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.

DEMONCACY & 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 33 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.
LET HISTORY JUDGE, by Roy Medvedev, MacMillan, pp. 566, recommended price $17.95.

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 begin-
dua" (despotic personal government — we characterise the Franco regime precisely as a dictatorship) differs considerably from its scientific Marxist sense. We use "dictatorship of the proletariat" when it is a matter of theoretical positions but in our propaganda we use different expressions such as "power of the working class" in order that the Leninist conception may be better understood by the masses.

On the matter of the political system of socialism, Lenin has left us not only some phrases but a real theory and method. Lenin's ideas on the variety of political forms and models of socialism are of an extraordinary clarity and richness. In State and Revolution, Lenin underlines the "extraordinarily diverse" forms of the bourgeois state (which run from fascism to parliamentary republic which give freedom to workers' parties) while saying that all these forms are, in essence, dictatorships of the bourgeoisie, and he adds that the transition from capitalism to socialism will offer "an enormous abundance and diversity" of political forms whose essence will be the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We use the word "model" without any hesitation even though it is sometimes considered "revisionist". It was written by Lenin himself. In a letter sent to Orjonikidze on March 2, 1921, he said "I ask you to take account of the fact that the situation in Georgia both internally and internationally requires of the Georgian communists that they leave aside the Russian model and create particular skilful and flexible tactics based on a spirit of greater concession to the different petty bourgeois elements."

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 theoretical level, but above all in relation to the reality 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, the autonomy of the trade unions and direct forms of workers' democracy, autonomy of cultural activity and creation with neither state nor party having any official doctrine in these fields; problems of health, education, etc. tackled by providing for broad, autonomous participation of teachers, health service personnel, students and workers' representatives alongside the state.

When considering features of the transition to socialism in Spain, we cannot leave aside the experience of the revolutionary war of 1936-39. This was the first experience of collaboration in government of the Communist Party with the Socialist Party and with petty bourgeois democratic parties (one of which had a religious catholic orientation) and with trade union organisations, one of which had an anarchist orientation.

In the midst of the war and with this coalition government, each party had its newspaper; the different positions were subjected to public discussion. It was the Communist Party that struggled to preserve open political discussion against rightist supporters of "apoliticism" in the name of "the requirements of the war". In these conditions, our party succeeded in ensuring a high degree of working class hegemony in the policy of the government and in life in the Republican territory. A new army was created; in whose officers were of working class or peasant origin. A radical agrarian reform was applied. The banks and main industries were nationalised or brought under the control of the popular front. Education and culture were placed in the service of the people. It was, as Dolores Ibarruri has written, the first experience in history of a genuine people's democracy.

It is a notable fact that, in 1937, in order to overcome political divisions within the popular front, the proposal of the Communist Party (rejected by the other parties) was that general elections should be held in which each party could present itself before the people and thus gain a measure of the support upon which it could count.

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 does not need an "ideological weight which consecrates it" (we are talking about 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.

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.

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 Franquismo, for freedom; in preparing our advance, by a Spanish path, towards socialism.