THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE have been let loose upon the Vietnamese people by American imperialism, pretenders to leadership of Christian civilisation.

To indescribable mass slaughter, in which civilian dead exceed soldiers by ten to one, are now added the gaunt spectres of famine and pestilence. Dreaded plague is reported among both Vietnamese and Americans; tuberculosis and venereal disease are spreading like wildfire. The Australian Broadcasting Commission's *News from Asia* (March 12, 1967) reported that "South Vietnam's economy is tottering on the edge of disaster." Inflation is such that a kilo of low-grade rice, 10 piastres only six months ago now costs 28 piastres; rice reserves are down to 30,000 tons, due to late arrival of promised US rice shipments and to decreasing supplies from the Mekong Delta. This report did not mention the cumulative effects of the deliberate US policy of laying waste huge areas of arable land by a particularly vicious form of chemical warfare.

This orgy of death, American-inspired and American-executed, is to receive new impetus from the Guam meeting of the President and his pro-consuls in Vietnam, Westmoreland and Lodge.

Death, whether on purpose or by accident comes by remote, cold, impersonal and ruthless decisions of civilised politicians and brasshats, thousands of miles away. It comes through napalm and high-explosive delivered by B52's from Guam and by Seventh Fleet. Character and cause of the accidents are better understood when one hears how a cluster of huts was deliberately napalmed by U.S. pilots in response to a casual request from a photographer for film of a napalm raid (as reported in the ABC TV session "People" on March 2). The monstrous US war is debasing many of the Americans who just 'obey orders.' How else can it be, when the war is an unjust aggression justified by foul racialism and pathological political lying?

GENOCIDE is the only word to describe such crimes against humanity. Every day that passes compounds the monstrous horror, not least the increasing overt callousness of the American
rulers and their Australian supporters who daily indulge in their shame-faced exercises of proving 'the end justifies the means.'

Mr. Fairhall, outstanding even in the Holt Cabinet of hawks (or is the Australian equivalent 'butcher birds'?), assumed more the shape of a vulture in justifying bombing of the North. He said . . .

Hanoi has been engaged in a high-powered campaign all over the world, mustering public opinion, with the aid of communist world forces, to try to produce an end to bombing; we are not fools; we understand that an end to bombing would be the finest kind of military victory for the communists . . (Hansard, p. 562).

Mr. Fairhall clearly implies that the distinguished men who advocate cessation of bombing—including U Thant and Pope Paul—are either fools, or dupes of Hanoi.

THE CREDIBILITY GAP is sometimes used to describe the position of the White House, in relation to world and American opinion. This jargon-term means that world opinion considers Johnson a miserable and deliberate liar, on small things as well as big. The lies and evasions are so numerous and contradictory, without even the saving guidance of a good memory, that America's few remaining allies are most confused of all.

The essence of the US war is revealed in the booklet Children of Vietnam, endorsed by the American Dr. Benjamin Spock, which shows the most horrifying pictures of child victims of napalm bombing, by its nature and purpose indiscriminate. No wonder Dr. Spock is moved to compare US acts with the nazi atrocities at Lidice and Guernica.

HORROR IS NOT WINNING the war, any more than nazi bombings could defeat the British. American casualties are growing every week, as they push aside Ky's puppet troops and try to destroy the National Liberation Front forces. Da Nang, oldest US base, is still subject to guerrilla attacks, which inflict heavy losses. The longer the war goes, the more frightful the American methods, the more the Vietnamese people are steeled in determination to fight on, the deeper goes the bitterness against the foreign forces which wage total war against a people fighting only for the rights of self-determination, freedom from aggression and peace. The longer the war goes, the more ridiculous as well as barbaric the Americans and their allies appear to world opinion, since the odds, so clearly weighted on their side, in numbers, technology and horror, though not courage, are still not bringing even victory, let alone glory.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE in Vietnam also expose the American policy-makers. While increasing US aggression in 1966, Johnson hypocritically spoke about 'unconditional negotiations.' Put to the test by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the offer that talks could follow immediately upon an end to bombing and other aggressive acts against the North, Johnson hastily ordered resumption and extension of bombing, ordered artillery and naval bombardment of the DRV, and mined the river and irrigation systems so vital to agriculture and food supplies. He thus flew in the face of world public opinion, and slammed the door on a very positive approach by the Democratic Republic, endorsed by South Vietnam's National Liberation Front.

This criminal American rejection of an opportunity for peace talks presents before all opposed to or disturbed by the Vietnam war the opportunity and the responsibility to demand an immediate end to the bombings. This demand can be endorsed alike by pacifist and religious opinion, by all shades of political thought, as well as by committed opponents of the Vietnam war and those, like the Communists, who support the just struggle of the National Liberation Front and their compatriots in the North.

The peace initiatives from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and supported by the NLF, in no way depart from their determination to carry on the struggle for their just demands conceded at Geneva in 1954 and subsequently withdrawn by unilateral US action in breach of international laws and its own solemn pledge.

The exchange of letters between Johnson and Ho Chi Minh just now revealed serves to emphasise these facts, and the further US escalation shows that Johnson still pursues the illusory aim of enforcing a 'Pax Americana' in the whole area. While this aim remains, indications are for a longer, dirtier and bloodier war.

AUSTRALIA'S CONSCIENCE was recently represented by a few Australian seamen in Boonaroo and Jeparit, overwhelmingly supported by their union mates in stopwork meetings, and by many other unions and workers. Subject to violent press misrepresentation and abuse by Bury and other Government spokesmen, the seamen and their union stood firm. They were denied the support and protection of the Australian Council of Trade Unions leadership, which instead collaborated with the Government in what can only be interpreted as a hastily-planned provocation. While the ACTU leaders were able to sell their line that naval ratings should take the ships, and get all the other sea-going unions except the shipwrights to go along with this, if unwillingly, all
the honor and dignity remain with the seamen and shipwrights who upheld union principles and their conscience in face of weighted odds. There is reason for speculation that the shipments were also a try-out for an unworthy bargain to get lucrative contracts for Australian capitalists to supply the US aggression, but it seems clear that Government-ACTU collaboration was also designed to exert pressure on the Parliamentary Labor Party.

THE PRESSURE IS APPLIED first on the Vietnam policy, which constitutes such a danger to Holt's efforts to secure national unity in support of the dirty war, but it also has wider aims.

A serious dilemma confronts Mr. Whitlam, newly-elected parliamentary leader. He has far-reaching plans for sweeping changes, to begin in the sensitive area of foreign policy. However, there is a clear enough policy already laid down, which constitutionally cannot be changed except by the elected bodies charged with deciding policy.

Opening the foreign affairs debate on February 28, he correctly criticises bombing of the North, the barrier to negotiations and an affront to world opinion.

... The Australian Government . . . pours scorn on all those who protest against the bombing and who seek negotiations. Of all the peacemakers . . . Pope Paul alone has escaped the Government's anathema . . . Every day . . . more than 300 civilians and armed personnel, including Australian soldiers, are killed and thousands maimed . . . to quote Tacitus: "They make a desert and call is peace." (Hansard, p. 206)

Mr. Whitlam then advanced the thesis that the Australian Government is seeking only "to embroil America as much as possible militarily in Asia." Thus, he says, "far from helping the United States off the hook, the Government wants to embarrass it even further . . . Because of Australia's stand, the extremists can say to President Johnson: 'You can't leave Australia out on a limb by entering into negotiations'" (Ibid, p. 207)

This flight of fancy, that Johnson is unwillingly continuing the bombing and stepping up aggression, is the height of absurdity. Mr. Whitlam has to say this, because he believes in the US alliance, only seeking to exercise "moderation." For this, it is necessary to believe, or pretend to believe, that Holt and Hasluck are playing the hawk to Johnson's dove. Mr. Whitlam is basically at one with the Government.

"The need for a strong and continuing American presence in this area is the common ground of all parties and all members of this House." The trouble is, by its slaughter of civilians "The world sees only the worst face of the United States. Thus the bombing seriously detracts from the constructive and beneficent role which the United States can, should and so often does, play in this region." (Ibid, p. 207)
VIETNAM POLICY is only first of a series of contentious issues in the struggle over policy within the ALP. There has been a widespread tendency to concentrate on personalities, perhaps because this is news according to the mass media and also this is the superficial estimate of how history is made. No doubt personalities do influence political struggles, perhaps particularly in the Labor Party; nevertheless personalities express policies and reflect trends and groupings. Thus, while Whitlam’s victory in caucus was undoubtedly due to a combination of differing views, hopes and fears, it represented essentially a victory for the right.

THE RIGHTWING GROUP controlling the ALP machine in NSW certainly saw it this way. They believe the time is now ripe to launch an offensive against the left, and commenced the campaign by a return to the undignified witch-hunting against the peace movement which marked the early fifties. Whether or not Mr. Whitlam endorsed this small-minded intrigue, it is the seamy side of the over-careful effort to project the new image of progressive and vigorous new ideas and intellectualism. The NSW Executive majority, whatever else it may be—perhaps efficient in the numbers game, tough, even ruthless, and dedicated in its anti-communism—it is certainly rich neither in intellectuals nor interest in ideas, old or new. It is a fact of political life that the path to winning the non-industrial employee for the Labor Party lies first through winning active support of its growing radical strata; these are committed to peace action and especially repelled by bans on ideas and the McCarthyite tactics so typical of the majority three-quarters of the NSW ALP executive. The ban will undoubtedly win the plaudits of the National Civic Council—there are strong Trades Hall rumors that it was worked out between two ALP notables and an NCC grouping in Sydney—but this is no way to unify the Party. Nor will the ban and its implications win any support from the militant industrial unions or active ALP members who take the socialist objective and radical policies seriously. And these make up the Party’s main core of activists.

Whitlam’s dilemma centres here, and his efforts to resolve it will prove much more difficult than securing a Caucus majority made up of a mixture of ideological rightwingers, politicians without ideology who were easily persuaded that Whitlam is Labor’s only electoral hope by the manipulators of public opinion, and others who genuinely believe that a profiled image will restore electoral fortunes.
The new leader at least recognises the problem. He has adopted several radical postures; public enterprises in competition with some monopolies, nationalised stevedoring, and clear enunciation of the word socialism—even if followed by a very vague and pale explanation of it as meaning planning, slightly more public ownership and a moral attitude. He has impressively attacked certain social policies of the government, particularly the growing public scandals of health and education.

These are the positive side of the Whitlam position, and will certainly receive support from all opposed to monopoly capitalism, whether ALP members or not. However, they are far from enough to make a socialist or even a radical policy, since what is needed is a clearcut and integral policy which challenges monopoly and the government on every vital issue. Such a policy has an even more essential ingredient, the will and ability to bring people into action to fight for the policy, co-ordinating widespread mass actions with parliamentary opposition. We may never know whether Whitlam has the ability, since it seems he lacks the will, to a greater degree than any of his predecessors.

Indeed, one serious weakness of his position is a real ignorance of trade unionism, a lack of feeling for its traditions and, even worse, disdain for its demands and methods of action. This attitude to unionism carries with it the danger of a new intervention in union affairs, disruptive of unity and tending to strengthen the do-nothing blight of rightwing bureaucracy at the head of Australian unionism. This is all the more serious in that all employees, industrial and white collar, are feeling the pinch and their unions have united to claim a $7.30 increase in the basic wage. This substantial claim has no chance of being met by the Commission unless backed by rising pressure of industrial campaigning and action and the rightwing forces oppose and try to hinder this at every opportunity.

WHITLAM’S CONCEPTS OF FOREIGN POLICY remain the main obstacle to a radical challenging opposition to the Holt Government. This is not only because he identifies completely with Holt’s basic position, accepting a bi-partisan stance on what is becoming the decisive issue in Australian politics (and bi-partisan-ship here voluntarily abandons decisive ground for challenging the Government). The Vietnam war and the whole ‘defence policy’ is already eating its way into essential social expenditure. This is
seen most dramatically in the slashing cuts imposed in government finance for universities. While education has always been starved of necessary money, from primary to tertiary levels, this is the first time that there has been an outright cutback of such magnitude, enforced by the Holt Government. *Comment* referred to this last issue; the consequences are seen now to be even more extreme. These affect post-graduate research, teaching staff and, in NSW, preparations for the first year of the higher-trained science students under the Wyndham plan. As the Vietnam commitment grows, reduced spending will invade new fields on top of the already inadequate spending in vital areas of social necessity—education, health, housing, pensions and social services, and national development except for direct subsidies to a few favored home and overseas monopoly consortiums. Money for scientific research is now tighter than ever, as American grants are harder to obtain—because of the Vietnam war. Even in the United States, important research is cut because of Vietnam. If the US must slash its scientific research to pay for the Vietnam aggression, how much worse will Australia fare?

The Government is not altogether averse to making the cuts, thus using its financial control to warn and discipline the universities because of academic and student criticism of its Vietnam and other policies. It is an additional lever to reinforce secret police spying in the universities, amply evidenced in recent disclosures from all over Australia.

This organic connection of foreign policy with home demands is at the centre of the agonising reappraisal Whitlam is trying to force through. Over the Australian Labor Party looms the shadow of the British; Wilson in opposition was more radical than Whitlam, but in office he has been even more conservative than Macmillan. This arises from similar acceptance of a reactionary foreign policy, predicated upon the bi-partisan acceptance of a special relationship with the United States.

All the issues of the Labor Party's path will clarify in coming months. However unclear the reflection in the debates and struggles, or apparently remote the connection between manoeuvre and counter manoeuvre, the underlying issue will be the working class policies and methods of action needed in today's conditions.

**THESE ARE PRECISELY THE ISSUES** now being debated in the discussion leading up to the Communist Party's 21st Congress, to be held in June. This debate, vigorous and uninhibited, nevertheless is concerned openly and clearly with policy, almost entirely,
though not perhaps completely, free of side issues, personal or group considerations, and petty 'politics.' This places it on a considerably higher political and theoretical level, while not less interesting, than the Labor Party debates. Though the outcome in the ALP will influence Australian politics much more directly, the Communist Party's discussions introduce a new dimension into Australian political life both in the type of internal democracy in deciding policy, and the long-range effect of the decisions finally made by the coming Congress. These will be helped by study of some important political developments in Europe and Asia.

IMPORTANT GAINS FOR THE LEFT were made in elections in two important countries, France and India. Conditions differ greatly between these two nations, yet there are certain similarities. In both, complacent and apparently impregnable governments suffered big declines in popular support and received a crushing no-confidence verdict. In both, very diverse left forces combined in effective coalitions around immediate issues.

In India, where there is the only really serious internal split within a national Communist Party—and this is not caused by the Chinese attack on international unity, though undoubtedly influenced by it—the two Communist parties were still able to improve their position in the Lok Sabha and to take part together in multi-party governments in Kerala and West Bengal. While the special conditions of Indian Communist divisions may make co-operation difficult, it is fervently to be hoped that this experience, and the burning needs of the Indian masses, will lead to new advances for the left.

The French elections resulted in a near-majority for the left. The Communist Party scored an outstanding success, gaining one million more votes and increasing its parliamentary representation by 75 per cent (to 73 seats). This increase was made with the Communist Party adhering strictly to its electoral agreement, and even making additional concessions by withdrawing some candidates, though they had led the left ticket in the first ballot. The Gaullists' majority of two is not enough to govern effectively. The new situation marks a dramatic change in rigid political patterns and presages a new advance for the left in a nation with a glorious revolutionary tradition playing a vital and even decisive role in contemporary Western Europe.