesser extent, while science, engineering and technological students are mainly passive. At the same time sociology and art students will mainly become ideologists of the ruling class, social manipulators of one kind or another and capitalism requires that they be taught a little about real social processes. And it's obviously true that the explosion of knowledge feeds into the whole situation. The new social strata are in some ways new sections of the working class but not all are productive workers, and in some ways they reinforce the petit-bourgeoisie. We don't see the new technological strata leading the working class — really they are still part of the forces spontaneously thrown up by capitalism.

**How do you rate and conceive “counter-hegemony” in revolutionary strategy?**

It is not primarily the cultural exposure of the bourgeoisie. There is too much stress on socialist education. A more adequate concept stresses that it should be built on a new organisational principle for social relations. An analogy is the guerrilla struggles: they represent a new organisational principle for society in certain social formations, with the abolition of landlordism, making the revolution by anticipating a new popular power, new kind of army, etc. . . . a new principle of civilisation. In our conditions the exercise of bourgeois power is based more on the cultural moment than on force, by comparison with the semi-colonial and for that matter with Tsarist power (though at the same time the modern bourgeois state has available far superior technology of repression). Hence for us there are different ratios in our struggle. We must engage in more cultural contestation (having in mind that the need for popular force would develop later) . . . and in this connection there is a need to analyse youth culture. It is of course partly integrated — we see already the development in the USA of “hippie capitalism” which is commercial and strongly anti-union — but it also contains elements of new principles of culture, for example the relation between the creator and the audience. The American underground press, too, is a new development marked by close rapport between writers and readers. The counter-culture must be critical and not accept a ghetto-type existence, as displayed by some old left publications and also in a different way by the US underground press.

In the field of politics, we should not come out with “realistic” solutions to capitalist problems, unless there are mass movements which can effectively promote alternative policies — as in the struggle on Vietnam. Otherwise we get away from the struggle and towards integration; top-level programs for structural change
are dubious; only demands for reforms coming from below help the movement.

A genuinely revolutionary movement in modern society needs to generate a radically new vision of society consonant with the highly developed forces of production but critical of their warped form. We see parties, incapable of doing this, insulating their members off from ideological infiltration — a real danger, in their case — and seeking to bind their members to some outrageous theses, creating group solidarity out of collective guilt. Only a genuine revolutionary counter-culture can obviate the trend to excesses of this sort. Potential elements of such a culture are to be seen, I believe, in the world of the underground, despite the mystification around it. Some revolutionary currents in Europe are exploring the possibility that in an advanced capitalist country, a revolution would have to be accompanied by a cultural revolution rather than followed by it. In such an advanced country, the revolutionary militant must break with prevailing bourgeois fetishism and mystification in everyday life, and be culturally integrated with the revolutionary movement — which of course does not mean the puritanism adopted by some on the left, but a genuinely liberating culture.

How do you conceive the role of the New Left Review?

I am speaking for myself, of course. I see it almost exclusively as a theoretical role. The British movement has been sadly weakened by contempt for and lack of theory and this has helped to reinforce the reactionary ruling class culture and hegemony. The NLR was launched at a moment when it was able to attach itself to developing disciplines in which the ruling class had not well worked out its ideology — e.g., sociology — and we hoped, too, to help bring about the internationalisation of the ideology of the British left, by systematically producing material on the Third World movement and the marxist movements in advanced countries. We were among the first to publish works by Franz Fanon and Regis Debray, for example. Later, Marcuse and others.

We tried to relate to the working class movement and the labor movement in Britain but it has been more difficult to develop work in this way among the left. In the student movement to some extent our work has been to seek to explain and interpret the class struggle intelligibly to students predominantly of middle class background. The Incompatibles book on trade unions is really aimed at explaining the unions to those of student background, as part of our interpretation and propaganda work, rather than to clarify strategy. Our broad theoretical and cultural task is to
shift a section of the intelligentsia, which would perhaps have shifted anyway to some degree under the influence of Vietnam and the bankruptcy of the dominant British intellectuals. Now we are more concerned with the question of forging a vanguard grouping, the strategy and tactics of the movement, and a theory of the revolution for itself — not just a critique of bourgeois theory. There is a difference between opening a door to radicalism and setting out to build a movement. This represents a shift of emphasis.

The history of the British labor movement has very much vindicated two of Lenin's theses — (1) that the working class, left to itself, will develop only an economistic consciousness, however militant; (2) that socialist ideas must be brought into the working class from outside, by revolutionary intellectuals. In the UK, the working class did its part in developing a militant, economic consciousness, but unfortunately the early intellectuals fell down on their role and produced fabianism. Therefore we feel the key point of intervention in this conjuncture is to create a properly marxist intelligentsia — what had been lacking. These intellectual strata may come from the technical intelligentsia or from the working class — but predominantly it must be from the middle class whose members have the education and the privilege of time and facilities to study. But an intellectual for us should be any real militant of a real revolutionary party, with a proper education. Taking socialism to the working class in the UK links up with our ideas on strategy for the development of the revolution in Britain. There exists a crisis in the hegemonic ideology of the British bourgeoisie, to be accentuated by renewed capitalist competition and the European Common Market and it has led to extra-parliamentary movements on the right, including Powellism and, more ambiguously, national movements in Scotland and Wales, the squatters and Northern Ireland. This differs from the situation of the past several decades.

NLR has been half British and half English-speaking, as there seemed to be a lack of such a theoretical journal in this whole cultural area — e.g. in the USA. In Britain the NLR has tried to remain close to political struggles — which has meant mainly the student movement — and to represent marxist, and now leninist, ideas within this context. It is a context that has been somewhat confusing in recent years when some things that appeared adventurist turned out to be not adventurist at all. Deviations in the early stage of a movement are more forgivable than those in the stage of decline. One still has to criticise them but they are part of the forward development.
Lenin's Impact on Australia

THE LENIN CENTENARY happens almost to coincide with the half century of the Communist Party of Australia. Therefore, it is an opportunity to consider how the Australian left became aware of Lenin and his thought (or that part of it which reached the Australian public in the years immediately after the October Revolution) and how Leninism first affected the development of the socialist movement in Australia. The impact of Leninism created the conditions for the formation of a Communist Party, as well as providing a new dimension to Marxism and revolutionary strategy.

In November 1917, Tom Barker, the prominent member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was in the Albury gaol. The gaol governor came to him to ask who the Bolsheviks were. Recalling the incident many years later, Barker relates that he had never heard of Lenin or Trotsky although he had organised support for the February revolution. Barker's lack of knowledge would have been fairly typical of the Australian left in 1917. Only very few, if any, would have known much of the Russian socialist movement. There were some in Australia, however, who were in a position to know a bit more than the average left-winger. After the 1905 revolution, there was a certain amount of Russian emigration to Australia. Among the revolutionaries there were socialists and anarchists, and among the socialists there were some Bolsheviks including F. S. Sergeyev (Artem) and Peter Simonoff. Sergeyev was the outstanding figure in this circle and around him the Bolsheviks formed a group which led the Russian organisation in Australia.

When Sergeyev returned to Russia after February (he became a member of the Bolshevik central committee, the vice-president of the Ukrainian Soviet Government, Commissar for Mines and a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern) Simonoff succeeded him as editor of the Brisbane-based paper Workers'

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2 The Russian organisation in Australia and the Bolshevik part in it is still inadequately understood.

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Life. Then, at the beginning of 1918, Simonoff became Consul-General for the Soviet Government in Australia.

He shifted to Melbourne where he received assistance from the left-wing Labor MP, Mick Considine, and the Victorian Socialist Party whose most notable member was the editor of the Party paper, R. S. (Bob) Ross. Like most of the Australian left, the VSP, was enthusiastic about the Russian revolution which Ross described early in 1918 as “greater than the French Revolution because it had given to the world a proletarian republic.” But at this stage the socialist movement had absorbed little of the detail of Bolshevik strategy; the aims of the Bolsheviks were said to be ‘(1) to free Russia, and (2) to end the war’. With this in mind, F. J. Riley proposed successfully to the regular Sunday meeting in the Socialist Hall that “a delegate from the militant Labor movement of Australia” be sent to Petrograd “to represent the Australian movement in negotiations affecting the revolution and for peace”. After the Labor Party had rejected socialist overtures for a joint project, the Federal Government refused a passport to the chosen VSP delegate, A. W. Foster.

Simonoff began to publicise the significance of the Russian events. He gave an authentic account of Lenin’s role. He spoke on many platforms, gave interviews and wrote for the press. Although Simonoff’s appreciation of the Revolution lacked the immediacy of the actual views of the Russian leaders, the book he wrote, *What is Russia?* published in mid-1919, gave the first substantial account to Australians of the history of the Russian revolutionary movement and especially the socialist influence in it.

He distinguished between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, and emphasised the importance of *What is to be Done?* without being able to expound Lenin’s ideas. He gave some idea of the nature of the Soviets. Towards the end of 1918 Simonoff was charged under the War Precautions Act and in the first half of 1919 he served four months in prison.

In the second half of 1918 and the first half of 1919 the ideas of the Russian Revolution had to compete with the prevailing view of the road to socialism — One Big Union. Over more than a decade the Australian left, especially in New South Wales, had absorbed the syndicalism of the IWW until in 1918 the trade

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Later a judge of the Arbitration Court.
union movement officially decided to reconstruct itself on "industrial" lines. With the national OBU conference in January 1919, the ideology of "bigger" unionism dominated the scene. Although there was much debate and different trends, virtually the whole left held to some form of One Big Unionism. It was thought that by class struggle and the application of "big" unionism, socialism could be achieved.

It is difficult to sort out completely cause and effect but the failure of the One Big Union to take on to any real extent and the greater opportunities to appreciate the Bolshevik strategy occur together. The fact that Lenin had proposed workers' control over industry to the Congress of Soviets which took power on November 7 and had followed this up nine days later with detailed proposals, created common ground between the Bolsheviks and syndicalists and "industrialists". Several eye-witness accounts which were reprinted in Australia in 1919 emphasised this aspect of the revolutionary process. It is hardly surprising that men prominently connected with syndicalist or industrial union ideas — Earsman, Laidler, Baracchi, Glynn, Garden and a group of "red" trade union officials—associated themselves with the Bolshevik position and were closely connected with the subsequent steps taken towards establishing a Communist Party. Even more important, perhaps, were the many militants who had either been in the IWW or strongly influenced by it or its ethos. In 1919-20 they were the living substance through which the first Leninist ideas were carried into the Australian labor movement and they stamped the ideas with their own style.

The early aura around the Russian revolution persisted in spite of Lenin's subsequent revisions. In fact, in Australia the original sequence of the development of Lenin's thought was reversed. The first important Lenin work was published under the title "Soviets at Work", late in 1919. Despite its title, it was really Lenin's The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government, one of a set of similar, closely-argued doctrinal statements, turning the Revolution in a new direction. Coming immediately after the Brest-Litovsk debate, this pamphlet propagated the ideas of one-man management, productivity, the importance of specialists, payment by results and discipline. Compared to State and Revolution written earlier, but published in Australia later, the emphasis had changed. Lenin's famous Spring address, as The Immediate

7 The Socialist, 28 Nov., 1919.
9 State and Revolution was first published in Australia in April 1920.
Tasks was often called, was the source of much of the early discussion of Lenin's ideas. It seems the actuality of the Soviet government had more meaning than the discussion of a more fundamental nature contained in State and Revolution.

Karl Radek's The Russian Revolution came out in Australia about the same time as Soviets at Work. Originally an introduction to Bukharin's The Communist Programme of World Revolution, it is marked with the brilliant pungency for which Radek was justly famous. Radek's theses are generally close to Lenin's but there is sufficient difference to illustrate that Bolshevism was not a monolithic doctrine. For instance, Radek suggests that in highly developed capitalist countries the proletariat will have to fight the peasantry.16

The Bukharin pamphlet itself was printed in Australia about the middle of 1920 by the Proletarian Publishing Association which, along with Andrade's Bookshop, Melbourne, was responsible for the bulk of the Bolshevik reprints in 1919 and 1920. Percy Laidler who had been assistant secretary of the VSP in the early days under Tom Mann, then an IWW, managed Andrade's, and started the most important early communist-orientated journal The Proletarian Review in June 1920 with Guido Baracchi as editor. J. B. Miles attested to the importance of The Proletarian Review in consolidating the trends towards a Communist Party in 1920.11

Baracchi, at least, took a critical interest in the various Bolshevik writings. He described Bukharin's pamphlet, which in a way seems to have been a pre-cursor of The ABC of Communism, as "distinctly inferior to the writings of Lenin, of whose revolutionary genius Bukharin's falls short." Perceptively Baracchi referred to the Bukharinist approach to the national question. Unlike Lenin, Bukharin did not regard self-determination as a principle; the right to national autonomy could be overridden by the international working class crossing national boundaries.12

Other of Lenin's writings published in the second half of 1920 were Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship, The Great Initiative and in particular The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky. As well there were two by Zinoviev: The Communist Party and Industrial Unionism and V. Lenin: His Life and Work. Apart from the intrinsic interest, no doubt the scandal produced by allegations of unusual sexual arrangements in Soviet

11 Interview with the author, 12 January, 1965.
12 The Proletarian Review, August 1920.
Russia, prompted the publication of *Marriage under Bolshevism*, an exposition of Soviet marriage law, and A. Kollontai's *Communism and the Family*. A couple of Trotsky's pamphlets, *The History of the Russian Revolution* and *Bolsheviki and World Peace*, completed a wide range of Bolshevik opinion available to the Australian left.

Apart from Baracchi's, there were few important Australian contributions to debate on the significance of the Russian revolution. Maurice Blackburn, ex-VSP, left-wing Labor Victorian parliamentarian, put out a pamphlet which was largely a commentary on Lenin's views of the immediate issues facing the Soviet government in the Spring of 1918, i.e., it was probably based on *Soviets at Work*. Interestingly, Blackburn warned against the possibility of growing bureaucratism due to the use of experts who could easily become a new governing class. But easily the most important Australian view came from sometime secretary of the VSP, editor of *The Socialist*, R. S. (Bob) Ross.

Ross had been an enthusiast of the Revolution from the beginning but had refused to endorse the universality of its methods. In a series of "Letters" to the Queensland *Worker*, subsequently reprinted as a pamphlet, he expounded most sympathetically the nature of the state and economic systems of Soviet Russia and the Russian interpretation of the Marxist theory of democracy but finally proposed that "our own industrial and parliamentary machinery can be more rapidly altered or used to ensure reconstruction towards emancipation than beginning anew on Russian lines." Ross maintained that Parliament could be bent to whatever the people wished and that One Big Unionism offered as many advantages as Soviets. There is an evolutionary-revolutionary analysis of the road to power, with what appears to be a lack of appreciation of the sharpness of changes which may be necessary: "on the day that education and events enable us to return to power a party with a mandate to establish the proletarian dictatorship and overthrow capitalism, on that day it shall be done."

There is repeated reference to Marx's estimate of the likely course of the English revolution and "what Marx said is our heritage".

17 Ibid., p. 48.
While Ross obviously regarded himself as writing in the Marxist
tradition, he wrote as if he regarded the state as neutral, failing to
assess the class character of state power. Nevertheless, he raised
important points: the effect of the social standards reached in
Australia, the importance of hard-won freedoms and the moral
influence of Labor in national life. Ross insisted that restriction
of the franchise was not essential to the dictatorship of the
proletariat. Unbeknown to Ross, Lenin had already conceded this
point: “it would be a mistake, however to guarantee in advance
that the impending proletarian revolutions will be necessarily accom­
panied by restriction of the franchise. It may be so . . . but it is not
absolutely necessary . . . it is not an essential earmark of the
logical concept ‘dictatorship’.”

Ross opposed the reorganisation of the VSP as a Communist
Party of Australia based on the Communist Manifesto of Marx and
Engels and the New Communist Manifesto of the Third Inter­
national. A significant section of the party, however, favoured the idea,
and others on the left proceeded with arrangements to form a
party upholding Bolshevism. After the rejection of the OBU by
the New South Wales Labor Party Conference in June 1919, the
OBU-ites left the ALP. After an Australian Socialist Party-inspired
conference failed to achieve socialist unity the OBU-ites moved
towards a communist position. The ASP itself adopted the line
of the Third International in December 1919. The Brisbane branch
of the ASP went ‘communist’. Finally, the ASP in Sydney
invited those interested to a conference to consider “communist
unity”, and they formed a Communist Party.

Although the left of 1919-20 did not have a complete knowledge
of Leninist thought, sufficient was known to begin a ferment of
ideas. The debate on the left explored many of Lenin’s theses on
revolution; and the Leninist strategy won mony adherents,
especially among the ranks of syndicalists and “industrialists”. The
successes of the Russian revolution made Soviet-style government
popular. Some demurred—at least to some degree—maintaining
that too close an attachment to the Russian model would be
misleading. However the Soviet trend had made genuine impact
and in the years ahead the influence grew.

18 V. I. Lenin, “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky” Selected
Most people know what Lenin DID
But what did he SAY that is relevant today?

"Marxism differs from all other socialist theories in the remarkable way it combines complete scientific sobriety in the analysis of the objective state of affairs and the objective course of evolution with the most emphatic recognition of the importance of the revolutionary energy, revolutionary creative genius, and revolutionary initiative of the masses — and also, of course, of individuals, groups, organisations and parties that are able to discover and achieve contact with one or another class."


From the original manuscript of Lenin's April Theses (1917).

Lenin was born 100 years ago, on April 22, 1870.

A wide range of Lenin's books, pamphlets and Collected and Selected Works are available from:

- New World Booksellers, 425 Pitt St., Sydney.
- International Bookshop Pty. Ltd., 17 Elizabeth St., Melbourne.
- People's Bookshop, 205 Brunswick St., Brisbane.
- People's Bookshop, 180 Hindley St., Adelaide.
- Pioneer Bookshop, 75 Bulwer St., Perth.
REVIEWERS HAVE REMARKED of Adam Ulam’s lengthy work *Lenin and the Bolsheviks* that in it Lenin appears as a much more complex and interesting figure than in any of the lives of him yet written. For what it is worth, this conclusion can hardly be avoided, if one reads the Collected, or even the Selected, Works. Although it is subtitled “The intellectual and political history of the triumph of communism in Russia”, the study falls far short of being either a satisfactory political biography or of giving an account of the political and social environment within which Lenin’s revolutionary ideas were moulded. It does not fill the gap left by Isaac Deutscher’s failure to complete the trilogy of political biographies of Stalin, Trotsky and Lenin.

A vivid picture of Lenin the man certainly does emerge, largely evoked from the recollections of contemporaries, and there is some brisk puncturing of the speculative accounts of recent

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*Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, by Adam B. Ulam. Fontana, ix, 785 pp. $2.35.

Daphne Gollan is a tutor at Australian National University.
years of Lenin's relations with Inessa Armand. They were just good friends is all that the available evidence will permit us to say, in Ulam's opinion — although the direct telephone line between Lenin's office and Inessa's apartment, and her photograph still to be seen in his apartment may suggest something more.

There is also a refreshingly cool look at the Mensheviks. Ulam rejects the sanctimonious defence by some apologists that the Mensheviks were moral men disarmed by the unscrupulousness of the Bolsheviks. He points out that from 1902 to 1905 the Mensheviks were as deeply involved in the political in-fighting as their opponents. If we look for the reason why they lost the advantage again and again, it would seem to lie not so much with Lenin's ruthlessness as with their own lack of an immediate and concrete revolutionary perspective in a political situation which in spite of the ebb and flow of repression and upsurge, was profoundly revolutionary.

This brings us to the question of Lenin's revolutionary outlook. No account of Lenin, which is not a study of the revolutionary strategy and tactics which he worked out in detail within a framework of orthodox Marxism to apply to the political conditions in which the Russian revolutionary movement operated, can hope to explain what it was that made this sulphurous polemicist unique among the factional brawlers in the emigration. Nor why it was, when they all went back in 1917, that he alone of the party men, although endowed with no gift of foreseeing future events, knew what to do next, while the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries squandered political time and capital in endless talk in the soviets.

Ulam has not attempted such a study. Although, in his contra-suggestible way, he has avoided emphasising the tedious and unproductive view of Lenin the opportunist, with the obsessive lust for power, which has been a standard interpretation in the West for many years, he has come up with a frequently repeated discussion stopper of his own, which is, that Lenin had an obsessive hatred of the social group from which he sprang, variously described as the middle class or as the intelligentsia. No adequate explanation of this hatred in terms of personality or rejection of his family background is suggested, for there is none. As is well known, Lenin remained to the end of his life devoted to his family, a collar and tie man of unshakably bourgeois tastes and habits and the sort of man who knew exactly what flattering remarks to make to Rosa Luxembourg about her cat Mimi, in 1912, when she and Lenin were seeing eye to eye on Kautsky's descent into reformism.
To explain Lenin's attitude to the intelligentsia, liberal and radical, one must turn to his political beliefs. It is true that, particularly from 1905 onwards, Lenin never ceased to pour vitriol on the liberals as the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie, but the reasons are clear. The political task before Russian Marxists at the beginning of the twentieth century was that of the struggle for the bourgeois democratic revolution. The socio-political feebleness and ideological waverings of the bourgeoisie were common knowledge amongst revolutionaries. Plekhanov had long since recognised that the working class would have to play the main part in overthrowing the autocracy and winning political and civil liberties. But a political alliance between the bourgeoisie and proletariat against the autocracy was still seen as essential.

In July 1905, after months of intense observation of the behaviour of the liberal opposition, Lenin stated (in Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution) that the bourgeoisie would be too treacherous, inconsistent and fearful to carry through its own revolution but would desert its proletarian allies and become counter-revolutionary before victory was won. The bourgeois democratic revolution would have to be achieved by an alliance of proletariat and peasantry in the face of the opposition of the bourgeoisie. A few months later the crumbling of the liberal opposition before the pseudo-concessions of the October Manifesto bore out Lenin's estimate of the bourgeoisie, but his heretical strategy of the revolutionary alliance of workers and peasants remained under attack from Menshevik exponents of orthodox Marxism. Lenin's savage and incessant hammering of the liberals had two ends in view, the first, to prove by constant demonstration the counter-revolutionary stance of the bourgeoisie, and the second, to block pragmatic alliances of revolutionaries and liberals against the autocracy.

The rigorous tactics flowing from the strategy of no alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie from 1905 to 1914 put severe strains on the loyalty of the Bolshevik following. Again and again, what seemed to be fruitful opportunities of forming a united opposition front against the autocracy had to be foregone. Electoral agreements with the Cadets, joint opposition to the government in the Duma and contributions by socialists to the bourgeois opposition press were all renounced.

Lenin's attacks however were by no means confined to the liberal intelligentsia. From 1900 he had been concerned to define a revolutionary Marxist policy and to build a revolutionary political party. This meant differentiation and separation from the mass
of the motley oppositional intelligentsia that had come into being by the end of the nineteenth century — an opposition ranging from “legal” Marxists, indistinguishable from liberals, to the neopopulist terrorists. Lenin’s most consistent assaults were directed against the groups closest in the political spectrum, the right-wing Social Democrats and the Socialist Revolutionaries.

With the final defeat of the revolution and with the severe repression ushered in by the Stolypin coup in June 1907, the semi-anarchist left wing of the Bolshevik faction were also the object of Lenin’s wrath. They wanted to renounce altogether the limited opportunities for legal political action won in the revolution and to reconstruct the faction entirely as an underground conspiratorial body dedicated to the preparation of an armed uprising. Apart from philosophical wrangles the main point at issue was whether to participate in parliamentary work and in legal mass organisations. The left wing, the otzovists, argued for the recall of Bolshevik deputies from the Duma, Lenin was adamant that the Duma was to be used as a platform for revolutionary agitation but not as a testing ground for the effectiveness of parliamentary pressure in squeezing concessions from the autocracy.

The combination of legal with illegal activity insisted upon by Lenin was a razor edge path between the Mensheviks on the right yearning to cut all connections with the underground and move into legal mass work “in order to take their place with the class”, and the otzovists on the left clamoring for a totally illegal revolutionary underground. The Bolshevik faction split again and again, with Lenin, irascible and vituperative, finding his only reliable supporter in Zinoviev. The formal split with the Mensheviks in 1912 was engineered by new workers in the field, crude Georgians, Ordzhonikidze and Stalin. All the old Bolshevik functionaries had either been hunted down by the police or had retired baffled and dissident from active work.

The isolation of the years of repression ended in 1912 with a great revival of working class militancy in mass strikes sparked off by the shooting of workers on the Lena River goldfields. A new era of revolutionary activity began with the return of the practical men to Petersburg and the establishment of legal daily newspapers, Bolshevik and Menshevik.

In an article, The Revolutionary Upswing, in June 1912, Lenin wrote of the militancy of workers in terms which reveal a remarkable rise in his estimation of the development of the working class above that seen in What is to be Done?. In 1912 Lenin wrote, “The proletariat . . . is drawing the masses into a revolutionary
strike, which indissolubly links politics with economics, a strike which wins the support of the most backward sections by the success of the struggle for an immediate improvement in the life of the workers, and at the same time rouses the people against the tsarist monarchy. This is a view of the role of the revolutionary mass strike in arousing the political consciousness of the workers which is similar to Rosa Luxembourg's.

Between 1902 and 1912 Lenin had learnt a great deal about the revolutionary potential of the working class. The revolution had shown to the embattled and wrangling intelligentsia the enthusiasm, initiative and political educability of the workers, and the scattered and isolated revolutionary groups had briefly grown into a mass party in which workers outnumbered intelligentsia.

A considerable change had also occurred in Lenin's thinking about the mass organisations of the working class. The deep reservations which he still had in 1905 about trade unions and his suspicious insistence that they should remain politically neutral and entirely separated from the party had, under the impetus of the many sided activity of the newly formed unions and the prodding of Bolshevik practical men, been abandoned by 1907. In their place was a recognition of the importance of combining the economic and political struggle and giving the industrial struggle itself a political character through Social Democratic leadership.

The history of the development of Lenin's revolutionary strategy and tactics has not been adequately recounted in English, at least to the point where E. H. Carr takes up the story in 1917. Certainly it has not been done by Ulam — nor by those of the English academic school who write political histories but who would not recognise a political meeting or a trade union meeting if they fell into one — nor by those Americans who see rivalries between Marxists as variants of the deadly Tweedledum and Tweedledee ritual of presidential contests. One can only regret once again the death of Isaac Deutscher.
Bertrand Russell

Lenin: An Impression

THE DEATH OF LENIN makes the world poorer by the loss of one of the really great men produced by the war. It seems probable that our age will go down to history as that of Lenin and Einstein — the two men who have succeeded in a great work of synthesis in an analytic age, one in thought, the other in action. Lenin appeared to the outraged bourgeoisie of the world as a destroyer, but it was not the work of destruction that made him pre-eminent. Others could have destroyed, but I doubt whether any other living man could have built so well on the new foundations. His mind was orderly and creative: he was a philosophic system-maker in the sphere of practice. In revolutions, three types of men come to the fore. There are those who love revolution because they have an anarchic and turbulent temperament. There are those who are embittered by personal grievances. And there are those who have a definite conception of a society different from that which exists, who, if the revolution succeeds, set to work to create a stable world in accordance with their conception. Lenin belonged to this third type — the rarest, but by far the most beneficent of the three.

Only once I saw Lenin: I had an hour's conversation with him in his room at The Kremlin in 1920. I thought he resembled

This article was first published in The New Leader (Britain) on January 25, 1924. It is republished here by kind permission of The New Leader, and Bertrand Russell just before he died.
Cromwell more than any other historical character. Like Cromwell, he was forced into a dictatorship by being the only competent man of affairs in a popular movement. Like Cromwell, he combined a narrow orthodoxy in thought with great dexterity and adaptability in action, though he never allowed himself to be led into concessions which had any purpose other than the ultimate establishment of Communism. He appeared, as he was, completely sincere and devoid of self-seeking. I am persuaded that he cared only for public ends, not for his own power; I believe he would have stood aside at any moment if, by so doing, he could have advanced the cause of Communism.

His strength in action came from unwavering conviction. He held his beliefs in an absolute way which is difficult in the more sceptical West. Beliefs other than his own — for example, the belief that climate or race might affect national character in ways not explicable by economic causes — he regarded as heresies due to the bourgeois or the priest. The ultimate coming of communism he regarded as fated, demonstrable scientifically, as certain as the next eclipse of the sun. This made him calm amid difficulties, heroic amid dangers, able to regard the whole Russian revolution as an episode in the world struggle. In the early months of the Bolshevik regime, he expected to fall at any minute; I doubt whether Scotland Yard was more surprised by his success than he was. But he was a true internationalist; he felt that if the Russian revolution failed, it would nevertheless have brought the world revolution nearer.

The intensity of his convictions, while it was the source of his strength, was also the source of a certain ruthlessness and a certain rigidity of outlook. He could not believe that one country could differ from another except in the stage of economic development that it had reached. In my record of the interview I had with him, written immediately afterwards, I find the following: “I asked whether and how far he recognised the peculiarity of English conditions. He admits that there is little chance of revolution now, and that the working man is not yet disgusted with parliamentary government. He hopes this result may be brought about by a Labor Ministry. But when I suggested that whatever is possible in England may occur without bloodshed, he waved aside the suggestion as fantastic”. I hope this opinion was mistaken. But it was part and parcel of what made his strength, and without his creed he could never have dominated the wild forces that had been let loose in Russia. Statesmen of his calibre do not appear in the world more than about once in a century, and few of us are likely to live to see his equal.
Lenin on Revolutionary Situations

THE CONCEPT OF THE "REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION" is one familiar to all revolutionaries since Lenin. Yet it is a concept which has been strangely neglected by Western experts on revolution. Thus Chalmers Johnson in his modern classic Revolutionary Change (1966) ignores the concept altogether while Robert C. Tucker in The Marxian Revolutionary Idea (1969) gives it less than adequate treatment. This neglect can partly be explained by the fact that Western writings on revolution are not so much theories of revolution as manuals of counter-revolution. Thus Chalmers Johnson's main concern is to advise the ruling elite on how to avoid revolution by being sensitive to signs of social disequilibrium as soon as they arise and by making suitable adjustments to economic and political policies to offset a revolutionary challenge. Lenin of course took an opposite stand. For him revolution was a necessary and progressive process and therefore it had to be welcomed and prepared for.

Lenin was a revolutionary long before the 1905 revolution but his concept of the revolutionary situation was largely a product of that revolution. In his writings of 1905-1906 Lenin already

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isolated some of the basic elements of the revolutionary situation as he was to define it in 1917 and in later years. These elements included the effects of military defeats on the ruling class and on their command of military and police power, the expansion of revolutionary struggle so that large numbers of industrial workers, peasants and middle class elements became rapidly involved, and the quick change from peaceful protest and demonstration to open armed struggle of the masses against absolutism and landlordism.

In his work "Left-Wing" Communism (1920) Lenin recognised four necessary conditions for the existence of a revolutionary situation:

1 All classes hostile to the revolution have become fully confused and weakened through internal struggle, and the ruling classes cannot continue to rule in the old way.

2 "All the vacillating, wavering, unstable, intermediate elements (the petty bourgeois democrats)" have sufficiently exposed themselves before the people and discredited themselves.

3 Among the proletariat "a mass mood in favor of supporting the most determined, unreservedly bold revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has arisen and is growing."

4 The armed forces of the bourgeois regime are in an advanced stage of revolt and disintegration.

The above summary, prepared as advice to over-zealous revolutionaries of Western Europe, was a far from adequate exposition of the concept of the revolutionary situation. To appreciate more fully this concept, to understand its complexities and the way Lenin used it, it is necessary to work carefully through the history of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and Lenin's analysis of the developments and contradictions of this revolution.

Even before his return to Russia, Lenin, in his Letters from Afar (March 1917) explained the outbreak of the March Revolution by reference to the "monstrous disorganisation" of Russian society, by the revolutionary experience and disposition of the Russian proletariat, and by the impact of the military defeats of 1916. Later on, after several displays of mass action (in early May and in early July) Lenin enlarged on the concept of a revolutionary situation in his article Constitutional Illusions (August 8, 1917);

... a revolution differs from the 'normal situation' in a state precisely by the fact that controversial questions of state life are decided by the direct
struggle of classes and the struggle of masses, even to the point of armed 

struggle. It cannot be otherwise when the masses are free and armed . . .

It is well known that in the long run the problems of social life are decided 

by the class struggle in its bitterest and acutest form, the form of civil war.1

(my emphasis—L.G.C.)

Following the failure of the Kornilov uprising in September 1917

Lenin drew attention to the qualitative change that occurred in 

political struggle in a revolutionary situation:

Every revolution involves a severe crisis in the lives of the vast masses 

of the people. Unless the time is ripe for such a crisis, no real revolution 

can take place . . .

During a revolution millions and tens of millions of people learn in a 

week more than they do in a year of their ordinary somnolent life:2

Although soon after he had written the above statement Lenin 

again briefly thought in terms of a peaceful solution3 to the unstable 

Russian situation of "dual power" the diversion was momentary. 

From October 12 until the uprising of November 7 weeks later 

he never missed an opportunity of pointing out how the situation 

was becoming more revolutionary and therefore making decisive 

action on the part of the Bolsheviks more imperative. He was 

handicapped by the fact that until late in October he was in 

hiding in Finland and therefore not fully in touch with the situation 

in Petrograd or elsewhere in Russia. In The Crisis has Matured 

(October 12, 1917) Lenin analysed the events of previous weeks 

in great detail and came out with the conclusion that;

The beginning of October undoubtedly marked a definite turning point in the 

history of the Russian Revolution and, to all appearances, of the world 

revolution also.4

To prove this contention he drew attention to the rapid spread 

of peasant revolt, to revolts among national minorities in Russia, 

to increasing opposition in the army and navy to the policies of 

the provisional government, to increasing support for the Bolsheviks in the Soviet and local council elections5, and increasing 

opposition to the war in Germany, and to the urgency of the 

German threat to Petrograd.

The above letter was sent to the Central Committee of the party

1 V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1946, Vol. 6, 

pp. 182-183.

2 Lessons of the Revolution, September 12-14, 1917. Selected Works, Vol. 6, 
p. 190.

3 The Aims of the Revolution, October 9-10, 1917. Selected Works, Vol. 6, 

pp. 240-249.

4 The Crisis has Matured, October 12, 1917. Selected Works, Vol. 6, p. 224.

5 Lenin claimed that the Bolsheviks had won 47% of the votes in the municipal 
duma (district) elections held on September 24. Modern research has shown 

that this was an underestimate and that the Bolsheviks received 50.9% of the
in an effort to persuade it to accept the plan for an armed uprising. For Lenin, armed struggle including insurrection was an essential element in Marxist strategy. But many other Bolsheviks, particularly Kamenev and Zinoviev, adhered to the view that insurrection was synonymous with Blanquism and was anti-Marxist. It was therefore necessary for Lenin to argue repeatedly throughout the months leading up to November that by advocating insurrection in certain circumstances he was not abandoning Marxism for Blanquism. These passages provide additional detail on Lenin’s understanding of the dynamics of the revolutionary situation. Thus in A Letter to Comrades (October 29-30, 1917) Lenin spelled it out in nine propositions:

A military conspiracy is Blanquism if it is not organised by the party of a definite class; if its organisers have not reckoned with the political situation in general and the international situation in particular; if the party in question does not enjoy the sympathy of the majority of the people, as proved by definite facts; if the development of events in the revolution has not led to the virtual dissipation of the illusions of compromise entertained by the petty bourgeoisie; if the majority of the organs of revolutionary struggle which are recognised to be ‘authoritative’ or have otherwise established themselves, such as the Soviets, have not been won over; if in the army (in time of war) sentiments hostile to a government which drags out an unjust war against the will of the people have not become fully matured; if the slogans of the insurrection have not acquired the widest renown and popularity; if the advanced workers are not convinced of the desperate situation of the masses and the support of the countryside, as demonstrated by an energetic movement, or by a revolt against the landlords and the government that defends the landlords; if the economic situation in the country offers any real hope of favourable solution of the crisis by peaceful and parliamentary means.

A week after writing the above letter Lenin issued his final appeal to the Central Committee to act before it was too late:

I exhort my comrades with all my heart and strength to realise that everything now hangs on a thread; that we are being confronted by problems that can be solved not by conferences or congresses (even by Congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by the people, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed masses...

If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf.

6 Cf. Guerrilla Warfare (September 1906) and Marxism and Insurrection, September 26-27, 1917.
8 See for example Letters on Tactics, Marxism and Insurrection, and A Letter to Comrades.
10 Ibid., pp. 334-335.
The understanding of the concept of the revolutionary situation is essential for the understanding of Lenin's policy throughout 1917. Between the two revolutions of 1917, a period of less than eight months, Lenin made no fewer than five tactical changes in his revolutionary policy and on each occasion the tactical change was prefaced by a detailed consideration of the concrete revolutionary situation at the time. Thus in April he recognised the significance of the dual power situation and directed the Bolsheviks towards the objective of overthrowing the provisional government and bringing "all power to the Soviets". After the failure of the July insurrection he urged the abandonment of the slogan and the preparation for insurrection but not the immediate planning for an insurrection. With the eclipse of the provisional government and the resurgence of popular enthusiasm for the Soviets following the defeat of the Kornilov conspiracy he again reverted temporarily to a slogan of "all power to the Soviets" even though the Bolsheviks did not yet have a majority in the Soviets. But two days after advising this change in tactics Lenin again (on September 16) advised preparing for an early uprising. Yet again, in early October in the context of negotiations between the "forces of the left" Lenin advised one last attempt at a peaceful development of the revolution. A fresh analysis of the situation a few days later made Lenin again swing back to planning an insurrection.

What stands out in this catalogue of change is not Lenin's inconsistency, although in one sense he was less consistent than Kamenev or Zinoviev, or even Trotsky. What stands out is Lenin's ability at analysing the changing revolutionary situation both at home and abroad and at drawing the correct conclusions from his analysis. He favored the maximum flexibility in tactics but his strategic objective remained unchanged throughout — the overthrow of the bourgeois provisional government. This strategic objective was not motivated simply by a desire to seize power or to make himself the master of the world revolution. He acted because he was already convinced that only a social revolution would end the slaughter of the World War and make it possible for future

12 The Aims of the Revolution, October 9-10, 1917.
13 The Crisis has Matured, October 12, 1917.
14 This charge is made by Stanley W. Page, Lenin and World Revolution, N.Y. University Press, N.Y., 1959.
15 The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution, April 23, 1917. Quotation from Selected Works, Vol. 6, p. 75.

44 AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW—APRIL-MAY, 1970
generations to avoid the scourge of war. Thus immediately after his return in April 1917 he wrote:

The war has brought mankind to the brink of a precipice, to the destruction of civilization, to the brutalisation and destruction of countless millions of human beings. There is no escape except in a proletarian revolution.15

Lenin’s single-minded devotion to revolution was an element in his socialist conviction and his humanism. His organisational ability and his mastery of the art of insurrection were consequences of his socialist conviction. For Lenin, a socialist could not possibly sit back and await the inevitable socialist revolution. His duty was to investigate the revolutionary potential of the given situation and, when the time was ripe, to act quickly and decisively to ensure success. For Lenin, revolution was both a science and an art.

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Lenin On "Counter-Hegemony"

THE WORD "HEGEMONY" simply means "leadership", particularly the leadership of, say, one state within a confederation of states. In revolutionary politics it rather means the leadership of one class within a polity consisting of several classes. This question is of particular interest to revolutionaries today as consciousness grows of the fact that the main way in which the bourgeoisie in advanced capitalist countries at present maintain their system is their capacity to have their ideas, values and institutions accepted by the majority of the proletariat and other classes. The bourgeoisie thus exercises a leadership or "hegemony" within society, and revolution can become a possibility only if that hegemony is destroyed by a "counter-hegemony" built up by the revolutionary forces. Here I take some aspects of Lenin's treatment of the subject.*

* This article is part of a booklet entitled Lenin on Theories of Revolution which will be published this month. This section of the booklet deals with four aspects of Lenin on Counter-hegemony — the party; different forms of hegemony; hegemony and the struggle against anarchism; alliances, compromises and hegemony.

The references are to the Collected Works of Lenin. Thus 5/451 means page 451 of volume 5.

Eric Aarons is a member of the editorial board of ALR and a member of the National Executive, C.P.A.
THE PARTY

Lenin's views on organisation of the party followed from the struggle for hegemony in the revolution in the conditions existing in Russia at the time, in which four main features stood out: the oppression of the autocracy; the great spontaneous upsurge of the struggle which culminated in the 1905 revolution; the smallness of the proletarian and socialist forces within that great movement; and the great differences in outlook and aims of the class and party forces participating:

The government is steadily developing the size and range of the activities of those of its lackeys who are hounding revolutionaries, is devising new methods, introducing more provocateurs, trying to exert pressure on the arrested by means of intimidation, confrontation with false testimony, forged signatures, planting faked letters, etc., etc. Without a strengthening and development of revolutionary discipline, organisation and underground activity, struggle against the government is impossible. And underground activity demands above all that groups and individuals specialise in different aspects of work and that the job of co-operation be assigned to the central group of the League of Struggle, with as few members as possible.

The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, 1897, 2/349.

... a special 'struggle against the political police' is required, a struggle that can never be conducted actively by such large masses as take part in strikes. This struggle must be organised according to 'all the rules of the art', by people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity.

What is to be Done? 1902, 5/451.

The root of the mistake made by those who stand for Martov's formulation is that they not only ignore one of the main evils of our Party life, but even sanctify it. The evil is that, at a time when political discontent is almost universal, when conditions require our work to be carried out in complete secrecy, and when most of our activities have to be confined to limited, secret circles and even to private meetings, it is extremely difficult, almost impossible in fact, for us to distinguish those who only talk from those who do the work. There is hardly another country in the world where the jumbling of these two categories is as common and as productive of such boundless confusion and harm as in Russia.

... in a period of great social turmoil, when the political atmosphere is charged with electricity, when now here and now there, from the most varied and unforeseen causes, outbreaks occur with increasing frequency, heralding the approaching revolutionary storm — in a word when it is necessary either to agitate or remain in the rear, at such a time only organised revolutionary forces can seriously influence the progress of events.

Preface to the Pamphlet 'May Days in Kharkov', 1901, 4/361.

The peasantry includes a great number of semi-proletarian as well as petty-bourgeois elements. This makes it also unstable, compelling the proletariat to rally in a strictly class party.

Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, 1905, 9/98.

Russia is one of the most petty-bourgeois countries in the world and is least accustomed to free political activities. This, and this alone, explains the contempt that is so widespread in this country for adherence to a party. One of the tasks of class-conscious workers in Russia (and one of the great historical services they must render) is to wage a systematic and persevering struggle against this attitude.

Bewildered Non-Party People, 1913, 19/436.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF HEGEMONY

As Lenin saw it, the struggle for hegemony in Russia had to take a predominantly political form, though he was conscious that this was not a universal imperative, but related to the conditions. Thus in polemics with the Economists he said:

... the workers' parties in the various countries have discussed the question many times and, of course, will discuss it again and again — whether to devote more or less attention at any given moment to the economic or to the political struggle of the proletariat; but the general question, or the question in principle, today remains as it was presented by Marxism. The conviction that the class struggle must necessarily combine the political and the economic struggle into one integral whole has entered into the flesh and blood of international Social-Democracy. The experience of history has, furthermore, incontrovertibly proved that absence of freedom, or restriction of the political rights of
the proletariat, always make it necessary to put the political struggle in the forefront.

A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats, 1899, 4/77. Emphasis added.

This seems to confine the question only to economics or politics, but it is broader than that:

Considering the wealth and many-sidedness of the ideological content of Marxism, there is nothing surprising in the fact that in Russia, just as in other countries, various historical periods give prominence now to one, now to another particular aspect of Marxism. In Germany before 1848, the philosophical forming of Marxism was the aspect particularly stressed; in 1848 it was the political ideas of Marxism; in the fifties and sixties it was the economic doctrine of Marxism. In Russia before the revolution, the aspect that was particularly stressed was the application of the economic doctrine of Marxism to Russian reality; during the revolution, it was Marxist politics; since the revolution it is Marxist philosophy. This does not mean that any of the aspects of Marxism may at any time be ignored; it only means that the prevalence of interest in one aspect or another does not depend on subjective wishes, but on the totality of historical conditions.

Those Who Would Liquidate Us, 1911, 17/76.

This certainly does not speak for those who consider that the emphasis being given to the development of counter-hegemony in the cultural and moral fields alongside the political and economic is “anti-Marxist-Leninist”.

With the foregoing in mind, it is instructive to look further into the struggle against economism in the period preceding the 1905 revolution when, on Lenin's assessment, the struggle for hegemony was concentrated in the political field. The essential question was the role or importance of consciousness in the revolutionary movement. It had several aspects to it:

(a) the general question of consciousness; or, bourgeois versus socialist ideas, referring to all fields — cultural, economic, political, etc. Bourgeois ideas prevail, said Lenin because:

bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology . . . it is more fully developed and . . . it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination.

What is to be Done?, 1902, 5/386.
(b) the kind of political consciousness needed for the establishment of proletarian hegemony:

There is politics and politics. Thus, we see that Rabochaya Mysl does not so much deny the political struggle as it bows to its spontaneity, to its unconsciousness. While fully recognising the political struggle (better: the political desires and demands of the workers), which arises spontaneously from the working-class movement itself, it absolutely refuses independently to work out a specifically Social-Democratic politics corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to the present-day conditions in Russia.

Ibid., 5/387.

(c) the kind of organisation needed in the conditions then prevailing to give practical effect to hegemony, the essential point being the independence of the social-democratic workers from peasants and liberal bourgeoisie — but the real and not merely formal independence:

The ultimate political outcome of the revolution may prove to be that, despite the formal ‘independence’ of Social-Democracy, despite its complete organisational individuality as a separate party, it will in fact not be independent, it will not be able to place the imprint of its proletarian independence on the course of events; it will prove so weak that, on the whole and in the last analysis, its ‘dissolution’ in bourgeois democracy will nevertheless be a historical fact.

Two Tactics, 1905, 9/54.

Change “dissolution” to “integration” and “social-democratic politics” to “socialist strategy” and we are not so far from some key problems of today!

Taken in its most general form, the idea of ‘economism’ is that of ‘economic determinism’ or ‘mechanical materialism’. This takes various forms such as attempting to explain the actions of individuals, parties and classes as a direct result of economic interests or processes; in line with this giving primacy in thought and activity to economic struggles; of expecting that these will at some time spontaneously give rise to socialist consciousness on a mass scale; and neglecting the intellectual effort and intellectual cadre force needed to develop and promote socialist ideas. It also reflects itself in a tendency to reduce the content of revolutionary material to the lowest common denominator:

Attention, therefore, must be devoted principally to raising the workers to the level of revolutionaries; it is not at all our task...
to descend to the level of the 'working class' as the Economists wish to do, or to the level of the 'average worker', as Svoboda desires to do... You, gentlemen, who are so much concerned about the 'average worker', as a matter of fact, rather insult the workers by your desire to talk down to them...

*What is to be Done?,* 1902, 5/470-1.

In 1916 Lenin returned to the struggle against a new type of economism which he dubbed "imperialist economism", which cannot solve the problem of how to link the advent of imperialism with the struggle for reforms and democracy — just as the Economism of blessed memory could not link the advent of capitalism with the struggle for democracy.


Capitalism and imperialism can be overthrown only by economic revolution. They cannot be overthrown by democratic transformations, even the most 'ideal'. But a proletariat not schooled in the struggle for democracy is incapable of performing an economic revolution.


Again, take "democracy" to include self-activity and the struggle for "workers' control" and all forms of self-management, and we have an interesting comment on some present day problems.
"IT'S ALL OVER BAR THE SHOOTING"

The Gorton Government has been trying very hard to convince the Australian people that the Vietnam war is no longer an issue, that we will soon be withdrawing, that it is all over bar the shouting. But to the Vietnamese people things must look much the same as they have done for the past thirty years of struggle, bloodshed and sacrifice. Despite the Nixon Administration's 'progressive withdrawal', despite the 'Vietnamisation' of the war, despite the rhetoric in Washington and Canberra, the bombing of villages goes on, the defoliation of crops continues, the 'search and destroy', 'clear and hold', and 'enforced pacification' operations proceed. To the people on the receiving end of the most obscene atrocity of modern times, the war is much the same as it has been at least since its 'Americanisation' in 1965.

Unfortunately, many of those active in the anti-war movement have allowed themselves to be deceived by the bland sophisms of Washington and Canberra. The level of involvement has fallen and interest has been diverted to other issues. Yet ending the Vietnam war remains the most urgent task facing the Australian nation. To this end we are organising a Vietnam Moratorium Campaign to end the war now and to demand the immediate repeal of the National Service Act.

We invite you to join us in the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign. We need your time, we need your money, we need your commitment.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE PHONE

☐ I wish to help in organising the Moratorium. Please put me in touch with my local group.

☐ I enclose a contribution of $______________


AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW—APRIL-MAY, 1970
Vietnam is a knife that was not twisted into me until the end of my second year at University, 1965. Before then, I had been afforded, and allowed myself to enjoy, the luxury of a casual approach to what was happening in that country. The pictures of the Buddhist monks who immolated themselves just before Diem's downfall in 1963 had aroused a momentary, uncomprehending horror in me, but nothing more... it was only when the monks again burned themselves to death in 1966, this time in opposition to Ky's regime, that they burned their way through to me as well. What had happened to change my response?

Conscription and Australian intervention in Vietnam had happened. I was required by the new National Service Act to register in the very first ballot. I am ashamed to say I did. I am

The author, 24, is an MA student in politics. He has been active in both the Pacifist and Labor Clubs in Melbourne University. Now a member of SDS he has spent several short terms in prison because of his beliefs and will soon serve a term of two years for his resistance to the National Service Act. This article is reprinted from the 1969 issue of MUM (Melbourne University Magazine), with the author's permission.
also ashamed to say that, at the time, I hoped I would be balloted out. Now, in a paradoxical way, I am glad I was not: I am privileged to have an avenue of resistance that is denied many others in a selective system or conscription (though of course it is open to all to urge and support draft resistance). Like Genet, in Sartre’s biographic analysis, I reassert my freedom precisely within the prison walls that aim to constrain me. I am glad, too, to have been snatched from a purely private and alienated existence to one in which I can feel, and act rationally upon, a sense of human relation to my fellow man. Such a sense of liberation, incidentally, is not just my own idiosyncratic response — it has struck me in nearly all of twenty other draft resisters I have met personally (see the account of the 1969 Non-Compliers’ Conference, Resistance Notes).

But while I feel this way now, it was not always so. In the first instance I reacted in two distinct, even disassociated ways. One reaction was intellectual: the desire to find out just what the Vietnam war was about, and what legitimate claims the Government could exert over me. After reading both the official justifications and the critics of the war, I became convinced of the injustice and untenability, both historically and contemporaneously, of American-Australian intervention in Vietnam. The results of my critical assessment of the history, rationales for, and negotiations concerning, the Vietnam war have been given in several previously published articles and I will not go into them again here. For a long time I did believe that conscription taken in itself, without reference to Vietnam (which of course it can’t be) might be justified, as perhaps during the Second World War, but further study on the nature and function of conscription changed my attitude on this too (see my analysis of conscription, in “Resistance to Conscription: the Politics of Commitment”).

The other reaction could be described as existential. The letter telling me of my conscription was like a harpoon barb that I suddenly discovered sticking in me. Personal hopes and aspirations, ideas of writing and overseas travel, personal relationships that meant much to me, all dissolved in the coming confrontation with the Army, a confrontation that would leave me either deeply compromised with myself or suffocating in a prison cell. My mood for two years, 1966 and ‘67, was one of more or less continual depression. University studies ceased to be of interest in themselves, so much as something I had to get through lest I lose my student deferment. I began to comprehend, for the first time in my life, what it means to be an Aboriginal, a delinquent,
someone born in poverty . . . any person, in fact, who has had his future, his intimate personal future, literally stolen from him by the society in which he lives.

Whichever way I threshed in the search for personal freedom, I eventually felt the sickening tug of the tautening line. If I tried to escape overseas, it meant I would have to leave those I loved. If I joined the army, it would mean complicity with genocide — a repudiation of all the values for which I have strived to live. Also it would mean voluntary submission to a system of military indoctrination and personality moulding of which, as a student of psychology, I had all too much understanding and fear. If I refused to join the army, it meant prison, with the soul-destroying monotony and time-wastage and indignity that constitutes prison life (as a full-time Probation Officer during 1967, I became fully conversant with what prison means, and does, to its inmates.) Conscientious objection procedures were not open to me: at first because I was a particular war objector; later because, despite the broadening of my objection to all conceivable wars (on account of their possible escalation to nuclear war), it became obvious to me that the conscientious objection procedures were simply a means of legitimising, "whitewashing", the whole system by allowing exemption to a predictably small number of absolute pacifists. (For a critique of conscientious objection procedures see A. J. Muste; American Friends Service Council Report The Draft)

There seemed no escape. But then a slight wisp of hope appeared in the form of the November 1966 General Elections. There seemed at least a possibility that Labor could win, and would withdraw from Vietnam and abolish conscription. The Bill White case, occurring just prior to the elections, made it just seem feasible that people would vote Labor to secure his release. Despite some equivocal statements from Whitlam, I trusted Calwell and Cairns' assurances at the time that the ALP would use withdrawal of troops to put pressure on America to end the war. But, of course, the ALP did not win, and their promises were not put to the test.

During the whole of the next year apathy and demoralisation engulfed the anti-war movement, myself included. The YCAC's virtually collapsed and demonstrations were rare and dispirited; 1967 was the year of paralysis. (See Roy Forward, "Conscription 1964-1968", p. 137)

My faith in parliamentary representation collapsed. Instead of retaining its principles and strengthening its campaigning, the ALP under Whitlam effectively withdrew from its anti-war stand — a
sure symptom of parliamentary impotence and moral bankruptcy. What has been said of the English Labor Party applies equally well to the Australian one: "Power corrupts, but lack of power corrupts absolutely". Freedom in a parliamentary system implies a real choice between two or more parties: if, in relation to the major decisions affecting people's lives, the parties are functionally equivalent, then freedom does not exist. Elections, in themselves, do not guarantee the existence of freedom: everyone votes in Russia, but since there is no alternative party, freedom does not really exist. During 1967 institutional politics congealed into one big consensus on all the most important issues facing Australia. This consensus has remained in place, jelly-like, ever since; only the occasional bickering squabble on some minor issue sets its wobbling.

Early in 1968, in an effort to discover how apathy and indifference had been overcome in other times and in other places, I studied Gandhi's campaigns in India, the Civil Rights Movement in America and the CND movement in Britain. I rapidly became convinced of the efficacy of non-violent direct action techniques to mobilise people out of apathy. Such action works not by violent coercion and intimidation but by an appeal to people's conscience and rationality (not necessarily of those in power so much as of those who might join a movement in opposition to those in power). Such action is distinguished from bourgeois notions of "non-violence" by virtue of the fact that it is not afraid, where necessary, to transgress the legal and institutional boundaries set to dissent (and this is nearly always necessary). Gandhi and King had at least demonstrated the feasibility of such methods, even if they had not succeeded in creating a genuine revolution in their respective societies.

With these ideas in mind, I helped in the organisation of the first national anti-conscription demonstration that had been called since 1966: a sit-in outside the Prime Minister's Lodge on May 19, 1968, at the time when the new amendments to the National Service Act were being considered by Parliament. The tactical novelty of the demonstration was that many of the participants were committed to going to gaol rather than pay their fines. Five eventually did so, myself included. Many people at the time criticised such action as "conscience-salving" and "making martyrs of yourselves". Such criticism failed to comprehend the possibility that the only answer to demoralisation and apathy is precisely to start putting one's values into practice no matter how "unrealistic" it seems. The French students, characteristically, had a slogan, "Be a realist — demand the impossible!" By going to gaol rather
than pay fines we hoped to show that a qualitative break must be made with our old methods of protests and action: dissent through the normal channels and in the normal arenas had become programmed into the system. Johnson on his visit to Australia could tolerantly hail the demonstrations as proof we were living in a "democracy".

That actions such as ours exercised some beneficial effect on the general atmosphere is perhaps indicated by the recent action of unionist Clarrie O'Shea in going to gaol for refusing to pay fines imposed on his union under the Penal Clauses. A nationwide strike of several million workers resulted, precipitated not so much by the prosaic demand for wage increases as by feelings of solidarity with a gaol ed fellow-unionist. Non-violent direct action and civil disobedience are powerful forces in a modern society where the mass media quickly communicate to millions what is happening, and feelings of human solidarity may be rapidly generated. Students may not be able to affect the power distribution in society directly, but they can provide models of resistance and alternative action for those exploited or excluded groups who come, as a daily occurrence, into conflict with the ruling bureaucratic hierarchies of society.

If 1967 was the year of paralysis for Australia, 1968 was the year of its reinvigoration — at least among students. Few on campus could fail to have been in some way affected by the new atmosphere that developed during the year — an atmosphere stimulated, on the one hand, by the momentous student struggles abroad — in France, Mexico and on campuses across America — and on the other hand by a resurgence of action on the home campuses. At some universities the action took the form of a renewal of the anti-conscription, anti-Vietnam war campaigns; at others the abolition of non-participatory forms (e.g. at Monash) or resistance to internal university policing systems in the form of disciplinary regulations. Unlike most of the campaigns of two years before, the action was generally initiated by radical groups prepared to use new forms of direct action rather than by reformist ad-hoc committees intent on separating one issue off from all the other issues confronting society. Groups with a theory or philosophy behind them, such as Labor Clubs and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), came to the forefront in place of the older ad-hoc groups such as YCAC who were neither prepared to relate conscription to all the other contradictions of modern society (or even to Vietnam) nor prepared to use direct action when normal constitutional channels had failed. The phenomena of student revolt became the burning issue of discussion at all strata in society.
For the first time marxist and other radical critics of modern society (e.g. Marcuse, Sartre, David Horowitz, C. Wright Mills, Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy) began to be read and discussed seriously by students.

The thinking of the New Left in America, and the significance of the May events in France began to make their impact. In the dialectic of events during 1968, we saw a remarkable verification of the fact that direct action is the sociological catalyst and precondition for people to make a serious attempt to understand the theory and dynamics of their society rather than a consequence of such an understanding. It is true, and most essential, that for any given individual, theoretical understanding will later guide his action, but on the sociological level, it is only the catalysis of direct action that catapults individuals into making the attempt at theoretical understanding.

Nineteen sixty-eight was the year of my own liberation — as I suppose it was for countless students the world over. Caught up in, and fascinated by, the interplay between events and ideas, and the need to interpret and clarify them, I read and talked and lived politics for the first time in my life (my previous introverted biases had been to psychology on the one hand, and creative writing on the other). In the course of studying, on the one hand, the situation in other Third World areas such as South America, and on the other (as part of a Fourth Year course in psychology) the nature and extent of industrial conflict, I encountered that chilling experience of Weiss's Marat:

*When I investigated a wrong it grew branches
And every branch grew twigs.*

The marxist critiques of Sartre and Marcuse were revelations to me — explaining and connecting much of what I had observed only partially in previous years (e.g. on the role of the media; methodology in psychology; social anomie; mental illness; American aggressiveness; organisation man; and of course American and Australian intervention in Vietnam). I studied, with equal appreciation and excitement the origins and ideas of the New Left in America, from the Berkeley Free Speech Movement to the rise of SDS. Late in the year the revelation to end all revelations arrived in Australia: Seale and McConville's detailed description of the May upheaval in France, *French Revolution 1968.* For the first time I became convinced that revolution in a modern industrial society was as historically possible as it was necessary. Just as the Chinese, Cubans and Vietnamese have demonstrated the feasibility of social revolution in Third World countries, the French
students demonstrated to an astonished world the feasibility of revolution in an advanced neo-capitalist industrial society. Acting through the example of their own resistance to police repression, and the mode of running their own universities, the students succeeded in detonating a general strike of over eleven million, including both blue and white collar workers. These workers went on strike mostly without union sanction, in many cases occupied their work-places and, even at the end, refused to ratify the wage agreements made in their name by their trade union “representatives”.

Far from merely wanting wage increases, as the bourgeois press reported, their demands were just as revolutionary as those of the students. But for the failure of the Left to resolve its sectional differences, De Gaulle’s regime would have almost certainly have been toppled. As it was, there was a power vacuum for several weeks in which (the concomitant of any genuine revolution) a sense of liberation swept throughout France. “Ten days of happiness already!” as one wall slogan put it.

By the end of that remarkable and exhausting year, I had come to the following conclusions:

1 Genocide and crimes against humanity are being practised daily by America and her allies in the Vietnam war (for a definitive substantiation of their commission of these crimes under international law, see In the Name of America, a 422 page report published by the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam).

2 The Vietnam war is not a “mistake” or “accident” or “miscalculation” of American and Australian foreign policy, but rather a consistent and rational expression of their policies as they have developed in the Cold War and in the Third World context. American policy in particular has been orientated towards protection of her neo-imperialist economic interests throughout most of South America and other Third World countries. Although American economic interests are not directly present in Vietnam, the war is a test of whether American military security for her economic hegemony over the rest of the Third World can be successfully challenged by popular revolutionary guerilla movements. Hence American leaders talk of the necessity of showing that “wars of national liberation” are bound to fail. This hypothesis alone is capable of explaining the seeming irrationality of a policy that has put tremendous strain on the detente with Russia, alienated huge sections of the home public, blocked domestic programs to end poverty,
caused incalculable deaths and misery to millions of people and threatened the world with the possibility of an escalation into nuclear war (only the failure of Russia to respond in the same aggressive manner as America would respond if one of her allies were systematically bombed into the stone age has saved the world from a third and final World War).

3 The full explanation of the Vietnam war, however, lies not only with the factor of protection for the world economic interests of American capitalism, but also in the internal character of modern industrial society, which breeds the kind of alienation that makes toleration of genocide a normal everyday response. This alienation derives from such sources as:

(a) meaningless and monotonous work conditions that leave workers, both blue and white collar, anxious for escape and distraction in their leisure hours (leading thus to an alienation in leisure too).

(b) Commercially-controlled media which functions to create false needs, artificial status aspirations, and alienated consumption patterns: the constant barrage of trivia and mediocrity leaves little opening for the development of an authentic culture, individual identity, and sensibility to the suffering of fellow human beings.

(c) A political system that minimises political participation to the bare minimum of a meaningless choice every three years between two parties whose differences, in relation to the decisions vitally affecting the lives of the great majority of the population, are negligible. The ballot box choice is made in “serialised” isolation from others rather than after rational discussion with one's fellows (instead the media conduct the “rational discussions” for their passive audiences).

4 The conflict between technology and humanity, as nightmarishly expressed in the image of a multi-million dollar B-52 indiscriminately dropping tons of explosive and napalm on defenceless peasants and villages in Vietnam, is reaching a critical stage both in relation to the nature and risks of modern warfare, and in relation to the dangers of totalitarianism in modern societies. The billions of dollars being spent on chemical and biological warfare by America, Russia, Britain, Australia and Canada are coming to represent a new threat to the whole of humanity. If the once-and-for-all nature of nuclear weapons has had any effect in discouraging the regular
resort to war to resolve political conflicts, then the more gradual and surreptitious processes of CBW may make war a feasible proposition again. In relation to totalitarianism, modern technology is facilitating two dangerous trends:

(a) The benefits and techniques of modern technology are accruing to the dominant elites in society, who are showing no hesitation or scruples about using them to (i) manipulate public opinion, (ii) strengthen the power of the repressive agencies in society (police, security, penal authorities), and (iii) wage war more effectively against poor countries who cannot match their technology. It is by no means beyond imagination that the final, humane, solution to the problem will be political compulsory injection of tranquillisers or other psycho-pharmaceutical drugs.

(b) Automation and technological innovations are displacing blue collar workers into inferior "service" occupations, or into unemployment (this is already happening in America, and will probably start developing in Australia within the next ten years). Unless they can be drawn into a genuine social and human revolution, these displaced blue collar workers may become the usual mass base for fascism. It is significant that poor whites formed a big proportion of the followings of Goldwater and Wallace.

5 The two most revolutionary demands that can be voiced in a modern industrial society are (i) for a right to participate in the decisions affecting one's own life, and (ii) for an end to repression as practised both at home and abroad. These demands are the modern equivalent of Lenin's famous slogan Peace! Bread! Land!, which resonated so deeply with the Russian people, and formed the basis for their collective revolutionary action. The New Left is precisely distinguished from the old in that it has recognised the revolutionary significance of these demands for our society, and is not afraid to use direct action to struggle for them, even when this means great personal risk to its members. The New Left does not aim so much to impose a specific political program on the diverse groups and individuals in society, but rather to galvanise them into demanding their right to make their own decisions in matters that affect them. As Cohn-Bendit has observed, the French workers in May last year did not immediately voice revolutionary demands when they first went on strike and occupied their factories: rather in the very course of their occupations, they began to ask themselves: "why shouldn't we run the factories for ourselves — why shouldn't we be our own bosses!"
other words, their demands did not stem from the teaching of an infra-structure of revolutionary cadres, appropriately equipped with a sophisticated critique of society and theory of workers' control, but rather developed out of the objective situation in which their action had placed them. Significantly both blue and white collar workers went on strike in France, showing that the strike was more about exclusion from decision-making and the right to control their own lives than about differentials in wage levels. Advanced capitalist societies can buy off their populations with increased wages and distractions, but the two demands they cannot, or will not, grant to people is control over their own lives — and the right to refuse or resist, on the basis of individual conscience, compliance with repressive or genocidal policies.

6 Repression abroad and alienation at home will only be ended by a political and social revolution that shifts decision-making power from the present unrepresentative elites to where it really belongs — with individual people. This revolution will take the form of a spontaneously-developing mass movement, probably triggered by direct action on the part of students and young workers. This revolution will not occur inevitably or automatically. Failure to accomplish it, however, will probably result in some form of totalitarianism, either along the lines of Orwell's 1984 or Huxley's softer, but equally nightmarish Brave New World. In his recent study of the origins of dictatorship and democracy, Barrington Moore has argued cogently, on the basis of social-historical analysis, that failure to accomplish a genuine social revolution is a pre-condition for later totalitarianism.

One of the central means by which such a revolution is hindered is the prevalence of a hegemonic bourgeois ideology, one of the main features of which is to dissociate ideas from practice, values from their realisation: critical thought is contained purely within the never-never realm of the mind. Universities are seen as places where dissenting intellectuals can buzz away to their heart's content so long as they refrain from acting on the basis of their beliefs. Just as during the rise of fascism in Germany, the universities were encouraged to think that, if they refrained from public criticism and action they would succeed in preserving their own freedom, so the universities in advanced capitalist societies are encouraged to think that they can preserve their freedom by not publicly attacking the totalitarian trends and policies in the wider society. Universities instead have become places where an expanding professional labor force is trained to carry out their future work-roles
in absolute ignorance of the social and moral implications of what they are doing. The “psy-war” psychologists who calmly make tape recordings of the screams and other utterances of suspect Viet Cong, tortured to extract information, are characteristic products of the modern Western university.

These were some of the conclusions I had arrived at by the beginning of this year. Simultaneously with this intellectual development, I experienced a sense of liberation. The fact of conscription no longer seemed the intolerable weight, the negation of my whole future, that it had in the past. Rather the barb that the Government had sunk into me now became the very weapon by which, through open resistance, I could help discredit the aura of legitimacy surrounding the Government’s authority both in relation to conscription and our involvement in the Vietnam War. It was also a means by which I could help towards the creation of a new atmosphere of resistance that would encourage any excluded or repressed person in our society, whatever his situation, to assert by direct action his right to make decisions in matters affecting his own life — and to intervene directly on behalf of those now suffering under our genocidal policy in Vietnam.

Soon after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, wild flowers began to appear in the ashes. Out of the ashes of Vietnam flowers have also begun to appear: the revolutionary student movements springing up in industrial societies all over the world. Vietnam alone was capable of making students forget their sectarian or private concerns in a concerted attempt to end the outrage. Everywhere the first reaction was simply one of disgust and repulsion as the images of napalmed children, defoliated jungles, razed villages, spread around the world. Then as the moral rhetoric surrounding American policy collapsed, attention began to centre on the twin factors that made such a war possible: firstly, the outward expansion of advanced capitalism in the form of neo-imperialist exploitation of the Third World, and the military repression such exploitation requires to sustain and protect it; secondly, the internal structurally-bred, alienation of modern society that had led, more by indifference and apathy than by outright callousness, to the toleration of such exploitation and repression. Protest that was once perfectly manageable within the system has now become metamorphosed into the spectre of resistance — a spectre that haunts both capitalist and communist bureaucracies. Contrary to the myths of the Right, student resistance in Western countries has more in common with student resistance in Communist countries than it does with the governments of the latter. Czech students in 1968 were not fighting for capitalism of the Western type, just as French students
in 1968 were not fighting for communism of the Soviet type. Both were fighting for the liberation of human beings from internal or external controls imposed by an alien system or elite.

Before the end of this year, or early in the next, I expect to be sentenced to two years' gaol for refusing to obey a call-up notice — with a possible extra one year's gaol under the Crimes Act for "inciting" young men to resist conscription. I know of forty others who face similar penalties for resisting conscription, including my wife Frances (who is also on the Crimes Act charges). Some of these will be gaol before me. Zarb and Reisenleiter are already there. I have the greatest admiration for those who first made the leap into total resistance. They must have felt like someone entering a tunnel of darkness — hoping that others are behind them but haunted by the sense that they are not, that they are now quite alone. And, as any draft resister will tell you, it is not only the reactions of authorities that make such action difficult: it is the cynicism of friends and relatives. One expects little or nothing from dehumanised bureaucrats, but cynicism from friends ("You're just trying to salve your own conscience!" "You're trying to make a martyr of yourself!") catches one off guard: it is a sort of repudiation of the whole basis of human relationship — preparedness to understand the other as the other understands himself. I would even go so far as to say that the main deterrent to draft resistance is not so much the coercive threats of the Government authorities as the cynicism of those around one, a cynicism that is an integral component of the hegemonic ideology which functions to preserve the status quo.

In 1966 I wrote, with some despair, at the end of a systematic critique of all the major arguments that were put forth at the time to justify the Vietnam war:

I think considering what we, with so little justification, are doing to Vietnam and its people, that if I ever meet face-to-face a Vietnamese person who lived through, and endured, the present conflict in his country, I will be unable to look him in the eyes. It is not his contempt or hatred that I fear, it is not these that will make me turn my eyes away — it is his pity.4

Three years, and a movement later, we have moved beyond the reach of pity. The Vietnamese revolutionaries may justly hold us in contempt for allowing them to suffer so long the results of our failure to successfully resist our Government's criminal actions — but at least we have restored some common human ground.

2 SDS Draft Resistance Group, Resistance Notes Vol. 1. No. 1, 19.6.69 National Non Compliers Conference, (roneed neweshet available from Centre for Democratic Action Research Library, 57 Palmerston St., Carlton, Vic.).
3 “Vietnam”, in Melbourne University Magazine, MCMLXVI, 1966, Melbourne University SRC.

4 "The Case for War — A Critique”, in Lot’s Wife/Farrago, 28.6.66.


6 “Peace, Paris and the Product”, in Melbourne University Magazine, 1968, Melbourne University SRC.


11 Parkin, Frank, Middle Class Radicalism, University of Melbourne Press, 1968.


13 See especially the new study by Arthur Waskow, From Race Riot to Sit-In, 1919 and the 1960s, a study in the connections between conflict and violence, Doubleday, Anchor, 1966.


17 “Inside the Mental Hospital”, in Farrago, 10.8.64.

18 Hal Draper, The New Student Revolt.


25 Robin Clarke, We All Fall Down, The Prospect of Chemical and Biological Warfare, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968.


28 see “Conscience and Dissent in the Non-Violent Revolution”, Farrago, 14.3.69.
"WORKERS, INTELLECTUALS AND MARXISM", A. W. Rudkin's discussion article in ALR No. 3, 1969, was like a breath of fresh air in the stale atmosphere of exclusiveness which some inverted snobs try to perpetuate in the working class movement. What these people do is to label a section of the population "intellectuals" (whatever they mean by this term) and then proceed to declare that these "intellectuals" are bound to play a very secondary role, if they are to play one at all, in the movement. Their zeal in defending the "class purity" of the movement knows no limits, and if challenged they can always produce a string of quotations from the marxist classics as their trump card.

In what follows I hope to show that what these people claim cannot survive even a superficial analysis in the context of today's highly industrialised Australia. Moreover I shall try to prove that the section of the working class described by the "purists" as intellectuals is going to play an ever-increasing role in the class struggle. To start with, I enumerate some of the criteria which have actually been proposed to me by some "purists" for deciding who is a "real" worker:

1. Calloused hands: . . . the acid burns on an industrial chemist's hands or his kidneys ruined through the inhalation of toxic fumes just won't do. I suppose one can classify in this category criteria such as greasy overalls, blue collars, etc.

2. Class origin.

3. Manual versus mental work . . . in a time when there is an increase in the number of jobs containing both these components.

These criteria, which have nothing in common with marxism and which were probably inadequate even during the French revolution, reveal that at least some of the "purists" are bigots. They are people who are either falling victims to their own prejudices or are trying to capitalise on the prejudices of others.
for reasons they only know. The Greek marxist, Vadis, was on
the mark when he coined the phrase "class racialism" to describe
such attitudes. A bona fide investigator can find an up-to-date
definition of the working class in marxist literature. Two such
examples which I consider adequate are listed below.

Carey¹ says: "For our purpose we have classified as working,
class all those who basically neither own nor control means of
production and who live by selling their labor power". Quattrocchi²
distills the following definition of the "new workers" from the
May 1968 events in France, events still pregnant with lessons for
the marxists of today: "All those who work in fields, factories,
laboratories and observatories. Living by selling their labor (in
various degrees of comfort or discomfort) without being able to
express their needs, practise their inclinations or fulfil their wishes.
Without being able to determine the direction, the aims and the
hopes of the community to which they belong".

In contrast I find the analyses in the classics interesting but
wanting in the context of the scientific and technological revolution
taking place in a number of highly developed countries. The
reasons are obvious; the classics correspond to an earlier period
when the scientific and technological revolution had not begun or
was still in an embryonic stage. Now let us examine some of
the objections that are raised against including people with high
skills, usually acquired at the tertiary educational level, in the
working class.

1. Lack of class consciousness: What one thinks he is (the sub­
jective factor) is not as important as what one really is. But
even if we concentrate on the subjective factor, what does the
Australian scene reveal if not viewed statically? While there
is an increase in the class consciousness of the highly skilled
section of the work force, in the less skilled sections there seems
to be stagnation if not a reversal. Who has not come across the
suburban couple who are acquiring middle-class pretensions because
they have managed to pay off the wall to wall carpet? (As a rule
the result of endless hours of overtime or a second job.)

2. Higher incomes: A very weak objection indeed, because paying
margins for skill and productivity is an accepted method of remun­
eration even under socialism.

3. A high proportion become employers or self-employed: No one
wants to argue that they should be included in the working class.

p. 98.
But what about the increasing proportion of professionals who become employees? There are more self-employed plumbers than professional engineers. Does this mean that a plumber employed by the Board of Works does not belong to the working class?

4. A high proportion become “lackeys of the ruling class”—administrators, executives, etc. True, but this is a declining proportion. And we must not forget that the less skilled sections provide the establishment also with “lackeys”—leading hands, foremen, members of the police force, the army, etc.

5. A high proportion are not directly involved in production—teachers, etc. This objection does not hold water in view of the ever-increasing shift of man-power from the secondary to the tertiary industrial sector in industrially advanced countries. Richta\(^3\) says that in the USA the ratio of “immediate production” to “services” has been completely inverted from 59:41 (1940) to 47:53 (1964). With automation, of course, these changes are bound to accelerate. But forgetting all this for a moment, who would dream of excluding a “trammie” from the working class just because he works in the service industry? Why then exclude a teacher (primary, secondary or tertiary) who works in the very important service industry of education?

Further, it can be argued that in terms of some criteria at least the highly skilled section of the work force is entitled more than any other to be included in the working class:

1. Degree of exploitation: Richta\(^4\) quoted some Soviet sources according to which the average creative scientist is 36 times more productive than the unskilled worker. This means that under capitalism a scientist, even allowing for a higher income, is exploited to a much greater extent than an unskilled worker.

2. Viciousness of attacks by the “class enemy”: this is generally accepted as a fairly reliable measure of the worth of the activities of an individual or a group. Even a superficial glance at the daily press would convince one that the increased radicalism of the highly skilled section of the work force, even if it fails to impress the “purists”, has certainly become the target for vicious attacks by the establishment. For example the Young Liberals\(^5\) (what a contradiction in terms!) resolved at their annual convention to infiltrate the NSW Teachers’ Federation “with the intention of completely destroying the left wing control of that union”. In the

\(^3\) R. Richta, *Civilisation at the Crossroads*, p. 93.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 19.

\(^5\) *The Australian*, 18-7-1969.
Queensland Parliament a Country Party member, Mr. R. T. Hinze, referred to a radical group at Queensland University as "contemptible hooligans" and "ratbags". One could go on to list many more such examples.

The increase in the militancy of the highly skilled section of the work force at the employed stage or the training stage (tertiary students), in the so-called affluent societies, is an observable fact. What is the explanation? In my opinion Ernest Mandel\(^7\) hits the mark when he asks: "What do these trends mean but the growing proletarianisation of intellectual labor, its tendency to become part and parcel of the working class?" About students: "... they are a social class in transition ... out of this interim layer there arises on the one hand an important part of the future capitalist class and its main agents among the higher middle classes, and on the other hand a growing proportion of the future working class".

What does this mean in terms of class contradictions? The privation factor, of course, is hardly relevant. It has stopped being a determining factor for the major part of the work force in "affluent" societies anyway. The economic factor is still present, with a great number from this section of the work force becoming increasingly aware of the degree to which they are exploited. This is reflected in statements made by unionists\(^8\) after the recent announcement of the farcical Engineers' and Scientists' awards.

The primary factor, however, is alienation. There is nothing airy-fairy about alienation and it is a pity that theoretical marxists do not bring this concept down to earth by explaining it in every day language and in terms of concrete examples. My personal experience as an industrial chemist and a management trainee taught me that alienation is as tangible and painful as an empty stomach. (I experienced the latter during the war.)

Alienation works in various ways, as the following examples show. A man with "letters after his name" who wants to "get on" has to prostitute himself. On one occasion a manager, a real lick-spittle, trying to threaten me indirectly for my non-conformism, told me about a fellow-chemist who was well known for his leftism, "C.H. is condemned to stay on the bench" (i.e. C.H. was not to

\(^6\) The Australian, 22-8-1969.
\(^7\) E. Mandel, "The Worker under Neo-Capitalism", Third World Broadside, p. 10-11.
become an executive). In another laboratory a young physicist who was determined to "get on" told me that he saw nothing wrong in fooling the housewives by printing on the packet of a certain product a completely false explanation of the complex phenomenon of the nature of detergents. The young trainee chemists kept "cooking" the results of their analyses because the managers were not prepared to accept results which showed that the products did not comply with the specifications. An Oxford graduate, who had majored in English literature, was a branch manager and was responsible for the TV commercial: "You will wonder where the yellow went, when you brush your teeth with Pepsodent", while a team of psychologists were working on the "guilt complex" of housewives who buy cake mixtures and packet soups.

There is nothing atypical about such young people or about the firms that employ them. If they do not already know they soon find out that if they want to reach the "top" where the decisions are made and the large salaries paid, they have to prostitute themselves. If they do not, they remain "condemned to the bench or the drawing board".

The awareness of this by the highly skilled section of the work force is increasing. Evidence for this is found in a negative way in the relative lack of radicalism in certain faculties like law and medicine — future self-employed professionals; engineering and technology — aspiring organisation men; commerce and business administration — future arch-prostitutes, etc. Then there are clearly pronounced statements such as a manifesto drawn up by a group of ANU students and staff, the opening paragraph of which regretfully says: "The modern university no longer functions primarily as a training ground for those destined to rule society. A graduate's degree today does not take him automatically into the ranks of the top elite; rather it stamps him as a highly skilled worker with a specialised knowledge".

There remains, however, some confusion even in the ranks of the radicals themselves. G. Sharp, for example, in advocating "a reversal of these trends" in modern universities gives the impression that he is nostalgic for the ivory tower-community of the scholars-type university. This brings to mind the slave Spartacus' nostalgia for his tribal past which although understandable was fundamentally reactionary. Humanity will not be liberated from alienated toil by "promoting intellectual values and a culture which transcends particularised ends" but by the technological and scien-

tific revolution in which the modern university is bound to play a prominent role. A. Langer\(^1\) quotes a statement by Mao about Chinese intellectuals (that word again!) in 1939. Although this statement was probably relevant in semi-feudal China in 1939 it is, in my opinion, as relevant in highly industrialised Australia in 1969 as the Old Testament.

There are also signs among some radical students of idolisation of factory worker and of a tendency to repeat mistakes of the past such as going to work in the factories, etc. Such "humility" is usually nothing more than a cover-up for a superior attitude, consisting in the belief that the factory worker and his class consciousness will benefit from the presence on the factory floor of such educated and bright cadres, and self-satisfaction with the enthusiasm of their motives. But the factory worker can look after himself and in all probability will not tolerate any patronising "egg-heads" telling him what to do. As for the motivation, there is usually nothing altruistic about it. If they are rebelling it is not to help their fellow humans but to help themselves and to solve the acute problems they will be facing when they become members of the highly skilled section of the work force. The working class movement is, naturally, helped by their rebellion but this is simply a consequence.

If there are hundreds of radical students and hardly any poor in anti-poverty marches it is not because we have hundreds of good Samaritans among us, but because the glaring irrationality of the presence of poverty in our "affluent" society, adds to the alienation of these youths who are being trained in the rational approach. But they would be doing something more constructive if, as graduates, they joined and provided leadership to the many existing professional unions in which militancy is rising for very good and objective reasons. They would serve the working class better if they joined some of the professional bodies, which behind a facade of pompous platitudes about professionalism, have been reduced to employers' pressure groups.

Perhaps it is worth speculating, at this stage, about the merits and demerits of this highly skilled section of the working class when it is compared with other sections. One disadvantage that comes to mind immediately is their lack of tradition in unionism. There is, however, another side to this lack of tradition. By starting from scratch and by learning from the mistakes of others they can probably avoid repeating some of them, particularly the ossification of the structures of the older unions.

\(^1\) A. Langer, *Analysis*, July 1968.
A small advantage in present Australian conditions is that this section of the work force, with a few exceptions (for example there is a glut of Ph.D's in chemistry), has the market on its side. And paradoxical as it may appear the relatively greater affluence of these people, in a society which is fairly affluent as a whole, enables them to take the junk which has become the fetish and the distraction of our consumer society for granted. As a result some of them have little appetite for this expensive junk and the ones that do have such an appetite can afford to buy it without having to work endless hours of overtime or in a second job, so they still have time for leisure and involvement in public affairs. Another aspect of this is that although economic demands are still the backbone of unionist activity among them, they can be politicised more easily than less affluent unionists. A good example of this are the campaigns which have been led in recent years by teachers' unions.

Another advantage lies in the fact that they have been trained for years in the art of critical evaluation of data, in the weighing of evidence, etc., so that, generally speaking, they are less likely to become dogmatic and inflexible in their involvement in the class struggle as other sections of the working class tend to be. It is also to their advantage that they have had practice in abstract thinking, that they are articulate, etc; in other words, if their tertiary training has not turned them into hopeless snobs, this training is to their advantage as potential activists.

Finally, to fully appreciate the significance of this section of the work force one must study the situation not statically, but as it really is, in a state of flux. Changes have always taken place, but never as fast as they do now. The left should study trends with an eye to the future. If this is done we shall see not only an increase in militancy in this section of the work force with all the associated factors mentioned above, but also a great increase in numbers at the expense, of course, of the other sections.

A. Pryce-Jones\textsuperscript{12} writes about the USA: "I read in A. Schlesinger's book that in a year or two there will be more than seven million students in the universities, more students than farmers throughout the country." According to Richta\textsuperscript{13}, in the future, when full automation has been achieved (and the only real obstacle to this is vested interests), this section will become almost the entire working class. So I strongly appeal to the "purists" to allow these people to . . . "join the club" even at this early stage.

\textsuperscript{12} A. Pryce-Jones, "Elders of America", The Listener, 82, 2102, 47 (1969).
\textsuperscript{13} R. Richta, Civilisation at the Crossroads, p. 103.
RECENTLY there has been a spate of press predictions that 1970 will witness something of a retreat on the university front, a decline in student militancy and a return to a more moderate and restrained style of protest and action. It would be easy to dismiss these forecasts as wishful thinking were it not for the fact that the modes of student radical action in 1969 have produced an unmistakable reaction in some universities and a reappraisal by some student leaders of the tactics that characterised last year's confrontations.

There is, I believe, something of a crisis in the student left movement, here and overseas, and it is as well to recognise the fact and to try to determine its causes and possible remedies. There has already been some valuable discussion in ALR and elsewhere along these lines, and in this article I propose to widen the ambit of the debate by relating developments in Australia to those in Europe and the United States, and suggesting a general framework for the diagnosis of the crisis. Like all overviews, this attempt at analysis will be vitiated by unwarranted generalisations, but I am hopeful that this defect will be compensated for by the merits of provoking consideration of the wider context of Australian student problems.

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Looking back at the confrontations that took place in 1969 between student activists and authorities at various levels, others beside myself have been struck by the extent to which action tended to become a thing-for-itself, regardless of the significance of the issues involved or the likely social results that would flow from the actions. There were confrontations about serious and important issues; there were others, however, that were frivolous and irresponsible. Some of the leaders of these actions showed themselves unable or unwilling to discriminate between what was important and what was not, between what would arouse mass student support and what would involve only a small vanguard, between what would enhance the level of social awareness of the non-active student and what would retard it. On the whole, less and less respect came to be paid to the representative character of actions, and elitist traits among the leaders became magnified.

Along with this tendency, there was a pronounced shift towards authoritarianism and repressive intolerance among some of the elite radical groups. It became obvious that to some of these groups at least the goal of student action in the universities was not a freer and more democratic institution in a freer and more democratic society, but rather the substitution for one kind of repression of another characterised by political fanaticism.

Until the latter part of the year, the apostles of unbridled activism met with little opposition from any quarter on the left. Organisations of the non-student left appeared to be too eager to derive political profit from the heightened militancy to apply critical standards to it. Among the student activists themselves, too few possessed a developed theory of social action which would enable them to recognise the dangers implicit in the course which was being followed. Additionally, there existed among them a fear of being pre-empted on the left by extremists and being labelled "reformists" or "liberals" for opposing ill-conceived actions. Only when the self-defeating character of mindless activism became clear, did substantial criticism begin to develop. By this time, extremists were sufficiently in control of some student left organisations to ensure that they could be displaced only by a power struggle, thereby precipitating a further splintering of the radical movement. All these features were most apparent at Monash, where the ideolological and power warfare has been most acute, and where the implications for 1970 are still not clear.

The impetus for the turn towards activism (by which, in the present context, I mean a belief in action as a revolutionary weapon in its own right) stems, I believe, from the May 1968 events in
France. At that time, a quite specific and unusual conjunction of circumstances brought it about that a series of confrontations between students and the authorities, initiated without a great deal of forethought or perspective precipitated a national political crisis which came close to overturning the de Gaulle regime. The activist strain in this great contestation, represented above all in the person of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, derived considerable prestige from its role in the May events, and the influence of its ideas and styles began to percolate through the student movements of other countries, investing them with an aura and power which Cohn-Bendit's flair for charismatic projection did much to enhance.

But Benditism has a far different aspect when viewed outside the specific situation which gave it its moment of glory. I met up with the fiery redhead and a group of his followers in Northern Italy in September 1968, where their talents were deployed for the disruption of the World Anarchist Federation Congress. Apart from their overweening arrogance and vicious intolerance, I was impressed by their adamant refusal to discuss or contemplate a revolutionary perspective of social change, their insistence that action alone was its own realisation and would produce its own logic of change. Returning to Paris shortly afterwards, I experienced at first hand the practical application of the doctrine of the actionists. Hardly a night would go by on the Left Bank without a foray by miniscule groups of students, who would materialise from nowhere, smash a store window or overturn a car, then melt into the crowds on the boulevards. Within minutes, the detested flics would descend from their vans, looking in their weird get-up like outer space goons, and proceed to harry the innocent and unfortunate passers-by. The Paris intelligentsia, who in May had supported the students overwhelmingly, were by now thoroughly fed up with these senseless spectacles, and watched with aloofness the occasional skirmishes between police and those who claimed to be “making revolution” after their infantile fashion.

Despite the primitiveness of the nihilists, their notions have found a home in many student groups today which claim to be socialist, marxist, social revolutionary. The extent of the retreat from reason was underlined for me during a short visit to the United States last September, which I spent mostly on campuses in the South, in New York and New York State, in Southern Illinois and San Francisco. Having lost touch with the student scene in America over the previous two years, and carrying with me the ideas of it I had formed in 1966-67, I was overwhelmed by the change which had come over the radical student movement in the meantime. In place of the naive but appealing and optimistic moral fervour and
idealism of the earlier phase, I found almost everywhere I went a pronounced bias towards nihilism, the cult of violence and factional intrigue. The intensity of these symptoms varied from one locale to another, but the general trend was unmistakable and commented upon by every thoughtful leftwing student and staff member I met. Many veteran leftwingers among the intellectuals admitted to pessimism and depression, having failed in their attempts to deepen the social and political understanding of the student activists and interest them in the formulation of basic strategies for social change. All the vices of the old left seemed to be making a grotesque comeback, one sect in New York having resurrected as its hero none other than — Joseph Stalin! There were unpleasant but well-substantiated stories of the persecution by so-called leftwing student groups of distinguished marxist intellectuals whose only apparent crime was that they opposed the cult of irrationality. (Similar occurrences have been reported from France and West Germany.)

It would be unfair to present this as the only current in American student radicalism. I met such courage and self-sacrifice among small groups of students working in the racist South that I was humbled; and Berkeley, for all its quaintness, retains much of the spirit which made it a beacon for idealistic radicals all over the USA. But I cannot doubt that the trend I have described has made very great headway in the past two years, and as yet shows no signs of ebbing.

The achievements of the student New Left are already prodigious. To the student upsurge of the sixties we owe in large measure the breach made in the politics of consensus, the mass revulsion against the Vietnam war, a new level of concern about the rape of the third world, the exposure of the mythology of pluralism, new dimensions of social and moral critique of contemporary advanced society. The wave of nihilism that has swept over the movement threatens these achievements and the future of the left as a whole. It has many roots besides the French experience. Uncritical acceptance of Maoist doctrines concerning the power of "revolutionary will" has encouraged elitism and resort to heroics, for example. But one feature of American student radicalism has, I believe, special pertinence to the Australian scene.

In its beginning the United States' student movement was notable for its neglect of ideology and strategic thinking, its idealistic worship of society's victims, and its belief that a saving message would suffice to arouse mass revulsion against the oppressive social system. The initial vulnerability of the universities to radical action encouraged optimism about the brittleness of the power
structure as a whole. There was a widespread feeling that by going to the poor, the negroes, or the workers, a revolutionary conjunction would be effected that would shake the system to its foundations. Events soon exploded this disingenuous perspective—students came up against palpable facts about the resilience and ruthlessness of the power centres, and the extent to which these are sustained by the ideological hegemony which the ruling class exercises over the masses. We are now witnessing the reaction of the students to their disillusionment—idealism has turned to bitterness, worship of the masses to contempt for them, ultra-democratic politics to elitism, moral persuasion to the cult of violence. The similarities between this evolution and that which occurred in the case of the nineteenth century Russian populists is too obvious to need labouring.

The torment that afflicts American student rebels is not nearly so strongly felt in Australia. For one thing, one does not have to be long in the United States to appreciate how much more oppressively the weight of official power is felt there in comparison with this country. For another, the long tradition of moral righteousness in American politics of the right and the left is not nearly so dominant in Australia. Nevertheless, both because student radicalism has modelled itself largely upon American styles, and because the same sense of powerlessness in the face of official power and mass apathy operates in both countries (though to different degrees), there are reasons enough why we should experience a milder but sufficiently serious outbreak of nihilism.

The crucial problem in re-orienting the student left, and the left as a whole for that matter, remains what it has been for many years past: the elaboration of a coherent and viable strategy of revolutionary change, and the integration with this strategy of appropriate forms of political organisation and appropriate tactics. Since this is a major subject in itself, and one which is receiving attention in many places, I only want to make two propositions about it.

Firstly, if, as I believe, the springs of revolutionary socialist consciousness and action lie fundamentally in the social strains induced by the scientific and technological revolution, then it is obvious that strategy must be founded upon a profound critical analysis of this transformation, and a recognition that it is still in embryo. Strategy must be projected over the next decades; it must be a strategy of protracted social warfare. The student radical finds it hardest to think in terms of prolonged preparation of revolutionary change, both because patience is foreign to the young and because, for reasons connected with the nature of the scientific
revolution, his milieu (the university) has been affected more drastically in the early stages of the transformation than have other social structures. Lest there should be any misunderstanding, the recognition of the necessity for a protracted strategy does not involve a curbing of student radical action, but a conscious acceptance of the wider social integument to which it must adapt if it is to serve general revolutionary aims.

Secondly, there is the vexed and unresolved question of the major revolutionary actor. Traditionalists continue to argue that the industrial worker occupies this role, eclectics that the old and the new (or intellectually-trained) workers both have an equal place in revolutionary perspectives, and the "revisionists" that the decisive section now consists of the new working class. I do not propose to repeat here the reasons which place me in the third camp, but the importance of a correct identification of the major revolutionary actor cannot be over-emphasised. I will confine myself to pointing out the implications for the student leader who accepts the "revisionist" theory. If the intellectually-trained constitute the decisive long-term agents of transformation, then by concentrating upon the revolutionisation of the outlook of the student body, the student leader is not (as has frequently been argued) merely catering to a privileged minority, but nurturing the forces of future social change. But he must be sure that his sights embrace the entire student body, and must view the students moreover not only in their present and temporary role but above all in their more permanent role as technicians of the industrial and bureaucratic complex. Again, to avoid misunderstanding, I would stress that this perspective does not imply that the student leaders should ignore the question of the relationship between students and workers. The industrial worker does not disappear from the social and political scene merely because he is displaced as the major revolutionary actor, and the importance of the closest possible collaboration between student movements and organised sections of the intellectually-trained working class follows inescapably from the premises outlined above.
Books


Many ill-informed people still believe that the staff of the political science department at the London School of Economics, once headed by Harold Laski, presents a serious threat to the ongoing system. In fact, almost all the teaching staff are either tired Fabian fact grubbers or ignorant Marcuse-baiters such as Maurice Cranston.

Laski's sole heir among the senior staff is the brilliant Belgian-born co-editor of the annual Socialist Register, Ralph Miliband, who is best known as the author of Parliamentary Socialism (1961). This work, an historical critique of the British Labour Party in terms of "parliamentary cretinism", demonstrated that Labour entirely excluded all forms of action except voting, debating and negotiating, including even the elementary militancy of industrial action. Not surprisingly, it was described by Bernard Crick, Miliband's former colleague at the LSE and a member of the Labour Party, as "a piece of protracted teleology, rather like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr's notorious history of the New Deal." (Most of the reviews of this book in the scholarly journals were completely illiterate, but an excellent critique by the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm appeared in Universities and Left Review). More recently, Miliband's support for the rebels during the LSE student revolt of 1968-69 did not improve his standing with the majority of his professional colleagues who when under pressure are every bit as reactionary as their counterparts in the US and Australia.

In his latest and most ambitious work, The State in Capitalist Society, Miliband begins with the recognition that since Lenin — with the exception of Gramsci — Marxists have made little notable attempt to explore the phenomenon of the bourgeois State in the light of the concrete socio-economic, political and cultural reality of actual capitalist societies. Several years ago Paul Sweezy observed that "this is the area in which the study of monopoly capitalism, not only by bourgeois social scientists but by Marxists as well, is most seriously deficient."

Miliband's book is a very substantial contribution to remedying the deficiency noted by Sweezy. It constitutes a major advance on works such as James Harvey and Katherine Hood, The British State (1958), not only because it comes to grips with and effectively demolishes the most influential schools of thought subscribed to by bourgeois political scientists and political sociologists but also because it confronts the cultural reality of advanced capitalism, an area of crucial importance which has been largely neglected by Marxists in the English-speaking world. Two long chapters are devoted to the processes of legitimation of advanced capitalist societies, e.g. education, the mass media and the churches. Miliband recognizes that for the ruling classes in these societies there can be no enterprises of greater importance than the battle to persuade the subordinate classes to accept the existing social order and to confine their demands and aspirations within its limits.

After reading The State in Capitalist Society, one must turn to the lengthy
review in *New Left Review* No. 58 by Nicos Poulantzas who puts forward a number of very important critical comments although he recognises the fundamental merits of the work. Unfortunately Miliband does not deal with the Marxist theory of the State as such. By omitting the first step he finds it rather difficult to get beyond opposing "concrete facts" to the old notions but these can only be combated effectively by the explicit introduction of new concepts. Another important point raised by Poulantzas is that the churches, political parties, unions, schools, the mass media and the family should be considered, despite their relative independence and autonomy, as *ideological* apparatus of the State as opposed to the classical *repressive* apparatus of the State (government, army, public bureaucracy, etc.). According to Marxist-Leninist theory, a socialist revolution does not signify only a shift in State power, but it must equally "break" the State apparatus. The classics of Marxism have considered it necessary to apply

the thesis of the "destruction" of the State not only to the State repressive apparatus, but also to the State ideological apparatuses. The advent of a socialist society cannot be achieved by "breaking" only the State repressive apparatus while maintaining intact the State ideological apparatus, taking them in hand as they are and just changing their function.

Notwithstanding these and other criticisms brought up by Poulantzas — which this reviewer accepts — Miliband's book remains a work of fundamental importance. He has demonstrated that the most important fact about advanced capitalist societies is the continued existence in them of private and concentrated economic power. As a result of that power, the owners and controllers in whose hands it lies enjoy a massive preponderance in society, in the political system, and in the determination of the policies and actions of the State.

JOHN PLAYFORD

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**Late News**

The editors have pleasure in announcing that Roger Garaudy, eminent French marxist, has accepted an invitation by ALR to make a lecture tour of Australia in September this Year.

Further details will be announced shortly.
Han Suyin to visit Australia

Han Suyin, distinguished author, doctor of medicine and world authority on China, is to visit Australia and New Zealand in April and May. She will be lecturing on China in Sydney from 25th April to 30th; Canberra 1st May, Melbourne 2nd to 7th May; Adelaide 8th May, and Perth 11th May.

She became internationally known for *A Many Splendoured Thing*, a best-selling novel and box-office movie, but the sweep and depth of her more recent trilogy, *The Crippled Tree, A Mortal Flower* and *Birdless Summer*, mark these as her most important works. Autobiographical, this trilogy is really a record of China's living history as seen and experienced by Han Suyin herself, her Belgian mother and her Chinese father. It covers the period 1885 to 1949 and gives a vivid and moving picture of the changes brought about by civil war, invasion and corruption.

Han Suyin was in China for three months during 1969, where she met and talked with many people in leading positions and she speaks with real authority on China's affairs. Everyone who has heard her speak has been most impressed; she is an attractive woman and a gifted speaker.

The visit will cost more than $2500 for return air fares from Paris, accommodation, etc. A substantial portion of this amount will have to be raised in advance of her arrival to pay for air fares and other necessary expenditures. It is felt by those organising the tour that many people who sincerely wish to see improved relations between Australia and China will be prepared to give financial assistance to make the visit possible.

The Han Suyin Committee may be contacted through Box 63 P.O., Summer Hill, 2130. Telephone 798-4633 or 439-2673.

This space has been made available by the editors of ALR as a contribution to the Han Suyin Committee.