CZECHOSLOVAKIA has a special place in world conscience. More than any of the other countries, it still symbolises the betrayal of small nations by the Western imperialist powers; 1938 was the fateful year that made war inevitable. Munich, Chamberlain, appeasement are words that still evoke shame, anger and sorrow. Analysis of the causes for these events goes deep into present as well as past history, with the lesson that imperialism is the cause of war, in Vietnam today as in World War II.

Munich and the Western capitalist betrayal, even more than the decisive role played by the Soviet in liberating Czechoslovakia, influenced the postwar course of that nation's history. The Czechoslovak Communist Party, always a powerful political force in the country, won national leadership through its heroic organisation of the popular struggle against nazi occupation. This position and its mass support, enabled it to defeat the 1948 attempt to push Czechoslovakia back to the capitalist path.

CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALISM, and the Communist Party which leads it, have great achievements to their credit and yet serious problems arose: economic, social, political. These problems finally reached a crisis stage, at which point a decisive change was necessary, not only in leadership but also in the structure of socialist society. Unless these changes could be made, socialism itself was in danger. It is a considerable achievement of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that it found within itself the moral and political strengths to change its course, as well as the old leadership, to set out on the path of socialist regeneration. The Party's Action Program, discussed in an article in this issue, envisages sweeping development of socialist democratisation, workers' management, an economic and cultural advance based on mass participation, decision and enthusiasm.

This program is still under vigorous nationwide debate, with most citizens taking part, as the Communist Party prepares its extraordinary Fourteenth Congress; 1,400,000 Communists are electing their delegates and debating out the issues of policy and leadership. Because of past errors and deformations, this debate is taking place both within the Party and in a wider national political struggle.
that still centres on the Communist Party’s program, policies and leadership.

This national debate is vigorous and even fierce; other political viewpoints are advanced, including non- and anti-socialist ideas as well as some which support socialism but are still critical of the Communist Party. The Communist Party has committed itself irrevocably to frankly debating out issues, to earning its leadership instead of basing itself on a monopoly of power. All available evidence seems to show that the Communist Party is winning out, increasing its popular support and overcoming mistrust and political apathy.

It would be of no service to the Czechoslovakian Communist Party to minimise its difficulties, or the strenuous efforts by Western capitalism to intervene in the political struggle. This is not confined to ideological and political intervention; there is no doubt that the Central Intelligence Agency and other imperialist agencies, particularly in West Germany, are also trying to recruit and even arm hostile elements in the hope of a capitalist restoration. Some say that communists always raise the CIA bogey when they are in difficulties. However, discovery of arms caches in Czechoslovakia is consistent with the record of CIA interventions in so many events—from the attempted invasion of Cuba right through to intrigue in student organisations in the United States.

However, these efforts cannot succeed without some mass basis. So far, emergence of any mass support for reaction has been thwarted by the Czechoslovak Communist Party’s policies of free national discussion of all the vital issues, that has increased its public support and brought a new vitality to the socialist forces in the country.

A CRUCIAL QUESTION in these differences is whether there is in fact a real and serious danger of counter-revolution. In all the exchanges so far, few hard facts have appeared to justify the sweeping generalisations that assert its imminence. Rather, it appears that the Czechoslovakian Communist Party has dramatically widened and strengthened its mass support. For example, take the much-publicised “Statement of 2000 Words” (said by the western press to be the manifesto of freedom and by Pravda to be a manifesto for counter-revolution). Some of the signatories to this statement met Communist Party leader Dubcek on July 19th to give him a new statement titled “Only a few words”. They explained why they had written the first article and admitted some of the weaknesses in it. The new article expresses full support for the Party’s Presidium.
Indeed, most of the western press and political commentators, however reluctantly, are forced to admit that there is no sizable support for a return to capitalism. Thus they are reduced to finding satisfaction in differences of opinion and even a division between Czechoslovakia and some other socialist countries. Perhaps they cherish the hope that this division may itself create conditions to give the west a chance of intervening more actively and effectively than it has yet been able to do.

Communist Party leaders from the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and the German Democratic Republic met in Warsaw on July 15th to discuss their views on Czechoslovakia. They sent a letter to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, fully published in Australia only by Tribune, which set out their concern at the danger of counter-revolution and their views on how to meet this threat.

THE CONCERN felt by these parties is understandable. If there were a danger of imperialist intervention and counter-revolution, very serious threats to their national security and to peace in Europe and the world would arise. The revival of militarism, revanchism and neo-nazism is a far more serious threat than the Australian mass media is ever prepared to admit, because the West German military revival is equally important a foundation of United States strategy as is its aggressive war in Vietnam. Rudi Dutschke, the West German student leader, shot down in West Berlin, expressed something of the reactionary nature of West German society when he was in Prague just before the attempt on his life. He made the point that West German fascism is not confined to the National Democratic Party but is generalised in the whole political structure of that country.

Understanding the concern of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, and the reasons for it, there still remain questions of principle and method of maintaining socialist unity, cooperation and alliance. The fundamental marxist-leninist principles involved are national self-determination and the independence of parties, that must be respected. The best methods for implementing these principles are fraternal support for the policies of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, thus helping its struggle against anti-socialist forces, internal and foreign.

It is impossible to believe that Czechoslovakia, with its past history, present realities and needs, would want to turn back from its alliance with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries,
Indeed, these alliances (and particularly with the USSR) are as indispensable for its present and future security as Soviet help was decisive in its liberation. This is clearly recognised, the alliances are unequivocally supported, not only by Party and Government leaders but also by virtually every section of public opinion.

If differences of opinion are held by some Communist Parties in socialist countries, as indeed they are, these should be expressed in a comradely way and discussed calmly, but always with the recognition that the Czechoslovak communists alone can decide their policy, as the Czechoslovak people alone can decide the type of socialist society they want. In particular, there should be no appearance of external pressure — still less actual pressure — from anywhere. Certainly not from Western capitalism, nor from other socialist countries nor Communist Parties.

Whatever differences on estimation of the Czechoslovakian situation and methods of action may exist, it is both wrong in principle and dangerous in practice to try to exert pressure, direct or indirect. Keeping Warsaw Treaty forces in Czechoslovakia beyond the scheduled date of departure was both wrong and unwise, and similar views could be held about reported Soviet Army manoeuvres along the Czechoslovak border and the rumored request to station Soviet forces on Czechoslovakia's border with West Germany.

The mantle of champions of non-interference and holier-than-thou criticism of manoeuvres can scarcely be worn by Western capitalism, particularly the Australian and US establishments. It is hard to reconcile the pharisaical condemnation of mote-in-eye Soviet manoeuvres with the monstrous beam-in-eye real US war of intervention in Vietnam.

This effectively removes any moral basis for the US or Australian poseurs of freedom. However this does not cancel out the need for communists and all socialists to assert the principle of national self-determination and to ask that socialist countries should not only refrain from any external pressures, but also not even act in any way that may give the appearance of pressure. This is vital as Czechoslovak and Soviet leaders meet for talks that may well be historic.

THE WENTWORTH BUBBLE BURST very quickly with Federal Cabinet's complete rejection of the Gurindji claim for some of their tribal lands now part of the Vestey meat empire. The Gurindji
had asked for 500 square miles. Wentworth visited Wave Hill and went on record as being impressed by the Gurindji’s plans and favoring return of some land, even if a much smaller area of eight square miles.

This was heralded as a sign of government policy following the Aboriginal Referendum and the new Gorton Cabinet. Wentworth was one of Gorton’s favorite sons, who had organised N.S.W. support for him after Holt’s demise. Wentworth was duly made a minister, and himself projected a new image. No longer was he just Wentworth the fanatical anti-communist, but a small “I” liberal, with a crusader’s zeal to improve the lot of the Aborigines, pensioners and other submerged minorities.

Whatever Mr. Wentworth’s subjective indentures, outcome of Cabinet deliberations on the Gurindji claim was entirely predictable. Even token return of Vestey land to its original owners would have been too dangerous a precedent. It was not the land itself — even 500 square miles is less than 10 per cent of the Wave Hill holding, the world’s biggest cattle station, while eight square miles was a mere speck. Return of this land would jeopardise all the cattle holdings, mostly controlled by absentee landlords. It would revive the issues of the recent robbery and alienation of land from the Aboriginal reserves, not in the distant past but within the last 20 years. This robbery directly benefits B.H.P. and international mining combines.

In these conditions, with monopoly interests threatened both directly and indirectly, a big business cabinet would obviously make only one decision. Even a token gesture was too dangerous. The sacred right of “private property” must be upheld. The Beef Baron lobby, powerful enough, was joined by the all-powerful Minerals lobby and that was that. Perhaps Vestey’s men saw no reason why they should return land to the Gurindjis, who have managed to survive the white man’s invasion, while Mr. Wentworth’s multi-million estates are beyond any claim, since the Illawarra tribes were wiped out long ago.

THIS IS NOT THE END of the issue of land rights, but only the beginning. The Gurindji claim lifted the Aboriginal struggle to a new level. There are several important new features in their struggle. First, it began as a class struggle, of doubly exploited workers against a monopoly boss. Second, it developed from a class to a national struggle, in which an oppressed national minority claimed not only their land but their right to an independent entity
and culture (implicit in the demand for retention of their tribal areas and relics). Third the Gurindji action accelerated the growing national consciousness among Aborigines across the nation, seeing the identity of interests of all Aborigines, irrespective of tribe, of where they live or what work they do. Fourth, this struggle developed new Aboriginal leaders, new capable fighters from the Gurindjis, even if unable to read or write, and brought new activists forward elsewhere in the Territory and other parts of Australia. It is already true that the movement for Aboriginal rights is no longer a movement mainly of whites who want to help the Aborigines, but an Aboriginal-led movement that is drawing ever-wider white support for this very reason. These leaders and their independent action makes ever more ludicrous the stereotyped government and pastoral companies’ accusations of political manipulation and communist plots.

The Aboriginal movement will inevitably develop and gain new mass and momentum. The Federal Government has been exposed by its decision. Its New Deal promises are suspect. Only a mighty mass movement, spearheaded by the Aborigines themselves, can force the deep social changes necessary to redress the inhuman wrongs done to an ancient people, give them their land, equal rights and opportunities in employment, education and political action. Above all, the Aboriginal people must be free to decide their own destiny, free to choose the path of national identity and culture, integrated into the Australian community without losing their identity, not assimilated, submerged and dispersed.

THIS NATIONAL STRUGGLE is also a class struggle. The Government decision on the Gurindji claim proved this. There are certainly many obstacles to forcing the deep changes needed — racialism, paternalism, apathy, indifference — but the single great obstacle is vested interests built into monopoly capitalist society. It is this deep social cause that creates, sustains and sharpens racialism, inculcates paternalism and encourages apathy by its ethics and its mass media.

APOTHEOSIS OF THIS RACIALISM, the Vietnam war, has brought violence into national politics. Australia is not a partner but an accomplice of American criminal violence against Vietnam. The mass media reports the war’s brutality, immorality and violence — the napalm, mass bombing, poisoning of crops, destruction of homes, rape, torture and massacre. This produces two reactions,
broadly reflecting the basic division of Australian politics. The official, government, ruling class, Establishment reaction is: This violence and brutality is justified, necessary and moral, because it is defending freedom (in South Vietnam and even the Free World) and because it is defending Australia (fight them over there, not here). Anyone who opposes the war endangers Australian security, lets down Australian troops, is a communist, a fellow-traveller, a dupe, naive idealist or woolly headed intellectual or cleric. In short, those who oppose the war are either traitors or objectively helping the traitors, even if well-meaning. And traitors should be dealt with, of course.

The other reaction comes from opponents of the war, or of conscription for the war. Some regard the Vietnam war as an immoral, criminal, imperialist war, others think it against Australia's real interests, still others only oppose conscription for the war. In different ways, they campaign against the war, demonstrating their opposition. Deeply-felt, this opposition finds a whole range of expression—marches, picketing, sit-downs and other civil disobedience, burning of flags or draft cards, as well as meetings, debates, teach-ins, discussions, publication of anti-war leaflets, pamphlets and posters. The authorities, who really regard this opposition as traitorous, have a dual policy to meet it. They have virtually abandoned the public debate — in parliament or outside, few government spokesmen are prepared to argue the issues. They are running the government, the war goes on, they are committed, this is enough.

As for the war's opponents, all possible obstacles are put in their way. By now many hundreds have been arrested, attacked, gaoled, fined. At first, efforts were made to intimidate demonstrators and even forbid demonstrations. When this failed—and it had first failed in the USA—the authorities tried to make a virtue out of necessity; "We allow the right of dissent", hoping that this pretence of toleration would contain and even discourage the demonstrators. When this also failed, and when non-violent civil disobedience was developed to express opposition to the war, the authorities decided to crack down. They introduced new draconic legislation—to stop aid to the NLF, to introduce harsher penalties for defiance of conscription. And they decided to get tough with demonstrators. As a beginning they acted against a student demonstration protesting the new National Service Act held outside the Commonwealth building in Sydney where Federal Cabinet was meeting. In a pre-planned move and at a given signal, the police removed their badges and waded into the demonstrators and press cameramen. The get tough methods were extended to Melbourne a few days later. Government hypocrisy over violence continues.