MORE ON SELF-DETERMINATION

REACTIONS to Ted Bacon's article "On Self-Determination" (ALR 5, 1968) have predictably been widely divergent. A central point of issue has been whether the right of self-determination is a fundamental principle in relations between socialist states or whether it is only a principle which may or may not apply depending on circumstances at the time.

J. B. Henderson (ALR 6, 1968) refers to the fact that the socialist world has entered the epoch of the transition to communism and concludes that old formulas regarding self-determination no longer have full application. This would seem to accord with his quotation from Lenin's *The Position and Tasks of the Socialist International*: "The socialist movement cannot triumph within the old framework of the fatherland. It creates new, superior forms of human society, in which the legitimate requirements and progressive aspirations of the working masses of every nationality will for the first time be satisfied in international unity on the basis of the abolition of existing national barriers."

However we need to be mindful that this was written by Lenin in November, 1914, castigating the leaders of the Second International who took up positions of strong support for their "own" national governments at the outbreak of the imperialist venture of World War I. This is made clear in Lenin's next sentence: "To the present-day bourgeoisie's attempts to divide and disunite them by means of hypocritical appeals for the 'defence of the fatherland' the class-conscious workers will reply with ever new and persevering efforts to unite the workers of various nations in the struggle to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie of all nations." It seems hardly fair to Lenin to take this to be his attitude towards relations between socialist nations.

While Lenin on many occasions speaks of the duty of socialists within a particular country to take up this or that ideological standpoint or struggle, it is always a question within their own nation. I have found no example of his calling for the socialists of one nation to impose a particular viewpoint on socialists of another nation, which I believe has been wrongfully done in the case of Czechoslovakia.

Because at the time of the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin there was no community of socialist countries, we cannot give positive proof of the attitude of the founders of marxism to the concrete problems at present under discussion. It does seem clear, however, that the right of self-determination was regarded as a fundamental principle. For instance, Lenin writes: "We have affirmed that it would be a betrayal of socialism to reject the implementation of the self-determination of nations under socialism . . . By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national oppression completely; the possibility becomes reality 'only'—'only!'—with the establishment of democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of
State frontiers in accordance with the 'sympathies' of the population, including freedom to secede. And on this basis, in turn, there will develop the practical elimination of even the slightest national friction, or the slightest national mistrust, accompanied by accelerated rapprochement and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state withers away. *(The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination.)*

When force is used, even if in good cause such as that of internationalism, national friction is increased and the cause of internationalism put back. I believe this has been the case with the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Not so long ago the spirit of Lenin's views was endorsed in practical terms in various statements by the world communist movement. Following the Hungarian events, the Government of the USSR issued a document which was permeated with realisation of the essential nature of the principle of self-determination. It said in part: "Being united by the common ideals of building a socialist society and by the principles of proletarian internationalism, the countries of the great community of socialist nations can build their mutual relations only on the principles of full equality, respect for territorial integrity, national independence and sovereignty and non-interference into each other's domestic affairs." *(Tribune 7/11/56).* That document is well worth re-reading in the light of recent developments in Czechoslovakia.

It further states "The Soviet Government proceeds from the general principle that the stationing of forces of any state, party to the Warsaw Treaty, on the territory of another state, also party to the Warsaw Treaty, is effected on the basis of an understanding between all its parties and only with the consent of the state in whose territory these forces have been stationed or are to be stationed at its request."

In spite of Soviet claims that such a request was received from Czechoslovakia, no names of those who made the request have been given. Official reports from Czechoslovakia state that neither the Government nor the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia made any such request.

The statement issued by the 81 communist parties in Moscow, November, 1960, affirms: "It is an inviolable law of the mutual relations between socialist countries strictly to adhere to the principles of marxism-leninism and socialist internationalism . . . Guided by the principles of complete equality, mutual advantage and cordially mutual assistance, the socialist states improve their all-round economic, political and cultural co-operation, which meets both the interests of each socialist country and those of the socialist camp as a whole."

Those who seek to justify the violation of the sovereign rights of Czechoslovakia seem to draw comfort from the fact that this was done by five socialist countries and presumably they would be more correct than one lone socialist country. This theory of the weight of numbers seems to have superseded the assurance by the 81 parties that "Every country in the socialist camp is ensured genuinely equal rights."

Once we accept such a substitution, it is only a short step to the principle "might is right" which I have always regarded as a law of capitalist rather than socialist state relations.

The argument that in a situation which certain socialist countries consider sufficiently grave, they have the right to impose their will (by force if necessary) on a brother socialist country, is a very dangerous one.

For instance, China and Albania
have on numerous occasions declared their conviction that the Soviet Government and CPSU leadership are betraying the socialist revolution and are hand-in-glove with American imperialism. Surely a sufficiently grave situation! Could their armed intervention in the Soviet Union then be supported? Or is the fact that China is regarded by many as having substantially departed from marxism to be taken as valid grounds for military intervention in China by other socialist states?

How does the “right” of a group of socialist countries to intervene in the affairs of another socialist country work out in practice? We might give all the other member nations of the Warsaw Pact the “right” to intervene in the Soviet Union, but are they militarily or economically capable of doing so even if they considered they should? Is this not a case of all being equal, but some more equal than others?

Departure from the principle of self-determination as a fundamental principle in the relations between socialist states can well provide a theoretical basis for war between socialist states—which marxism has to date refuted. Subsequent developments have shown the mass popularity and support among their people for the leaders of the Czechoslovak Government and Party. There can be little doubt that had the leadership called upon the people to resist the entry into their country of the Warsaw Pact forces, there would have been war. It is naive to expect that similar interventions in the future will not at some stage lead to armed conflict between socialist nations.

J. B. Henderson refers to the “colossal assistance of all kinds given by the U.S.S.R. to socialist countries and progressive movements, especially in the developing countries.” This is undoubtedly so and is in contrast with the many-stringed aid offered by capitalism. However to newly developed countries political freedom from foreign domination is a very precious thing (though many soon find economic chains remain). I believe they would be more attracted to taking the socialist path of development if the colossal assistance given them by the Soviet Union were matched by colossal evidence of the complete equality and self-determination they could expect as a right if they chose to become a member of the socialist community—a right extending to the point of withdrawing from the socialist community if they wished.

Similarly, the majority of people in advanced capitalist countries cannot be expected to support the platform of socialist parties within their countries while ever events like Czechoslovakia make it clear that that platform must be acceptable to foreign socialist powers if it is to be implemented.

Events in Czechoslovakia have taken the world socialist movement along a dangerous path. Let us hope the present debate will see a return to the position of the Soviet Government as set out in their statement of 30.10.56: “consistently putting into effect these historic decisions of the 20th Congress which create conditions for the further strengthening of friendship and co-operation between the socialist countries on the immutable basis of respecting the full sovereignty of each socialist state.”

G. SANDERSON

SELF-DETERMINATION A BOURGEOIS PRINCIPLE

IN THE ARTICLE “On Self Determination” (ALR 5, 1968) Ted Bacon does his cause serious damage by seeking to use Lenin as an authority to support his views.
In 1917, Lenin wrote “Marxism is an extremely profound and many-sided doctrine. It is therefore not surprising that scraps of quotations from Marx — especially when the quotations are not always to the point — can always be found among the arguments of those who are breaking with marxism”. (A Letter to the Comrades — Little Lenin Library, Vol. 13, p. 42.)

Here Lenin’s words stress that to understand and faithfully present the views of the leaders of marxist thought, it is necessary to examine, not scraps out of context, but the whole range of their writings on the particular subject.

Certainly, if we are going to Lenin for advice on national self-determination, we need to look further than Comrade Bacon has done.

Of four quotations from Lenin, three deal with the responsibility of the Russians towards the non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union, which is only one aspect of the question, that aspect acceptable to a bourgeois nationalist, and certainly not the fundamental approach to the national question hammered out by the Russian Social Democrats”. The fourth quotation appears to have been thrown in because it seems to give support to Comrade Bacon’s views on democracy, although any proper examination of Lenin’s views on democracy will show that they were vastly different.

Ted Bacon speaks of the “Communist principle of self-determination of nations.” But Lenin tells us that “the demand for self-determination of nations” was advanced “before us, as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the petty bourgeoisie” — Meaning of the Right to Self-determination, Selected Works, Vol. V, p. 271.

It is, in fact, not a marxist principle but a bourgeois democratic principle which marxists support, in general, but not in every case. The condition of our support is the interest of the social revolution.

Marx, for example, was against Czech independence in 1848, because the Czech nationalists were aligning themselves with Czarist Russia, the most reactionary force in Europe. Lenin makes the point in Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economics that “it is not our duty to support every struggle against imperialism.”

Czechs who know their modern history could remind us that, during the negotiations with Chamberlain, Hitler demanded self-determination for the Sudeten Germans, a classical example of the use of this slogan for purposes of fascist aggression.

Lenin wrote “The Social revolution cannot come about except in the form of proletarian civil war against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries combined with a whole series of democratic and revolutionary movements, for national liberation.” (Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economics.) So he supported and fought for the principle of self-determination to assist the socialist revolution.

In The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination he speaks with approval of Marx “having in mind mainly the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries” when he demanded the separation of Ireland from England.

In the same article he said “There is not a single democratic demand which could not serve, and has not served, under certain conditions, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers. To single out one of the demands of political demo-
cracy, namely, the self-determination of nations, and to oppose it to all the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory. In practice the proletariat will be able to retain its independence only if it subordinates its struggle for all the democratic demands . . . to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie (p. 273, Vol. V., Selected Works).

Again, in the same article, Lenin wrote that "The central point in the Social Democratic program must be the distinction between oppressing nations, which is the essence of imperialism . . . the Social Democrats of the oppressing nations must demand the freedom of secession for the oppressed nations . . The Social Democrats of the oppressed nations, however, must put in the forefront the unity and the fusion of the workers of the oppressed nations with the workers of the oppressing nation (p. 284). This was the "fundamental approach" of the Bolsheviks.

In the Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Question (written in June, 1920, for the Second Congress of the Communist International) Lenin wrote: "The struggle . . . against the most deeply rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, come the more to the forefront, the more the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one (i.e., existing in one country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat covering at least several advanced countries and capable of exercising decisive influence upon the whole of world politics) becomes a pressing question of the day," and he followed this up declaring:

... in states which are already fully capitalistic and which have workers' parties which really act as the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against the opportunist and petty bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and most important task."

Comrade Bacon, wrongly declaring national self-determination to be a communist principle, has failed to understand the central point, the fundamental approach of the Bolshevik program on the national question, and he does not see that socialism and internationalism are the primary questions at all times. Nor does he see how Lenin's principles have been carried forward into the decisions of the 81 Communist Parties as a right to independence in formulating policy together with (and always together with) a duty to unite.

D. Gillies

CZECHOSLOVAKIA — NEED FOR OBJECTIVITY

J. B. Henderson in his contribution to the controversy on the Czechoslovakian crisis says that "the evasion of the case of the Five has been a marked and disturbing feature of those in Australia who disagree with the actions of the Five". This accusation is groundless. What materials are necessary for the presentation of such a case?

Firstly, a correct estimation of events in Czechoslovakia would be impossible without the facts, relevant documents, and if possible the evidence of scrupulous witnesses. Were these things available? The 'Tribune' Sept. 18, said: "Our examination of the international communist press shows that none have surpassed our objectivity in presenting the main contending viewpoints".

Even so, at the most these evidences are only empirical and descriptive. What is wanted, an explanation, an
interpretation of the facts and events in Czechoslovakia, and the necessary condition for this is the application of marxist principles.

The witnesses were Eric Thornton and Malcolm Salmon. At the end of his detailed report Salmon wrote: "The unmistakable conclusion both of Eric Thornton's enquiries in June and my own in the last week of July and the first week of August, is that far from there being a rising counter-revolutionary danger in Czechoslovakia, the Dubcek leadership of the Communist Party was in the process of successfully delousing this danger, which undoubtedly existed mainly as a hang-over from the Novotny regime."

There are the other documents readily available, including the contradictory 13,000 word Pravda statement, and many other happenings that have built up the case against the Warsaw Pact countries.

The very character of the crisis in Czechoslovakia gave the assurance that a great controversy would ensue, and that this would be revealing. The invasion was not only a violation of socialist territory, but also of socialist principle. Concepts firmly fixed in socialist thinking have been completely shattered. The inadequacy of the habitually accepted point of view is being challenged. The old ways of thinking still survive but they are doomed and have to go.

The controversy now raging all over the socialist world has its own logic. It is already demanding objective thinking. The elements of subjectivity, which are prejudice, habitual and wishful thinking are being severely tested.

The participants (no matter how sincere) in this controversy urging justification for the invasion by the five socialist countries imagine they are loyal to and are defending socialism, when actually they are defending concepts which have nothing in common with socialism, and practices which hinder its advance. Such ways of thinking cannot furnish the party or the class with any satisfactory method of action.

A comparison of the arguments in this debate should be sufficient. Henderson's article is typical of those who support the interventionists. Read it a second time. It is narrow. It treats the whole question in isolation. What is happening in the Soviet Union or any other place is not important. A wall is erected between the domestic and foreign policies of the socialist states. The problems of democracy are seldom raised. When they are they are unrelated to the principle of self-determination which stands at the heart of the problem. J.B.H. mentions democracy once, and only casually, accidentally.

"The proletariat cannot be victorious except through democracy, i.e., by introducing complete democracy and by combining every step of its struggle with democratic demands formulated in the most democratic manner."

This is the essence of Lenin's teachings on democracy. Only the old and the blind can mistake the issue in Czechoslovakia as one against counter-revolution when it is one for democracy.

The Ted Bacon article endeavours to see the Czech problem in its all sidedness. Happenings over the years are disturbing, and these when related to the Czechoslovakian events compel the conclusion that "marxist thinking is not keeping pace with the vast changing reality." Bad policies and practices inevitably flow from this. The weakness in the communist world is derived from the failure to understand the question of democracy, its
relation to the right of self-determination of nations, and to the struggle for socialism.

J.B.H. does concede a fragmentary thought on the problem of self-determination. He quotes from Lenin about the higher interests of socialism, which the master himself would have condemned as having no bearing on the situation under discussion. He then proceeds to inform us that “old formulas regarding self-determination no longer have full application.” “This is the period to ever greater integration, not drawing away”, says J.B.H.

This sounds profound but it is not true. In the first place the word integration as used in this connection is not a good word. In the small socialist countries it would have the flavor of compulsory conformity. Secondly, the real trends in the modern world are not at present towards homogeniety, and there have been trends of “drawing away”.

“Even in the socialist world this is to be observed, and up to a point is natural and inevitable. The “integration” of socialist nations, their togetherness, requires above all else an understanding of Lenin’s teachings on self-determination which extend over a period of many years and must be studied as an organic whole.

The ever deepening general crisis of the capitalist world increases complexities and contradictions. The wrestler needs first to embrace his opponent if he is to toss him onto the mat. Such is life. To bring nations together in order to hasten their dissolution will be a long and protracted process. Compulsion will not help but can only hinder this. Impositions from without can only impede the process of “integration”.

There can be no victory here “except through democracy”. This may appear to be taking the long road around. Lenin’s whole life was a struggle against those who were for “short cuts”.

“My country right or wrong” is the slogan of chauvinists, not socialists. If a socialist country errs in its relations with its neighbors, then it is obviously the duty of its friends to face the unpleasant task of telling it so. But in doing this we should not mistake the blemish for the whole body.

G. Burns

ANALYSING ‘ANALYST’

“ANALYST” avoids the main points of my article “Censorship and Socialism”. He contends I am in error in saying that those who uphold censorship as a principle seem to have the view that ideas alone can cause a counter-revolution. As I do not adequately prove this in my article, but only mention it in passing, he may have a point here.

But he then goes on at some length to attribute to me the view that “ideas alone can win and defend a revolution.” I do not hold this view as will be clear from reading the article itself (e.g. 3rd paragraph page 47 and top of page 50). Nor will such a view be found in anything else I have said or written.

What I do contend is that the struggle of ideas is a vital part of the class struggle (recall Engels on this); that censorship is not necessary for victory in the socialist revolution (even could it be practised on any significant scale); that censorship is, generally speaking, an ineffective method for winning the struggle against the survivals of capitalist ideas after the victory of the revolution; and that if practised to a major degree will hamper the advance of socialism to communism.

“Analyst’s” example of the flat earth theories is an interesting one.
Does he seriously suggest that such ideas are so dangerous they might prevail unless people are protected from them by censorship?

More important, ideas do not all fit neatly into boxes labelled bourgeois and proletarian and we are not without examples of political ideas, later accepted as socialist, being outlawed under Stalin as being of the "flat earth" variety.

Such erroneous labelling of other ideas was extended not only to directly political ones, but to those concerned with art and even to those having to do with natural science (e.g. the Lysenko affair).

Today, in more advanced conditions of socialist society and of the crisis of capitalism, such practices are particularly harmful. A characteristic of our times is the struggle against bureaucracy ordering things from on top from positions of power, with consequent manipulation and lack of involvement and purpose by the majority of people (the "mass society").

Capitalism is incapable of overcoming this because of the relations of private ownership. But socialism has, up to now, inadequately grappled with it, though Lenin placed particular importance on this in the years after the revolution.

Imperialism is certainly the enemy, but the point is how to defeat this enemy, frustrate its plans and build unity against it. I contend that in Czechoslovakia a blow has been struck against socialism, not imperialism; that lack of development of democracy in socialist countries also hinders the struggle against imperialism, and that the invasion of Czechoslovakia has led to greater disunity in the world movement.

Interference in the affairs of other Parties, attempts to decide which leaders are acceptable and which not, attempts to impose by pressure or force one interpretation of what is "true marxism-leninism", are all great obstacles to building unity in the struggle against imperialism.

Communists are also concerned with the nature of the society they seek to build. We should be concerned to understand why such things as Stalinism could come into existence and what measures are required to prevent them growing up again.

As many have pointed out, no satisfactory analysis has yet been made by the CPSU—which is to take nothing from the courageous exposure of many of the facts by Khrushchov and others. But in the absence of an authentic and substantiated analysis from this source, others can rely only on their own assessments.

In mine, I include an at present overly defensive attitude towards imperialism and associated theories which come close to the view that the class struggle intensifies as socialism is built; a tendency to equate the national interests of the USSR with the international interests of socialism; a failure to curb bureaucracy and to sufficiently develop democracy and narrow interpretations of marxism in many ways.

Considering that such factors as these made possible the rise of Stalinism, I am concerned to see evidences of them still in existence and even being actively defended and propagated.

Analyst makes much of the machine guns and ammunition in the Prague House of Journalists.

What are the facts?

The head of the workers' militia in Prague has declared these and other arms seized to be those belonging to workers' militia units in factories, of-
ices and institutions, and has demanded their return!

The "clandestine radio stations" similarly featured by Soviet authorities as proof of the imminence of counter-revolution, were in fact those belonging to the Czechoslovak armed forces. They were used by President Svoboda and other Party and Government leaders to broadcast to the people when normal communications were disrupted by the invasion.

No one has been arrested by Soviet or Czechoslovak forces for possession of these arms or use of these radios, and in December the Czechoslovak Parliament recorded that the communications equipment used between August 21 and 28 was Czechoslovak (not foreign) and that its employment was entirely legal.

Whether it is dishonesty (Analyst's word) to misinform people concerning these questions on which so large a part of the case for invasion has been built, readers can judge for themselves. In any case, it certainly speaks against censorship, which would allow such misinformation to go unchallenged.

Analyst is pleased to denounce me as anti-Soviet, and to hold that I believe 50 years of socialism has produced nothing more than a "monumental blunder".

To one who, like myself, has spent a lifetime praising and defending the Soviet Union such a charge can only be treated with derision. I will continue to defend and praise the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, but will not blinker my eyes or mind, as in the past, to defects and blunders when they become vital issues, as in the present case. Nor do I believe that defects and blunders can be disposed of simply by balancing them against greater achievements.

Today, mass trials and executions from the 30's on are condemned. But how much better it would have been to have had the facts available to condemn them at the time, together with the censorship, lying and arbitrary use of power without which they could not have occurred.

Having many of the facts now, and being entirely unconvinced by the case put forward for the invasion, or in support of censorship as a part of that case, I regard it as a socialist duty to attempt to assess the situation, draw appropriate conclusions, and make them known.

- Eric Aarons

MARX AND CENSORSHIP

IN DISCUSSION of the Dec-Jan ALR Mavis Robertson referred to the dilemma which faces the critics of the majority viewpoint in the Australian Left on current problems and illustrated this very well in regard to zig-zagging assessments of the policies of Yugoslav communists over the last twenty years.

This raises the broader question of maintaining a consistent, independent analysis if one is to avoid, or overcome, the position of being regarded as a mindless follower of an arbitrary line laid down by some organisation which is held to be virtually infallible.

The coyness which implies this infallibility rather than proclaims it, no longer fools anyone. The situation would not be so bad if it were only a matter of a single zig-zag or one subject. But more than one subject is involved, and sometimes, as with Yugoslavia, it was not one zig-zag, but a double zig-zag.

Something less dramatic, but similar, goes for the subject of censorship. Critics of Eric Aaron's article on this subject can pounce with glee on a
few formulations of the late fifties (remembering that the maestro in this field was E. Hill) with which most would now disagree, as is their right; but if they are to do so as marxists, they are obliged to begin their investigations with the man who gave the movement its name, and study the trenchant criticisms of censorship in itself (unqualified by reference to social systems) made by Marx.

It is clear from Marx's writings that, quite apart from the Prussian legislation of the 1840's, he regarded the practice as an evil one, bringing inhuman relationships in its train and exalting a bureaucratic caste (not class) which takes upon itself superhuman powers.

It is no less clear that Marx regarded censorship as a key weapon in the preservation of bureaucracy, whose essence he saw, not in the poor organisation and muddle of overworked officials, but in the preservation of concentric layers of secrecy, which effectively transformed organisations into deciders and powerless implementers of policy.

These studies of Marx, although made in the 1840, are still of use in the present, when many enquire just how the abolition of censorship in Czechoslovakia was intimately connected with the smashing of the bureaucracy which had almost brought the economy to a standstill and sowed cynicism and irritation throughout the working population.

One needs to briefly add to this the fact that free-expression was wider in the Soviet Union in its early years, when it was relatively weak, than in recent years, when it is enormously strong, and that Lenin fought gamely in his last years to at least have freer expression in the struggle against bureaucracy, and to compare this with the situation during Stalin's tenure, to realise the real seriousness of the situation that has been carried over.

No one, thank goodness, now makes airy statements about "mopping-up the last remnants of the personality cult" as was the fashion once.

On this final note, I can only agree with Gajo Petrovic, that "personality cult" was a great misnomer. It was, in fact, an "impersonality cult"—the cult of the impersonality of the mass of the Soviet people.

The desirable cult—the cultivation of the personality of the mass of the people everywhere—as individuals—is incompatible with the ugly paternalism of any censor, be he tyrant or the representative of some self-nominated elite which seeks, in Chairman Mao's phrase, to paint pretty pictures on the blank minds of the masses.

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ON WRITING HISTORY
MY PURPOSE HERE is historiography—the authentic method in the writing of history for appraisal of leading figures and events. Of decisive importance, as I see it, is to discern basic trends and movements to view everything from the large of history, the total approach; in Spinoza's phrase, "under the form of eternity." This specially demands the ability to surmount current "passions and pragmatisms" whatever their immediate compelling importance. Failure in this
regard reduces history-writing to scholastic exercise; it is useless for the needed practical politics to combat, say, (I'm anticipating here) certain official Soviet tolerance of anti-Semitism.

Since the Soviet invasion many Left writers in Australia seem to have lost all historical perspective. Say what you like about Stalin's crimes and I will say the same, but serious writing of history cannot ignore his contributions to theory, organisation and military affairs. Particular conditions and happenings can be understood only by reference to general principles, and vice versa: genesis, historicity, inner development and contradictions, relation and relevance. Stalin was guilty of great nation chauvinism, but examination of his mistakes requires of the scholar concurrent analysis of his earlier work in this sphere which earned Lenin's commendation: "A young genius on the national question."

Under Stalin's direction scores of the formerly-oppressed nationalities and ethnic groups advanced (through literacy with invented alphabets, industry, establishment of the University of Eastern Peoples, etc.) to freedom and culture.

Except for cataloguing Stalin's misdeeds (and the misdeeds of his "heirs") there is a complete black-out in many Left writings. Stalin becomes an "unperson"—as Khruschev made him and who was himself un-personned by his successors. But objective facts: Under Stalin's dictatorship socialism was built; he was generalissimo of the army that planted the Communist flag over Hitler's chancellory. It was the USSR advance to socialism, led well or ill by Stalin, that helps account for such momentous events in civilisation as colonial freedom, the youth-student revolt, the ever-widening fissures in the R.C. Church and the "startling" new experience in the open criticism of the CPSU by non-Soviet CP's.

The denial of "everything Stalin" becomes intellectualist conformism to old-style anti-Sovietism. It suits Moneybags perfectly in his claim that repression is integral to socialism and communism.

Some dates of the Stalin period are nodal points in Soviet and world history.

1927. Soviet production finally reached again the (tsarist) total of 1913 which was only seventh among the industrial countries; a feeble level, and in that post-October decade USA and other States had meantime shot way ahead.

1931. "We have only ten years," warned Stalin, to prepare for the anticipated imperialist onslaught.

1941. Exactly ten years later, so it happened, imperialism's Nazi shock brigade attacked with a prodigious aggregation of forces. But USSR parried the blow, defeated Hitler, and mankind's future progress was assured. (In passing, one of the very first decisions of the newly-established Soviet State, even before the well-known decrees on peace, land, etc., was consolidation of power. The Nazi defeat signalised the final historical consolidation of socialist power).

Stalin played a prominent role in drafting and in the adoption of the USSR Constitution (1936). Here indeed is a wonderful declaration of rights and freedoms, by very far the most advanced in human affairs. Socialism elevated Soviet citizenry to foremost place among the nations in literacy, education and culture.

"But, damn it all," one can validly object, "despite the Constitution and culture Stalin was able to kill off thousands of Party cadres, intellectuals and military specialists. He nearly brought USSR to destruction. And
now with Stalin's 'heirs' we have the Czech events, new repressions . . .”

Yes, true. Awful. But culture is essentially humanist. Culture becomes synonymous with man's sensibility, intelligence and creativity, with human worth and dignity. Culture is impossible without democracy (in the given historical stage of social evolution), and by the same token has always been the first challenge to injustice and authoritarianism. The Soviet society that reads Tolstoy and Gorky, Shakespeare and Goethe in hundreds of editions will overcome Stalinist crime and political folly.

It has already overcome much! The repression against young Litvinov and the others is shocking, but it isn't one-hundredth as bad as the Stalin purges.

The total view, the all-sided approach. I reject the doctrine of the "Socialist commonwealth and the right of interference," but cannot forget USA's thousands of N-weapons, or that two-thirds of humanity suffer undernourishment. Or the 20 million Soviet people who died in the war.

Left writers of history are makers of history; hence their responsibility for integrity by which I mean wholeness in presentation. But the Lefts I am criticising describe Soviet history only in unrelieved black; there are no nuances, no tiny light amid the encircling gloom. They are, to me, historians who adopt the advice of German militarist theoretician von Moltke: "Tell the truth, tell nothing but the truth, but don't tell the whole truth." The very language used by some of the Lefts is an "improvement" on "Voice of America" style, but it is the style of nihilism and sceptis.

I am not querying the facts these Lefts present, but writing and remaking history require more than regurgitation of ingested facts however authentic per se.

**Summary.** Let's forget historiography. What do I think about Brezhnev and his colleagues? There are two statements of mine (Tribune and Discussion), but to emphasise:—Brezhnev and his colleagues are bureaucrats and were naturally misinformed about Czechoslovakia. They don't trust and cannot grasp the dynamism and creative potential of full socialist democracy; they are guilty of repression, falsification and, understandably, of political gaucherie and propaganda ham-fistedness.

But to balance up, one (here only one) fact: Thanks in large measure to Brezhnev and his colleagues USA imperialism has suffered military, political and moral defeat in Vietnam.

L. H. Gould

**BREAD PRICE SWINDLE**

Condensed from material prepared by Research Officer L. J. McPhillips for the Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union, N.S.W. Branch.

**BREAD MANUFACTURERS** in N.S.W. willnett a cool $2 million extra profit this year as a result of the recent bread price increase so generously approved of by the anti-Labor Askin Government.

On December 2nd, 1968, the press reported a price increase in flour “announced by the chairman of the N.S.W. Flour Millers' Council.” The increase was $3.50 a short ton (2,000 lb) of flour and was said to be “due to the increase of 5.5c a bushel in the home consumption price of wheat” and to what was loosely called “wage increases and general cost rises in the milling industry.”

From a bushel of wheat weighing 60 lb the millers get approximately 43.2 lbs of flour. The remainder of
the wheat is converted into bran, pol­lard and other products, with a very small ‘waste’. On this basis it requires 46.3 bushels of wheat to produce a short ton, i.e. 2,000 lbs. of flour.

43.2 lbs of flour is approximately 72% of the 60 lbs of wheat contained in a bushel. Since the rest of the bushel of wheat is not waste but is, in the main, converted into other products, not all of the 5.5 cents increase in the price of a bushel of wheat can be said to increase the price of flour.

72% of 5.5 cents—the amount by which the price of a bushel of wheat was increased—is 3.96 cents. If this is increased to 4 cents as representing the amount of the 5.5 cents wheat price increase which should affect the price of flour, then with 46.3 bushels of wheat being needed to produce a short ton (2,000 lbs) of flour, the increase in the price of a ton of flour should be $1.85.

If this is increased to $2.00 to allow for some of the cost of the waste product of wheat to be recovered in the price of flour, it would leave $1.50 increase in the price of a ton of flour to meet “wage increases and general cost rises” in milling 2,000 lbs of flour.

The value of wheat used is approximately 93% of the total value of all materials used in producing flour and the value of materials used in producing flour is approximately 70% of the total value of the output of flour mills. So to cover the cost of the major ingredient in flour production only slightly more than half the price rise is needed.

The other portion of the increase in the price of flour, i.e. $1.50 would give the millers an extra $790,023 on 1966-67 production. That sum of money equals approximately 27.5% of the wages bill for flour mill opera-
tives for 1966-67. But wages for those workers have increased during the year only by amounts ranging from 6% to 16% of previous wage rates with most workers getting increases equalling only 9.5% and 10.5% of their previous wage.

Increased wages could not possibly justify a price rise for flour. For every 31 cents the workers in this industry receive in wages and salaries, they produce another 69 cents for the flour millers. So wages and salaries could be doubled and without any increase in the price of flour the millers would still make a handsome profit.

But flour milling companies are large scale owners of bakeries. At June, 1968 there were 691 registered bakeries in NSW. Of these, 433 are in country areas and 258 in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. What are called “group” bakeries are the biggest bread producers and these are owned by the same people who own the flour mills. Tip Top Bakery Holdings, Buttercup Bakeries Ltd., Gold Star Group, Cob­bity Farm and Marrickville Holdings are the big bread manufacturers and are all owned by companies owning flour mills. Of 172 bakeries in the County of Cumberland only 20 are so-called independent bakeries and the largest of these “ABBCO” is owned by a flour milling company.

So, as flour millers, they charge themselves an increase for the flour they use as bread bakers and then, as bread bakers, they “jack-up” the price of bread to recover the increased price they have paid themselves for the flour they sold to themselves.

But even that is not all. The price of flour rose $3.50 a short ton and at 2,000 lbs to the short ton the increase was .175 cents per lb of flour. One 2 lb loaf of bread takes 1½ lbs of flour. The flour price rise increases the price of flour used to make a 2 lb loaf of bread by .263 cents. One cent being
the lowest valued coin available, the flour millers cum bakers "up the price" of bread by one cent. This gives them a "cop" of $0.737 i.e. 37 of a cent per 2 lb loaf of bread over and above the increased price of the quantity of flour used to make the loaf.

If the differing sized loaves of bread manufactured are expressed as equivalents of 2 lb loaves — production in N.S.W. in 1966-67 equalled 28,030,626 loaves. At $0.737 cents per loaf "cop" there would be a total "cop" on that number of loaves of $2,122,785!

So allowing for both these factors, our estimate of a $2m. "cop" for bread manufacturers is not exaggerated — and remember, the big bloke gets most of this.

The last general price increases for bread in N.S.W. was in July 1967. Since then there have been only two small wage increases totalling $2.35 for adult males in N.S.W. Awards covering Bakers and Breadcarters. Official figures link bakeries with cake and pastry manufacturing and they show that in those industries, for every 35 cents the workers receive in wages salaries, they make another 65 cents for the employers. So wages are not a major cost in these industries and the small increase in wages did not justify a price rise.

This seems to be a form of legalised robbery per medium of a price rise. And the Askin Government approves of this. In addition to approving such price rises, this same Government has increased fares, raised hospital fees and imposed additional taxation burdens. What we have said here in relation to N.S.W. is true also of the position in relation to other States with only slight changes of some figures. But this same legalised plunder by means of price rises applies to a vast range of commodities, e.g. steel and petrol.

The Trade Union movement has a policy of price control. Quite obviously this will need vigorous action for enforcement if the value of hard won wage gains is to be protected and living standards really raised.

VIETNAM AND AFTER

IRRESPONSIVE of the cynical lies of the US propaganda machine, the Americans from 1954 up to 1967, never once had the initiative in Vietnam. These were 13 years of defeats. However, due to the fact that the Americans have the capacity for telling the most outrageous untruths with an innocent face, and that they are experts in oiling over or violently silencing dissenting voices, they managed to keep up a facade of right-doing and victory till December '67. The events known as the Tet offensive sent this facade crumbling. American and world audiences witnessed Pro-Consul Bunker hiding in and refusing to come out of his secret bomb-proof bunker in his own fortress, and Westmoreland, the new Napoleon, hiding for dear life under his desk, hysterically shouting "I have the situation under control." This was too big a pill to swallow, even for the gullible folk at home. The world laughed and cheered. The laughs were directed at the gum-chewing crusaders, the cheers went to the indomitable fighters of Vietnam.

Just as the French defeat of Dien Bien Phu signalled the end of the French military adventurers' presence in Vietnam, the glorious Tet offensive heralded the end of the US adventure in Vietnam.

The following happenings would have been impossible, even unthinkable before the Tet offensive:

The US willingness to negotiate with Hanoi.
The acceptance of hostile, anti-US Paris (of all capitals) as the seat of the negotiations.

The humiliating acceptance of the rightful seizure of the US spy-ship Pueblo by the North Koreans.

The declaration of Johnson that he would not present himself for re-election, thus giving a free hand to a less compromised person to work out the details of US withdrawal from Vietnam.

The cessation of the barbarous bombing of North Vietnam.

The admission of the NLF delegates to the Paris talks.

The strongly worded rebuffs of Clifford to the Saigon lackeys.

I am of the opinion that the US will gradually disengage from Vietnam in 1969, but will keep some military bases in her vassal state of Siam. US efforts will be concentrated against the peoples of South and Central America, mainly against socialist Cuba. Castro's example of national independence is anathema to the US. If the entire socialist camp does not stand firmly behind Fidel Castro, socialism, freedom is doomed in this part of the world.

The Latin Sub-American continent is and always has been the principal source of the ill-acquired wealth of the US. Their stake in Latin America staggers the imagination. This is their redoubt—200 million slaves toil incessantly for US plutocrats in Latin America. By the turn of the century these slaves will number 5 to 6 hundred million. The signs are on the wall for everyone to read. America is on the defensive and retreating to her lair—military adventures are out, in Europe, the Mid-East, the Asiatic continent, Africa—but let us watch Latin America and the Caribbean.

It would be unwise to conclude that the US has decided to stop meddling in the affairs of nations outside her own continent. She would not be the US if she did. What I put forward is the view that she will not use massive force for many years to come anywhere in the world except in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Socialist Camp and others such as de Gaulle of France are cutting the US down to size, which in fact is not a tenth of what her propaganda would have the world believe.

MICHAEL PERDRIEL

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Contributions for the discussion pages should not exceed 1,000 words.—Ed.