International notes
by Mavis Robertson

A number of important anniversaries will be marked in 1976, some by this journal.

The highly publicised United States bicentenary seems likely to become a major public relations exercise for the "American way-of-life" and an opportunity for considerable public spending in the interests of that theme. Whatever other economies are on the list of the Fraser government, its "great and powerful ally" isn't one.

Most people engaged in official celebrations will be left unaware of the fact that the bicentenary marks the "Declaration of Independence" adopted on July 4, 1776.

The first shots in the American War of Independence were fired at Lexington in April 1775 and the struggle raged for years before the independent United States emerged in 1783, but the revolutionary framework dates from the anniversary that will be celebrated this year.

Two hundred years later it is worth recalling that this framework was:

* All men (not, note, women, who had a longer and separate struggle ahead of them) are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

* It is to secure these rights that governments are instituted, and they derive their powers from the consent of the governed.

* When any government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundations on such principles and organising its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

The practice of the United States, both internally and internationally, bears no relationship to these ideals, but the ideals, then and now, are important.

By the date of the bi-centenary, Vietnam will be a reunified nation carrying out principles far closer to the aims of the Declaration of Independence than those who rule the United States.

1976 is the 20th anniversary of several events which traumatised most communists.

1956 was the year of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union where Khrushchov gave his "secret" report. It was also the year when Soviet troops entered Hungary. In that year, many long-held and strongly defended beliefs wavered or disappeared. The reasons why socialism had been so deformed had to be sought. It was, and is, a painful experience and not everyone wanted to try. Some gave up, some sought a different framework in which to work, at least until the war in Vietnam many opted for a "plague on both your houses", others continued to assert that any criticism of the Soviet Union is simply CIA propaganda (some of it is) or "anti-Soviet", which is deemed to be the same thing, some assumed that criticism was all that was required.

After a rough start - including an attempt to sweep the contents of the secret report under the mat and expel those who circulated it - the Communist Party of Australia became one of the parties which has tried to come to terms with the meaning of the 20th Congress, to work for a socialism with a democratic practice.

This month, the 25th Congress of the CPSU will be held. Within the Soviet Union the problems of socialism with democracy still await an answer.
One other event of 1956 was particularly significant in the ongoing struggle for liberation although, at the time, it didn't receive much attention. On December 2 of that year, a few revolutionaries in a ship named Granma landed in Cuba. Thus began the renewed battle which 25 months later made Cuba the first territory in the Americas free from imperialist control. For a world locked in "cold war" postures, when all liberation struggles seemed impossible, given the power of the United States, when many revolutionaries had become tired and cynical, Cuba became a symbol of a renewed and optimistic struggle. It is fitting, therefore, that the recently concluded first Congress of the Cuban Communist Party has named 1976 the "Year of the 'Granma'."

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Nine months after the fall of Saigon, the defeat of US imperialism in Indochina continues to exert its effects on international politics. The changed world balance of forces which followed the collapse of US strategy in Indochina set the stage for a renewed round of struggle by national liberation and revolutionary movements in which the power of imperialism to intervene and get its own way has been seriously curtailed. As the US policy makers struggle to find a viable new strategy around which they can unite and which can be sold to a reluctant electorate, their problems multiply and in many cases they are unable to act.

The prime example of this is Angola. Even one or two years ago it would have been impossible to imagine that the US and its allies would have to stand by virtually helpless while the Soviet Union and Cuba aided the revolutionary forces against reactionary interference from South Africa in a country far away from their own borders. Ford's and Kissinger's inability to push military 'aid' programs through Congress to stop the rot in Angola reflect serious divisions within the US ruling class over imperialist strategy and tactics in the post-Vietnam era. Angola in 1976 is a long way from the Congo in 1960 and even further from the British-French-Israeli intervention in Egypt in 1956.

The war in Angola also reflects a changed situation within Africa. For years the racist regime in South Africa relied on the USA and the West to carry out the imperialist policy in southern Africa and protect it from the 'Black Hordes' to the north. With the decline of western power in Africa, Vorster turned to a more subtle strategy involving 'detente' with rightwing regimes in black Africa in order to obtain guarantees of non-interference in South African politics. Vorster's carrot was his willingness to barter away the Smith regime in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) in return for 'detente' in southern Africa. That particular scheme has foundered on Smith's own obstinacy and self-interests and in any case the whole detente strategy has been overtaken by the Angolan events.

Events in Angola were themselves accelerated by the Portuguese revolution, which in its turn resulted from the long and unsuccessful colonial wars in Africa. But the Portuguese revolution has not had the same favorable outcome as the revolutions in the former colonies. For the first year after the overthrow of the fascist Caetano regime, the revolution advanced from strength to strength and went further left with each passing month. In early 1975, it seemed that a socialist outcome was quite possible and that correct tactics and strategy by the revolutionary forces would be able to utilise the defeat of the right and the temporary immobilisation of imperialism to bring about a socialist solution.

But mistakes by the revolutionary forces and confusion and division within the ranks of the left allowed the social-democratic and rightwing forces to regroup and counter-attack. With the defeat of the leftwing paratroopers' revolt in November, the right is well and truly in command for the moment. This serious setback for the left in Portugal poses again important questions of strategy and tactics for revolutionary socialists, just as the fascist coup in Chile did before it.

The first weeks of 1976 have seen an incredible upsurge in Spain.

Francoism without Franco continues to be the policy of King Carlos and his advisers, but they are faced with mass demands for a fundamental break with fascism.

Many diverse forces have joined hands to ensure a genuine amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles, freedom of association and the right to legal political parties and trade unions.

Strikes of railway workers and postal
workers brought forth solidarity actions in Australia. Railway workers organised petitions, deputations and meetings. Postal workers banned Spanish mail deliveries for a week.

Strikes and demonstrations continue in Spain. A notable feature is the engagement of women acting for their own liberation in the context of democratic renewal.

Despite a strong unity in the Spanish opposition there will be attempts to divide it - to offer legality to some parties, but not the Communist Party. The Communist Party cannot be ignored and to remind the fascists of this fact, some of its leaders managed to hold a “secret” press conference in Madrid recently.

The Spanish communists, according to their general secretary, Santiago Carrillo, "... do not want any solution that would provoke bloodshed, another civil war. First of all, because the wounds of the past war, which bled even after it was over have still not healed, and also because this new generation of Spaniards which does not know what war is, is made up of the sons of those who fought for the Republic and the sons of those who had been with Franco, whom time and events have mixed up and who today live together. We have this situation within the Communist Party itself .... We think that this new birth of democratic forces is not only political and social, but biological too, and all this permits us to believe that it is possible for the transition from the dictatorship to democracy to take place without a civil war, in a peaceful way."

It is perhaps external factors, as much as internal factors, which will determine whether the Spanish people can impose far-reaching democratic reforms without bloodshed.

To take one example: United States investment in Spain (in millions of US dollars) increased from 31 million in 1950 to 758 million in 1970, and we all know what the United States did to preserve their investments in Chile.

The centre-right government in Portugal still has its great problems and a resurgence of the left is possible. This will depend on events in neighbouring Spain which, with increasing tempo is beginning to emerge from the long night of Franco fascism.

Solidarity with the left in both Spain and Portugal is an important task for the international left and workers' movement in the coming period, because events there will have their positive or negative effects throughout the capitalist world and especially in Europe.

The Indonesian generals have been carrying out the genocidal invasion of East Timor for two months.

The East Timorese people have been holding out against much superior forces. They have not yet resorted to guerrilla warfare in the traditional sense - they have instead defended all towns except those directly on the waterfront. Those towns that have fallen have been evacuated by the people, and guerrilla war fought on the occupying troops.

The Indonesians hold little but the towns of Dili, Baucau, Manutoto, Aileu, Viqueque and on the southern coast the town of Betano. Supplying the inland towns is a major difficulty, given the poor roads and mountainous terrain.

But the war is not yet over, and by wilfully destroying crops by chemical warfare the Indonesians hope to starve the Timorese into surrender. Moreover, the East Timorese have only a finite supply of ammunition, and so must rely on capturing supplies from the Indonesians.

The anger of people throughout the world will be increasingly focussed on the Indonesian generals. While they may even silence, with the help of Fraser and Peacock, Fretlin’s voice to the world, they cannot silence the anger of workers and students in Australia and the world.

Fraser, like Ford and other imperialists, hopes the world will quietly forget East Timor and its heroic people. It is a major task of the progressive forces in Australia and elsewhere to see that East Timor is not forgotten, any more than the Vietnamese people were forgotten.

The massive mobilisation in Australia of workers, students and all sectors of the population horrified by this genocide, is only the prelude to similar mobilisation throughout the world.

Solidarity with the East Timorese is also an act of solidarity with the 160 million Indonesians who are under the military-fascist repression of the Jakarta generals.