STRATEGY FOR LABOUR: A radical proposal, by A. Gorz. Translated from the French by Martin A. Nicholas and Victoria Ortiz. Beacon Press, 213 pp., $2.45.

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 1958 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 means 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 ideologists 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 effectiveness 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 wage case. Variations to Awards and Determinations conflict and that from the point of view of the transfer of power it is of limited effectiveness and does not in any fundamental way challenge the capitalist model of society and the values on which it is based.

Perhaps 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, and 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 wage- and salary-earner to a struggle he cannot win. On the one hand the capitalist can usually pass the cost of any gains made by the worker at the factory level and on the other any attempt to translate conditions of social (as distinct from industrial) existence into industrial issues is failing to come to grips with the real problem. But if the wage- and salary-earner can be encouraged to see himself as a social being and at the same time to see himself more clearly as an economic unit which must take account of both the income and expenditure sides of his activities just as one does, then it should be relatively simple to interest him in such questions as price, how it is set, by whom and the effects on it of a monopolistic or oligopolistic market structure, and the multi-national corporation. As tax is a component of price it follows that levels of taxation should be examined and other aspects of Government fiscal policy. This leads to analysis of the Budget and an examination of the Government's priorities for public investment, how this figure compares with the amount of private investment and to what extent does all the investment satisfy the needs of the population rather than private needs.

So the problem for the labour movement in Australia is firstly to obtain the conviction of the union activists as to the necessity to see the wage- and salary-earner as a social being and secondly to convince the wage- and salary-earner of the fruitlessness of conceiving of himself in any other way, and thus of using his industrial power to secure his social needs.

Social or collective needs can only be satisfied in a social way and hence the necessity for social or collective organisation in order firstly to articulate those needs and secondly to act to achieve them. Thus Gorz is saying not only must the issues be changed around which the battle is waged if capitalism is to be successfully challenged, but in the process of changing the issues men and women will begin to see beyond themselves as individuals and to see themselves as social beings. To the extent to which they do this they will have opposed the ideology of capitalism and will have been successful in weakening this underlying pillar of its power. In Gorz's view 'demands in the name of collective needs imply a radical challenge of the capitalist system, on the economic, political and cultural levels' (page 94).

What Gorz considers as applying in Western Europe, namely that the labour movement has not put forward goals or solutions which the population not only sees as necessary but also sees as being realisable, also applies in Australia. In this situation it is seen as being an agitator rather than a force with an achievable alternate programme which meets the needs of the bulk of the population. If such a programme were proposed then in the struggle for its realisation, whether it be at the level of the plant, the locality or the state some power over the production process, or economic power, will have been gained and the necessary political power to maintain that gain will have been established with the employer, with the workers directly involved and with other sections of the population. For this to occur the struggle to achieve the demands will have to be waged on the industrial, political and cultural levels against the traditional forces that the power-holders use such as the mass media and its opinion-makers, the legal system, the formal educators and the State police. The struggle itself will serve an educative function in that wage- and salary-earners will see that they have the ability in their own hands to effect the transfer of power and that the transfer 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 but whose survival will have to be fought for continuously against reversionary tactics. The labour movement should therefore define its solutions to current and longer term problems in terms of practicable possibilities around which the population at its various levels can enthuse, act and be successful and thus feel confident that if it transfers 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 has come to see itself as 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 reform is an 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.

Gerry Phelan
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, the inequities and repressive functions of the criminal justice system. 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 approach is the rather utopian notion that, basically, proposed reform has been derived, has, from its inception, been primarily a means of maintaining maximum control over the convict population while assuaging the public conscience 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 authors also note that, despite the obvious and growing crisis in the prisons and the growing climate of political repression, we see few signs of change in the system of criminal justice in an unjust society. Thus, they are critical of the 'ideological spring from which almost all actual and personal prejudice notwithstanding 'discrimination de

The authors also note that, despite the obvious and growing crisis in the prisons and the growing climate of political repression, we see 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 manifoldly 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 recognize 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 of bias from American life'. Personal prejudice notwithstanding 'discrimination the 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 all actual and
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 of which he considers correct, but none of which he really represents Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and admitted Stalin’s positive features, where they 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 read 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 lofte, 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

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and to take power from the masses, will apply the rigorous 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-