MURDER WILL OUT. This old truth is again verified as the blood-chilling story of Song My village burst out of the suppression which kept it from the world for 20 months. Of course, this horror was known in Vietnam, along with many other American and allied war crimes, explaining again the unshakable determination of the Vietnamese people to fight to the end for victory and freedom. This one crime, exposed to light of day, will shake the whole foundation of the American (and Australian) case for remaining in Vietnam — the big lie that they stay only to prevent massacre of the “good” Vietnamese (read, the pro-American puppets).

Its impact was correctly stated in a London Times editorial:
The charges affect the reputation of the whole American Army. Unless conclusively disproved they must materially influence the conduct of the war, the negotiations for peace, and even the position of President Nixon. (Times 20/11/69).

An American Army “judicial investigation” will try desperately to whitewash the crime — as the brass has already stated, the US Government interests have to be considered — or pin it upon some junior officer. This is already impossible. It cannot be suppressed, as the Green Beret case was suppressed, nor can it be treated as an aberration. A mountain of evidence exists to show this crime is typical of the whole war of imperialist genocide. The US Army already knew of the crime, for one of its own photographers had taken pictures of the massacre.

Mass indiscriminate bombing by B52's continues in the South, stepped up since Johnson was forced to halt bombing the North. The atrocities of napalm, chemical warfare and other refinements of technological war as waged by the most advanced capitalist civilisation have partially hidden the brutalising individual cruelty deliberately developed by the Army, under the detached, long distance “button-pushing” mass cruelty dealt out in cold blood, without soiling hands. Yet there is enough — more than enough — evidence that this olympian cruelty is supplemented by deliberate encouragement of mass murder of civilians, burning down of villages, torture of prisoners. This inculcation of cruelty is underpinned by racialism and anti-communist indoctrination,
copied by the Australian Army which teaches its soldiers to “kill those slant-eyed yellow bastards” wearing peasant hats.

The American imperialist power structure — President, Pentagon, press and plutocracy — is directly responsible for Song My and all the horrors of Vietnam. The United States refused to accept the Geneva Agreement, and set to work to frustrate it. The first step was engineering the coup to put its placeman Ngo Dinh Diem in power and, at the end, engineering the coup in which he was murdered. Ironically enough, the anniversary of Diem’s death is now celebrated as the puppet Republic’s “National Day”.

It was the Ngo Dinh Diem regime which began the policy of mass repressions — jailings, tortures, murders. And the Americans backed these actions all the way. When these excesses produced the inevitable counter, peasant uprisings and guerilla fighting, the Americans moved in their troops — first “advisers”, then whole fighting units.

Song My explains some of the fantastic reports emanating from the American side of the war. There was hardly ever a battle report which did not give Vietcong casualties as from four to ten times the US losses, allegedly tallied in that gruesome US contribution to anti-guerilla war, the “body count”. Enough has been written from American sources to know that this was often exaggerated too, but the US figures are a bit less incredible if civilians killed are added to soldiers, and if Song My was not an isolated case. Indeed, the Americans really regard every Vietnamese as a Liberation Army fighter. And they are not so far from the truth; for there is a deep and burning hatred for the US invaders and their South Vietnamese puppets.

The Pentagon recently released their figures of total “body count”. This claimed over 700,000 NLF and North Vietnamese dead in military action, compared with 150,000 “Allied” dead (including 40,000 Americans). This figure is unbelievable except if it includes women, children and old men deliberately killed in military actions, as at Song My.

This terrible slaughter is the final indictment of the American-Australian war, hundreds of thousands are massacred, allegedly to save the Vietnamese people from possible massacre should the Americans withdraw. This is the last and weakest of the American “big lies”, without basis in Vietnamese reality and is only an excuse for the continued effort to “save face” and maintain an American presence in South East Asia. This determination is shown again in the fake agreement to “return Okinawa to Japan”, yet hanging on to nuclear bases in that restive island.
NIXON HAS LEARNT NOTHING from Johnson's humiliation and collapse. Like Johnson, he promised peace with honor, and, like him, is delivering only more war with more dishonour. Behind the facade of peace talk, fake "withdrawals" and protestations of injured innocence, Nixon and his advisers are working out a last desperate strategy for "victory". Key to this strategy is to "Vietnamise" the war, to get Asians to kill Asians — or as US Ambassador to Saigon Ellsworth Bunker cynically said "change the colour of the dead". This is a permanent American imperial strategy which has had many "successes" but is becoming harder and harder to operate.

Nixon's latest strategy will not succeed, any more than did the various strategies worked out by a succession of military and political strategists. Yet the longer the war goes on, the greater the death roll and the more villages will suffer the fate of Song My.

A great and sustained effort is needed to end the war. This will have to be forced upon the governments involved. While this is first of all the US government, the first responsibility of Australians who oppose the war is to force their own government out of the war, simultaneously lifting the campaign against American imperialism to a new level. We should speak out, louder and clearer, for the truth that only the National Liberation Front and the Provisional Revolutionary Government have the program to end the war. Supporting every effort for withdrawal of Australian troops — for this would be a psychological blow to the US war, already unprecedentedly unpopular at home and abroad — it is also necessary to speak out against the US policy of "Vietnamisation". Mr. Whitlam may regard this new Nixon manoeuvre as vindication of his Vietnam withdrawal policy, as he has stated, but this cannot be the position of any genuine anti-imperialist.

Nixon's policy will fail. Vietnamese military and political realities, the position at home and the world climate of opinion all continue to make it impossible for it to work. His appeal to the so-called "great silent majority" met with — Silence. He ignores at his peril the depth and breadth of the anti-war movement. Johnson, too, ridiculed the protesters and called them agents of Hanoi. Vietnam remains the key issue of American politics, affecting every other issue.

MR. GORTON FOUND THIS to be true of Australian politics, suddenly and surprisingly for him. In 1966, Vietnam, the threat of Asian Communism and China's Southward Thrust were
election winners. In 1969, a Gallup Poll showed 55 per cent favouring Australian withdrawal, and suddenly the old bogies were not enough to produce the usual conditioned reflex voting. In this new situation, the Liberal-Country-DLP coalition found itself without a plan of campaign, facing an unresponsive audience, unable to seize the initiative from a smooth opponent whose policies were also smoothed and non-abrasive.

In the deeper sense, these elections were an exercise in consensus politics. The most important issue was Vietnam, and there was a real difference in policies. Mr. Whitlam promised withdrawal by June, and this was an important step forward by the Labor Party. So was the promise to abolish conscription. Yet even here, the Whitlam position was not so basically different from Gorton’s as it first appeared. Whitlam’s policy is “Vietnamisation”; as already mentioned, he found Nixon’s policy agreeing with his concepts. Any conscription would be rendered redundant by establishing an efficient professional army — for what? This question was left open.

On other issues, there were differences, of course. Most important of these was abolition of penal clauses, and there were attractive promises on education, health, housing, pensions. These differences, important in themselves, represented no real problems to the existing setup. This could be seen in two press comments, one before the election, the other after. The first referred to the lack of concern felt in big business circles and on the Stock Exchange as a Labor swing became obvious; the other, gratuitous advice to the Liberals to do as Menzies did: implement ALP policies without acknowledgment.

The latter advice is sure to be followed, at least on some domestic issues. That it would even be given, let alone accepted, says a lot about similarity of the party leaders policies and perhaps of their fundamental philosophies. The first report is interesting in itself, but a further question is posed. Was the “neutrality” of big business reflected in the unusual press impartiality towards Labor or rather, the lessened partiality against Labor — reinforced by increased financial and other help? Quite active rumors, and not uninformed, suggest that the unusual profit reported on the ALP campaign was not caused by any huge jump in union donations, nor by the usual and well-known business sources. New donors are suggested; the name of the American Chase National Bank is the most often mentioned.

Of course, this type of “insurance” politics is not unknown wherever two party systems exist. The “good sense” of hard-headed businessmen is so often vindicated by Labor and Social
Democratic politicians that they cannot be blamed for investing in Australian. Wilson in Britain, Brandt in West Germany have not presaged Red Revolution — why should Whitlam be any greater threat?

YET IT WAS A LEFT SHIFT, despite all this. How to estimate the significance of this left swing is becoming a big political question, first of all for the left itself (in its broadest meaning). And this is true for the Communist Party as well as the ALP left, for the New Left, for every left trend. It can be exaggerated, as it will be by those who want to justify some centrist or other theory of transforming the ALP into a revolutionary party. It can be discussed by those who take an anarchist or super-left position that votes don’t matter since parliament is a fraud. But it will be discussed by all.

The vote was an important move away from conservatism, placing the coalition in its only real danger since 1961 — and the danger is greater than then, since it cannot be removed by an economic upswing. In this tangible sense it was an obvious swing to the left. If it was not a conscious move to the left — and this seems clear from the policies involved and some of the social groupings which moved — it provides new opportunities for the left.

Of these, the most intangible is perhaps the most important in the long run. This is the discontent, sensed and felt rather than rationalised, with things as they are. This discontent did not arise directly from economic problems of unemployment and insecurity as in 1961 or more starkly in the 30's and 40's. Yet the deep discontent is no less real and its causes are even more significant. The discontent was more with the system, with its effects upon people’s lives and their development as human beings, it is more moral, a disgust and revulsion against inequalities and injustice, against war and conscription, against lies and liars, against the prevalence of double standards, against the obvious manipulation of society by those at the top.

This feeling will not subside, no matter what changes are made by the Liberal Party, under Gorton or any other conceivable leader. (Nor would it have disappeared if Whitlam had become Prime Minister, because its causes would have remained.)

GORTON WILL GO, despite his win over McMahon and his subsequent humiliation of the re-elected deputy leader. Gorton’s style does not suit the more conservative Liberal establishment, although they picked him precisely because his style was seen as
an attractive image. And his personal politics have turned out a bit radical for them, even if it is compensated by an impeccably rightwing posture on most vital issues. Gorton apparently aspires to a type of Gaullism for himself and for Australian capitalism in South East Asia. Like de Gaulle he would create a mythos of Australian nationalism, seek a type of personal rule, and manoeuvre on the international arena, trying to use the divisions between the great powers.

The only trouble is that Australia is not France, and Gorton no de Gaulle. Neither by tradition nor training do the policy makers of the establishment lean to Bonapartism; the Menzies-type ascendency was rather in the British bourgeois-aristocrat tradition. Australia cannot aspire to any such international independence even as France displayed under de Gaulle — and this was probably punctured by the events of May, 1968. And Gorton himself certainly lacks most of de Gaulle's characteristics, except a considerable vanity, which usually dissipates itself in non-political pursuits anyway.

THE SPLIT IN CONSERVATISM is real and deep. It is compounded of real policy differences, of personal antagonisms (frustrated ambition and wounded pride are deep emotions) and sectional interests. Gorton's new ministry is remarkable for the extremists it has promoted to join W. C. Wentworth, and for some unlikely ministerial allotments. In the latter category Snedden as Minister for Labor must take the prize. Perhaps he did go to University at the same time as Bob Hawke, but this didn't create a beautiful friendship. Nor is he any match for the latter, as their TV encounter showed. Even if it's not true that the Law Faculty at the University of W.A. carried "with hilarity" a motion congratulating Snedden on his earlier appointment as Attorney-General, he is obviously no intellectual giant. And the same might be said of most other Gorton appointments. Thus the disappointed and the bitter will find it easy to seek their revenge.

Divisions like these are not easily healed, even under the exhortation to "hang together or we'll hang separately". They are also caused and complicated by deeper divisions within the system itself. These divisions are over policies of national development, affecting huge monied interests, involving a clash of monopoly groupings. The notorious Trade-Treasury clash, not just between Ministers but also between the capable top policymakers of the bureaucracy, is involved as well (and in fact this difference is itself a reflection of the clash). In the final analysis, it could be said that the clash is over foreign investment and
control of the economy — not so much the principle, but the degree. And this affects everything, including foreign policy. Gorton was not joking when he claimed privately that the CIA was out to get him. True or not, the claim shows how he feels about certain American influences in Australia.

THE NEW POLITICAL SITUATION surely favours the left, although the main beneficiary of the electoral swing was Labor under Whitlam. The Labor Party's differences remain, although they appear by contrast small. They were reflected in caucus voting for Senate deputy-leader and Executive. The first went to the right (and not to Whitlam's own preference, Senator Bishop); the second saw some strengthening of the left. Mr. Whitlam is prepared to make concessions to all ideologies for the sake of unity and electoral success. This is easier because he is not first an ideologist, though temperamentally on the right. After all, his overriding ambition is to become Prime Minister, as a personal desire rather than an ideological commitment.

The Whitlam strategy will be a parliamentary offensive, to exploit the divisions, to win the Senate and either force an early election or take over in 1972. This is not a bad reformist strategy, and could well succeed. But the left should not be sold on it. It would contain the movement outside, the best guarantee of defeating Liberal governments and the best preparation for that real challenge to the system which is the objective of all genuinely left politics.

THE STRIKE MOVEMENT IS DEVELOPING fast. Even Mr. Snedden prophesises a bigger upsurge next year, as the ACTU rejects the government "offer" to tone down the penal clauses and the strike wave rolls on. Certain new features of the strike movement are worth noting. The SA rubber mills strike, and the much bigger dispute at Ford, are marked by a stubborn determination to stay out and bitterness against the management's contemptuous rejection of workers' claims (in the Ford case, the foreign control is blamed, correctly). Immigrant workers are deeply involved, too, and they influence the determination to stay out longer.

Paralysis of the penal powers, caused by the Government's fear of mass response to their clear ACTU Congress call, weakens arbitration and in fact raises new doubts about the arbitration system itself. Exciting new possibilities exist for the union movement. The main obstacles to realising these are most important, the rightwing opposition to militancy and action, and then a different type of union conservatism which can affect the left
as well. The main problem by far is the rightwing influence; but effective struggle against the rightwing can itself be hindered by conservatism. The new mood for action will make big demands on all trends in the unions, as will the need for dynamic changes in union programs and structures. The need and possibility for such changes have been shown by the changes demanded by unionists in the old bureaucratic structures, most dramatically in ultimate success of the long rank and file campaign to win and revitalise the AWU in NSW. This is no isolated example; it is the shape of things to come, an earnest of the new mood and its potential.

THE FUTURE OF UNIONISM is one of the major issues facing the workers' movement, the left as a whole and the Communist Party in particular. The Communist Party's coming Congress, now proposed for Easter, will certainly be one of its most important. It is no secret that there is a division of opinion in the Party, which the Congress will have to decide. What is becoming clearer is that this division is not just about Czechoslovakia, but ranges over a much wider field. It concerns the very concept of socialism — and that is the importance of Czechoslovakia. It concerns the concept of democracy, workers' control and self-management, and this in turn raises issues about the union movement and the way revolutionaries should work to modernise this great movement, to bring it closer to the essential challenge to monopoly domination, to the system itself.

Much of the argument about the "leading role" of working class and party makes no analysis of what is meant, nor of how to translate these aims into reality. The developing discussion on trade unionism and its present problems will demand more than generalities and parroting of dogmas. It will be an important debate at Congress and before.

This discussion, already begun more than a year ago, is now becoming widespread in the union movement as well as within the Party. It is very closely connected with the main issue for the Congress, elaboration of the Party's concept of socialist strategy for Australia. The decisive part the working class must play in socialist revolution ensures deep attention to burning issues of the workers' movement and unionism today.

The 22nd Congress of the CPA is sure to be full of interest and clash of views. Serious observers of political developments, no matter what their position, will not be able to ignore the discussions already begun in the Party, and outside, which will continue until Congress assembles.