Unions & Revolutionary Strategy

International Trade Union Movement

Vietnam: Western Aggression

The Althusser Case
Because of the importance of the issues raised and the quality of the articles, we printed 1000 extra copies of the last number of ALR, "Ecology and Revolution". It has completely sold out, and should the demand continue we will investigate the possibilities of a re-run.

In this issue there are three articles and an extensive book review dealing with problems in the trade union movement. This continues to be an area in which questions are contested hotly, both theoretically and practically, and on which there are wide differences of opinion both within the trade unions and outside.

ALR believes that the issues involved, some of which are raised in the following articles, are of particular importance to the left. We will therefore endeavour to make available to readers still more extensive material in future dealing with this subject.

On a broader front, we begin here a series of articles seeking to clarify fundamental conceptions of marxism which are current in the world today.

Part of the processes of re-orientation and fragmentation evident in the left at present in Australia and most other countries, is the proliferation of basically different theoretical approaches.

This is probably inevitable, and even in a sense to be welcomed. But so far, in the main, the most fundamental aspects have been implied rather than clearly stated, assumed rather than substantiated, and we consider it necessary to bring them out into the open, where they can be thoroughly debated.

We begin with an article by British philosopher John Lewis on the French marxist Louis Althusser, whose work has attracted some following among sections of theoretically minded revolutionaries in a number of countries.

Alastair Davidson's review article on the book Australian Capitalism: towards a socialist critique, also contributes to the debate we wish to develop.

In subsequent issues we hope to have articles on Critical Theory, Maoism, Trotskyism, the Lukacs school and others. We invite comments, contributions, and discussion pieces from readers on these vital theoretical problems, suggesting to them only that the issues are more important than colourful polemics.
AN unprecedented campaign has been launched against the N.S.W. builders laborers, their secretary Jack Mundey and the Communist Party of Australia. Hardly a day passes without the Sydney press carrying editorials, news reports and letters on this theme. Sir Robert Askin, his deputy Mr. Cutler, and various other Liberal-Country Party politicians regularly get into the act. Not to be outdone, the “New Right” union and ALP leader Mr. John P. Ducker puts in his contribution. He is joined, if less openly, by some union officials who call themselves “left”, usually motivated by a craving for industrial respectability and for unity with Mr. Ducker, plus ideological hatred of the CPA’s independent stand.

The Sydney Morning Herald and other sections of the mass media were overjoyed at Mr. Ducker’s discovery of a “communist plot” for “planned violence”, which arose out of a minor incident at the end of the plumbers’ strike. After a mass meeting voted 687 to 659 to end the strike — a course recommended by Mr. Ducker and the union officials — 200 or so plumbers loudly expressed their resentment at what they believed was a sell-out. This natural — and justified — reaction was blown up into a savage assault and a threat to Mr. Ducker’s life, with a tear-jerking picture of a pyjama-clad Mr. Ducker clutching his two children.

This godsend for the developers’ lobby, the rightist press and the Liberals was seen as a way to shift the issue from the real struggle against the developers to a concocted “plot for communist violence”.

Mr. Ducker is not unused to performing such services for the Establishment. When the Liberal Government attacked the first great national moratorium on the grounds that it threatened law and order, Mr. Ducker and his Labor Council-ALP machine in NSW joined in that chorus about violence. (Two moratoriums later, the acrobatic Mr. Ducker jumped on the bandwagon as an anti-war activist.)

The Sydney Morning Herald, usually a bit more restrained than some other Establishment media, has thrown caution to the wind. Its editorial policymakers seem intent upon snatching up the mantle of extremist rightism, anti-unionism and anti-communism laid down by Sir Frank Packer when he sold The Telegraph. In the space of 12 days, it had five hysterical leading editorials, each one more virulent than the one before.

There is only one conclusion from all this: the ruling class and all the establishments — including the union one — are driven off their brain by the new ideas on strategy, new issues of action and the new tactics developing in the workers’ movement.

It is no accident the builders laborers and FED&FA ban on the Rocks “development” (and other bans on anti-social “developments”) started off this rightwing campaign. These bans attack the two elements essential to modern capitalism: profits and power.

The big “developers” are presently among the most profitable of all the corporations. Their profits are soaring and will keep rising since they control the city’s land, and have virtually a free hand to direct their construction and development to whichever field is most profitable. To them,
people's welfare, the quality of life, conservation of the environment, preservation of historic buildings are all fads and fancies, well enough in themselves, but having no weight when stacked up against profits. If more money is to be made out of turning the city into a steel and concrete jungle, and driving out its people, than out of building hospitals, schools, housing — then the city jungle wins by a street.

Some of the biggest developers have just announced huge profits — and they have their sights aimed right on a bigger and better money harvest. These profits certainly help explain why The Sydney Morning Herald is so concerned for the overseas investors in “development”, writing editorially (August 11):

... there is absolutely no case for a union black ban, which is very likely to discourage overseas investors, knock the bottom out of a generally desirable scheme and reduce employment opportunities ...

Mainline — its overseas shareholder is the aptly-named Hawaiian Dredging Company — is just one example of the profits made, and those expected. In 1971-72 its profits rose by 69.3 per cent, and — to quote the SMH — “promised even more cheer for the new year”. And well it might, since there are 21 new city “development” projects beginning in Sydney, at an estimated cost of $274 million (plus others planned at a cost of over $300 million).

Besides the development corporations' huge profits, there are fat pickings for the highly-placed lurkers and perkers, those with inside knowledge about land releases, zoning, how to get around, over or under “planning” decisions. No wonder Sir Robbing and his cohorts are so incensed at the bans, which may discourage the overseas investors. This might, in turn, reduce the scope for turning inside knowledge into negotiable assets.

Now for power. The historic relationship between wealth and power is well-known. It is not a simple, automatic and one-way relation of cause and effect, here wealth automatically gives control (or vice versa). Historically almost always a complex relationship, modern capitalism renders it even more complicated, especially in the era of the multi-national corporation and mushrooming growth of bureaucracy in both the corporations and governments.

Yet the fundamental relationship remains unchanged. The owners of capital are also controllers — or they are able to exert control through other controllers (management, government, judiciary, police). And these other controllers do their job both because they believe in the system, share the same values and priorities, and are also very well-paid (and the less scrupulous become very wealthy indeed).

Control is decisive for the system, and for capitalist profits. Therein lies the real reason for anguished screams and hysteria about the builders, laborers, Jack Mundey and the Communist Party. The assertion of workers' social responsibility and right to intervene challenges the sacred rights of ownership, direction and control.

The Sydney Morning Herald senses the real challenge of the demand for workers' control. This can, and will, go far beyond its rudimentary forms which have long been issues in workers' action and union demands — to control the bosses' right to hire and fire, control over work speed and technological change, the rights of job organisations, against victimisation of shop stewards and union activists, and even more radical demands such as opening of company books, election of foremen and safety supervision by workers.

This new challenge is already prefigured in the banning of construction projects which threaten the environment and the cities, lower the quality of life and subordinate human needs to the goals of a capitalist-controlled and directed society — more and more production for more and more profits for fewer and fewer giant multi-national corporations. Implicit in the laborers' action is the demand for workers' control over the goals of work and social priorities.

This asserts that workers and their unions should not concern themselves only with the terms and conditions on which they sell their labor power. They should also concern themselves with the social implications of their work. This is sound commonsense, as well as genuine idealism and correct political ideology, since workers and their families are the majority in Australian society. What they make, what they build, what they allow the capitalist to do with pollutants and effluent from industry, affects their environment, their life, their children.

If all building workers follow the laborers' lead, they could say: a halt to the concrete jungle; housing before insurance headquarters; hospitals before a new Stock Exchange; schools before war factories. What if then the automobile workers were to demand social control over the industry? The carmakers (US-dominated), in close association with the oil cartel, do more than any others to pollute the environment and kill people (last year's road toll was over 3,000 dead). Possibilities such as these scare the daylights out of the ruling class (and others whose ideology is authoritarian, including many in the trade union movement and even some who say they are socialists).

Alarmed by such a radical new idea, the rulers of society try to scare workers by loss of jobs. If you ban anti-social building (or wasteful and pollutant manufacturing, or useless advertising), where will you work and how will you live? By posing this question, they really invite the revolutionary answer: a socialist society, self-managed and controlled by the people as a whole; a society
with a completely new set of goals, priorities and values — human-oriented and conservationist, global in its outlook, not narrowly nationalist. For how can one contemplate the hunger, deprivation and exploitation of hundreds of millions of people because of imperialist domination of the world, and still say there must be a shortage of work for human needs?

That this is a real challenge, a growing new feature of industrial conflict, can be seen in its repeated assertion in many spheres. It may seem a long way from a building site to the Australian Broadcasting Commission, but the ABC Staff Association is raising the same demand for workers' control over the programs they make.

This issue, a little clouded by Liberal-Country cries of bias (!), has brought from Mr. McMahon a classic formulation of the authoritarian position: Do people right at the bottom of the line decide what their policy is to be in their particular theatre of activities? Or must it be decided at the top and consequently the activities of those lower down the line kept within the policy decisions?

Increasingly, the answer is going to come up: those "at the bottom" must decide. (The phrase itself is a revealing comment on Mr. McMahon's concept of institutions and society.) Indeed, the whole essence of the fight for real democracy is to overturn this concept and the capitalist social structure which it faithfully reflects.

The demand for workers' control is an important issue in the struggle for this real democracy, impossible without a great social revolution. This social revolution cannot be prepared without a more profound challenge to the whole ideology of capitalist-authoritarian control which justifies and perpetuates the system itself. This challenge must be translated into action on issues which are close to people's needs and understanding. The builders laborers have blazed a new path, and people's response to their actions show how powerful a potential exists for this revolutionary concept.

In a different way, the NSW plumbers' strike also showed a new mettle of workers' action. This was the first-ever general strike by plumbers, whose union has been controlled by a rightwing bureaucracy. The strike lasted five and a half weeks, and even then the vote to return was almost 50-50.

This, after the democratically elected rank and file committee had done all the work, while the officials had done their best to get the men back to work, laying back in the traces, giving no leadership, and trying hard to frustrate rank and file activity.

This spirit and determination will transform this union. It reveals new trends in workers' action — towards longer and hard-fought strikes, for active involvement of strikers in picketing, speaking and raising money, and for democratic workers' control of the unions. These trends are bound to grow in the workers' movement, since the employers are also digging in their heels and show every indication of holding the line even more firmly against workers' demands. Whoever wins the Federal elections, the struggle between capital and labor is bound to sharpen. If the Liberals bring off an unlikely miracle, they will feel emboldened to use all their anti-union laws — and will meet very powerful resistance. In the much more likely event of a Labor success, the new government will very quickly have to make crucial decisions. The big corporations are going to expect "sane and responsible" economic policies from a Labor Government. They are likely to get their wish, for the contradiction between Labor in office and the real source of power in capitalist society is a stubborn reality. The huge multi-national corporations, which now control most of the economy, will not easily accept anything but orthodox bourgeois economic policies.

This was clearly revealed during the oil strike. This very important struggle showed that the big oil companies — US and British-controlled — would not easily make even small concessions (which would have cost them one cent per hundred gallons of petrol). Rather, they were prepared to halt the whole nation and lose tens of millions in profit — Esso-BHP lost 23 million dollars in its Bass Strait operation alone.

The oil strike again showed the trend to longer strikes; some of the workers were out for nine weeks. It became a major political struggle, raising two political issues very sharply. The first was foreign domination; this was the main talking-point all over the country. Public opinion was decisively against the foreign oil companies, particularly after the unions' tactics probed at some differences between foreign-controlled and Australian companies. The second political issue was the threat of government intervention to break the strike, using penal powers, even to jailing of unionists, calling out troops and other projected show-down measures.

McMahon tried to act the man of destiny, but no-one believed that he could play the part — not even the ruling class. That was the real reason for Justice Moore's last-minute intervention, to remove the strike from arbitration to negotiations, in essence a form of collective bargaining.

The unions won on both these issues, a political defeat for the McMahon Government which will assist Labor's electoral prospects. This was achieved despite the fears of many Labor leaders, who still want to subordinate workers' action in the misguided view that the only way to a Labor win is "don't rock the boat". The oil strike showed how wrong this can be; unfortunately, this lesson may not be learnt in the case of a Labor electoral success by most ALP leaders, either in the political or industrial field. It will be more easily understood in the workers' movement.
TRADE UNIONS & REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

Joe Palmada

It was Marx who first pointed out that, under capitalism, social relations are not seen as relations between people and all that involves in terms of human values. They are seen rather as relations between things, between machines and the commodities produced. Never has this been more clearly expressed than in this period of 'neo-capitalism' and the 'consumer society'.

If we were not aware before, then the experience of some socialist states has shown that the revolutionary act involves not only the destruction of the economic and political power of capitalism, but also the construction of a whole new social order of things in which the newly liberated forces of production find both adequate forms for their further development and, perhaps more importantly, the coming to fruition of a new ethic of human relations — an ethic which sees the new society in terms of people as individuals as well as social beings. This ethic includes new concepts of democracy, freedom, creative initiative, a sense of being, respect for the individual, and so on — all those human ideals which have inspired revolutionaries over the years but which do not automatically come into existence at the instant when political power passes into the hands of the formerly oppressed classes. In the beginning, the new socialist state will, of necessity, take over many practices, traditions and habits of capitalism.

What the working class and other oppressed classes aspire to in the new society and, more importantly, the extent to which they struggle for it in capitalist society, will play a major role in moulding the society of the future. I say this, for I believe that, in developing the class struggle under capitalism, the strategy and tactics of revolutionaries, together with their concepts of organisation, institutions and structures must contain within them the embryo of the socialist society that revolutionaries strive for. Double standards should have no place in the socialist society of the future.

The conditions for revolution — for radical transformation to a socialist society — is neither willed directly by the political party, the trade unions, nor even by the working class. The socialist revolution is the result of a whole complex of historical circumstances, upon and within which the masses, particularly the working class (understood in the broadest sense) must exercise its active and conscious influence.

The pre-requisite for this intervention is the revolutionising of the working class as a whole. This means, in essence, a stage being reached when the working class no longer merely refuses, spasmodically, and in a general way, to collaborate with the ruling institutions of the capitalist class and state, no longer takes a stand that represents solely an opposition confined within the framework of capitalist democracy. It means that the working class, as it actually exists in factories, whole industries and localities, launches a movement that challenges fundamentally the capitalist state, its institutions, its values.

The organised working class, in their trade unions, must be assisted in this role which, by the very nature of the spontaneous movement expressed in their day to day struggle against capital, they are prevented from seeing clearly. The development of trade union organisation is characterised by two main features:

- the trade union movement embraces an ever-expanding and ideologically diverse number of workers
- of necessity, the union concentrates and generalises its activities so that the power and discipline of the movement tends to concentrate in centralised leadership from which control is exercised. The general tendency of this type of leadership is to become more and more remote from the masses, from the workshop or office, thus losing close touch with the moods and currents that characterise the spontaneous struggles of the working class.

As well as assisting the unions to gain legal recognition by the capitalist state (partly because the capitalist class saw the need to facilitate and regularise their right to represent, in an "orderly" fashion, the workers' demands, and partly to make the workers' demands subject to legal endorsement), this tendency, at the same time, spontaneously enmeshes the workers' organisation in the framework of capitalist society and capitalist class laws.

Legal recognition of the trade unions was, of course, a tremendous victory for the working class and has assisted considerably in the improvement of the material conditions of the working class. But such a situation represents no more than a necessary compromise with capital, a compromise determined by the nature of the struggle when it is confined merely at the level of fighting for a...
greater share, or merely maintaining the share, of what the workers produce.

The trade unions can only become an instrument of revolutionary change if their leadership recognises not only the importance of the economic struggle but also its limitations, and constantly makes preparations for the moral and political awareness of the workers for an offensive of a different kind, a radical transformation of the capital-ist system itself.

If the tendency of the trade unions towards centralism and a central apparatus has its strengths and advantages, it also has its weaknesses. This is a growing remoteness from the workers at grass-roots level, and a tendency towards bureaucratisation of the institutional structure of the union movement embodied in its rules and constitutions.

The workers throw up their own organisation at shop floor level spontaneously. Sometimes they are encouraged by the more conscious of union leaderships; sometimes, indeed in general, they are discouraged, or at least contained, by such restrictions as the A.C.T.U. Charter for Shop Committees.

By its very nature, the shop committee wages the class struggle constantly, for this is where class conflict is more clearly defined. The bureaucratic structure and form of the trade union, however, in general tends towards settling and resolving class conflict. There are, of course, exceptions among those trade union leaders who exert a lot of energy in promoting and encouraging the workers' struggles and refuse to be contained. But here, I am not referring so much to individual trade union leaderships but rather to the inherent bureaucratic nature of the trade union structure, its rules and constitutions. This has two sides — both unity and conflict with the spontaneous movement of the rank and file.

It is precisely this relationship which requires greater study and clarity. The relationship between the two institutions — the trade union, and its official organisational structure on the one hand, and the “unofficial” shop committee on the other, should be such that every spontaneous movement by the workers at grass-roots level should not result in an assumption of control by the union. The shop committee, and workers, will accept and assimilate the discipline of the union leadership to the extent that its autonomy and freedom to act is respected and encouraged. In this respect, the shop committee organisation must be seen to be, and encouraged to become, a counter-balance to the inherent bureaucratic nature of the official trade union structure.

The concept that sees the shop committee as a mere instrument in the trade union struggle — a concept expressed in authoritarian discipline and the right of direct control over it, means that the committee becomes emasculated as a force for revolutionary activity and expansion. The real power of the job or area committees consists in the fact that they are close to, and conform more closely to the consciousness of the workers who are con-

stantly developing new initiatives in their struggle against capital. Today, more than ever, and for a variety of reasons which space does not permit us to develop here, smaller and smaller numbers of workers actually participate in the life of the union — general meetings, elections, etc. But at job level, and with greater possibilities in whole industrial areas, the workers' actual participation is, and can be much higher.

Revolutionaries are vitally interested (or should be) in two main areas of work among the working class:

- The workers' struggles for both the immediate and long-term interests of the class.
- How political consciousness and social awareness can be developed in the course of these struggles.

These two areas of work and responsibility embrace a whole complex of demands and issues — economic, political and social.

If we examine the present workers' movement in Australia, we find that it is characterised by the development of a spontaneous movement embracing ever-widening categories of workers. A new feature of this movement is that it continues to develop alongside a steady growth of unemployment — a factor which in past circumstances has had a tendency to dampen the militant movement.

What is the nature of this movement and what is its motivation? In brief, the immediate reasons lie in the steady erosion of real wages through the inflationary cost spiral, monopoly manipulation of prices, and the effects of increasing direct and indirect taxation. Whilst these factors constitute the main pressures propelling the spontaneous movement, other issues of deeper significance are beginning to emerge which demand further analysis. That is, the growing number of strikes associated with political and social issues and questions of managerial policy. The following table shows a steady increase in strike struggles around managerial policies and "others", which include political and social issues.

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The significance of the above statistics is that they reveal a growing challenge by the workers to managerial policy-making which reflects the beginning of consciousness towards challenging the power base, and for greater workers' participation in decision-making. It reveals, as well, a growing participation by the organised workers in the political and social issues of the day.
As well as the objective factors associated with the spontaneous movement and mentioned previously, two important subjective factors have operated which give momentum to it . . .

- the favourable conditions created by the movement for over-award payments which began in the middle 1960's. For instance, in 1967-68, over-award payments accounted for about 15 per cent of the increase in average weekly earnings. In 1969, this had increased to about 30 per cent, and last year, it was estimated that over-award payments accounted for as much as 40 per cent of the increase in weekly earnings.

- The impetus given to the movement as a result of the moratorium on the use of the most obnoxious features of the penal powers of the Arbitration Act following the national strike of May 1968.

These facts reveal two important phenomena. Firstly, the militant section of the working class (an ever-widening section in narrow trade union terms, including sections of workers with right wing leaderships, some never having been in a strike before in their history, such as NSW plumbers, textile workers, etc.) has revealed a determination to maintain its share of the gross national product.

Notwithstanding the inherently defensive nature of the struggle and the fact that the gap between the skilled and unskilled, the more strategically placed and the not-so-strategically placed workers, and Australian-born and migrant workers, continues to grow, the movement is important inasmuch as it holds the potential for a wider, more conscious offensive action provided both its limitations and its potential are understood.

Secondly, the movement reveals a strong trend away from the established institutions of arbitration and towards direct negotiation as a means of satisfying the economic demands. This does not mean that the workers have abandoned arbitration nor that, as yet, it is a fully integrated concept with its ramifications understood by the class as a whole. Rather it is a movement which sees a much easier and quicker method of satisfying demands through a direct confrontation with each employer or with groups of employers.

Whilst viewing this trend as positive because of this and the potential it holds for a better understanding of a new concept of industrial relations (indeed, the whole process of industrial democracy, not the least important of which is "workers' control"), its weakness lies in the subjective pressures involved. Herein lies the weakness of job or industrial organisation if, as so often happens, the workers seek to resolve their problems separately, exclusive of the interests either of other sections of the working class, or other oppressed classes.

They are assisted in this delusion by virtue of the "special" or "privileged" position some sections of the working class occupy in the scheme of production, such as certain sections of heavy industry, some areas of construction, maritime workers, etc. This raises the question of how the workers' grassroots organisation in this or that factory or industry can recognise or become conscious of the identity of interests among themselves and between themselves and other oppressed strata. Such understanding can come only partly from within the spontaneous movement; it has to be developed from outside, by the working class political movement.

The preoccupation of the trade union movement with somewhat narrow economic issues, their lack of mass involvement in the struggles around the broader political and social issues, and weak trade union responses to the social injustices of this society, are bringing into question among the youth, the viability of the trade unions.

Such an attitude has some basis in the role and approach of most unions today. We see it reflected in the erroneous, subjective responses that reject the concept of the decisive role of the working class and the trade unions as a viable force for revolution, and the development of new theories for the destruction of capitalism expressed, for example, in such slogans as the "right not to work". Such a slogan is acted out by some of the youth who, rejecting capitalist life-styles, opt out of the rat-race and develop their own counter-culture — rejecting both work and the values of a consumer society associated with it.

The basis of this concept — the right not to work — which, in itself, contains considerable validity, proceeds from a rejection of the hypocrisy of this society with its consumer ethic and its moral values that declare it obscene to use a four-letter word in public at the same time as it glorifies and tolerates the obscenity of war, particularly the obscenity of the Indo-China war of U.S. aggression.

This attitude is perhaps easily enough understood, particularly for its counter to the capitalist ethic, but to elevate the symptoms of an ever-expanding alienation in society to a primary revolutionary force is to place undue emphasis on effects and not causes. Alienation is not new in capitalist society. It began with commodity production and the consequent division of labour in the productive process. Today, in the era of the scientific and technological revolution, this process of the division of labour has accelerated, making still more acute the producers' alienation from the processes and results of their creative labour. The worker becomes a mere cog in the production process, far removed from concern with the end result of what is produced for society, or even whether society needs what is produced.

Life becomes more meaningless, with little more purpose than the need to "keep up with the Joneses". This is what is being rejected. In the words of C. Wright Mills... "Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to try to buy them back each night and week-end with the coin of fun."

To illustrate the point more clearly: in the days of developing capitalism, science and the work of scientists was confined mainly to the universities,
and the results of their work was more or less peripheral to the production process. Whilst the scientist served industry, it was mainly indirectly, the fruits of scientific discovery flowing to, and becoming adapted to, production, as a matter of course rather than by deliberate design.

In the age of the scientific and technological revolution, the ever-widening branches of science are directly related to the production process in what is termed "research and development". In advanced areas of production as much, sometimes even more, capital is invested in the area of "R and D", which, like the machines and raw materials becomes an extension of the "means of production".

The mental labour-power of the scientist, chemist or technician becomes a commodity, just as much as the manual labour of the labourer, thus reducing them to wage-labourers and widening the strata of the working class. This is but one effect, albeit an important one, but for the purpose of illustrating the point, we stress the second aspect. A chemist working for a multinational corporation, say I.C.I., can never be sure whether what he discovers, and is appropriated by the capitalist, will end up as a new fabric to clothe society or a chemical to defoliate a Vietnam jungle.


The first he calls "powerlessness" which he defines as the inability to control work, such as the inability to influence management decisions, lack of control over immediate work processes and lack of control over conditions of employment.

The second he calls "meaninglessness" which he defines as the inability of the worker to develop a sense of purpose by seeing the relationship between his job and the over-all production process.

The third, "isolation", is the lack of membership of industrial communities and is reflected in impersonal administration and the absence of informal groups.

Fourthly, "self-estrangement", is the failure to become involved in work as a means of self-expression. It is reflected in the isolation and separation of work from the totality of social life, and in work being simply instrumental (a source of income) rather than a source of intrinsic satisfaction.

Whether one agrees with these definitions or not, it is clear that alienation has its origin in the division of labour in the production process.

It seems to me that the solution cannot be found in merely opting out of capitalist society, but rather understanding better its causes and organising an assault on the root causes. The "right not to work" is a negative slogan, even though it reflects positively an opposition to capitalist society. Rather, the slogan should be "a right to purposeful work — a right to meaningful leisure". However, it will not be slogans which alter the situation, but action; and not in some future society, but now!

If alienation means "powerlessness" as defined by Blauner, as being the "inability to control work, influence management decisions, lack of control over immediate work processes and lack of control over conditions of employment", how relevant then is the demand for workers' control? Is it merely a gimmick, an example of "left-adventurism", or class collaboration? or does it have a real validity in the "revolutionising" of the working class? And how relevant to the revolutionary work of the trade unions are such struggles as the prevention of the destruction of historic buildings, the preservation of parks, prevention of pollution, direct trade union-worker intervention in the ecology-resources crisis, quality, production standards, and so on?

I firmly believe that the trade unions, as workers' main organisations, are relevant — that they can and will become an important component in the vehicle for radical social change. But for this to happen, trade union leaderships and structures, like the concepts which guide them, must conform to, and accommodate, not only the new issues, but, above all, the democratic participation of the rank and file and their organisations at grass-roots level.

A new movement must be developed which extends the workers' organisation at factory, shop and area level — a movement which encourages and develops the initiatives of the workers and assists them to find expression for their activities in organisation which they truly feel is theirs.
A NUMBER of significant developments are maturing in the international trade union movement. In summary, these are:

1. Increasing co-operation, and even unification, in previously deeply-divided national trade union movements.


3. Pressures for change in the W.F.T.U.

4. Proposed withdrawal of unions in one country from both the I.C.F.T.U. and the W.F.T.U., and consideration of this in other countries.

5. Substantially-increased trade union contact independent of either the I.C.F.T.U. or the W.F.T.U.

6. A strongly-emphasised trend by Socialist country trade union bodies to promote the image and, in some cases, the practice of autonomous and independent trade union organisation and action within Socialist society.

These major manifestations of the situation exist together in a complex of interacting effects. Basic­ally, they derive, on the one hand, from economic and technological developments since the I.C.F.T.U. was formed as a splitting breakaway from the W.F.T.U. in 1949 and, on the other hand, from the reality of some practices and events that have occurred in Socialist countries.

Enormous growth of productive capacity, uneven development and competition of the advanced capitalist countries, weakened grip of the American dollar on the capitalist world and "export" of U.S. economic problems for all the capitalist world to "share", more and more creates irresistible pressure for capitalist countries to find bridgeheads of trade with the Socialist countries.

Increasing contacts between I.C.F.T.U. unions and unions in Socialist countries have developed accordingly. Many of the unions concerned, still under rightwing reformist leadership, simply reflect the needs of their own capitalist class.

Union officials in a number of countries who still vigorously oppose any form of militant action within their own respective countries, let alone anything that resembles revolutionary activity, have found it a common place to accept invitations to visit Socialist countries closely in association with talks between the capitalist industries they cover and a Socialist country ministry.

The trend took an important political turn when Scandinavian and some other I.C.F.T.U. unions took a stand against the U.S. role in Vietnam.

The overall trend of this was basic to an ultimatum delivered by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. to the I.C.F.T.U. in 1969, that European affiliates in particular should cease activity — an ultimatum which was sufficiently ignored to make the A.F.L.-C.I.O. walk out of the I.C.F.T.U. in 1970 despite valiant efforts by the British T.U.C. to avoid it happening. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. won no new friends when it was then instrumental in having U.S. funds withheld from the I.L.O. because it couldn't get its own way.

The walk-out epitomised the weakened ability of U.S. imperialists to dictate terms of trade and contact with the Socialist countries to the rest of the capitalist world. Now the U.S.A. itself is

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compelled to get in the trade queue to the Socialist world.

The second major influence is multi-national-monopoly growth that has come in the wake of economic and technological development.

The full advantages of modern technology can only be realised with enormous investments. Previous levels of capital concentration are quite inadequate for the purpose. On the other hand, accumulation in the hands of the largest corporations has reached fantastic proportions. These two factors combined in creating in a few short years a labyrinth of multi-national monopoly growth that virtually dominates the entire capitalist world mostly based in U.S. imperialism, but not exclusively so.

General Motors, operating in 38 countries, have an annual turnover greater than the annual national income of countries such as France. Almost every industry of significance in a modern economy is affected, from mining of raw materials to production of micro-miniature electronic circuits. Competition is intense, takeovers and mergers are a daily occurrence.

More and more workers in similar (and dissimilar) industries across the capitalist world find themselves working for the same company. Unionists find their destinies determined at secret board meetings in such a manner and in such remote circumstances that their union officers cannot talk direct to those concerned at all. On the contrary, with modern techniques now available, production in one country is flagrantly used to defeat workers' struggles in another country working for the same company.

The merging of multi-national-monopoly with the State machine in capitalist countries has further sophisticated the social means of exploitation so that, despite higher material living standards for some, there are increasing social problems in each country: Enormous wealth, on the one hand, but inflation and unemployment existing side by side in all capitalist countries, and getting worse; increased taxation of all kinds, yet social services, education and housing get more and more beyond the people.

These pressures have resulted in changes taking place in the outlook, policies and leaderships of unions in some countries; in some cases to much greater united action on immediate issues, such as in Great Britain, whilst in Italy it has gone to a wide acceptance for organisational unification of the union movement on an agreed programme for social change.

Part of the Italian agreement included withdrawal of the uniting unions from both the I.C.F.T.U. and the W.F.T.U. It included agreement for vigorous action against international monopoly in all respects and, at the same time, to enter into debate with the Socialist countries concerning Socialist life and the role of the trade unions.

The events of Czechoslovakia and Gdansk were specified as instances that provided the catalyst for agreement in this direction.

There is considerable activity in Western Europe, and between Europe and Africa now taking place with contacts, delegations and conferences, in relation to the new circumstances, involving unions — sometimes with similar ideological positions, sometimes with widely-divergent ideological positions. Material relating to Italian and French discussions is of particular interest in this regard as the area for common, international action continues to widen.

It was most significant that the I.M.F. (part of the I.C.F.T.U.) refused to accept separate affiliation by a group of Italian rightwing Social Democrats, which was sought at the time the Socialist metal union of Italy disaffiliated as part of the agreement to form the newly-amalgamated metal workers' union in that country.

A further influence in Europe and South America has been a developing radical Catholic attitude pressing for social change. The Italian Catholic-led trade unions have readily participated in the substantial actions of recent years and are part of the unifying process now being carried out in a number of countries.

The pressure for common action in Europe has brought a number of positive developments, including agreement for a West European trade union conference irrespective of affiliation.

A problem in relation to achieving an all-European trade union rapprochement is the non-recognition of the German Democratic Republic. So far, the I.C.F.T.U. affiliates will not be in any conference that includes unions from the G.D.R. and the Socialist countries won't participate without them. The I.C.F.T.U. also still insists that trade unions in the Socialist countries are not independent. Considerable effort has been exerted by the W.F.T.U. to bring about a united conference with the I.C.F.T.U. — both on a world scale and for Europe.

In the light of the developments, the last W.F.T.U. Council meeting in Moscow issued a most forthright call for unity. Many bilateral discussions have taken place to try and establish a basis upon which some united conference for Europe can occur.

The role of the W.F.T.U., encompassing as it does the trade unions from the Socialist countries, is also subjected to pressure for change. There are indications that within the W.F.T.U. there are views which could shift its centre away from Prague. Alongside of this the most recent W.F.T.U. publications display a strongly-emphasised trend to show the role of union "independence" within the Socialist countries.
Recently, a critical examination was made by Italian unions of the Fiat works at Togliattigrad in the Soviet Union. This covered the contract terms with Fiat and the work methods involved which are similar to those of Fiat in Turin. A substantial case was made out to show that only an independently-acting union organisation could meet such circumstances.

Aspects of this examination have been publicised by Santamaria’s *News Weekly*. But what is carefully avoided by *News Weekly* is that this same critical examination is part and parcel of the task adopted by the Italian metal workers’ union for the achievement of a Socialist society in Italy and for the destruction of a multi-national-monopoly capital power.

More and more the appeal of Socialism as the alternative to capitalism has to be understood and presented in considerably different terms than those previously used. This is essential if there is to be sufficient unity created to provide the forces capable of achieving Socialism. Particularly is this so in the realm of democracy and the role of the trade unions as the mass organisations of the working class.

Despite the pressures for change, there are also pressures to try and ensure that whatever might emerge alongside of or in place of the W.F.T.U., involves the Soviet trade unions in a central position and possible developments are at least “influenced” and even retarded to try and achieve this result.

These problems remain despite the excellent and very successful conference on social services conducted by the Soviet trade unions in September 1971. This was attended by unionists from 109 countries. It is in this realm that the Socialist countries can really show their achievements. It was a conference on a specific issue that showed the possibilities existing outside of the formal international structures currently available.

In recent years some of the Socialist countries have made more far-reaching changes in the role of the trade unions to the point where the practices, rather than the image or appearances, are quite significant. This is particularly so in Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia.

In the Asian region, which is of vital importance to the movement in Australia, the lack of a national trade union organisation on behalf of China’s working people is the greatest single impediment and any highly-developed international trade union unity in this region without China is highly unlikely.

The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has paid considerable attention to the Asian region, particularly Japan, to ensure that reformist leaderships are not influenced by what is happening in Europe and, at the same time, great sums of money have been expended to inflict defeats on the “Left” in the unions.

Indonesia does not have any effective, independent trade union organisation (what does exist is under Suharto's military, dictatorial control) and in some areas (viz. New Guinea) there are only the rudimentary beginnings of organisations coming into being.

The situation in India, however, is extremely interesting and new, real steps toward a more effective unity in action are developing.

During April 1972, an all-Asian union conference convened by A.I.T.U.C. took place in New-Delhi, from which an assessment can be made as to future prospects in the Asian area.

There is also an emerging awareness by some unions in Australia to view the significance of international union relations in terms of other than “having a trip” or of it being merely “an appendage to a corner of someone else in the international arena”.

Independent contacts are being made in New Guinea and Fiji where Australia, as an imperialist base, carries great responsibility. This needs extension into Malaysia. Other contacts have been made in New Zealand, Japan, India and the Philippines.


There is need for closer relations, particularly between the union movements of Japan, India and Australia as a base for developing more effective Asian region co-operation.

Not for more than 20 years has the situation in the international trade union movement been more fluid than it is at the present time. It reflects changed circumstances for the world’s working classes. What finally emerges from the currently maturing trends will be of very great importance. The final result might well be neither what is currently the I.C.F.T.U. or the W.F.T.U., but an alternative with a programme for thoroughly independent trade union action directed against monopoly capital and for the achievement of a social transformation as envisaged by the newly-united Italian trade union movement.

The Australian trade unions, long isolated from any real participation in effective international union affairs, have a considerable stake in the outcome, particularly in the Asian region. There is need to study current trends more deeply and to participate in a more cohesive manner in the developments taking place.

(This article does not pretend to be an exhaustive analysis — e.g. it does not attempt any estimate of important developments in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, or their effect upon the general situation. It simply tries to describe the major manifestations of the general situation, with some reference to European influence and the situation in Asia which directly involves Australian participation.)
VIETNAM: AGGRESSION FROM THE WEST

Bob Catley

THE ECONOMIST’s ‘Foreign Report’, confidential and never to be cited, is no doubt a great boon to academic commentators on foreign affairs; a useful short note on the latest activities in far-flung places, providing ample data for notes on current affairs. Its report on Vietnam, describing Hanoi’s admission, via an editorial in Nhan Dan of the failure of this year’s offensive was my first reintroduction to Western reporting on Indochina since my return from the DRV. While there, I had the opportunity to talk to the editor of Nhan Dan, and writer of the editorial, Mr. Hoang Tung; I also read the editorial. The Vietnamese make no such admission. On the contrary, they regard the offensive as the latest in a series of strategic defeats which have been dealt to American policies in Indochina.

In the view of the DRV, the war in Indochina may be viewed as a war of resistance to American efforts to impose a neo-colonial government in Saigon. Each American strategy to achieve this objective has been defeated; each defeat has produced a new strategy, which has in turn been defeated. At first, the French provided the means for US policy; they were forcibly evicted in 1954. A Saigon client regime was then organised, with Richard Nixon a major architect. By 1961, this was on the verge of collapse and was only rescued by Kennedy’s despatch of thousands of US military advisers and the utilisation of ‘special war’ techniques. By 1964, this policy was in ruins both militarily — the NLF was recording impressive victories — and politically, with the series of coups which followed Washington’s abandoning Diem. Johnson resorted to naked US force in the form of both combat troops and aerial bombardment. The Tet offensive of 1968 saw the denouement of both that strategy and its creator.

In 1969, Nixon who, like all his predecessors, had been the peace candidate in the election campaign, again reformulated American strategy in Indochina, but in crucial respects his objectives remained the same. He made two crucial decisions, neither of which has been rescinded at the time of writing: to win the war — that is, to preserve an unpopular, client Saigon regime; and to win the 1972 US elections despite winning the war. Again, like his predecessors, he had to do this in the face of declining US capabilities in Indochina. The US army was inefficient, costly, politically expensive and facing severe morale problems. In addition, US options were being reduced by the considerable erosion of its global supremacy, both economically, as international financial crises were to testify, and militarily, as the necessity to choose between competing military demands in strategic weaponry, Europe and Indochina brought home.

The means the Nixon Administration adopted to implement US policy in Indochina were designed to overcome these problems. They are by now well known. The Saigon forces were to replace the Americans and were suitably equipped for this purpose by large increases in US arms shipments. A stepped up “pacification” campaign, staffed by Saigon forces with US equipment, supervised by extensive, increased USAF bombardment of rural Vietnam, backed by the herding of millions of refugees into urban ghettos and resettlement camps, and supplemented by assassination programs against the “Viet Cong infrastructure”; these were its features. It was cheaper, less visible, and more destructive. The 1969 campaign season witnessed its formulation, inauguration and political camouflage. In 1970, Nixon reimplemented Johnson’s abortive efforts to cut supplies to the South. Cambodia was invaded in a farcical attempt to locate the NLF command structure and the Cambodians joined the Indochinese resistance. In 1971, Southern Laos was invaded and Saigon’s crack forces beaten back in total defeat.

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In 1971, Nixon attempted a more daring and original manoeuvre. He opened personal contacts with both Peking and Moscow. The Vietnamese and Chinese both viewed these initiatives as indications of Nixon's weaknesses, arguing that had the US retained its supremacy of the 1950s, a US President would not have considered such personal diplomacy. They also appreciated that a subordinate objective to the relaxation of inter-state tensions was an attempt to persuade the Soviets, by offers of trade deals, and the Chinese, probably by suggestions of technical assistance, to relax their support for Hanoi.

In early 1972, many commentators, ranging from such anti-war veterans as Alex Carey, to the DLP, argued that Vietnamisation had succeeded and that the war in South Vietnam was all but won by the US. Diplomatically, the US had totally rejected the negotiating position of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. The PRG had proposed in its 7-point program of July 1, 1971 the establishment of a tripartite Saigon government of National Concord, one-third PRG, one-third union opposition, one-third pro-US (minus Thieu), to supervise democratic elections in the South. American forces would withdraw on a timetable that would also see the release of the POW’s from the DRV. South Vietnam would be non-communist, neutral and independent and then negotiate with the DRV on the question of reunification. The Americans utterly rejected this proposal by supporting the farcical one-candidate presidential elections Thieu organised and won with over 90 per cent of the vote in late 1971. Even McMahon admitted Australia did not consider it worthwhile to send observers. The Americans were indeed confident: the cost of the war was down, its destructiveness was up; only McGovern seemed likely to try to make it an election issue; victory seemed once more around the corner.

It is only in this context that the objectives and achievements of the spring/summer offensive may be considered. It was a surprise. The US thought an offensive of two or three divisions on one front might be possible; over 100,000 regular forces were deployed and four fronts opened. First, the ten year old defensive line south of the DMZ was smashed. Secondly, the outer defensive line northwest of Saigon, centred on An Loc was attacked. Thirdly, the defensive line for central South Vietnam around Kontum was assaulted. These surprise offensives brought the deployment of Saigon’s regular strategic reserves. The decisive front of irregulars on the coast and in the Mekong delta was then opened in conjunction with intensified political activities against Thieu in the cities.

The main objective was never to seize territory for trading off in Paris, to capture a city and set up a government, or to conquer the whole of South Vietnam. As Mr. Hoang Tung said, they cannot kick the Americans into the sea; they only have a small foot. Their major objectives were the American equipped, American trained, and American directed Saigon forces, and the American

created pacification campaign. They estimate to have severely damaged both.

Saigon’s regular forces have been fully deployed and severely mauled — three of their 13 regular divisions have been entirely destroyed and the remainder badly damaged. Pacification was then manned by the even less well-motivated local forces that the irregular Liberation forces could engage. The army of occupation was withdrawn to meet the offensive and revolution was again on the agenda. Phuoc Tuy was one of its first successes. It will take years to rebuild ARVN and pacification.

In this situation, the reaction of the United States became, as ever, critical. Clearly Nixon’s military interdiction policies had failed. Also clearly, despite the conjectures of Western observers, particularly I. F. Stone in the New York Review of Books, and David Horowitz in Ramparts, Nixon had failed to persuade Peking or Moscow to urge surrender on the Vietnamese. On the contrary, China seems more co-operative than before in transporting Soviet equipment and has just signed a new agreement on supplies with the DRV; Pogorny’s visit to Hanoi brought no relief to Washington; and Kissinger brought no new crumbs from Peking in June.

It should be pointed out that Peking’s reception for Nixon, while continuing its support for the Vietnamese, is contrary to neither its ideological posture nor its present strategic objectives. On the first matter, the Chinese have clearly stated since at least the late 1950s that negotiations cannot be substituted for force, and will not stop American ambitions. At present, in their estimation, which may, of course, be disputed, the US is entering a strategic decline in east Asia and it is this defeat which enables negotiations, not vice-versa. On the second point, they reason that the major contemporary contradiction is between the people of the world and Soviet and US imperialism. Again, the normalisation of state-to-state relations with both is not incompatible with a policy of heightening that contradiction. Whether such views are valid may be debated; but they certainly do not necessarily mean a “diplomatic sell-out” of the Vietnamese, as sections of the Western left have been quick to conclude.

As is well known, Nixon, like his predecessors, escalated rather than abandon Thieu. First, the blockade: will it work? To my untrained eye, Haiphong seemed shut, although the Vietnamese would not admit it. In view of US attacks on smaller vessels, they may well be correct. A CIA estimate of 1969, published in the New York Review of Books, June 1, 1972, gives detailed reasons why it would fail. The blockade certainly hasn’t stopped the offensive.

Secondly, Nixon has increased the bombing of the DRV. I visited only the Hanoi-Haiphong area which is, by all accounts, less heavily hit than the southern provinces. While the US may well be attacking military targets, it is most certainly and deliberately hitting non-military ones. I saw
As enthusiastic American estimates of rising crime, raids to catch civilians emerging from the shelters. The village was attacked by B-52s at 2 a.m., April 16. Schools, hospitals and residential quarters that had been bombed. Villages have been attacked with fragmentation bombs, the most recent of which use plastic pellets that X-rays do not detect. Phuoc Loc village was attacked by B-52s at 2 a.m., April 16, 1972, and 444 people killed and 517 wounded. The Red River dyke system, built over 1,000 years, and providing life for 15 million people, has been bombed deliberately and clouds seeded to increase the destruction. "Spider" bombs, fragmentation bombs with eight 8-metre springs to attach them to buildings, trees or rubble, are dropped after raids to catch civilians emerging from the shelters. As enthusiastic American estimates of rising crime, prostitution and corruption in the DRV suggest, the main objective of the bombing is the social fabric and morale of the population, not its military capability which Johnson found invulnerable.

But at present, American intentions to destroy totally the dyke system and break up the social fabric of the DRV remain a threat; a threat which will be steadily implemented as the stick to encourage Vietnamese acceptance of a bitter carrot, the Thieu regime and its cease-fire.

Thirdly, the Nixon Administration has increased enormously the American fire power at its disposal. The number of B-52s has been quadrupled to over 200; the number of tactical planes tripled to over 1200; the 7th fleet greatly strengthened. Perhaps 200,000 U.S. servicemen remain engaged in the war, only a quarter of whom are stationed in South Vietnam.*

Finally, Nixon offers the message to Hanoi; McGovern will not win. I will compromise now, but after the elections I will have no incentive to do so. You must compromise and accept my Saigon regime, and you must compromise now. If you don't, I will win the election and you will be dead. To the world, Nixon's message shows a different face. We are entering a period of peace and compromise, in Europe, in the arms race, in Korea, with China. Only the DRV remains obstinate. The American press even quotes, out of context, what the Cambodian Ambassador, estimated that Lon Nol was little more than "the mayor of Phnom Penh", controlling Battambang, Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, and a few smaller townships. Communications between these centres is extremely limited and their economies to a large degree regulated by the surrounding forces. Mr. Soai, the PRG representative claimed extensive control in four border provinces, along the coast and in the Mekong delta. In addition, he argued that the urban opposition opposed US policy, but was forced to operate legally in a situation of extreme repression. All three movements were adamant that their local opponents were non-nationalistic, their major weakness, and without US support would collapse rapidly — Saigon in 15 days.

Can the DRV, backbone of the Indochinese Liberation Movement, hold out? At every level from Foreign Minister to factory worker, from diplomat in China to hospital patient, determination and optimism were forcibly expressed. I could retail the concrete grounds for this, their effective air defences, their shelter system which minimises casualties, their well equipped air force and army, their cohesive, democratic social structure, but this would prove lengthy. Perhaps more impressive was their consciousness of their historic moment. In their view, their history was one of defeating invasion, of creating a Vietnamese nation through two thousand years of struggle, of integrating themselves and their culture to their environment, of creating a specific Vietnamese community. US policy of grafting an alien social and material form on this fabric was painful and destructive, but would finally fail, if not this year, in 1976 or 1980 or . . .

Can the United States continue? Militarily and financially, Hanoi seems to accept that the US can continue its present policy for some time, but that it will encounter political pressures that will make the game not worth the candle. In order to assess the strength of this view, it is necessary to ask what precisely are the stakes?

The PRG has offered Nixon an olive branch in its seven-point proposal; its Paris delegation reports he still wants the whole tree. Mr. Hoang Tung argued that there is no fundamental disagreement on the issues of a US withdrawal, the release of American POWs or a ceasefire. The crucial question is the character of the Saigon government. Only Thieu is unacceptable to the PRG; perhaps only Thieu will implement US policy. Despite widespread treaties on the imperialist character of US policy, with which I am in sympathy, it still seems absurd that the US should expend over $100 billion, 50,000 lives, weaken its economy and alienate opinion throughout the world in order to maintain a corrupt militarist in power.
The post-war years in France saw a great swing towards Marxism. After the defeat of Germany the reactionary governments of country after country collapsed and were swept aside. Everywhere socialism was on the ascendant. In Western Europe too the tide of socialist thought flowed strongly and there was a great upsurge of Marxist writings. This was greatly influenced by the philosophical theories of those central-European Marxists who had re-discovered the Hegelian basis of Marx's thought, notably Lukacs and Korsch. The hitherto unknown texts of the Marx of 1844 which had first appeared in the thirties but were lost sight of during the War were being translated and eagerly read and studied. Such works as Sartre's *Existential Marxism* became popular with its emphasis on commitment as the realisation of the "authentic" person. Mounier's "personalism" represented a parallel movement of a humanist kind which found support in the notion of alienation, which Lukacs emphasised as part of the essential Hegelianism of Marx.

Two diverging trends became evident. While one strongly held to the whole corpus of Marx's writing, but found in them a humanism which had been missed, at the same time emphasising the importance of Hegel for a real understanding of Marx, the other counterposed the recently studied works of the younger Marx to the established and familiar texts of the older, interpreting the earlier writings in terms of a moralistic humanism and of an existentialism which laid stress on the importance of the human will (of voluntarism) and personal decision as the effective force in revolutionary change. They regarded the later and now generally accepted works of Marx, such as *Capital*, as reflecting a decline of Marx's ideas into determinism and a preoccupation with economics. For them the real Marx was finished somewhere around 1845.

Althusser's *For Marx*

The growing influence of the early Marx, both in the existentialist Marxism of Sartre and in Marxist humanism, was countered by the appearance in 1965 of Louis Althusser's *Pour Marx* (For Marx), which comprised a series of articles which had begun to appear in 1960. This was followed by his *Preface to Capital* in 1969, an essay on the *Reading of Capital*, and an interview in *Pensée*. These essays stirred up a considerable controversy: and both in France and in Britain he now has devoted disciples.

Althusser, a former Catholic, has been a member of the French Communist Party for some 20 years. He is a lecturer in philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure.

His strategy is a bold one. He advances an interpretation of Marxism which is directed both at the existentialist humanists on the one hand, and, on the other, at all those Marxists who, while remaining in the central tradition of Marxist thought, are nevertheless profoundly influenced by the Hegelian and humanist philosophy of the young Marx.

* Marx, *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.*
Althusser's position is that Marx in 1845 totally abandoned all his early views as Hegelian and idealist, and thereafter they play no part at all in his writings. These Hegelian conceptions include "alienation", "the negation of the negation" and "supersession" (Aufhebung).1

Among the idealist notions which he now once and for all abandoned were two others: the Marxist theory of historical development, which Althusser calls "Hegelian-evolutionism"; and Marxist humanism: the concepts of "man" and "humanism", says Althusser, are terms whereby Marx never again thought reality, after 1845.2 They must give place to what he calls "Marxist anti-humanism".

This, certainly demolishes both existentialist Marxism and moralist theories of socialism: but do we not pay a rather high price for it? It is not the best cure for a toothache to cut off the patient's head. Not only has revolutionism been overthrown, but the whole Hegelian heritage that Marx himself, as late as 1873, still regarded as fundamental. In fact everything we have hitherto known as Marxism has gone, and in its place all that is left is a static and scholastic parody of the Marxist method.

The "Break"

Althusser's arguments rest on the basic assumption that after the Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 which in Althusser's opinion represent the high-water mark of Marx's Hegelianism, there was a sudden and dramatic "break" with all his previous thinking. The German Ideology, which Marx and Engels wrote in 1845, marks, according to him, the abandonment of these earlier views and the establishment of his final "scientific" position. This is the "break". Discussing the 1844 Manuscripts, Althusser says:

"Marx is furthest from Marx in this book. It is Marx on the brink of change, on the eve, on the threshold—giving the philosophy he was on the point of giving up a last chance".3

He speaks of Marx's "sudden and total return" to Hegel in the 1844 Manuscripts, followed by its complete rejection in the German Ideology, where we see:

"Thoughts in a state of rupture with the past, playing a pitiless game of deadly criticism with all its erstwhile theoretical suppositions".4

This story is a complete myth. What evidence is there for this "break"? Althusser claims that Marx himself announced the rejection of his former views when he says in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy that in the German Ideology "we settled accounts with our former philosophical consciences". Marx goes on to say that after their publisher refused to print it, having taken fright at the author's reputation, he and Engels "abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of mice". It was indeed shelved, forgotten, and never published until 1932.6

But is this remark about "settling accounts" evidence for a "break"? Why if it was here that he reversed his whole position did he never publish it? But further, Althusser rests his case on the content of the book itself, in which we are to find all Marx's previous writings contradicted and the doctrines of the mature Marx enunciated. Is this the case? Not in the least. So far from refuting his earlier views in the Manuscripts of the previous year, Marx continues and develops their argument, announces no divergence, no repudiation of these views.

Take first Marx's Hegelianism. What exactly was this? It was firstly what Marx believed to be a permanent and vital element in the understanding of man and his world—the notion that in creating his own world by labour, man creates himself; secondly, comes Hegel's theory of alienation—that man's labour somehow resulted in loss as well as gain, a deprivation, a loss of humanity; thirdly, that in due course man overcomes or transcends alienation, recovers and fulfils himself. These are all Hegelian concepts, and they are all Marxian concepts. But what Marx did with them was to show that they must be understood in relation to man's material life in the real world. Thus we escape the mystification which Hegel himself is responsible for when he treats the whole process as the manifestation of the Idea. But Marx never abandons these three principles. Enunciated in the Manuscripts of 1844, they are expanded and developed in the German Ideology, and embodied and made concrete in Capital.

Nor when we turn back to the Manuscripts do we find "the high-water mark of Hegelianism", the "idealism" from which Marx is supposed to free himself, the "total return to Hegel", which Althusser sees there, in which "the whole of nature is derived from logical abstraction". On the contrary, we find the theory of man creating his world himself through his labour, which Marx accepts from Hegel and maintains through all his later work, but treats materialistically as meaning that all history is man's self-creation.

We find here in the Manuscripts, rather than in the German Ideology, in the essay entitled "Critique of

1 This important Hegelian concept represents the "overcoming" or "supersession" of one historical and economic phase by the next which nevertheless carries over onto the new level in a modified form what was achieved in the earlier. The essential notion is that of "going beyond" or "transcending" capitalism, its basic structure, its economic laws, and its ideology. The German word for this is Aufhebung.

2 For Marx, p. 244.

3 First published in 1932. The first English translation appeared in 1934.

4 For Marx, p. 159.

5 Ibid, p. 56.

the Hegelian Dialectic as a Whole", which Althusser appears never to have read, Marx's fundamental criticism of Hegel. It is in this essay, rather than in the later work, that Marx "settles his accounts" with Hegel as, indeed, he tells us in the Preface to the second edition of Capital. But, as he explains, "settling accounts" with Hegel is not rejecting him. (any more than the phrase itself would mean in business). Marx tells us what he accepted and what he rejected. He accepted the unity of the subjective and the objective in knowledge, but he rejected the derivation of the material world and history from The Idea. All this is in the Manuscripts itself, not in the German Ideology.

Marx and Alienation

It is here also that Marx raises the question of alienation, which Althusser describes as a purely Hegelian conception. It is true that Hegel sees it as a feeling of deprivation or loss resulting from man's creation of the object over against himself—a purely subjective affair. Marx while he accepts the fact of alienation, explicitly rejects this explanation and gives it an economic interpretation. But does he, as Althusser says, now reject it so completely that "no trace of this Hegelian category appears in the Marx of 1857"?

On the contrary, it immediately reappears in the German Ideology—the work in which Marx is supposed to have submitted it to "pitiless and deadly criticism". On the contrary here it plays the central role which it continues to play in all Marx's subsequent work.

Althusser declares that Marx's treatment of alienation in the Manuscripts is purely Hegelian, that it remains on the purely subjective level, alienation being the very form and existence of pure Mind in the course of its development. Is this really Marx's view of alienation in the Manuscripts? Let us turn to the very first page of this work, where Marx explains what to him, alienation, really is.

"Wages are determined through the antagonistic struggle between capitalist and worker. Victory goes necessarily to the capitalist. The capitalist can live longer without the worker than can the worker without the capitalist", and so on.7

This first essay is on Wages; the second on the Profit of Capital; the third on the Rent of Land. Then we come to Alienated Labour, and what does Marx say about that?

"On the basis of political economy, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities".

Where is the subjective idealism? Where are the "pure abstractions"?

Clearly this is not the Hegelian view of alienation but Marx's economic explanation, and he brings it forward in opposition not only to Hegel but to the ideas of Feuerbach as well.

Of course Marx owed a great deal to Feuerbach who showed that so far from the material world owing its being to the idea, our ideas arise from our comprehension of the material world. As he says:

"I do not generate the object from the thought, but the thought from the object: and I hold that alone to be an object which has an existence beyond one's brain".8

But Marx rejected Feuerbach's religious explanation of alienation, which was that man felt deprived, unworthy and sinful, because he had projected his real humanity upon the deity. Marx had already replied, in an earlier essay,9 that on the contrary it was not because men were religious that they were alienated, but because of the grievous conditions under which they laboured that they turned to religion for consolation.

Thus Althusser is wrong again. Marx is not under the influence of Feuerbach's Hegelian errors, he is refuting him.

Feuerbach's Theory of Man

But what about Feuerbach's very abstract theory of Man and human nature? Althusser declares that in the Manuscripts Marx is guilty of accepting this fundamental Hegelian error of Feuerbach's and that he only escapes from this after his conversion to materialism in 1845.

This is not the case. It is precisely in the Manuscripts that Marx refutes this notion of Feuerbach too, and we find "the concept of the human species brought down from the sky, the abstraction to the real ground of earth". Marx sees man as developing and realising his personality as he wrests his living from the earth, and thus makes himself.

What then does Marx mean when he uses the term "species man"? Marx's conception of man is that he is essentially a social being—"species man". The human essence, says Marx, "is no abstraction inherent in each individual", (which is Althusser's idea of Marx's understanding of "Man"). "In reality, it is the ensemble of social relations." But this, says Althusser, "means nothing at all".10 Any comparative psychologist, however, would explain that man, unlike some solitary predators, is essentially a social animal who becomes himself in society by accepting its obligations and receiving its social benefits, following the acceptance by others of those obligations to create, serve and maintain the human fellowship. In a capitalist society man is still "the ensemble of social relations", but the co-operative relations are contradicted and in part nullified by competitive relations. Man becomes himself only in

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7 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p.1.

8 Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity.

9 Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.

10 For Marx, p.243.
the pattern of social relations found in common ownership and social control of production for the common good. This is what Marx means by "the concept of the human species brought down from the sky of abstraction to the real ground of earth; what else is it if not the concept of society?"

It is remarkable that Althusser should turn a blind eye on the concept of alienation in the *German Ideology* work, for it is an essential part of the whole of Marx's argument here. Marx uses two words for this notion: *Entfremdung* is used when his intention is to emphasise the fact that man is being opposed by a hostile power of his own making: *Entausserung* when the emphasis is on "externalisation" or "objectification" of this power, as in the capitalist "market".

Turning to the *German Ideology* from which, says Althusser, the Idea has been completely banished, we read that in class society "Man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him". Marx goes on to speak of the "consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations ..." "This alienation", he continues, has become "an intolerable power, a power against which men make a revolution" because it rests upon the fact that the great mass of humanity have been rendered propertyless. We recall that the first four essays of the *Manuscripts* were devoted to precisely this explanation of alienation, and here it is again in the *German Ideology*.

In *Capital* in which the term again appears, the economic form which Marx had given it from the first is further developed in the theory of man's labour power as a "commodity", which, inseparable as it is from man himself, is bought and sold in the market. But this is not to abandon the notion of alienation, for it is how Marx explained it from the first, in the *Manuscripts*. This is clearly shown if we turn to the passages in which he first discusses it.

"In the purchase of men's labour we purchase the man with his labour and he becomes a mere tool or instrument for our ends—a commodity, a thing. The man who becomes a wage labourer finds that his real personality no longer exists even for himself." In the important *Grundrisse*, or *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*, written in 1857 (the date which Althusser regards as heralding the "mature" Marx, now completely free from Hegelianism), Marx is still using the hateful term.

There are over 300 occasions on which he explicitly refers to it by the original term, *alienation*, in this work, and frequently does so in long and important paragraphs. All through *Capital* the emancipation of man from alienation and the fulfilment of his personality is the constant theme. Alienation, indeed, might well be described as the basic theme of the whole of Marx's life-work from its early beginnings in the Essays of 1842 to the day of his death.

Lenin also wholly accepts Marx's theory of alienation as expressed in the *Manuscripts* of 1844. Of course he had not seen them (they were unpublished), but Marx had transcribed the essential pages on alienation into the *Holy Family*, and Lenin wholly endorses the theory as he found it there.

Althusser's "Theoretical Anti-humanism"

On no other topic does Althusser's intellectualism appear more barren than on the question of humanism in Marxism. It cannot be denied that Marx himself affirms his humanist faith frequently and explicitly in his earlier works, and that there is no more warmly humanist analysis of the cruelties and inhumanities of capitalism than *Capital* itself. This Lenin recognised. He had no sympathy with the view that the humanism in *Capital* is alien to Marxism and should be extruded.

"In few scientific treatises will you find so much heart, so many burning and passionate polemical outbursts. It depicts capitalist society as a living thing with the actual social manifestation of the antagonistic classes in the relations of production." Of course, we are well aware of the possibility of a rapid, emotional kind of uplift which can call itself humanism, but its existence seems a poor reason for eliminating the basic concern for humanity from socialism. To strip Marxism of its concern for man, for human interests, for the fulfilment of human aspirations and the human personality would be to deny everything that Marx, and after him Lenin, stood for. Humanism, and faith in man, was never for Marx the theory of "abstract" man, though that is Althusser's whole point. But it was Marx himself in his earlier writings, these very writings which Althusser characterises as idealist, as treating man as an abstraction, who criticises Feuerbach for this error—not however, to reject humanism, but to make it concrete, historical and linked with the technological advance of developing man.

One cannot turn to any work of Marx without entering immediately into the human problem. In 1843 we find him proclaiming "the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man ... therefore with the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being." Althusser regards this as "abstract, illusory, utopian and idealist." He condemns it as:

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11 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.


13 There are references to "alienation" and "estrangement" on pages 21, 23, 24, 27, and 28 of the Pascal translation of 1938. It is the theme running through the whole of Part 1.

14 *German Ideology*.

15 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.


18 Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. 
“the recourse to ethics so deeply inscribed in every human ideology (which) plays a part only in the imaginary treatment of real problems.”19

We must learn in these matters, he says, to use our scientific concepts, value free, excluding moral considerations and humanistic ideas.

Marx regards the whole process from the standpoint of values. He roots the inhumanity he condemns in the wage system of capitalism and the sale and purchase of labour power as a commodity.

Althusser has never noticed that one of the longest essays in the Manuscripts, is Engels’ Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy, which occupies 34 pages. This was Marx’s first introduction to capitalist political economy and to the crises its market system involves. Engels show that:

“... in the last instance private property has turned man into a commodity whose production and destruction also depend solely on demand. The system of competition has thus slaughtered, and daily continues to slaughter, millions of men. All this we have seen, and all this drives us to the abolition of this degradation of mankind through the abolition of private property, competition and the opposing interests.”20

Of course, both Marx and Engels had still a long way to go in their analysis of capitalism; but this is a masterly beginning. Is all this “abstract”, “philosophical”, “illusory”?

“Truly Human” Man
Marx immediately follows this with the important argument in The Holy Family, which demonstrates that “the empirical world must be arranged so that in it man may at last be able to experience himself as truly human”.21 The whole of the German Ideology is concerned with this very problem, for the alienation of man’s condition under capitalism arises because:

“... we have the majority of individuals from whom these forces have been wrested away, who robbed them of all life content, have become abstract individuals.”22

It is not Marx who treats man as an abstraction, it is capitalism! And it is Althusser’s empiricism! To free the account of man’s economic and social condition from “values”, “ethical considerations” and “humanism”, is not being scientific. It is the worst form of abstractionism.

Alienation is overcome by the social ownership of these forces.

19 For Marx, pp. 242, 247.
20 Engels, Outline of a Critique of Political Economy from the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.
21 The Holy Family, p. 176.
22 German Ideology, p. 66. Althusser has assured us that with the final rejection of Hegelian thought which is the essence of the “German Ideology”. Marx has finished with alienation. On the contrary, it is the constant theme of the book, and of the Grundisse, and of Capital.

It is in Capital that Marx’s humanism reaches its full realisation, that this understanding of the economic nature of alienation is now expanded into those moving chapters on the factory system, burning with indignation, which make this work so much more than an analytical exposition of economic and social structure. The ultimate appropriation of the means of production by the community achieves “the realisation of the person”. Now “begins that development of human power which is its own true end... the full development of the human race”, of “species man”, the realisation of “man’s necessity to develop himself.”23

And this is anathema to Althusser. He emphatically declares that after Marx’s conversion in 1845, i.e., the rejection of the Hegelianism of the Manuscripts, Marx never again introduces the concepts of man or humanism.24

“The absolute precondition for the positive knowledge of the world itself and its transformation, and of knowing anything about man is “that the philosophical myth of man is reduced to ashes!”25

This rejection of humanism carries with it for Althusser the elimination of man as the agent of historical development, and of the necessity of the rise of historical consciousness in the proletariat, which was for Marx the indispensable pre-requisite of socialism.

Althusser asserts that “the whole classical Marxist tradition has refused to say that it is man who makes history.”26

To which Marx replies:

“It is man, real living man, that makes history; history is not a person apart, using man as a means for its own particular aims: history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims.”27

Marx refutes Althusser’s “theoretical anti-humanism” in the same argument, for he declares that “the entire history of the world is nothing but the begetting of men through human labour”. “By activity in the world, and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature and develops the potentialities that slumber within him”.28 Thus, man’s making of his world is at the same time his making and re-making of himself and his achievement of his own full development as man.29

24 For Marx, p. 244.
25 For Marx, p. 299.
26 Althusser, Interview in La Pensee, April, 1968.
27 Marx, The Holy Family.
29 For Althusser social transformation is the effect of pre-determined economic development of an automatic nature. If men play any part it is only because their actions are in the last resort determined by the economic factor.
Part 2.

We have ceased to read Hegel, and that is why for the past half century none of the Marxists has understood Marx. Lenin

Two philosophical trends unite in Marx, and are both transformed by him. The first is the materialist tradition, British (Bacon, Hobbes and Locke) and French (Descartes, Gassendi). The second is the German classical philosophy of Kant, Fichte and Hegel.

The importance of materialism was its rejection of everything beyond the natural world, whether supernatural agencies, tendencies moving to some goal, or entities like the "vital force" of Bergson, Shaw and the vitalists. Materialism also laid proper stress on the importance of the environment in the making of man, but could never explain, how in that case, the environment could be transformed by those who were themselves made and constituted by it in mind and character!

Marx was a materialist, but in two respects he disagreed with the materialism of his day. He did not accept the prevalent view that the mind is a blank sheet on which the material world makes its impressions. On the contrary, Man *knows* what he *makes*, and changes his environment by the knowing and activity which is his life. Therefore Man's objective and subjective life are united—Man does not stand over against his world trying to make out what it is. He *makes* it—though its physical priority is unquestionable. Thus Marx asserts that in these respects he rejects "all previous materialism".

But the fact that he is a materialist by no means implies that Marx rejects the tradition of German classical philosophy and its culmination in Hegel. On the contrary, of this philosophical tradition the working class movement, said Engels, is the true inheritor. But, as was the case with materialism, Marx's *critique* is an evaluation which both preserves and rejects. Marx accepts from Hegel his belief that reality is not as it appears to empirical reflection, and rejects every form of empiricism. There is inseparable interaction of Man and his material world in every fact of knowledge. Mind and action are creative. Marx further joins Hegel in treating as "merely empirical" and to be "overcome" every mode of reality which presents an obstacle to the unfolding of Man's potentialities. The world is to be transformed; not by an appeal to eternal principles, or by the unfolding of the Idea—the sole reality—but by the progressive unfolding of its own material and human possibilities. But that the ultimate reality is Mind or Reason, and the material world a derivate from it, Marx wholly rejects: speaking of his acceptance of the idea of Man making his world, he says that "of course in all this the priority of external nature remains unassailed". History was both for Marx and Hegel the story of Man's self-creation, not a record of events passively reflected in the mind.

Hegel's Contribution

As the triumph of rationality over brute existence, Hegelian idealism and the earlier materialist tradition happily combine, and the transition to Marxism represents in every respect a radical break in the continuity of nineteenth century thought.

Marx regards the emphasis on the "active side of knowledge" as Hegel's important contribution to the theory of knowledge, which they both saw as acquired not by reflection, but in manipulating, using and changing the world—associated with the pervasive idea of the self-creation of Man as a process in which the principal factor is Man's own labour. This is the basic theme of the first section of the *German Ideology*, which far from eliminating the basic Hegelian concepts, integrates them in materialistic form into the very substance of Marxism.

This in fact is the "kernel" which Marx says, in the Preface to *Capital*, he extracts from Hegel; or to use another figure of speech, "sets Hegel on his feet."

What precisely does this mean? It has sometimes been interpreted rather simplistically as asserting merely that matter comes before mind, or that thought arises as the consciousness of material objects. It has even been supposed Hegel was "put on his feet" when the self-unfolding of the concept was embodied in nature and history. But that would indeed have been a return to the pure metaphysics of Hegelian idealism. Marx means by it—seeing the development of Man and Society in the interaction of creative thought with the environment, showing the theory as essentially the realistic process of getting one's subsistence in the material world by labour, invention and organisation. This is developed in the *German Ideology*, which is by no means the work in which Marx's thought "is in a state of rupture with the past", and "all its erstwhile theoretical presuppositions" are discarded, as Althusser says. On the contrary, it is where Marx's inversion of Hegel is established and fully expounded.

Althusser has a very defective understanding of Hegel, seeing in his philosophy no more than "the

2 Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, No. 1.
3 Engels, *Feuerbach*.
4 Marx-Engels, *German Ideology*.
identification of thought and being”, and the postulation of “a simple organic unity which develops within itself by the virtue of its negativity”.6

Whereas for Marx the unification of the subjective and the objective is the modification and saturation of what we know with our way of knowing it, with the conditions and the activity involved in knowing in order to act; and “the simple original unity” is reached in the realisation that there is only one world and it contains thinking Man and his material environment in continuous interaction.

Marx saw in the approximation of society to a rational goal the gradual disappearance of the ideologies of religion, of utopia, and of reassuring philosophies, which are all compensations for the materialism of the times. But you cannot abolish the illusions of religion, said Marx, (or any of the other illusions), until you abolish the evils which make the illusion necessary. Utopian hopes play the same role as religion, and so do philosophies which only assure us that “reality” is so much better than it appears to be! All these ideologies are useful and necessary illusions; but they will disappear when we know how to change the world, instead of explaining it and kidding ourselves with fantasies.

Man and His World: “The Grundrisse”

The acceptance of the dialectical process of social development means for Marx the alteration of the environment by men’s activities and the adaptation of our economy and our ideas to the environment we have thus created; the impact of that new economy in further changing the environment, leading to further changes in the economy, the superstructure and the very nature of Man. All this is the Hegelian theme of all Marx’s mature work; and most completely in the only comprehensive treatise on his theories as a whole (of which Capital was only the first unfinished fragments), the 1,000 page Grundrisse of 1857, the most fundamental work that Marx ever wrote, “the result of 15 years of research, thus the best period of my life”, as he said.

The Grundrisse, the work of Marx’s complete maturity, is Hegelian in the above sense, through and through.

Althusser never mentions the Grundrisse. Indeed he cannot. For appearing as Marx’s mature work, it is a complete exposition of the whole series of concepts which Althusser has removed from Marxism as worthless.

It contains a synthesis of the various strands of Marx’s thought, beginning with the outlines of the substance of all four volumes of Capital. And it could well be described as the exposition of authentic Marxism, and as marking the crucial stage in the development of his thought. Any discussion of Marxism that does not take account of the Grundrisse is doomed from the start.

Althusser by his own critical attitude includes it in the writings of Marx’s maturity, coming as it does in 1857, but since it includes the whole series of Hegelian concepts (alienation, transcendence, negation etc.) which Althusser says Marx abandoned for ever in 1845, and play no part in the work of the mature Marx, he simply ignores it and proceeds with his exposition of Marxism as though it did not exist!

Capital and Marx’s Theory of History

If so much of Marx’s work has been rejected by Althusser as worthless, what is left? His choice of Capital, Vol. I would certainly please the more traditional type of Marxist who has always thought of Marxism in terms of Marx’s analysis of capitalist contradictions.

Althusser does indeed select Capital as the source of the essential Marxism, but only after stripping it of its Hegelian accretions and distortions. His treatment of the book is a strange one: He is not at all satisfied that what we have in Capital is free from Hegelian defects. Almost the whole of the first section on “Commodities” is unsatisfactory because, in Hegelian fashion, it is based on the historical origins of “the commodity”; and moreover Marx’s theory of value is completely false.

Althusser appears to be unaware that Lenin, whom he always treats as a repository of pure and unsullied Marxist truth, gives his full support to Marx here.8 Has Lenin also confused Hegelianism with Marxism? Must we reject him along with the great first chapter on “Commodities”? It is a pity that poor Marx is “trapped in a Hegelian conception of science”, and has made such a mess of these conceptions of “value” and “commodities”. But, far worse, in his theory of the “fetishism” of money and commodities, he has gone head-over-heels into it again. This “reification”, or turning into a powerful and controlling entity or force, of “money”, and the laws of capitalism, seems to Althusser a purely Hegelian error. He says:

“The whole fashionable theory of ‘reification’ depends on the projection of the theory of alienation found in the early texts (particularly the Manuscripts of 1844) on to the theory of ‘fetishism’ in Capital.”9

Marx on the other hand, sees it as the very essence of the capitalist system which traps men in the irresistible working of its laws, until they realise that men can be brought to see that the whole law system of capitalism and the fetishism of money and the commodities is an illusion. It belongs only to a passing epoch, it is not eternal or absolute. At the

5 For Marx, p. 189.
6 Ibid, p. 197.
7 Grundrisse der Kritik des Politischen Oekonomie (Rohentwurf) Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough draft) .
8 See Lenin’s biographical article on Marx, Collected Works, 1930, (Vol. XVIII).
9 For Marx, p. 230.
right time, if we come to understand, we can and must pass beyond, supersede, transcend\textsuperscript{10} the capitalist economy and establish a socialist one, in which the production and distribution of goods is carried out in terms of reason and human needs, and no longer under the alienation and obstructive laws of the commodity market. But all this appears to Althusser pure Hegelianism, and he will have none of it.

Marx and Historical Materialism

Readers of Althusser's Preface to the French paper-back edition of Capital\textsuperscript{11} must have been somewhat surprised at his rejection of Marx's theory of historical development as "Hegelian evolutionism". The formulation he selects for criticism is not explicitly set forth in Capital itself, though this is the concrete exemplification of the whole idea, but in the classical summary to historical materialism in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy (1859). The essential paragraph, well known to everyone, opens with these words:

"In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will".

Marx then develops this dialectical conception of historical development to show that the enlarged forces of production (technology) come into conflict with the relations of production (the wage system, capitalism) which fetter and limit the potentialities available. Now follows the reconstruction of society to bring the economic structure into line with these potentialities.

This is the dialectic of reciprocal interaction between the technology and the men operating it on the one hand, and the economic system on the other. Marx then goes on to show that it is in the struggle of ideas that Man leads the way to this transformation for it is by no means an automatic economic process. It is fought out, says Marx, in ideological forms.

Althusser describes this whole passage as saturated with Hegelian evolutionism, and as a dangerous source of ideas which "have caused havoc in the working class movement". He continues:

"Not for a single moment did Lenin succumb to the influence of these Hegelian-evolutionist pages".\textsuperscript{12}

Had he done so, says Althusser, Lenin would have been hindered in his battle with the Second International, nor could he have won power in Russia, or begun the construction of socialism.\textsuperscript{13}

Now the astonishing thing is that Lenin not only warmly approved these pages, but quoted them \textit{in extenso} in his essay on Marx\textsuperscript{14} describing them as

"... the integral formulation of the fundamental principles of materialism as applied to human society and its history".

and elsewhere he describes them as "formulated on the basis of Hegel's philosophy".\textsuperscript{15}

What emerges in this criticism is Althusser's objection to the notion of evolutionary change in which the agency is not the economic factor "in the last resort", but the human intelligence and will, the movement of history by the capacity of Men to transcend the laws of their society and to re-build the structure. This he describes (and misrepresents) as "the original unity which develops within itself". But Marx never considered social evolution in the sense of the development of the imminent Idea, nor did he think of it as a logical unfolding within nature and history operating without the consciousness and will of Man. Althusser would appear to see social change as resulting "in the last resort" from the development of the contradictions of capitalism in an almost automatic manner, certainly in a deterministic fashion. But for Marx capitalism does not break down and transform itself into socialism automatically. Men have to discover what has gone wrong, how the internal contradictions arise, and why they cannot be finally overcome unless they set to work and change the pattern of society. Once again Man re-makes Society.

Althusser does not believe in evolutionary change based on the development of proletarian political consciousness; for this essentially Hegelian approach he substitutes the positivism of building a theoretical structure based on the scientific observation of economic facts, a "retreat" which he admits comes "within a handsbreadth of positivism".\textsuperscript{16}

This includes Marxism in the kind of science which apprehends data and their regular sequences, and thus arrives at general laws. This is not even true of the physical sciences as they are understood today; it is wholly untrue of the science of social development.

The upshot of Althusser's positivism is the creation of a new system of theoretical abstraction, a system stripped of its humanism, its consciousness, the laws of motion, as described in the Preface, its evolutionary historicism, a conceptual system which is to be the guide to practice. This system was never created by Marx, Althusser argues; it is, however, implicit in the structure of Capital, and it is our task to extract it and build it up into a system.

\textsuperscript{10} The words which Althusser will have nothing to do with regarding them as wholly idealistic.


\textsuperscript{12} Preface to the paperback \textit{Capital}.

\textsuperscript{13} Althusser, Preface to \textit{Capital}.


\textsuperscript{16} For Marx, p. 187.
Is there a Marxist System?

It is important that we should at once compare this with Marx's own method. He does not present us with any system. Had he thought one necessary he would certainly have constructed one. What he has in mind is the development of consciousness, of understanding, of the possibilities, the problems, the opportunities and necessities in the actual social situation. This Marx calls \textit{praxis}, because it is always concrete, always we are involved and acting, and therefore thinking as we act, and acting as we think. There is no fixed theoretical structure existing outside the concrete situation, but a situation that changes as we act, because we act; and so instantly demands a re-examination, a \textit{new} understanding, and a \textit{new} reaction. This is the philosophy of the working hypothesis.

Marx also put his whole emphasis on the working class, (or a leading section of it able to inform and carry with them the rank-and-file,) coming to this higher level of consciousness at which men become able for the first time deliberately and consciously to make their own history. This is a constant repetition of "going beyond" the present pattern and its laws. It demands at each step the human option, the anticipation of unaccomplished ends; of ends not deduced from existing structure and laws. This Althusser totally rejects as "subjective" and "spontaneous", as ideological.

Althusser's substitution of the system for praxis, leads to the disappearance of the creative man of history, and the arrival of "a knowledge" reserved for the elite, completely separated from the masses by the "break" between involvement and conscious search for a way forward on the one hand, and the level of a detached system of organised abstraction on the other. This is a structuralism and its scientific laws, and is independent of human options.

The upshot is a complex and endlessly argued scholasticism, in which there must necessarily be a variety of rival and equally plausible conceptual constructions; and no possibility of deciding except by exhaustive and inconclusive arguments which is correct. Althusser's disciples seem to disappear into the far distance of remote and never concluded abstract discussions. Their intellectual labours may remain intellectually satisfying, but they are totally irrelevant to the stream of events and the understanding of the masses who are involved in them.

What is Scientific Socialism?

Althusser opposes to the evolutionary historicism of Marx, and equally to Engels' dialectical progress based on his laws of motion in society, his own version of "scientific" social theory. This system, Althusser explains, was never formulated or mentioned by Marx. We have to elicit it from \textit{Capital}, where it exists "in a form which has never been extracted". In fact it has to be built up, not from any actual statements or formulations of Marx, but from what Marx did \textit{not} say (but implied). Our attention has to be "focused on absences", for as far as Marx is concerned there is "silence in respect to the abstractions within the theoretical practice" of \textit{Capital}. We must therefore search for "answers corresponding to no questions asked".17

Therefore Althusser, rejecting Marx's philosophical approach, and accepting scientific objectivity as his method, analyses and describes the pre-existing structure of capitalism and its economic transformation.18 Man as active subject goes, and we return to a pre-Marxist form of materialism and the corresponding theoretical model or conceptual reproduction of the world. We establish ourselves in the concept, possess its first principles, immutable and complete, from which all further truth and action can be deduced.

This becomes the kind of predictive determinism so severely criticised by Popper, and represents a history which unfolds in accordance with immutable laws based on the contradictions in the economy. This comes very close to metaphysical materialism, which is itself simply the inverted form of metaphysical idealism; the interacting forces conceived conceptually operating with the inevitability of an immanent and unfolding logic. But the notion that the whole of history, with its extraordinary transformations, is predictable by inference from existing data is really quite indefensible19.

All that can be deduced from any such formulation of the structure of society is that the structure conditions Man, and that means that the ruling ideas which condition Men as part of the superstructure of a class society, represent and maintain that class structure and the interests of the dominant class. Marx himself rejected this view as the inevitable consequence of materialistic positivism.

"The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances... forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can only be conceived and rationally understood as revolutionising practice.18"

The point is not to describe the world and accept its law system, but to change it.

The Marxist approach to history does not represent it as the automatic consequence of the operation of inexorable laws, but lays down the guiding theory which shows that when people in a capitalist society become involved in certain contradictions, the way to overcome them is to adapt

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Theoretical Practice} (No. 1) (The British Journal of Althusser Studies).
  \item Althusser adopts the Law of Transformation the theory of contradictions formulated by Mao Tse-tung.
  \item If there is any Marxist who thinks so, Popper has a most convincing answer, but the determinism he refutes is not Marxism.
  \item \textit{Third Thesis on Feuerbach}.
\end{itemize}
the pattern of the economy, that is its productive relations, their constitutions and ideas, to the already developed form of production. This is the Marxist working hypothesis, the successful operation of which depends on us, on our fully taking the variable conditions into account, on our understanding of the situation, on a very wide understanding and not merely the knowledge of an elite. As Cornforth says:

"It is not, and could not be, a 'law governed process' in the strict determinist sense that there are pre-ordained laws which allow nothing to happen except what does happen."\(^{21}\)

This would be history without men, who are reduced to being no more than the medium which carries the pattern of social relations, not its makers. It treats structure without reference to human option, or to the imaginative insight necessary to transcend any historically reached and established structural pattern and conceive a totally new one. This is the break which depends upon anticipation of a course that is quite different from the one predetermined by existing conceptual structures, a venture in the making of history which contains risk, responsible choice, and real historical initiative. The essence of Marxism is to show how man transcends existing structure and the logic of that structure. He goes beyond current laws, which he sees as not absolute or eternal, but as historically conditioned. We remember that the one Hegelian concept (after alienation) that Althusser ruthlessly cuts out of Marxism is that of transcendence, going beyond, supersession (\textit{Aufhebung}); but is it not precisely by this that human history is made?

Althusser only finds one Marxist (Marx himself he sees as full of hopeless inconsistencies!) who can be depended upon to hold firmly to structural rigidity and strictly scientific objectivity, and that is Lenin. Lenin is presented as wholly free from Hegelian slipperyness, idealist moralisings and sentimental humanism. This he had hoped Marx would be too, but was sadly disappointed. However, Lenin, he believes, never regards any Hegelian concept as essential, neither negativity, alienation, "supersession", nor of course the Hegelian fusion of subjectivity and objectivity. We must disappoint him yet again.

Lenin, after his study of Hegel, accepts his essential contribution to philosophy, the unification of the subjective and the objective in the process of knowing, just as Marx did.\(^{22}\)

Lenin, as we pointed out earlier, enthusiastically accepts the summary of Marx's historicist theory in the Preface to \textit{The Critique} which Althusser rejects and imagines that Lenin rejects too. This bases social development on the changes in the productive relations when they become fetters on the productive forces. Althusser had said "not for a moment did Lenin succumb to the influence of these Hegelian-evolutionist pages". Lenin actually quoted them in full in two of his most important works, where he describes them as "a complete formulation of the fundamental theory of historical materialism".\(^{23}\)

And, "most unkindest cut of all", instead of rejecting the Hegelian theory, in its materialist form, but still essentially what Marx always took it for, the dialectic of Man simultaneously creating himself, society and history, through his growing awareness of the historical process, "the realisation of philosophy" by and in the proletariat, Lenin regards the full understanding and acceptance of the Hegelian truth in Marxism as indispensable.\(^{24}\)

"We have ceased to read Hegel, and that is why none of the Marxists for the past half-century has understood Marx."\(^{24}\)

We know one French Marxist to whom this most signally applies.

The Althusser Style

One cannot leave Althusser without some comments upon his whole style of life and writing, which is unusual, though more impressive than persuasive. He speaks as a dedicated man and a voice crying in the wilderness. He gives the appearance of wide and competent scholarship applied to a totally novel, and in his view, desperately necessary restatement of the whole Marxist position. Highly polemical, he at once arouses our interest by arraigning in the dock the enemies and heretics which it is his responsibility to expose and denounce; they are the philosophers, the evolutionists, the Hegelians and the humanists.

He argues exhaustively and with extreme dogmatism as the last champion of an orthodoxy in grave difficulties. Interest is held because he has thought for himself, and his presentation has a certain independence that is more convincing than repetitions of well known arguments and expositions, which have a tired and exhaustive feeling.

There is no mistaking the basis of his re-presentation: it claims to be scientific as opposed to the ideological theories of the evolutionists and humanists. This is the reason for his arguments and theses taking on the aspect of vigorously stated \textit{empirical facts} and strictly logical inferences from them.\(^{25}\)

There is no ambiguity or subjectivism about his case. One would think that he is an exponent of the older kind of physics before Einstein took the

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\(^{21}\) Cornforth, \textit{The Open Philosophy and the Open Society}. Cornforth adds that we may read right through the works of Marx and never meet with any formulation of any such laws.


\(^{23}\) Lenin, \textit{What the Friends of the People Are}, and The Biographical Article on Marx.

\(^{24}\) Lenin, \textit{Philosophical Notebooks}.

\(^{25}\) A fatal return to empiricism, as he himself admits.
finality and absolutism out of it. Althusser would clearly like Marxism to be clear, absolute and final, incontrovertible and unalterable.

With this necessarily goes the aggressive militancy of the man who knows he has the final truth. This strongly partisan spirit is refreshing and imparts to those who adopt it a reassuring feeling of superiority and confidence.

What, then, is the theoretical system that has emerged and what is he doing about it? Unfortunately, nothing intelligible has emerged and nothing is being done about it. A complete theoretical system is promised, but not presented. Instead we are told to read *Capital* under Althusser’s direction. But the secret of Marx, when we put down his books, has been well kept.

Nor is there the kind of healthy immersion in everyday affairs and current issues from which clear insight as to what is really happening and what is to be done emerges, as was the case in all Lenin’s vigorous, concrete and practical speaking and writing. What does seem to happen is a scholastic retreat into greater and greater confusion and obscurity. With every fresh batch of essays the topic grows more recondite and the readers and disciples more select and fewer.26

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26 I refer particularly to the two volumes of essays entitled *Theoretical Practice*.

The parallel with the schoolmen of the Middle Ages cannot be avoided. Every purely conceptual system, though once it is accepted it is going to rule the facts and dictate our actions, can never reach the certainty of unquestionable unanimity. All theoretical dogmatism is very far from science because it is not *praxis*, not a working hypothesis, tested and revised continuously in action, as for instance medicine is; and as Marxism is. Consequently its profound theorisings must take the form of an insistent dogmatism, or tremble on the balancing point of conviction, like all speculative metaphysics. And it must always be open to an alternative and equally rigorous system. That is precisely why medieval scholasticism disappeared within the classrooms of the Catholic philosophers and was for ever lost to sight. Nor is certainty ever to be assured,—the only way in which dogmatism can triumph over doubts,—by the increasing urgency of the assertions as to the rigour and authenticity of the system.

Althusser is prepared to defend his case on the field of a battle for the right *word*. There are two words in particular on which he is prepared to fight to the last: firstly, he refuses to admit that Marxism is a *humanism*; secondly, he refuses to say that it is *Man* who makes history. If these are his dogmas, he may keep them.
1. The Budget . . . and the Economy

BEHIND Billy Snedden's glowing words: "Taxes down; pensions up; growth decisively strengthened", is a Budget which does relatively little for the unemployed, for the pensioner, for the lower income wage earner. It is only a few months since the Treasurer talked of the need for increased unemployment to put the workers and their wage claims in their place. In the face of the political liability of last year's ill-conceived 'unemployment' Budget, the Treasurer tried hard to create the impression that this year's Budget would cut unemployment decisively.

The facts as contained in the fine print of the Budget Papers are to the contrary. On Budget Day, it was announced that the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment had reached about 112,000 workers, or about 2% of the workforce. On the Treasurer's own predictions, the total growth in employment over the next 12 months will be about 2%. Given that the rate of growth of the workforce is likely to be at least of a similar magnitude (over the last seven years the non-rural workforce has grown at about 3.3% per year, and has only been below 2% since December of last year), Mr. Snedden's 'decisive stimulus to growth' has little to do with cutting the present rate of unemployment. It might even rise, depending on what happens to overtime worked and productivity increases. In other words, the Treasury predicts that there will continue to be 'ease in the labor market'. What nicely antiseptic words, with free bus rides to find a non-existent job, and the outrageously low unemployment benefit left at $17 a week single and $25 a week for a married man. For a man, wife and two children, the benefit is $35.50 per week. To put the unemployment benefits up to the Melbourne Institute of Economic Research's very conserva-

�edly estimated poverty line would require an increase in unemployment benefits of over 70% for the single person and over 40% for the man with a wife and two kids. Tut, tut, says Mr. Snedden. You should have saved up for the day when you knew I would put your job on the line.

Well, if the growth story is a little misleading, what about the 10% income tax cuts? Mr. Snedden proudly proclaimed that these would decisively favor the low income earner. In fact he said: "... We have decided to take what we regard as a more equitable course of restructuring the tax scale so as to ensure diminishing percentage reductions as incomes rise... for example, persons with a taxable income of $2,000 will receive a 14.2% tax reduction; at $4,000 the reduction will be 12.4%; at $6,000, 9.4%; at $10,000, 8%; and at $40,000, 6.5%". What sheer sophistry! The impression given is quite contrary to the real situation, which should be examined in terms of the % rise in take-home pay, and which is revealed in the following table:

IMPACT OF TAX CUTS ON TAKE-HOME PAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>% rise Single</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Wife + 1 child</th>
<th>Wife + 3 children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>$2,800</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>$4,400</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.26</td>
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<td>$5,200</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.60</td>
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<td>$6,000</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.70</td>
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<td>$7,500</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>5.30</td>
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At current rates in inflation, the tax cuts for the average wage and salary earner would be wiped out in a little more than six months.

Pensions are all that remains of the Budget slogan. Once again, the impression given is that the latest of a quick succession of pension changes has dramatically improved the lot of the pensioner. What is not revealed is that as a % of average weekly earnings, pensions had reached an all-time low of 18% by 1969; whereas in 1915 the pension was 27% of average weekly earnings. So the latest increase in pensions, making them 22% of average weekly earnings, merely reverses an abysmal trend. The married pensioners now have $3.52 per week over the Melbourne Institute of Economic Research’s very conservative poverty line, but the single pensioner remains $3.53 per week below it. The other benefits to pensioners — the easing of the means test from $10 a week allowable earnings to $20—is yet another case of the ‘great father’ restoring the ratio between allowable earnings and the pension to the original 1909 situation when the pension was first introduced. And the timing of the announcement of the intention to eliminate the means test over three years leaves one just a little suspicious that the government is particularly anxious to catch the votes of the better-off pensioners. In the absence of any stated intention to eliminate the enormous hardship of the non-working pensioner and the unemployed, such a step has little to commend it.

And so it goes for the rest of the Budget. Not much in it for the vast majority of Australians. Nothing to shift the trends towards increased income inequalities which have been evident for many years. Nothing to significantly alleviate poverty. Nothing but more consumerism to prevent higher unemployment. For the government is relying on increased consumer spending to restore the profitability of investment, and is hoping that by retaining a higher level of unemployment there will be smaller wage demands in the future, so that prices will not have to be increased as fast as in the past. Not a particularly exciting prospect. But given the already high savings of the better-off, and the anticipated continuation of high levels of inflation, the predictability of consumer spending is indeed a shaky business. Indeed it is possible that the estimated rise in total income and employment could be too low.

Whilst such an outcome (and it would not be the first time that the Treasury was wrong) would have obvious beneficial short-term effects on the level of unemployment, it does not augur well for the stability of the economy in the future. For it is likely that if such a new boom eventuated, it would push the rate of inflation yet higher, making it more difficult to deal with the underlying social and economic problems which confront Australia at present, and could well create the conditions for a permanent increase in the level of unemployment ‘necessary’ for the economy to function.

Regardless of the government in power, it would create stronger pressures for an anti-union incomes policy with its attendant emphasis on wages, rather than on price control. For the most obvious avenues for controlling prices under capitalism (not mentioned in the Budget) — the use of sharp competition from imports and the removal of the anti-competitive practices so rampant in this economy — are beyond the power of the present political parties to implement effectively. A prices justification tribunal might have a short-run impact, but it too would run into deep trouble with the entrenched interests of the boss, creating little more than confusion in the process. The two methods of lowering the price of imports — a revaluation of the exchange rate or a lowering of tariffs — both run counter to the interests of powerful political lobbies. In the case of revaluation, it’s the farmers, the mining companies and highly protected manufacturers. In the case of lower tariffs, the protected manufacturers are crucial. All this leaves out the immediate interests of workers who know full well that a revaluation or a cut in tariffs under the present government would force them to pay the costs of economic adjustments (e.g. unemployment, re-training costs, loss on houses in rural towns, etc.) carried out in the economic interests of the majority.

So much for the realities behind the recent debate on the value of the Australian exchange rate, which was so studiously ignored in the Budget. With all of the government’s emphasis on wages as the cause of inflation rather than price increases made to restore profit margins, it is indeed highly ‘irresponsible’ not to mention the exchange rate as one of the most significant factors which, in combination with monopoly power, has enabled domestic prices to be increased with near impunity. In addition to the already significant factor of excessively high tariffs which leave a nice margin for price increases without foreign competition in many industries, there is extra scope for price increases via the over-valuation of the exchange rate which has continued over the last 12 months at least. Yet we have been treated to the absurd spectacle of Mr. Anthony calling the speculative investors who have taken advantage of the over-valued currency little more than a bunch of gangsters. How those financial manipulators in the big ‘international’ companies, who are the major currency operators, must have laughed at such flattery! Poor Mr. Whitlam, followed the advice of his new-found economic advisers in some off-the-cuff remarks, found out what he should already have known — that the Labor Party is subject to similar pressures on such matters, particularly from the rural rump — Messrs. Grassby and Patterson. They seem so frightened of losing their seats that they out-promise the Country Party on matters dear to the heart of the farmer.

Amid cries of treason from Mr. Nixon, both parties re-affirmed their faith in the possibility...
that increased inflation would do the job of raising the price of the Australian dollar, rather than using revaluation to do it quickly. At the same time, both parties are shying away from the brink of what they see as a longer-term political disaster for themselves — the possibility of lowering tariffs, which in the short-term would cut inflation, use up some of the excess foreign currency reserve to make the economy more 'efficient' in the long-term. A rough guess at the kind of changes that such tariff cuts would cause in the structure of the economy are set out in the table below.

**APPROXIMATE STRUCTURAL CHANGES, WITH FREE TRADE (1960's DATA)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No output change</td>
<td>Output fall of 10-50%</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; over 50%</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; 10-50%</td>
<td>Output rise of less than 10%</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; 50%</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; 10-50%</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; 10-50%</td>
<td>Output rise of over 50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; 10-50%</td>
<td>Output loss of up to 10%</td>
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In addition to these changes, it is likely that the less skilled and female sections of the workforce would, in the absence of decentralization and retraining programmes, have to bear the major cost of such changes, whilst more highly skilled workers would find themselves in increased demand. Again, as a rough guess, the over-all wage level would rise about 3% but for the reasons mentioned above, wages for skilled workers would tend to go up rather more and for the unskilled they would fall. And, not insignificantly, the capitalists who would lose most from a drop in tariffs are small fry and predominantly Australian.

What are the chances of the conflicting interests in the ruling circles coming to grips with the long-term problem of making Australia a more 'efficient' base for imperialism in the Pacific Basin by reducing tariffs? On the face of it, the chances seem slim, for the 'modernizing' forces in the major political parties are so weak. What attitude should radical unionists take on such matters? Obviously a prerequisite for acceptance of a restructuring of Australian industry is a well-developed system of retraining and re-location schemes; unless combined with radical demands for worker control of industry, etc., the end result would be to build a more efficient version of the present order. In the meantime, the tensions created by the obvious inefficiencies of the present state of affairs could provide space for radical activities.

2. The Debate on Foreign Capital

Largely because of the Government's mismanagement of the exchange rate, foreign capital...
inflows have continued at a record rate during the year. Much of this is in relatively short-term loans and cash for share purchases. Neither the government nor the Labor Party have come to grips with the problem of the short-term capital flows, or the long-term problems relating to control of large sectors of the economy by foreign capital. Under the rules of the game, to lower the short-term flows, the obvious thing to do is either to revalue the currency, to place a tax on the capital inflow, or to use the reserves gained to cushion a cut in tariffs. Not surprisingly, none of these proposals have gained support from the various vested interests — the first, as suggested above, because the political power of farmers, mining companies and protected manufacturers outweighs that of the foreign speculator who stands to gain from the revaluation. And who ever heard of taxing foreign investment? So in spite of the wisdom of the Treasury, the Reserve Bank and the usual bourgeois-economist advisers, the solution will be increased direct control of capital movements. Needless to say, such direct control is likely to be arbitrary and capricious, letting through the big and not the small fish. For the big company has so many means of transmitting funds via inter-company accounts that the small fry government bureaucracy could keep hunting forever before they knew what was going on.

As for the long-term foreign capital position, the political climate is ripe for increasing raids on this-or-that takeover. And the Labor Party might allow the Australian Life Office to do what they have wanted for ages — get into higher profit, government-backed investments. Where will such activity leave the economy, and the worker? It might make a few feel a bit better, but nothing much will change. The action which would make a difference, such as additional royalty taxes on mine products exported; the exposure of the myriad of tactics designed to dodge Australian taxes such as excessive charges for 'technical advice' from head office, rigged prices for inter-company transfers of materials and machines; the outlawing of policies restricting exports from Australian subsidiaries, etc., all cut a bit close to home. It is rather significant that the recent Treasury White Paper on foreign investment only mentions such matters in passing, displaying all too clearly the past unwillingness of government to collect such crucial information. In fact, the main concern of the White Paper lay in discussing the problem that the increased ease with which Australian-based companies can by-pass local credit restrictions and borrow internationally. The gist of it all is as follows: now that the economy is so heavily connected with international money markets, it is no longer possible to operate interest rate and credit policies without regard for the effects on foreign capital flows; an efficient world-order for capitalism requires such inter-connections. Yet it raises the distinct possibility that, under some conditions, the required interest rate for the domestic economy will be different than that required for international connections. It will indeed be interesting to see how such conflicts are resolved.

3. The Outrage of the Year

Did you know that during 1971-72, the year of bitter attacks on wage rises, the average salary increase for the 'chief executives' of companies was 21%? But, of course, it's really necessary to give them the incentive to keep grinding on for you without feeling too unhappy when comparing their lot with their international associates!
CO-EDITOR Doug Kirsner’s chapter appears first in this book but it really begins with the essay of Bruce MacFarlane who correctly claims that his examination of the causes of Australia’s economic buoyancy “will form a backdrop to the arguments of my co-authors…” Broadly MacFarlane’s argument is this: Australia passed through a first period of boom economic conditions in 1860-90, then a long trough (1890-1939), and finally a second boom period starting after the Second World War and continuing today. In both boom periods the “prosperity achieved was in no small way due to the migration of capital from Britain and America into Australia … [the capital] came largely from the profits of colonialism, obtained at the expense of the immiseration of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.” This inflow of capital fostered local capital formation and was one reason for the comparative well-being of Australian workers, from whose surplus-value local capital would normally have had to be accumulated. Their well-being was also compounded by a relative labour shortage throughout Australian history. As the beneficiary of British exploitation of its colonies, Australia had thus to be seen as a part of Britain and not itself exploited. MacFarlane argues that within the overall picture of an Australia which is “an aggressive outpost, first of British imperialism and later of American imperialism … rather than the victim …” the specific difference of Australian development is this: “… whereas most countries had development through importation of goods from low-wage countries at the price of internal cyclical unemployment, Australia was able to enjoy analogous benefits through the effect of labour-saving inventions made possible by capital inflow.”

Where the crucial capital investment of the first boom stemmed from an expanding imperialist exploitation, during the contemporary boom Australia is, however, benefiting from its image in the eyes of retreating imperialism as a safe area of investment and as a “springboard” into South-East Asia for the imperialism characterized by the multinational corporation. It follows that though an Australian economy separate from that of the two main imperialist powers (Japan and USA) with the most capital now invested in Australia is likely to disappear, relative affluence will remain a feature of the capitalist system in this country.

MacFarlane’s closing references to the development of the multi-national corporation as the characteristic form of enterprise of declining imperialism leads easily into Wheelwright’s discussion of the powers of such corporations. On the basis of the rather sparse evidence available to him, he is still able to construct convincingly a case that three hundred corporations, on whose enterprise the well-being of most Australians depends, hold most economic power in Australia, and that two-fifths of these are already controlled by overseas interests. Between them, by price fixing and monopoly of basic industry, as well as through interlocking directorates and close contact with the state, they control and, he intimates, political life: “Across the bargaining tables of power, the bureaucracies of business and government face one another, and under the tables their myriad feet are interlocked in wonderfully complex ways”, is the pithy quotation he borrows from Mills. It remain for John Playford to establish that the capitalist corporation in fact rules Australia: “the translation of economic power into social power and thence into political power becomes the crucial concern of the political scientist”. Playford maintains that the owners and controllers (including the managers) of capitalist enterprise in fact control political power through their dominance of the supposed governments of the country. He has two explanations how they do this. First there are the structural links with government in its political, administrative, judicial and police roles. Second, there is the shared ideological commitment to maintaining the system described by MacFarlane and Wheelwright.

David Evans then takes up the baton to establish that the ruling class use their political power...
external to "prevent the further erosion of capitalist territory in the world economy" — that Australia's effort in "developing countries" of South-East Asia is in fact, as MacFarlane suggested, to provide a springboard for imperialism. Australian aid and investment, always with strings attached, goes to foster the welfare of the developing capitalist sectors of those countries and not the people as a whole, "building up inequalities and differences between people." Of course, the object is not to set up a competitive capitalist class, but to get rid of obsolete technologies to them, to make way for the more advanced technologies of the multinational corporations, as Australia takes on her "junior partner role" in world imperialist exploitation (Whitlam). Finally, Kelvin Rowley's chapter sets out to show that the object of capitalism internally since 1945 is, through relying on the massive inflow of capital and labour since the War, to control the government and to foster national development in the interest of private enterprise. He points out that the bulk of investment in Australia's paltry public sector goes to foster private enterprise, and that capitalism has stimulated the emergence of a different quality in the classes from that which existed before. The new bourgeoisie, Playford's ruling class, is composed of managers and those with the wealth based on industrial enterprise, together with those in government. The bulk of the workers live in relative affluence. They have not however, become "em-bourgeoisified", as they still have to sell their labour power to this bourgeoisie to obtain all the consumer items that they are seduced into believing represent happiness. Their nexus with the system depends on the hitherto bulging paypacket continuing to remain bulging. Even a relative decline in the income levels they have obtained could break their cash nexus with the system. Their commitment to either of the parties in the service of capitalism has declined. In particular, as Labor continues increasingly to prostitute itself to imperialism, in all the ramifications described by the other writers, the working class has turned more and more to extraparliamentary solutions to its problems. Yet Rowley concludes, how Australia will fare in the future will depend primarily on the impact of the decline in imperialist power which is going on in the world. He speculates that the growth of multi-national corporations will result in high-wage countries becoming a production liability from the point of view of profit, and thus suggest an "economically dangerous" move to control increases in wages, and that as a result not only of this external decline but resulting internal strife (e.g. from wage freezes), lead to more and more repressive regimes at home declining into fascism and war. Class tensions will increase.

He finishes that socialists must recognise the continuing validity of the orthodox marxist thesis that the "massive support of and participation on the part of the working class" is a condition precedent for socialist revolution in this country, and that since only on the basis of "collective activity and rational thought to overcome shared problems" can true proletarian collectivism emerge, the fundamental task is not to develop the socialist party but its "precondition", organic intellectuals who by engaging in the praxis of the working-class are able to raise its problems to a theoretical level, and thus advance beyond mere populist pragmatism and intellectual elitism.

The other essays in the book, apart from Kirsner's, of which more will be said, do not really belong in it, because they are peripheral to or merely illustrative of the main argument and often merely allow old theories to be advanced once again. (Groenewegen, Sorell, Catley, White, McQueen).

On the whole, the articles discussed are well-backed with facts, based on the most up-to-date research (at 1970) mainly by bourgeois authors, and appear to present a solid "demystified" description of how Australian capitalism works, so that, as the authors never weary of telling us, we will know what action to take as socialists. Or do they?

Tickling our consciousness from the opening lines of MacFarlane's essay is the feeling that we have heard this all before, that far from the beginning of demystification which it claims to be, it is the tail-end of something else. And it is not the leninist thesis about imperialism which MacFarlane admits he starts from, which we are reminded of. Rather, those references to investments in railways and ports making Australia part of British imperialism (p.39), are, are? are?... reminiscent of Trotsky speaking to the second congress of the Communist International in 1920, and in that flash of recognition we have it. It is not that these writers have not got beyond leninism, they have not got beyond the crude theory of pseudo-leninism advanced by the Comintern. Indeed as we pursue the argument further we recognise the old crisis theory of imperialism "retreating into its last bastions" (MacFarlane) as monopoly capitalism (the three hundred companies or "families") (Wheelwright/Playford) reaches a zenith of concentration, provoking through its own contradictions a reduction in the possible level of bribery (Rowley), a growth in class consciousness and a turn to "social-fascism" for aid, and then to war and fascism (Rowley), the very theory that Stalin advanced in 1928 at the Sixth Congress and soon after at the Ninth Plenum of the Comintern. As many readers will remember it was precisely because world imperialism was supposedly in a state of crisis (the depression) which must inevitably affect all those in its interlocking tentacles, that revolution would ensue, even in advanced capitalist countries like Australia. What these writers have created in the totalization of their host of industriously dug-out facts is a picture of Australian capitalism in which developments in Australia depend on objective structural developments in world imperialism, not only on the level of economics but on the level of politics. Grasp the economic moment (a word used advisedly) and you have explained political possibilities and consequences. In fact their picture of Australian capitalism is not significantly different from that of
the Maoists, whose hope of revolution is so dependent on the change in the balance of world forces, that what their argument really adds up to is a plea to wait and see, a fatalism which on the one hand fosters actions which are adventurist in the interim period, and on the other a feeling of complete structural determination of the outcome of socialist action.

It is the complete anachronism of their theoretical conceptualisation, as implicit in their argument, which provoked the title of this article. Despite periodic lip-service to current heroes, Gramsci, Lukacs, Althusser, and, I fancy, in Rowley's demand that the economy be seen historically, a belated discovery of Labriola, they stand revealed as economic determinists of the crude sort which is associated with Stalinism.

What does this tell us about the value of the book? Simply, that while they discuss economic matters proper they make a useful contribution to our knowledge of Australian capitalism. When they start to relate economic matters proper to politics, far from demystifying they mystify in a totally unacceptable and irresponsible way, in fact not so much by ignoring all the theoretical considerations since Stalin to understanding what is the fundamental problem of revolution: how the realm of economic facts is related to the realm of consciousness; but by ignoring the lessons of real life over thirty years, which provoked reconsiderations of the sort of notion of how history progresses which they advance. Indeed, a close reading to discover the works in the marxist tradition to which they refer to support their view of the interaction of economics and politics reveals that they turn not infrequently to Engels and those volumes of Capital which Engels put together after Marx's death, according to the sort of principle he applied in Wage Labour and Capital when he republished it in 1891, showing a complete absence of a critical approach to theory but a strong commitment to a particular tradition of marxism in their practice.

In their concern to get at the "empirical facts" of Marx (to demystify), they have fallen into the error of equating these with economic facts, whence in their argument all else flows, in Playford's words "structurally", (I note as an aside that many wrote these chapters before they discovered Althusser, and that their notion of structural determinants has nothing in common with the Frenchman's theory). They have, with the exception of Evans, arrived at a complete lack of concern for men: indeed the Australian society they describe is devoid of the men who suffer so much in Marx's Capital. Insofar as men exist they exist as categories, as objects, who are objects of the structural determinants. That this is an inadequate way of explaining how economic developments are related to politics is revealed in the contradictions particularly manifest in Playford's article and to a lesser extent in Rowley's. Playford cannot really make up his mind whether the link between economics and politics should be seen on the level of structures (p.123) whose objective functioning can be established, or on the level of ideology (pp.140-1) where subjective positions are of paramount importance. Of course in the first scheme, one is made a capitalist (or implicitly a proletarian) by forces external to oneself, and in the second one makes oneself either a proletarian or a socialist in collective action. Neither of these either/or positions corresponds with that of Marx.

On a theoretical level Rowley, who is the most sophisticated of all theoretically, realises the inadequacies of the "vulgar" marxism he practises, but he too is riddled with contradictions. On the one hand he recognises correctly that the economy can only be understood historically, that is, as the product of men's actions, and yet on the other he ends up having men's actions the product of the economy: as a corollary on the one hand he recognises explicitly (p.289) that it is production relations and not consumption which is crucial in the marxist definition of class (and indeed, had he taken to heart the Grundrisse, and the favoured Nicolas' reading of it, he would have maintained that frustration of production rather than consumption is crucial in the rise of class consciousness, but he ends up making frustration of consumptive ability (freeze on wages and buying power) (p.316), his stimulus to class antagonism. Not having your needs satisfied makes rebels, not marxist revolutionaries.

This criticism of the theoretical level of the book — how the writers totalised their facts — brings me to what is disconcerting about it on a practical political level, and I think explains the lone contribution of theory by Kirsner. When this book was planned some people close to or associated with the CPA were to write papers for it. At the behest of the bulk of the contributors they were excluded, because of the hostility towards the CPA shown by nearly all the remaining contributors except Kirsner. The argument usually proffered to me (and it is not sour grapes on my part as I was not one of the intellectually purged) was that those excluded were not up to it intellectually. This was completely spurious. But the political result was the exclusion of the thirty years of CPA experience of the practical consequence of its own theoretical mistake in accepting the understanding these men advance, which lesson has been manifested in a determined effort not to fall into the sort of theoretical error characteristic of this book, by keeping up to date in a real sense with contemporary reaction to that error.

The connection of the sort of theory common to stalinism and to these authors, to the terrible practical debacles in Italy in 1922 and Germany in 1933, provoked the Gramscian and Marcusan and other subsequent theory. While communists have internalised those real lessons and thus the substance of the new theory (they do not have to have lived through Hitler to do this), these authors have only paid lip-service to this theory. So by refusing to accept the intellectually inferior, repentant and chastened men who were heirs to past practice (by ignoring their own behests (see Rowley) to live the
real experience of life), they cut themselves off from contemporary theory in anything but the most name-dropping of senses. Only Kirsner was left to make a valiant attempt to totalise the facts of this capitalist society in up-to-date conceptual terms. Embodying much of the populism they claim to despise, they have attacked him privately and publicly, fearful that his article constitutes "bullshit artistry". Does it cause them concern that so many bourgeois and renegade reviewers (see the Age and the Bulletin) voicing the populism of Australia have also attacked him in like terms? This is not to deny that Kirsner's chosen theorists are themselves to some degree reminiscent of Saint Bruno and Saint Max, or to assert that his essay is to be exorbitantly extolled. It is, however, to recognise that as a product of real theoretical practice, he has attempted to understand Australian capitalism in the theoretical terms of the seventies, not the thirties.

**DEMOCRACY & SOCIALISM**

**Manuel Azcarate**

(An extract of a paper —slightly abridged — given at an International Symposium organised by the Communist Party of Japan as part of its fiftieth anniversary. The paper was delivered by Manuel Azcarate, member of the Executive Committee, Communist Party of Spain. The full text of the paper will shortly be published by the Communist Party of Australia.)

Our path to socialism must be characterised by thoroughly democratic forms, and democratic not in a bourgeois or reformist sense, but in a strictly leninist one.

One of the axes of the marxist critique, and of the struggle of the proletariat, against capitalism, is the winning of liberty. One of the richest sources of revolutionary sentiment among the exploited masses against capitalism is the will to be free. Freedom is the banner of socialism, of the working class, of the Communist Party.

As a result of a complex range of factors (in which are blended objective causes, and a series of grave mistakes and deformations, usually grouped under the name of stalinism) this intrinsic quality of socialism as higher freedom has not had its translation into practice, into history, especially in the fields of the political system and political and cultural freedoms.

For the Communist Parties of the industrially developed countries, faced with State monopoly capitalism, the struggle for liberty, for an effective democracy, moves to the forefront. In Spain, after 35 years of fascist tyranny this is one of the dominant motivating factors among the working masses and the widest sections of society. To respond to this political reality we must not only delve anew into Marx, Engels and Lenin to enrich our theoretical positions on the problem of freedom. We must analyse certain new dimensions in contemporary conditions, which require an open and future-oriented marxist response.

In conclusion, we cannot help feeling that the authors of *Australian Capitalism* like all men who make the error of thinking that everything is everything else (note how McQueen again misunderstands, through extra contextual reading, the relation between party and society in Gramsci), or that all phenomena (politics/society) can be reduced to an essence, (economics) they think like neo-Hegelian idealists, and as Marx went to considerable lengths to show the result of such undialectical and unrealistic thinking, their end position must be one of hostility towards the "stupid populace." *Australian Capitalism* becomes a book by elitists, for elitists. We can only hope that in the new venture with which some are associated, *Intervention*, there will be some recognition of their theoretical backwardness as it manifested itself in what is not our starting point, the *Capital* which every generation must write, but hopefully the last in a tradition of pseudo-marxist works.

The marxist critique of "formal freedoms" is that they are inadequate, restricted and, fundamentally, freedom "for the rich". But if we take, for example, the problem of freedom of the press, we see that the present historical level requires us to pose the question on new grounds. Freedom of the press requires (if it is not to be emptied of a good part of its content) that we consider the problem of all information sources, especially of radio and television. At this level "formal freedom" becomes technically almost impossible. The question arises: either it is a State of the monopolies which controls and directs these instruments in its own service; or it is another State, a democratic State, which will put these instruments into the service of the masses. The struggle for freedom thus becomes each time more plainly a struggle for the radical democratisation of the State and society; a struggle for a State where the masses are effectively masters of their destinies. Hence there is an objective rapprochement between the struggle for genuine freedom, at the contemporary level, and the struggle for socialism.

The qualitatively superior freedom which socialism must represent for the people supposes the end of exploitation; and it also supposes a radically democratic State in which the working class — the workers, manual and intellectual — are truly the master; that it is they who decide on the great issues. And it is within this framework that the vanguard role of the marxist-leninist party is to be found.

Socialism is superior to bourgeois democracy, not only because it frees man from capitalist exploitation, but also because it must guarantee political democracy as such, and political and human rights, which are much superior to those prevailing under capitalism. Clearly, socialist society, faced with attacks of enemies who seek to destroy socialism (Continued on Pages 38 and 39)

GORZ is a Marxist who has set himself the task of enunciating a strategy by which advanced industrial societies might proceed towards socialism. While he concentrates on the development of the workers' movement in the capitalist nations of Western Europe he does not ignore the necessity for a similar development in the socialist states so that those societies too can proceed towards the kind of socialism conceived of by Marx.

Gorz's basic premise is that the human misery and widespread poverty of the 19th Century which gave birth to and nurtured the mass movement for socialism at that time can not now be the basis for a contemporary socialist movement. At that time the mere affirmation of the right to life, to adequate nourishment, clothing and shelter, had an immediately apparent revolutionary content; the necessity for revolution became the same as the necessity for living. Today the satisfaction of these fundamental needs has lost its previous urgency and hence the need for basic social change can not spring from this source. The reason for this loss of urgency is not that misery and poverty have been eliminated but because they are not now experienced to such great depths and do not affect such large proportions of the population as previously. These factors must be linked with the relative isolation of the poverty-stricken, their lack of racial and social similarity, their lack of accessibility to the media and the inability of this issue to catalyse action for social change by those wide sections of the community which are unaffected.

Gorz asks the questions: "Why socialism? For what reasons will modern-day wage- and salary-earners see this as a goal worth striving for?" He is quick to point out that not only do they not see socialism as a necessary goal for the reasons outlined above but they do not see it as a realisable goal, that socialism is rather an abstract term that no longer serves as a mobilising force. Gorz's contention is that capitalism in the course of its development creates new needs for which it is incapable of providing fundamental solutions even though it often solves these problems in its own way and in due course in such a way as to make the system socially tolerable. Gorz instances the problems that have arisen from the Common Market such as the imbalance and disparity between regions, the problems of development, economic planning, job-creation, training and professional adaptation to technological evolution.

But in addition to these problems capitalism has created a model of consumption in which human priorities have been subordinated to the priorities of capital. It will be only coincidental if the investment decision reached on this basis accords with optimum social or human needs. Gorz gives several examples of where these criteria conflict one of which is the following—

In 1938 the Philips trust developed a fluorescent tube with a life of 10,000 hours. Production of these tubes would have covered existing needs cheaply and in a relatively short time; amortisation on the other hand would have taken a long time. The invested capital would have been recovered slowly and the labour time necessary to cover existing needs would have declined. The Company therefore invested additional capital in order to develop a fluorescent tube which burns for only 1,000 hours, in order thus to accelerate the recovery of capital and to realise — at the price of considerable superfluous expenditure — a much higher rate of profit (page 79).

The model of consumption typically found in advanced capitalist societies is one in which the individual aspires to the possession of a washing machine, a car and the necessary wage increase. He does this in response to a need which he has some chance of satisfying as an individual. On the other hand he has no chance of obtaining local, modern, cheap public laundry facilities or rapid and comfortable modes of transport, parks and athletic facilities close to home or even suitable housing at a price he can afford. Left to himself therefore (or conditioned to regard self-reliance as a virtue) he will always tend to demand individual goods rather than collective services or facilities — to demand in other words, a market economy and a society of consumption rather than an economy and a society founded on service.

The defenders of capitalism have often pointed to the entrepreneur and the role he has played in the growth of the economy. They choose to ignore the very real social costs (such as the Queensland Government's building of new railway lines for mining companies in north and central Queensland) occasioned by such private initiative, the extent to which these social costs delay other urgent social investment, what other long-run social investment the private initiative necessarily induces and what alternate investment the entrepreneur's private decision will render possible. While capitalism does not have a solution to these problems much less a satisfactory one the labour movement has not yet been able to define its own solutions and the strategy it would use to achieve them.

The strategy typically adopted by unions and union groups in Australia to improve the living standards of their members concentrates on wages and salaries with attention focussed on the annual national wage case before the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission. But such a strategy itself is not capable of cementing a firm unity as between the various groups of wage and salary earners as evidenced by the different bases on which the two peak Councils, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations, draw up their claims reflecting the differing demands of their constituents and their members. Hence this strategy reinforces the attempts by the ideologues of capitalism to maintain an atomised society in which the citizen is encouraged to think in terms of his separateness from the other members of the society.
and the supposed uniqueness of his individual demands rather than in terms of the social nature of his existence and the common demands which he shares with many other members of society. Gorz's main criticism of the wage struggle as a strategy is that capitalism can absorb any blows which will be inflicted on it in the course of such a conflict and that from the point of view of power it is of limited usefulness and does not in any fundamental way challenge the capitalist model of society and the values on which it is based.

Of course the unions in Australia don't rely solely on the national wages case. Awards and Determinations are continually being sought most often in an attempt to increase rates of pay or to improve conditions. But in any case the unions' concentration on the price the wage- or salary-earner receives for his labour and the conditions under which he performs it is essentially a one-dimensional approach: it sees the employee as an industrial man or woman in an economic system rather than as a social being in a complex economic and social system in which the citizen exists, not only in one dimension as a worker concerned about the consequences of his work, but as a producer who is producing specific articles or services for a specific market and hence needs to be aware of, and is vitally affected by, the output of other producers offering similar goods or services in the same markets. In addition to his role as a producer the employee is a consumer, he is a commuter, a member of a family, a psychological being and a political being. He can be described in so many other dimensions. Because the wage and salary earner is a social being the unions need to encourage him to consider himself as such and to consider his relationship to the society at large. To fail to do so and hence allow the wage- and salary-earner to continue to conceive of himself as an industrial man able to improve the conditions of his total existence by struggle around industrial issues narrowly conceived, is to commit the unions to a tactical solution in the face of an economic power which is realisable gradually from the present towards, which is in fact being born by their own actions. Such a solution is conditional upon the efforts that they make both to obtain it and retain it.

As this transfer occurs (and this transfer of power is at the base of socialism) socialism will be more clearly visible not as something in the distant future but as a new kind of economic, political and cultural relationship among men and women which is realisable gradually from the present onwards, which is in fact being born by their own actions. The transfer of power to the labour movement at the national level the proposed solutions to national problems will be effective and will be acted upon. Until this transfer of power occurs and in the absence of campaigns around realisable goals at the lower levels of society the labour movement is in the position of appealing for mass support on the basis that once in power a fundamental solution to all problems will be found. This is an appeal based on the population's faith in, rather than their experience of, the workers' movement in action around their needs.

From the foregoing it can be seen that the strategy being put forward by Gorz involves the progressive conquest of power by wage- and salary-earners, a strategy which does not however exclude the possibility of, or even the necessity for, a revolutionary seizure of power at a later stage. Gorz is right to this position because in his view the labour movement in Western Europe is brought to this position because in his view the labour movement in Western Europe is between armed insurrection and reform within capitalism. Gorz is quick to point out the difference between reformist and revolutionary reforms the latter being conceived not in terms of what is possible within the framework of a given system and administration but in terms of what is necessary in terms of human needs and demands. Revolutionary reforms can be achieved suddenly or gradually but in either case the important point is the modification of the power relations which will result in the devolution of power to the people.

This book is a mine of thought-provoking material and deserves to be read and thought about by all members of the labour movement in Australia because of the assistance it can be in helping us to find the ways of creating a more human society in terms of our own institutions, traditions and culture.
and Punishment in America, prepared for the American Friends Service Committee. Hill and Wang, 179 pp., $1.95.

Books, whether by Marxists or non-Marxists, that offer any genuine insight into the role and functioning of the repressive state apparatus (army, police, courts, prisons, etc.) within contemporary capitalist societies, are notably few. Even more scarce are works endeavouring to make a realistic assessment of the place of the criminal law in the transition to, and maintenance of, a truly free and democratic society.

Struggle for Justice, a report by a working party of the American Friends Service Committee is a short, but interesting, book containing significant contributions in both these areas. Although not based on any general theory of the state, and therefore seriously defective, the book nevertheless presents us with a number of accurate and penetrating observations regarding the day to day administration and impact of the American ‘criminal justice’ system. Much of this applies with equal validity to the Australian instance. Of particular interest, however, is the section containing the authors’ views on the proper role of the criminal law under a ‘just’ social order. Their challenging suggestions in this regard deserve the consideration of all progressive-minded legal theorists.

Unlike most liberal criminologists andsocial administrators, the authors view the criminal justice system from the perspective of those on the receiving end. Thus, they see the chaos in American courts and the growing spirit of rebellion and unrest in her prisons, not as ‘problems of management’ but as part of the increasing overall challenge to the legitimacy of the American power structure. They examine, at length, the inequities and repressive functions of the criminal justice system; its use to perpetuate the second-class status of minorities and the poor; to combat differing life styles; and to silence those who might challenge the status quo. Beyond this, the authors question the very notions of criminality and ‘justice’ upon which the system is based, correctly pointing out that the actions which should be labelled criminal, because they bring the greatest harm to the greatest number, are, in fact, accomplished by governmental agencies and others in positions of power and influence.

The authors also note that, despite the obvious and growing crisis in the prisons and the growing climate of political repression in the USA, there are few signs of change in the program of those whose business it is to be concerned with the problem. These ‘experts’ continue to advance the well-worn, yet mani festly bankrupt reformist prescription of ‘more judges etc. for the courts, improved educational and therapeutic programs in penal institutions, more and better personnel at higher salaries, preventive surveillance of pre-delinquent children, greater use of probation’ etc. etc. The premise of this approach is the rather utopian notion that, basically, all the programs are on the right track and only need to be given a fair trial. In fact, it evades the heart of the problem by refusing to recognise that criminal justice is dependent upon, and largely derived from, social justice. As the authors explain: ‘the only solution for the problem of class and race bias in the courtroom, or by the police, or by the correctional system, is the eradication ofbias from American life’. Personal prejudice notwithstanding, discrimination ‘facto will occur as long as there are gross inequalities of status and economy in the larger society’. The commonly proposed reformist prescription serves only to iron out rough spots in the functioning of the repressive apparatus.

As an illustration for their argument, the authors seek to demonstrate that despite the benevolent sounding verbiage which usually surrounds it, the individual treatment model, ‘the ideological spring from which almost actual and proposed reform has been derived’, has, from its inception, been primarily a means of maintaining maximum control over the convicts purged from the criminal justice system with the promise of ‘imprisonment for rehabilitation’ as opposed to ‘imprisonment for punishment’. This, they claim, accounts for its enthusiastic acceptance, in the face of persistent failure, by almost all sections of opinion in every area of the administration of criminal justice — the notion implicit is the model, that lawbreakers are somehow sick or abnormal, has possibly been a means of hiding ‘the mixture of hatred, fear and revulsion that white middle class Protestant reformers feel towards lower class persons who do not share their middle class Christian ethic’. Disguised as a humanitarian concern for the ‘health’ of the lawbreaker, treatment actually seeks to enforce conformity to this ethic of threatening sub-cultural groupings. For prison administrations, on the other hand, the rehabilitative system has provided justification for unquestioned discretionary power over those in their custody. In any event, the model is sufficiently vague in concept and flexible in practice as to accommodate both the traditional (punitive) and utilitarian objectives of criminal law administration.

The common complaint of reformers that, if this system has not worked it is because of legislative stringency and public apathy, is plainly far wide of the mark. The authors establish a compelling case for their claim that the individual treatment model is ‘theoretically faulty’, systematically discriminatory in administration and inconsistent with some of our most basic conceptions of ‘justice’. It is quite apparent that none of the major problems at hand can be remedied with a ‘return to the earlier concept of ‘let the punishment fit the crime’. The law, they argue, has no business with a particular norm, when there is no feasible, less costly, method of obtaining compliance, and when there is some substantial basis for assuming that prohibition would produce a greater benefit for society than simply doing nothing. Once done, they propose the reversal of the individual treatment model and a return to the earlier concept of ‘let the punishment fit the crime’. The law, they argue, has no business concerning itself with the ‘whole person and should deal only with his criminal act. Indeed, honesty of semantics here, with the labelling of all second-class citizens, would perhaps rather than reduce the critical necessity of limiting its use as much as possible. It should only be a last resort, where no less stringent measures of social control and education will suffice. Sentences generally should be greatly reduced and uniformly applied.

Yet the authors do not stop at this idealistic formulation. They also suggest a number of ways of reducing somewhat the impact of prejudice and discrimination in the present criminal justice system. These include suggestions for the organisation of oppressed peoples and abased groups aiming at self-determination, suggestions for ‘making the system viable’, community aid centres and a prisoners’ Bill of Rights. In all, then, Struggle for Justice is a stimulating and valuable book which demands deep consideration of all those concerned with the assault on legal inequality. As such, it raises a number of important guidelines, not only for socialists grappling with problems of the State, but also for all those seriously interested in penal reform in this country.

John Connor
A spectre is haunting the revolutionary left — the spectre of Stalin and ‘stalinism’.

Unfortunately, the discussion of the phenomenon of stalinism in Australia usually takes the form of trying to score party political points, rather than a real analysis of the disease. Every publication of the CPA, no matter what the topic might be, is greeted by the Trotskyists with the cry that it doesn’t analyse the stalinist past of the CPA. The supporters of the SPA prefer to bury the whole topic. Within the CPA, discussion remains on the level of whether A was more ‘stalinist’ than B. The major exception in Australia to this method is J. D. Blake’s Revolution from Within.

I still believe, however, that a full analysis of stalinism must come from the CPSU, as Togliatti pointed out in his ‘Yalta Memorandum’. But this is improbable in the near future. The investigation committee into the facts surrounding Kirov’s murder (a central event in the stalinist terror of the thirties, set up 10 years ago), still has given no report, if it has not been silently disbanded. The decision of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU (1961) to build a memorial to the victims of stalinist terror remains a dead letter, as do other Congress decisions, decisions of the highest body of the CPSU, and therefore binding on every member of the party, according to the CPSU Constitution.

Roy Medvedev who, together with his biologist brother Zhores, is famous for his struggle for civil liberties in the USSR, has now written a book on the history of the development of stalinism and attempts to explain its causes. He correctly states ‘that it would be a crime to remain silent’.

The author joined the CPSU in 1956, after the 20th Congress, and, in 1962, decided to write this book. It was not completed until 1968, and was rejected by the Soviet publishers to whom he submitted it. It has now been published in the West. Medvedev was expelled from the CPSU in circumstances which suggest a frame-up.

Medvedev ruthlessly attacks Stalin on a number of counts. He represents Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and other victims of Stalin as Bolsheviks upholding sincere policies, some of which Medvedev condemns as incorrect, others of which he considers correct, but none of which he really analyses. However, he refuses to adopt the ‘all or nothing’ attitude, and admits Stalin’s positive features, where they existed in his opinion. As he writes:

‘The impression should not be created that Stalin’s activity consisted only of crimes and mistakes. It was Stalin who perfected the art of classifying his opponents’ mistakes in such a way as to ignore their services and to stress not only their real mistakes, but also imaginary ones.’

Medvedev is able to use many sources not readily available in the West, and some completely unknown in the West: memoirs of old Bolsheviks, of returnees from the camps, local newspapers, etc. Some of these can obviously not be checked by authentic Soviet sources, and may well be attacked on that ground. But they have the ring of truth about them, as has the New York Times report of Khrushchev’s ‘secret speech’ to the 20th Congress, for which there is also still no official Soviet source.

Anyone who is concerned with the truth of what happened in the Soviet Union in the Stalin era should read this book. It is packed with facts showing the development of stalinism. Unfortunately, I cannot say that the analysis of the causes is as deep as one would hope. Despite the quotation of Harold MacMillan in the publisher’s blurb that Medvedev is a ‘marxist-leninist’, his analysis does not go beyond that of the civil liberties fighter that he is. While giving all credit to the courage of the Medvedev brothers, this book will not advance our understanding of why stalinism developed.

Medvedev basically argues that the cause was Stalin’s departure from the true path laid down by Lenin. But this does not explain the repetition of the phenomenon, with national variations, in China, Romania, Cuba, etc. Again and again, CP leaders accuse the former leaders of having usurped power and concentrated power into their own hands (Poland, USSR, etc.). Is there some aspect of the leninist party which leads, or at least facilitates, this ‘dictatorship of the leader’ replacing the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’? As a loyal member of the CPSU, Medvedev refuses to face these questions. Lenin was always right, and the deviations from Lenin’s course are the trouble.

It is unfortunate that the editors have decided to delete certain parts of the book as being repetitious or unnecessary. Despite the length of the book, it would have been preferable to leave it to the reader to judge this, as such judgments are always subjective. The way in which Russian names are translated is also irritating to anyone familiar with Soviet publications, e.g. Yoffe, the Soviet diplomat, becomes Ioffe, etc.

But, all in all, this is a ‘must’ for anyone who wishes to learn more facts about the history of the CPSU than those contained in the official text books. The analysis of stalinism still awaits a full marxist treatment.

Henry Zimmerman

Democracy & Socialism — continued from page 34

and to take power from the masses, will apply the rigors of the law. But the very important question is that of freedom for the toiling masses themselves. In socialist society, there are contradictions which do not come from the class enemy, but which are produced by the structures of socialism. Different opinions arise within socialism and the political system of socialism must offer means by which these can express themselves, by which correct solutions may be found in a democratic manner, by which the confrontation of viewpoints and discussions may be fostered. It is in this framework that democratic freedoms (limited, mangled and falsified by the bourgeois regime) can take on a new dimension in socialism.

In seeking new possibilities for socialist transformation, we are aware of all we owe to the socialist countries beginning with the October revolution. We reaffirm our class solidarity with these countries. On the other hand, we have doubts as to whether it is possible on the basis of experience of certain socialist countries — however glorious it may have been — (and denying the experience of other socialist countries) to establish general, obligatory laws for the building of socialism. For, either it is a matter of generalities which everyone interprets to his taste (which does nothing to raise the prestige of our theory); or the “a priorism” of such laws can impede a decisive aspect of marxist analysis: the concrete analysis of concrete situations.

The Communist Party of Spain bases itself on the fundamental conception of Marx and Lenin of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. The word “dictatorship” creates a problem because the usual sense in Spanish of the word “dicta-
radical agrarian reform was applied. The banks and main "the requirements of the war". In these conditions, our orientation.

problems of health, education, etc. tackled by providing for industries were nationalised or brought under the control of the trade unions and direct forms of workers' democracy; hegemony in the policy of the government and in life in party succeeded in ensuring a high degree of working class particularities of Spain and the crisis of imperialism — stresses that this political system must be characterised by a radical democratism and it must embrace, among other components: plurality of political parties including parties with critical attitudes to socialism; political freedoms of press, assembly, demonstration, etc. which are effectively guaranteed; a state which will have no official ideology (we are convinced that the ideas of scientific socialism will become the orienting to workers' parties) while saying that all these forms must have a great internal richness of discussion to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, the party must be able to listen to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, it must have a great internal richness of discussion and democracy. At the same time, it must possess great firmness in the face of attempts at division, strong unity at the moment of decision and action.

We live in a period when the differentiation within the revolutionary movement is tending to become accentuated. There are doubtless areas of similarity, of rapprochement of the present day struggles and taking account of the particularities of Spain and the crisis of imperialism — stresses that this political system must be characterised by a radical democratism and it must embrace, among other components: plurality of political parties including parties with critical attitudes to socialism; political freedoms of press, assembly, demonstration, etc. which are effectively guaranteed; a state which will have no official ideology (we are convinced that the ideas of scientific socialism will become the orienting to workers' parties) while saying that all these forms must have a great internal richness of discussion to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, the party must be able to listen to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, it must have a great internal richness of discussion and democracy. At the same time, it must possess great firmness in the face of attempts at division, strong unity at the moment of decision and action.

The leading role is, in reality, a place that the party wins by its theory, history, example, but it is also a place that the party must re-win every day in the open field of confrontation with practice.

We are striving within the party to bring to life qualities which can give a real capacity for leadership of the masses. To know how to convince, the party must be able to listen to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, it must have a great internal richness of discussion and democracy. At the same time, it must possess great firmness in the face of attempts at division, strong unity at the moment of decision and action.

Our elaboration of what the political system of socialism should be in Spain — an elaboration carried out at the theoretical level, but above all in relation to the reality of the present day struggles and taking account of the particularities of Spain and the crisis of imperialism — stresses that this political system must be characterised by a radical democratism and it must embrace, among other components: plurality of political parties including parties with critical attitudes to socialism; political freedoms of press, assembly, demonstration, etc. which are effectively guaranteed; a state which will have no official ideology (we are convinced that the ideas of scientific socialism will become the orienting to workers' parties) while saying that all these forms must have a great internal richness of discussion to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, the party must be able to listen to the masses. To lead by means of the method of conviction, it must have a great internal richness of discussion and democracy. At the same time, it must possess great firmness in the face of attempts at division, strong unity at the moment of decision and action.

Our experience in the Spanish war has lost neither its historical nor theoretical value by virtue of the fact that we were conquered by fascism, for our defeat was caused by external factors.

I wish to underline that, in the leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is not the party but the proletariat itself which should lead the state and conduct the politics of socialism. However experienced it is, the communist party has not, and cannot have, a special charisma which makes it everywhere and always the interpreter of the interests of the working class. The party can be mistaken and we must be constantly aware of this possibility while striving to ensure that this happens in the smallest number of cases. To fulfil its role of vanguard in the advance towards socialism, and in socialist society, the party needs not an "apology" which consecrates it "the leading party", but a living dialectical contact with the masses; and within its own ranks a democratic life, criticism and self-criticism, which raises its political potential.

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We live in a period when the differentiation within the revolutionary movement is tending to become accentuated. There are doubtless areas of similarity, of rapprochement (for example, among the developed capitalist countries). But what must be stimulated is the marxist analysis of specific situations, of new paths and models capable of taking forward in practice the revolutionary process. In this framework, respect for the independence of each party becomes more essential. That is the real road for advance towards the unity of the international communist movement, which, in the world of today, must be a unity in diversity; and above all, unity in action against the common enemy, imperialism.

Imperialism is sinking into a crisis from which it cannot emerge. The heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people marks without doubt a turning point in history. It is required of the revolutionary forces to move to a more offensive strategy, taking account of all the contemporary situations. This presupposes that the examples and schemas already known of socialist revolutions will doubtless be enriched by new features, by variants which are in large part unforeseeable at the present stage.

It is in this offensive spirit — in fidelity to proletarian internationalism, a fidelity proved by the history of our party at decisive moments, in action and not only in words — that we Spanish communists are seeking out and creating our revolutionary road: in struggling today against Francoism, for freedom; in preparing our advance, by a Spanish path, towards socialism.

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