AFGHANISTAN
35 HOUR WEEK • WEST IRIAN
In this issue

Eric Aarons in Comment examines the principles involved in the Afghanistan events, and their ramifications in Australia and the world, while Denis Freney studies the different explanations given for Soviet intervention.

The campaign for a shorter working week and the reasons for it are the subjects of an article by Laurie Carmichael.

Gavan Butler, in our regular Economic Notes, looks at energy pricing, especially for the aluminium industry.

Peter Savage examines the West Irian independence movement, particularly after the upsurge in 1978, and its present perspectives.

The work of the late Nicos Poulantzas, and his relationship to the Althusserians, is the subject of an appreciation by Peter Beilharz.

Kathe Boehringer reviews My Brilliant Career, while Peter Mason pays tribute to the late Professor Eric Burhop, to complete this issue.

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Afghanistan is crystallising, rather than having caused, a new world situation, though of course it makes its own contribution to it.

The main features of this new situation are an intense new “Cold War” drive by the United States, backed by Britain and Australia in particular, and the shaping of new alignments, especially between the US and China.

This process was already well advanced before Afghanistan. In the last issue of ALR Michael Klare outlined the struggle going on between different US ruling class groupings he characterised as “the Prussians” and “the Traders”. He cites a special issue of Business Week on “the Decline of US Power” whose (Prussian) editors “called for a revitalised military capacity to protect US interests abroad. Without a more activist foreign policy they argued, America’s favored economic standing may soon vanish. ‘The policies set in motion during the Viet Nam war are now threatening the way of life built since World War II’.”

The Prussians “insist that as the world becomes more turbulent and chaotic, America must use its military clout to prevent Third World upstarts from upsetting the global economic applecart”.

Iran, of course, was a particular case in point.

The “policies set in motion by the Viet Nam war” included the “Nixon Doctrine” that US forces should never again become directly involved in military operations in Third World countries and that others such as the Shah should do the dirty work. “The armed forces lost half their uniformed personnel, thus eliminating future openings for thousands of generals, admirals and other top career officers. The Pentagon budget was reduced causing a significant drop in defence contracts. The CIA was forced to undergo an unprecedented public probe of its secret operations, and lost many veteran ‘spooks’ through a massive layoff of senior personnel.” The President’s independent (of Congress) warmaking powers were curtailed.

This drive by the Prussians to overcome “the Viet Nam Syndrome” and to “Re-legitimise intervention” in fact made significant progress before Afghanistan.

The awesome Polaris submarine (see Nuclear Countdown No. 1) was pushed ahead; new cruise nuclear ballistic missiles were to be installed in Europe; military spending was up; Salt 2 ratification possibilities were reaching zero; a special 100,000-strong “Rapid Development Force” for intervention in the Middle East was created; and the development of the US-China alliance proceeded apace.

Cold War Sources

One hardly has to be a marxist to identify the world economic crisis which began soon after the Viet Nam war ended as the source of the Prussians’ present policy, just as World Wars I and II, not to speak of hundreds of other wars presented (to paraphrase Clausewitz) the continuation of capitalist economic compulsions and policies by warlike means.

But the present crisis is more profound and all-pervading with many new problems, both economic and social, eating away at capitalist stability and confidence in the future. The resources/energy crisis is but one such problem, though of course a major one.
The Statement by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General George S. Brown of the US airforce *On the Defence Posture of the United States for Fiscal Year 1977* (dated January 1976), was heavily resource oriented.

It says "Since World War II, the United States has moved from near self-sufficiency in natural resources to increasing dependence on imports in many critical areas. The USSR, by contrast, is nearly self-sufficient in natural resources." (page 5.)

It lists 14 strategic metals in which imports comprise 50 to 100 per cent of US supplies, and the countries from which they come.

It then traverses the globe by regions, saying of Africa (for example): "The vast African continent is an area which warrants continued attention not only for its strategic geographical position and sheer size, but as a source of the materials which are becoming increasingly important to the industrialised world ..... Africa has not swung towards the Communists, but neither has it swung towards the West. Any large-scale breach of the peace could destroy capital investment of American firms and interrupt US access to important raw materials, such as aluminium, chromium, oil, manganese, tin, tungsten, copper, iron, and lead." (pp. 12 and 20.)

Middle East oil, it says "is essential to the allied forces which support US defence commitments as well as to the general economy of the United States and her allies in Western Europe and Asia. The continued access to Middle East oil at reasonable prices for our NATO allies, Japan and the United States must remain a primary US objective in the region for the foreseeable future." (p. 18.)

A more strident, even hysterical note has been struck since the fall of the Shah, the holding of US hostages, the deepening of the energy crisis and the economic deterioration generally.

As usual, when sacrifices and losses, rather than profits, are to be shared, each capitalist power tends more to go its own way, hence the less than whole-hearted enthusiasm with which the Carter-Fraser-Thatcher war dance has been received in Europe and Japan.

Nor are the masses of people, whose living and social conditions and prospects are under attack today, as susceptible to cold war mongering as they became in the earlier period.

But the war drive has deep roots, and the dependence of the rest of the capitalist world on the US — especially its military, but also its economic might — operates to one degree or another to force every capitalist country into line, so the dangers cannot be underestimated.

Combatting them is the urgent task of everyone on the left and all anti-war forces.

**Soviet Motivations**

Rebutting the basis on which the anti-Soviet campaign is built — that the move into Afghanistan is but one step of a far-reaching plan to "seize 'the West's' oil" in the Middle East on a march to world domination — is part of this.

As stated in *Tribune* articles, and by all but the lunatic fringe of political commentators, the Soviet move is a reaction rather than an initiation. It is a defensive move prompted by the general world scene described above, and the worry about instability in a bordering country within its close sphere of influence, and a concern with "encirclement" by a US-China-West Europe alliance.
The fact that these fears can be understood is, however, no reason why the Soviet perception of a necessity to move into Afghanistan should be accepted, or why socialist forces outside the Soviet Union are compelled to share the view that gains from the move outweigh losses. Often in the past, also, Soviet perceptions of the requirements of a particular situation have clashed with those of socialists elsewhere. An independent assessment must be made.

The nature of the responses in various sections of the left, sometimes surprising in the light of past standpoints, also indicates the need for further independent analysis.

Principles and Real Life

Here I will examine the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries (or the right of self-determination of nations), the principle of the non-export of revolution (or the limits, if any, on external aid for a socialist movement), and the effects of the Afghanistan action on the world situation as a whole.

One objection made to this approach is that “principles” are all very well, but this is a real-life situation.

It is true that no principle stands free (of other principles) or absolute (independent of the actual situation), but it is also true that no situation can be analysed from a socialist viewpoint without principles. Otherwise we would move from case to case without any guidance or standpoint. That “truth is concrete” is a “dialectical” principle we should all adopt, but the rest of human knowledge and the principles derived therefrom enter into this concrete truth.

Self-determination of Nations

The principle that socialists should uphold the right of self-determination of nations is not based on abstract morality of “rights”. It derives from the view that, in the epoch where nations exist, and the oppression of some nations by others, national emancipation and social emancipation are linked, and that the attraction of socialism will be reduced and capitalism therefore gain, if socialists fail to support the right of nations to self-determination.

In the future there may be one world, a single community of peoples, in which nations have become obsolete. There are necessities in the present world (resources, the ecology, population, the striving for equality, the “North-South” conflict) which impel in this direction.

But this is still a very long way off, and can only come about on a voluntary basis which, in turn, means recognising the right to self-determination. And, in fact, one of the most vital features of the world since the second world war has been the national liberation movement — the movement for the liberation of nations.

Socialist revolutions have also been a vital feature of this period. But in most of the outstanding cases (China, Yugoslavia, Viet Nam, Cuba, for example, these have been inextricably bound up with national liberation.

On the other hand, some of the biggest setbacks of socialism in the period have been linked with interference by the big socialist powers — first the Soviet Union and then China — in the internal affairs of other countries and communist parties, and even direct military intervention (the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia, China in Viet Nam).

It is also a fact that the emergence of multinational corporations, undermining effective national sovereignty even in developed capitalist countries, has raised the issue of national independence in another way, while also displaying the necessity to advance beyond nations, even if this occurs in distorted form.

Self-determination and socialism are linked also because the process of social transformation and liberation of working people from a multitude of oppressions has proved more difficult and more closely connected with national history, traditions and culture than most marxists realised.

This means that each nation must find its own way to socialism and make its own distinctive contribution to finding the solutions to these complex problems.

This does not mean that the principles of self-determination and non-interference automatically transcend all others, making
the solution of any issue in which they are involved straightforward and easy. But it does mean that they cannot be brushed aside for reasons of expediency, or anything but the most cogent and principled considerations.

For example, although the CPA expressed reservations about the intervention in Kampuchea, we have continued to support Viet Nam. This support is based on recognition that the Pol Pot regime, aided and abetted by China, invaded Viet Nam and refused all efforts at negotiation, and that Chinese hostility, soon to be manifested in military invasion, posed a threat to the continued existence of a genuinely independent Viet Nam.

Destruction of the detested Pol Pot regime was a by-product and would not of itself justify Viet Namese intervention. And we believe they should withdraw at the earliest possible moment, leaving the Kampucheans to exercise their right to self-determination. They say they will, and while no nation’s proclamation of good intentions can be unquestioningly accepted, Viet Nam did, in fact, voluntarily withdraw from Kampuchea after the victories in the wars with France and the United States.

But are there any limits or conditions, and if so what criteria should apply? The following might be considered.

Firstly, the most common form of aid available except where socialists are in power, is political solidarity. And it is often the most effective form of aid that can be given — for example, US, Australian and world-wide political action in support of Viet Nam’s struggle against the US.

Secondly, where material aid is given it should remain under local control and direction, should not be used as a lever to force adoption of policies desired by the donor rather than the recipient, and should help and be used to create conditions for self-reliance.

The Vietnamese, even when excessively hard-pressed by the US imperialists always rejected the introduction of outside forces on the basis that they themselves knew best how to wage their struggle — and because “once they’re in, it’s not always easy to get them out”.

Thirdly, such aid should not be such as to substitute for local effort or replace it as the main force, for this would be tantamount to the export of revolution.

It has become clear that in Afghanistan the social base of the revolution was weak outside the main towns, and especially among the peasants who comprise the great majority of the population. Thus, the agrarian reform lacked the necessary political preparation among the people, and when legislated was not sufficiently backed.
by other essential measures such as control of irrigation (required in much of the country), provision of seed, etc.

Thus a social base was left for the reactionary forces which created increasing difficulties for the regime.

The other major factor in these difficulties was the long-standing factionalism in the People's Democratic Party, pursued with colorful vigor in a succession of coups, in the last of which, at least, Soviet forces were involved.

Eqbal Ahmad, editorial board member of Afrique et Asie and Race and Class calls such a regime "left-wing Bonapartism", citing Ethiopia as a further example. And, he says, "left-wing Bonapartism does not prove to be much better than right-wing Bonapartism .... The difference is in the language and the rhetoric .... also in intention. The difference is not in result. .... Both the regime in Ethiopia and the regime in Afghanistan, both issues of coups d'état, were in fact, in their policies, very socialist. They immediately introduced very meaningful and wide-ranging land reforms; very meaningful — on paper — and wide-ranging educational reforms; made considerable advances — again, in principle — on the question of the emancipation of women; and they gave a great deal of lip service to, and even introduced laws, concerning the participation of workers and peasants in the running of the republic. And in fact they took steps to enforce these reforms.

"So in terms of their intention, and in terms of their program, these were actually quite genuine socialist regimes. Their programs were righteous, they were democratic, and they were just. The problem was that they didn't have any roots among the masses. And whenever you introduce massive transitory changes in society, those changes can be misunderstood unless they are brought about with massive political education and the support of the masses." (Interview with Dorothy Healey on radio KPDK, Los Angeles.)

Far from being overcome by Soviet intervention, these political problems are likely to become more intractable, as national as well as social and religious elements become involved in the struggle.

It is certainly grievous if a regime with good intentions and a good program should fail. But can revolutionaries adopt the standpoint that any amount of outside force to sustain it is legitimate, that "once we are in they will never get us out?" Will the socialist struggle here and elsewhere be furthered by advocating this? And how from self-emancipation would the socialism be which would be imported in this way?

Many of those who support the Soviet action reveal in discussion that they do in fact believe in the export of revolution, and even have the vision of "world socialism" coming as a result of a march over the globe by some "Red Army".

Apart from being fanciful, the political essence of this as yet only half-articulated idea is a pessimism about the prospects of indigenous revolution, and an unwillingness to face up to the long and painstaking task of winning sufficient adherents to build a political/social force capable of pursuing the class struggle to a successful conclusion. This, together with the over-emphasis on the role of leadership which often goes with it, shows that force from the top instead of mass movement from below is still a way of thinking. How bureaucratic a socialism it would produce if ever it had a chance!

Foreign Intervention

Stress is often put on outside intervention as the basic cause of the internal difficulties of the Afghan revolution. The "rebels" were certainly given accommodation in Pakistan and material aid by the local reactionaries and China and the United States.

But information about these "rebels" which has appeared, including on TV, shows what a motley, disunited, and mercenary crew they are. Certainly, there is no credible evidence that their existence was the main reason for the difficulties in Afghanistan or was sufficient to justify the nature and scale of Soviet intervention.

World Effects

Another justification given is that whatever the case with Afghanistan itself,
looked at from a world point of view, the Soviet intervention has advanced the socialist cause, and weakened US imperialism, for example in regard to its possibilities in Iran.

But it seems that the US has in fact been assisted — for example, to find a solution to its hostage problem and make an accommodation with the Iranian rightwing. The US "Prussians" have been able to advance their military preparations and development of bases in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.

The right wing virtually everywhere has been assisted, including in the Islamic world where progressive forces had been making advances.

It has been said that in a struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States, a "class line" demands that one support the former without reservations against the latter.

If only the world were so simple!

And such an approach would reduce other countries and movements to a passive position, reinforcing the hegemony which bloc leaders are always trying to assert. In this respect, though not in others, they may be equated.

The need today is rather for more forces, more countries and movements to have their own input into the world situation from the anti-imperialist side, for the perceptions of the Soviet leadership, made through the prism of national interests, are not always congruent with the needs of the movement in other countries, or as a whole.

The factional struggle may be "solved" by the installation of that faction seen as most congenial to Soviet perceptions of its needs. But can one expect better results from this in Afghanistan than in other countries where such measures have been applied?

**Effects at Home**

Fraser’s motives, like Carter’s, include electoral opportunism as well as an ideological dedication in which Mr Fraser, of long conviction, is “frontrunning for the United States”, to use Sydney Morning Herald Associate Editor Peter Hastings’ apt phrase (February 16).

This combination makes the dangers of Fraser’s policies greater, not less. Peter Hastings, expressing for the third time in the above article worries about Fraser’s policy and stance, is giving voice to more than his own concern. A sizeable and more farsighted section of the Australian ruling class are worried about the possible backfiring consequences of Fraser’s “alarmist, exploitative approach” to Afghanistan. (Same article.)

There is also some concern in the degree of foreign sellout. The Financial Review of February 14 said in an editorial headed “Oh, how the money rolls in”: “... the stockbroking fraternity has never known a boom like this. Most of the money to fuel it is coming from overseas with Japan a new and aggressive source of private equity investment.” It worries about the likely inflational consequences of this (especially if “a billowing money supply would ensure an accommodating attitude on the part of employers to union demands”).

Another editorial two days later recalled that Mr. Fraser had told “a group of Los Angeles businessmen about the virtues of investing in Australia where he said their money was welcome and where ‘profit is not a dirty word’.

"With the return of the Liberal government in 1975 and an economy in a painful economic recession the reservations (of some earlier Liberal PMs such as Gorton) about foreign investment were eroded, and the regulations covering it steadily relaxed.

"Nowadays the Foreign Investment Review Board is little more than a rubber stamp and Australia’s Prime Minister, even when on pressing matters of international political concern, can always find time to drum up a few more investors.

"The economic case for foreign investment is undeniable when it is presented in general terms.

"However, there are quite a few areas of foreign investment where legitimate reservations can be expressed. The most important is in the area of energy resource investment, development and export.”
The reason for these carefully qualified doubts? Our old multinational friend Utah, having declared a profit of $139 million (and raised its ship-out of dividends from $116 million to $134 million) has concluded an eight-year agreement with Japan to provide 9.6 million tons of Norwich Park coking coal at approximately $US50 a tonne. The Financial Review sees this as becoming a benchmark for all coal export prices. The Japanese cartel has thus “once again split the Australian market”.

“(But) you can’t blame Utah. It is here to make a profit (and) has done so at the expense of the Australian coking coal export industry.” “Australia’s national interest can hardly be said to be the responsibility of Utah ....”

Being closely associated with them the Review knows the ruthless character of the multinational corporations only too well. Its whinge is really a wish to have the best of both worlds — stacks of multinational money and respect by those who bring it for the equal profit hunger of the locals. Fat chance!

In the last issue of ALR I outlined the Fraser government’s resources, energy, industry restructuring and (they hope) election winning strategy, its deleterious effects on jobs, the environment, the uranium push, social policy, and the prospects of future generations. All these aspects will be exacerbated by a Cold War atmosphere which provides an additional push for “development no matter what”.

Profit whether local or foreign, is the dirtiest of words when it comes to energy and resources.

Fraser, Anthony, Bjelke-Petersen, Court and Co. won’t and can’t do anything about even the greed of the locals, let alone about the longer-term effects of their resources sellout. They are far too tied up with, and dependent upon, the multinationals. And multinationals don’t give a damn about the people, the future, or the fate of their “host” countries — and precious little even about their own, except as gendarmes to promote and protect their profit-making. “National” capitalists are little better, being concerned only about their own “share” of the spoils.

But a mass movement and the trade unions — and even the Labor Party, with their prompting, could begin to radically tackle this question.

So a fight against the Cold War drive is not only a fight on foreign policy, defence spending, foreign bases and the Olympic Games, vital though those issues are. It embraces also economic issues, and specifically energy and resources.

These should all be part of a “Stop Fraser Now; Beat Him This Year” campaign. It would be foolish to be over-optimistic about the outcome of this year’s federal election. But it’s wonderful what a fighting spirit can do, and pleasing to hear that the Parliamentary Labor Party executive is beginning to overcome its hesitations, and perhaps also its preoccupations with Hawke and the leadership issue, and sound the note that “we need to be angry”.

We do indeed; for the stakes are high. A successful Cold War drive could make it impossible to realise the better options in the struggle for socialism in this country and elsewhere, and instead promote the outbreak of chaotic and destructive political, cultural, national and military struggles, with who knows what end.

The campaign for a SHORTER WORKING WEEK

By Laurie Carmichael

1979 saw a surge of discussion and activity around the demand for shorter hours of work. This has been displayed in changes of policy at the 1979 ACTU Congress, the metal unions' decision to campaign for shorter hours and the response to these unions' call to work only 35 hours during the week of Congress, the Queensland power workers' strikes, the dramatic seven-week strike and plant occupation for shorter hours at Union Carbide, Altona, and other indications.
Recent activity has produced results for shorter hours in one form or another at the Swan Brewery, WA, the Electricity Commission of South Australia, the Electricity Commission of NSW, Philip Morris, Victoria, Mount Goldsworthy, WA, and some other places.

In essence, the resurgence of activity for shorter hours of work derives from unemployment and the growing experience of the effects of unemployment. It has taken some time for these effects to assert their impact in workers' understanding. However, the reality is now being felt despite distorted statistics which don't make the problem “go away”. And added impetus has been received from multi-million dollar corporate profits and take-over battles blazing across newspaper front pages.

Since the emergence of higher levels of unemployment in 1974, a sustained effort by reactionary forces has been proceeding to convince the victims that they are the cause of their own malaise. It’s their education that’s at fault, their indolence, their friend...

As a result, people were made to feel impotent and guilty.

The public were convinced, induced and seduced into believing that the unions had “too much” power, wage claims were the “cause” of unemployment, and the unemployed are “dole bludgers”. Monopoly control of the media to project this guaranteed its success to a significant degree. The unions were not geared to meet it. Out-dated journals, papers and leaflets still immersed in “routines” that have to be met, to simply perform basic functions, have not been adequate.

However, families have had to carry the burden and gradually, instead of being scapegoats, a desire for a solution has begun to emerge with a surge of support and activity for shorter hours of work.

It is upon this experience that a thrust for an across-the-board offensive for shorter hours can be launched. Furthermore, prospects for the immediate future are such that this experience will intensify. Nevertheless, the same prospects for the immediate future must also inevitably mean an intensification of attacks on unions...
to divide workers and isolate their organisations.

There has been some economic recovery since the slump in 1974-75 but it is now clear that a business cycle recession is going to assert itself in 1980. Recovery has been most marked in farm output and incomes, but only slight in manufacturing. In fact, in some major commodities such as automobiles, the recovery has not equalled 1974 levels. (New car sales: 1974 — 507,000 units; 1979 — 465,000 units.) The same applies to a number of other consumer products. Overall production has not exceeded 80 per cent of capacity.

Federal Department of Manufacturing Industry publications show that unsold stocks of finished products, components and materials began to rise from June of 1979, the normal indications of a recession occurring on about a five-yearly cycle. The car industry is a significant barometer in this regard and over 130,000 unsold new cars are now standing in yards around Australia.

Additionally, high interest rates and stringent monetary control in the USA, arising from resurgent inflation and currency crises, has led to a net outflow of capital from Australia in September and October. This is despite trade surpluses arising from record farm product sales and is reinforced by a similar action taken by the British government. This is now further reinforced by renewed pressure on the US dollar from the Middle East generated energy crises.

Capital has begun to "flow out" of Australia and other countries to meet immediate corporate needs because normal sources in the USA are not easily available to them. This capital outflow from Australia will put pressure on capital investment, thus adding to the immediate recessionary influences. So, in the immediate
circumstances, a combination of “excess” production and investment “restriction” must have an effect.

Structural adjustment

Recession in Australia is superimposed on a comparative stagnation of development in manufacturing where about 20 per cent of Australia’s workforce is employed. This stagnation will continue into the 1980s and will most likely extend into some service, and other tertiary, areas of employment.

Australia is being developed for mining, extractive and energy producing industries — raw materials for manufacturing industry in low-wage countries of Asia and Latin America. What manufacturing industry beyond “extraction” industries that remain in Australia will largely be for political marketing reasons and geared into selective “complementation” programs of the multinational corporations. Industries now being developed in Australia are capital intensive, using the newest of high level technology which provides fewer jobs than those displaced.

Australian workers are being highly taxed for this restructuring while getting substantially less in return for their taxes by way of social welfare. Publicly financed infrastructure and taxation concessions to the corporations are now of enormous magnitude.

Not all corporate forces are involved in giving effect to the global redistribution of production. Some are ill-affected by it and oppose it in varying degrees. They also have political voices to express their position and there are certainly some related trade unions that are vitally concerned. The restructuring plans do not proceed smoothly or at a constantly rapid rate. The pace is adjusted to meet the circumstances but the direction is beyond doubt.

Technological revolution

Also beyond doubt are the effects of technological development in those industries which survive structural changes; and furthermore, technological change stands at the base of the structural changes. The pace of technological change increased in the 1960s and again in the 1970s; it will increase much further still in the ‘80s as we proceed deeper into the modern technological revolution.

In particular, micro-computer development is extraordinary, even by other computer developments. During 1979, one-piece, 16-bit “processor” chips of 30,000 components have become commonplace, as have one-piece large capacity various type “memory” chips. Other similar electronic developments guarantee massive application of physically small, but quite powerful, computer control right into the machines and desks. Dramatically faster communications systems using both “new generation” satellites and land lines guarantee control by large-scale stored intelligence and information bases that interconnect with automated machines and desks, eliminating a wide range of labor in production and commerce. Virtually workerless factories, supermarkets, warehouses, banks and offices will definitely be marketed in the 1980s.

Along with application of new materials, chemicals and even biological engineering, great stress is going to be exerted on social structures, even though not all sections of industry will be affected at an equal rate and inevitably many relics of the past will remain. Australia contributes only marginally to the main scientific and technological development which the multinational corporations keep well under their control in the traditional centres of capitalist global power — the USA, Japan and Western Europe. Australia principally receives the application of high level technology and thus reduces both the size of the labor force and its comparative skill and education.

Currency and inflation

The third factor is currency inflation arising from hidden super profit making embedded in corporate transfer pricing or transfer banking; extraction of “auction block” concessions from governments on taxation and publicly financed infrastructure; the creation of a stateless 1,000 billion Eurodollar market; and orbiting speculative operations beyond the control of governments of nation states.

None of this shows any signs of abating in the 1980s. Rather, the “less endowed” corporations strive to equal the annual
Wives and children of Union Carbide workers showing support for the factory occupation in support of a 35-hour week.
returns of the “billion dollar club” while the “haves” continue to strengthen their power and influence with massive take-over operations.

Consequent inflation and high interest rates, which affect both purchasing power on the one side and investment opportunities by small companies on the other (all blamed on the workers trying to maintain the value of their wages), have increasing effects in the long term and intensify the five-yearly recessional cycle.

Energy and resources limitations

A fourth long-term factor is the limitation of available known forms of energy and resources, and a related factor is provided by those farseeing forces working for conservation of resources and the environment. These factors will also increase in intensity in the 1980s.

Taken altogether — long-term technological, structural, resources, currency and inflation crises, superimposed by five-yearly business cycle crises — these create, for the foreseeable future, a lengthy period during which “uncertainty” must prevail and where the danger of being plunged into deep depression will be constantly present.

Basic choices

The choice then is either a smaller and smaller workforce paying higher and higher taxes to maintain more and more unemployed in poverty — or to redistribute the available work to all those wishing to do so via shorter hours.

There are other questions of political economy that obviously relate to this and these will inevitably emerge and have to receive attention. But overall, it will be essential to show that structural change, technological change, resources limitations, currency inflation and cyclical recessions will be with us even if workers’ wages fall and hours of work do not change. The workers, however, will have done nothing about it until it is far too late.

If this analysis is generally correct, then the basis for a continued resurgence of the demand for shorter hours on full pay will continue to grow. A basis, however, does not necessarily guarantee the result. Ideological factors can prove decisive, at least for a further period of time, and as previously stated, the same factors that create the basis of support for a solution to unemployment also work to produce a frenzy of propaganda against us.

Trade union focal point

Shorter hours is an industrial issue which relates to the social issue of unemployment and so is an issue for both employed and unemployed. It has an appeal for the unemployed both ideologically and in terms of action if means are promoted for this to occur. Particularly, means must be found to relate this campaign to young people who are most affected by unemployment, who have no industrial experience and who neither know nor understand the causes, or the rationalisations of vested interest arguments.

Shorter hours is also an industrial issue relating to trade union rights, particularly where those rights are under concrete threat from the accumulation of anti-union legislation enacted since 1976. It is a practical basis for developing genuine “industrial democracy” intervention in industry on the issues of technological and structural change and their effects on the workforce.

There is also a practical basis for inter-relating national and international union activity arising from the August 1979 International Metal Workers’ Federation (IMF) conference decision to pursue a shorter hours demand globally. This will require some quite concrete and specific forms where it can be promoted, particularly in common company employment, as well as publicity about what is happening around the world.

Collision of interests

The thrust for shorter hours will collide with the major corporations, in particular the multinational corporations, and the political forces that represent them, and account must be taken of this. The major corporations, their political and institutional spokespersons and their media influence will try to show that shorter hours of work would not be good for the country, and that the unions are ruining the country.
The full significance

Their argument is that any such major advance reduces Australian competitiveness and industry potential. In this, they harness small-scale business and the middle class to their chariot while deliberately buying up and closing down industry. They expand investment in capital intensive mining, extraction and energy industries and take out the national wealth using transfer pricing and transfer banking to hide the result.

It is incontestable that:
(a) More wealth is being produced in Australia than ever before, the real value of the GDP is higher and productivity has risen significantly.
(b) Despite greater wealth, partial indexation has reduced wages and the Fraser government has inflicted a substantial cut in the social wage, with reduced welfare and higher taxes.
(c) Despite greater overall wealth real incomes for workers and their families, inflation and unemployment are again rising, and would continue to do so if workers’ incomes were reduced even further. The wage and salary earners’ share of the Australian National Income has fallen by 3.4 per cent (from 62.3 per cent to 58.9 per cent) in three years (June '76 to June '79) — 2.1 per cent of this in the last year. This represents a transfer of almost four and a half billion dollars from wages to profits and puts the wages share of the national income at a lower level than the average for the last 20 years.
(d) The result is reflected in corporate profits and in the wealth of the privileged and powerful who continue to say that Australian wages and costs of production are too high.
(e) All this is directed towards using low wage areas of the world to force down wages and conditions in advanced countries like Australia for the benefit of those who exploit both.
(f) It’s all right to sit around a tripartite table so long as unions agree that it is the workers’ wages and conditions that must be sacrificed.
(g) But if unions get in the way they will be clobbered with Arbitration Court penal powers, deregistration and sequestered funds.

This is what corporate and Fraser government industrial relations policies mean and therefore any substantial move for shorter hours must collide with government policies, particularly during 1980, an election year. Much more will be heard of “The unions have too much power” — not that they have “much”, but “too much”.

By its very nature, the issue of shorter hours has much more to it than an ordinary industrial matter. And it must be expected that the accusation will be made that our
The answer is that the demand for a 35-hour week has been formulated for over 22 years, but it is only now that a mass response is developing for which answers must be found in objective conditions rather than in any subjective desires of unions or their officials.

It is in the “doing” of work around a major social issue such as this that the image of the trade unions is recreated and their strength replenished. The considerable forces of the trade unions, when brought together, can turn the tide.

In the historical context, of course, if the unions are effective in bringing about such a major social advance it will mean that the people are able to forge a significant advance in their lives and assert their organised strength in vastly new circumstances. It would represent further hard-won advances in both respects.

It is in this substantial sense that real unity in action has its deepest significance and underlines its importance. It would represent the continued democratic development of working people’s expectations of both industry and government in the face of multinational corporate power as it is now exercised in global terms.

Policy path cleared

While shorter hours has been ACTU policy since 1957, its implementation has been based on a selective priority, piecemeal approach. All that has now changed.

The September 1979 ACTU Congress adopted amendments to policy which enable an effective across-the-board approach for the first time.

At the international level, a conference on shorter hours convened by the IMF in August 1979 adopted a declaration calling for international action for shorter hours. This was subsequently endorsed in October at the Vienna IMF Central Committee meeting.

The significance of both the ACTU and IMF decisions is very great. At the national level it can be argued and substantiated that the workers of Australia are not proceeding by themselves without regard to the situation in other countries — certainly, however, we are not going to wait around till the end of the queue just to meet the spurious arguments of the corporations.

Publicity about what is happening internationally around shorter hours will play an important role in our strategy.

Metal workers’ endorsement

The Metal Trades Federation has already acted jointly on the shorter hours issue as highlighted by the 35 hours work limit during congress week in September 1979. In addition to this, however, the metal unions’ National Negotiating Committee recommended to mass meetings (called to consider the outcome of the 1979 work value case) that workers should endorse a proposal that the metal unions elaborate a comprehensive strategy for shorter hours of work as the highest priority issue. This was endorsed at all meetings held throughout Australia. The metal unions can expect to be reinforced in this by both the ACTU congress and IMF decisions.

Related policy questions

Some aspects of policy, however, need further elaboration:

1. The form of shorter hours should be flexibly and creatively applied so long as basic working class principle is not violated. In fact, a single common system is not entirely possible. Nevertheless, proposals to adopt flexible hours without a simultaneous reduction in hours must not be agreed to.

A four-day week, nine-day fortnight, etc. are forms which can provide both an attraction to support action, and pressure to create more jobs.

2. Overtime will be a major issue. For some, shorter hours without any loss of pay will simply be a means to more money. Our argument is to create jobs. We must expect the corporations to use this to create division and confusion. If the objective is to be achieved, a position needs to be taken on the question of overtime.

The 1979 ACTU Congress decision is as follows: “In conformity with this policy unions should seek to restrict overtime by award or agreement prescription, and by union action.”
3. "Phasing in" will have to be considered in some sectors of industry. In some cases it can facilitate a breakthrough. "Phasing in", however, cannot provide a means of opting out of the campaign; neither can it be related to any "productivity deal". Productivity has already risen and the objective is to create jobs in addition to defending those jobs that still exist.

4. Part-time work. The trade union movement (ACTU policy) rejects part-time work as a means of dealing with recession and unemployment. Less hours at less pay is not our objective. Any attempt to introduce shorter hours in this fashion must be met immediately with wage demands and action to restore full pay.

5. Leisure time. The most reactionary forces will seek to distort union motives and claim alleged social ill effects from less hours of work while ignoring the very real ill effects for those in total unemployment and the inadequate expenditure on social welfare. The same type of forces, only 100 years ago, made the same allegations when it was first proposed that kids should not have to work down mines or in workhouses. Promotion of policy on the arts and creative recreation has been a very conscious act on our part and, since 1977, has been ACTU policy. We have done this both for its own intrinsic value and also because we have foreseen that a significant reduction in work hours will have to be fought for and achieved.

We should undertake strong support for, and involvement in, the growing "community education movement" which seeks to promote widely education, when, where and how it is accepted in its broadest sense through an entire lifetime. This is both the right means in the shorter hours campaign and the right purpose for it. We are genuinely interested in the quality of life and, for the first time in history, the modern technological revolution creates an opportunity where all people can benefit. The importance of this policy should be explained and pressed forward as every opportunity arises, including those aspects of ACTU policy which call for allocations of government expenditure to promote genuine social welfare which includes the right to a full education and a creative life for everybody.

6. Young workers, women, migrants, Aborigines. Attempts will also inevitably be made by reactionary forces to play off sections of the people against each other, cause disaffection and create confusion over each other's needs and purposes. The magnitude of the shorter hours objective requires more effective relationship to all social sections, relating the overpowering need for unity with, and understanding of, social needs.

Trade unions have simply not had the resources to meet all expectations of them and levels of understanding are not automatically achieved simply on the basis of being institutionalised. However, much can be achieved in the course of doing our work for major objectives and in the way it is done. In this regard, an early opportunity should be taken to consult with those activists in each social sector who can relate to the shorter hours objective, particularly, but not exclusively, where these activists are from the union movement.

As we progress, other policy matters will arise related to this demand. We must judge these from the standpoint of the objectives we are seeking and the fact that we are not buying these objectives at the expense of some other hard-won gains of the past.

Diversions

Vitally related to policy on shorter hours is the issue of priority. Diversions will inevitably be encountered and it must be assumed that there will be deliberately sponsored diversions. Probably wage demands will be more complex to handle as we progress through the campaign. Only the most careful but insistent efforts will ensure that the shorter hours issue remains as the highest priority.
Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has led to many conflicting views and stands. We must first ask why the Soviets intervened. Yet much of the debate has taken place without any investigation or study of the evidence.

The Soviet explanation has been given many times. President Leonid Brezhnev on January 14 outlined his view in an interview with Pravda: "The unceasing armed intervention, the well-advanced plot by external forces of reaction created a real threat that Afghanistan would lose its independence and be turned into an imperialist military bridgehead on our country's southern border."
Pravda (January 19) spelt out that “in recent months, the (imperialist) aggression assumed such forms and scale as to jeopardise the very existence of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan as an independent and sovereign state.”

The Pravda article, by A. Petrov, defines this aggression as “tens of thousands of mercenaries, armed with foreign arms and trained by foreign instructors, who are sent into Afghanistan”. He claims that on June 20 and 21, 1979, two Pakistani vessels brought arms to Karachi for the Afghan rebels. The first brought 2,000 tons of US-made weapons from Britain and the second 8,000 tons of war materials from China. The material was allegedly taken to Peshawar. This operation was supervised by CIA agent Louis Dupree who, with a CIA team, was trying to force a united front of the rebels and a government-in-exile.

Units of American-trained mercenaries were sent into Afghanistan and when they “were routed, proofs were obtained that confirmed the fact of external aggression”.

One thing should be noted: Petrov speaks of aggression reaching a scale which would have endangered Afghan independence in “recent months”.

This would therefore refer to the period when Hafizullah Amin was president. Leaving aside the question, for the moment, of whether Amin was a “CIA agent”, let us examine the military position in Afghanistan between September and December 1979.

It is easily documented that the CIA, Pakistan and China were training and aiding the Afghan rebels. The question is rather how successful they had been in developing a force which would have been close to seizing power and which would, therefore, have required the presence of so many Soviet troops.

It must be noted, first of all, that both sides — the American and Soviet — have a clear interest in showing that the rightist rebels did indeed pose a real threat to Kabul. The Soviets need to show that there was a threat of a new “Chile” to justify their action. The Americans need to show it is true, to justify their action. The Americans need to show it is true to justify their claim that the Afghan people were valiantly and successfully challenging the “communist” regime in Kabul.

Second, linked with the above point, we must be cautious in estimating sources of information. The various Afghan rebel groups are notoriously unreliable as sources of information. They seek to promote themselves over their rivals, each claiming great victories. This was also part of the bidding for aid from imperialism and China.

One of the best examples of unreliable information was the claim that 10,000 Soviet soldiers had been killed in Afghanistan in one week after the Soviet invasion! It is also true that such stories were enthusiastically seized upon by the sensationalist western media. The Americans, particularly the CIA, also broadcast misinformation, as the media have now discovered.

The ABC’s Geoff Herriot has been particularly strong in emphasising the unreliability of guerrilla sources and US embassy misinformation (see Sun-Herald, January 27 for summary of these views).
Dr. Beverley Male, lecturer at Duntroon military college, an expert in Afghan affairs who spent some months there in early 1979, and who is certainly not pro-left, is even more definite. Dr. Male in a letter to The Bulletin (January 29) says that it was clear when she was in Kabul last year "many reports were based on unsubstantiated and unchecked rumors, the most vicious of which could often, regrettably, be traced to US Embassy sources".

"The Taraki-Amin regime was certainly no worse and probably much better than many others that are not subjected to such a sustained and savage media attack," she writes in The Bulletin.

We must very strongly make the point that there was a CIA-sponsored "disinformation" throughout this period. As journalists have since found out, this disinformation was highly exaggerated then as it is now. We must therefore sift our reports which uncritically report rebel or US "information service" sources, and to search for reports which are either independent first-hand reports, or seriously try to evaluate reports.

Military situation, September-December 1979

Amin had, from the early 'seventies, been the Khalq leader responsible for organisation within the army. When he seized power from Taraki in September 1979, it seems that the military operations of the army improved and that, in fact, after Amin took power the army broke the back of resistance in Pakhtia province, one of the main centres of the rebels. Certainly the position was better than six months previously. Pakhtia province, like the other major centres of revolt, is on the Pakistani border, was the subject of a major offensive by Amin's army, and the rebels suffered a major defeat there.

Asia Week (December 14, 1979) under the heading "Amin hits Back" reported heavy bombing of dozens of rebel villages in Takhar province "seemed to turn the course of the 14-month-old civil war in the Government's favor". Rebels withdrew from several key areas in Pakhtia and Badakshan provinces. The government recaptured Taghab, Nejrab and Wardak, 40 kms from Kabul. Similarly the Far Eastern Economic Review (January 25) reports "The Afghan forces say they were not doing too badly against the rebels before the coup".

Dr. Male The Age, January 21) speaks of the "effectiveness" of Amin's policies. She adds: "and rebel sources admitted they were effective".

Amin, after taking over from Taraki, she claims then, "had the authority to pursue a more vigorous campaign against the rebels and to press on with the economic and social reforms. He embarked on a successful offensive against the rebels in Pakhtia province and at the same time turned the religious propaganda against them."

In fact, Dr. Male claims, the very success of Amin's policies "probably signed his death warrant", as "once the rebellion was crushed there would no longer have been any need for a friendship treaty (with a military cooperation clause) with the USSR". We shall return later to Dr. Male's explanation of Soviet intervention, as we shall also to a discussion of the nature of Amin's repression of the rebels.

It is possible to also find references to the "tottering" Amin regime, but a close examination of these reports finds almost no reference (except in direct reports of highly doubtful rebel claims) of the danger to Amin coming from an imminent rebel defeat of the Afghan army. Rather, the danger referred to is from mutinies in the army itself, and attempts to stage coups. There were, for example, coup attempts in Kabul in November and December and mutinies in other centres. But such mutinies were not, of course, new phenomena.

In fact, successes gained by the rightist rebels were due almost entirely to army mutinies which, for example, allowed rebel tribesmen to capture part of Herat, the third largest city, for four days in March 1979.

The documentary by British TV man Nick Downey, screened on ABC TV's "Four Corners" (February 2), was ample evidence that defections from the army provided the rebels with their strength — particularly in arms. But the divisive tribesmen failed because they did not use the army defectors. Downey also noted that the leader of the army defectors was, in fact, an officer who was the son of one of the feudal chiefs of the area.
Within the army there were two factors operating to “purge it”. First, officers linked with the feudal lords naturally were against the land reform, and led many of the mutinies. This was a “self-purge” of the old feudal army of its counter-revolutionary elements (many of whom were also eliminated, once discovered, before they could defect). The second factor was the division among the different revolutionary officers, based upon their support for Khalq (and within that Taraki or Amin), or Parcham, or different bonapartist tendencies that emerged.

There is no suggestion that the revolts in Kabul in November and December were counter-revolutionary, pro-feudal revolts, but, on the contrary, there is evidence that they were launched by dissident Parcham and Khalq elements.

Finally, it remains the Afghan army which is fighting the rebels today. Abdul Sammat Azhar, head of the “security organs” under Karmal, speaking on East Berlin TV “resolutely rejected allegations that there had been an interference by Soviet troops. Not a single Soviet soldier had taken part in such (anti-rebel security) operations and this would remain so in the future.” (ADN Bulletin, No. E4, January 1980.) He did, however, stress that Soviet forces “are stationed here to oppose any aggression from abroad”.

His claims are confirmed by western and even CIA reports that Soviet troops are not engaged in operations against the guerrillas. If they are not needed now, then they were not needed in December for such operations, particularly as it is the height of winter and the rebel areas are snow-bound, removing the chance of any major rebel offensive.

Dangers of foreign invasion of Afghanistan?

Was there then a danger of US, Pakistan and/or Chinese troops invading Afghanistan?

This is a separate question to that of well-documented US, Pakistani and Chinese support for and training of the rightist rebels. When Azhar speaks of Soviet troops being present to “oppose any aggression from abroad”, we must assume he means actual invasion.

The allegations made by Petrov (quoted earlier), the well-documented article by Konrad Ege in CounterSpy (Vol. 4, No. 1) showing US, Chinese and Pakistani aid for and training of rightist guerrillas and other such charges, do not add up to an invasion.

The Japanese Communist Party daily Akahata (January 19) correspondent in Kabul says he was told by the Karmal government that it was not under threat of foreign invasion when the Soviet troops moved in. In the Kabul press, from October to December 1979, before the Soviet intervention, the Akahata correspondent “found no reports on a threat of aggression
from outside. During my stay in Kabul, newspapers rarely referred to this problem”.

But, he reports, “the Afghan authorities stressed that the despatch of Soviet troops saved the lives of many political prisoners (who were) liberared by the USSR. This statement happens to throw into relief the fact that not only international relations but also internal affairs were important reasons for the Soviet troops being sent in”.

Indeed, if there was no danger of foreign aggression from, necessarily, foreign troops, and only aid and training of the rightist rebels, then there is no justification for Soviet troops being present, particularly in such large numbers. If such imperialist aid to rightist forces was a justification for such large-scale deployment, then Soviet troops could go into any country in the world, because the CIA is active everywhere, including Australia.

Indeed, the Soviet leadership used similar excuses for the invasion of Czechoslovakia which was supposedly under imminent threat from CIA and West German infiltration. No doubt the CIA and West Germans were active, but there was no reason to believe that Dubcek and the Czech communists were not capable of defeating their efforts. Warsaw Pact troops quite clearly moved into Czechoslovakia for other reasons: they wanted a regime in power they could completely control — they did not want another Yugoslavia or Romania in eastern Europe, particularly as it was beginning a unique experiment in socialist democracy.

It is difficult, therefore, to accept the Soviet’s basic explanation for such a large-scale deployment of troops. WE must look elsewhere for the real reason.

The overthrow of Amin

One does not have to look far for one obvious factor: the overthrow of Amin came only days after the massive Soviet airlift had begun. It is impossible to accept the Soviet explanation that the overthrow of Amin was purely a Parcham operation which they had, nothing to do with. Subsequent Soviet condemnation of Amin (including that by Brezhnev himself) shows they had no love for him. There is no sign of equanimity or restraint in their condemnation. They are also assiduously repeating the stories coming from Karmal that Amin was a CIA agent, etc.

All the evidence points to the Soviets either directly overthrowing and executing Amin, or directly aiding those who did so, by disarming or demobilising Afghan troops loyal to him. Thus, either incidentally, or as a major reason, the overthrow of Amin and installation of Karmal was an objective of the Soviet invasion. Why should this be so, and did it necessitate such a massive presence of Soviet troops to do so?

Indeed, it is emerging from Soviet and pro-Soviet propaganda that the overthrow of Amin may have been the major reason precisely because, they claim, he was a CIA agent and was about to throw the Soviets out and even invite American troops into Afghanistan. In fact, the only pro-Soviet allegation made of imminent invasion by American troops refers to the allegation that Amin was going to invite them in.

Jim Mitchell (The Socialist, January 30, 1980) reported the allegations from Kabul, after a press conference. In summary, Karmal’s Interior Minister S.M. Galabzoi claimed to have “obtained information” that “on instructions from the CIA, Amin, in collusion with counter-revolutionaries in Pakistan, planned a coup to take place on December 29 last”. (Two days before he was executed by Karmal.)

They planned to execute all remaining “honest leaders and party activists” and establish a government with Amin as president and Gulbuddin Ekmattiar, leader of the rightist Islamic Party based in Pakistan, as prime minister. In late last September, an Amin emissary met with Ekmattiar. On October 4, Amin and his accomplice held a secret meeting in Kabul and endorsed the plan. In December, Amin’s representative met US special services agents in Paris, Rome and Karachi.

Another Amin representative went to Peshawar in Pakistan on December 22 and informed Afghan counter-revolutionaries that the plot was set for December 29. Mitchell reports: “Assurances had been received from American circles that Washington ‘if necessary’ would support the initiators of the coup ‘with the full might of the US armed forces’.”

Investigations are continuing, Mitchell
reports, and Karmal said “all evidence of Amin’s connection with the CIA will be produced to the world press in due course”.

The allegations of the scale of the massacre which Karmal claims Amin was planning has also escalated. Karmal claimed on January 23 that Amin was planning to massacre “half the Afghan population” in the period December 31 to January 2. This was “more terrifying than those that took place in Kampuchea or Chile,” he said. (Le Monde, January 31.)

Any rational person must be highly sceptical of these claims which go alongside allegations that Amin was too radical, too harsh on the rebels, thus turning the population against the revolution. Moreover, some can still recall the Moscow Trials of the ’thirties where similar allegations were made, “confessions” obtained and “evidence” produced to prove that old Bolsheviks, leaders of the October Revolution alongside Lenin, were “Hitler agents”.

Was Amin a CIA agent?

Who was Hafizullah Amin and does his life history show him as a likely CIA agent?

In August 1979, Romesh Chandra, President of the World Peace Council whose ideas for many years have exactly coincided with the Soviet leadership’s, had no doubts about Amin. Thanking Amin for his opening speech at a WPC-sponsored International Conference of Solidarity with Afghanistan held in Kabul from August 24-27, 1979, Romesh Chandra said:

“It has been a great honour and privilege for us to hear the inaugural address of our dear friend, comrade Hafizullah Amin. We have been given great new strength by his brilliant exposition of the situation as it now exists. His address has been the address of a man who loves his own people and who loves all the peoples of the world. It was the address of a true patriot, it was the address of a true internationalist. We are very grateful to you for your inspiring words.”

(Publication of WPC Information Centre, Helsinki.)

Leaving aside the customary hyperbole of Chandra at such gatherings, it is clear that he (and the Soviet delegates present) did not think Amin a CIA agent then!

Similar comments in less flowery language can be found in other Soviet and pro-Soviet publications of that time.

The introduction to the WPC booklet reports delegates were able to move freely around the city and country, and replies to “imperialist slanders” about 75 per cent of the country being in the hands of rebels, etc. The introduction continues: “Mr. Hafizullah Amin in his statements and speeches spoke warmly of Afghan friendship with the Soviet Union.”

After the conference, delegates divided into groups and visited Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Kunduz, Mazare Sharif and Parwan, by plane or bus where they addressed rallies of tens of thousands (Herat 50,000; Jalalabad 10,000; Mazare Sharif 10,000). All the cities had been attacked by rebels but “calm and tranquility now prevail in all these areas”.

Of course, all this could be nonsense, lies and pure propaganda. But the source is pro-Soviet, and there have been no reports of similar rallies or popularity for Karmal.....not even from pro-Soviet sources. Mitchell can only claim “hundreds of thousands of toiling people are willingly co-operating in the new situation”.

We have no space to quote from the speech of Amin opening the WPC conference. However, the emphasis is on the socialist nature of the revolution. His speech is sprinkled with quotes from Lenin (and one from Brezhnev!).

Amin returned to Afghanistan in 1965 after studying abroad at Columbia University in the USA, where in the mid-fifties he first came into contact with socialist ideas. He was an alternate member of the PDP Politbureau formed at its founding conference in 1965, and quickly emerged as number two to Taraki in the Khalq faction. He stood for the PDP in the elections in 1969 and won a seat in Laghman, a predominantly nomad area in the northeast. Karmal was the only other successful PDP candidate (Fred Halliday, New Left Review, November-December 1978).

After Parcham played a successful role in bringing Daud to power in the 1973 coup,
Khalq also began to work in the army, and Amin was responsible for this work. After the wave of repression launched by Daud in April 1978, it was Amin, just before his arrest, who managed to get orders to the Khalq military officers to launch the coup, which they did successfully on April 27. After the April 1978 revolution, Amin became Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. In July 1978 he remained in these posts, after Karmal was exiled. In March 1979 he became Prime Minister, as well as Foreign Minister, and in July 1979 gave up foreign affairs and took over defence. In September, he became president.

He was never (as some claim) Interior Minister, in charge of the police, and when he became Defence Minister he was to “execute the President’s (Taraki’s) directives and supervise the Ministry of Defence”. A Supreme Council for the Defence of the Country was formed on March 29, 1979 which included Taraki, Amin, Watanjar (Defence), Mazduryar (Interior) and Major Yakub, chief of the general staff. The Council was clearly the body responsible for decisions on repression aimed at foiling conspiracies, “eliminating traitors”, etc.

Amin then was a key figure, but not alone, as Taraki particularly remained in overall charge.

We must examine the events of September 14, 1979, the day Amin took power from Taraki, to fully understand the situation.

Taraki had returned from Havana (the Non-Aligned Conference) and Moscow a few days before. All versions of the events agree that Amin had asked Taraki to agree to the dismissal of Interior Minister Watanjar and Border Affairs Minister Mazduryar. Taraki, according to most reports, was not happy and invited Amin to the Presidential Palace. Amin was suspicious and took along a military escort.

In the Far Eastern Economic Review (October 5, 1979), Rodney Tasker reports: “The guards opened fire as Amin and his men were climbing the stairs. (This correspondent saw evidence of some replastering on the staircase wall in the palace on the way to Amin’s press conference.)” Former Kabul police chief and then Taraki’s chief aide Syed Daud Tarun was killed in the shoot-out and given a hero’s burial two days later by Amin who said he had been killed by “counter-revolutionaries”. Amin, according to most reports, escaped and returned with troops who captured the palace and Taraki. Watanjar and others escaped and Amin told Tasker he did not know where they were.

Fred Halliday in the New Statesman (see CICD “Dossier on Afghanistan”) presents another version: Taraki, he claims, was going to arrest Amin peacefully after lunch.

Taraki did not die until early October when, according to Karmal, he was smothered to death on Amin’s orders. Others claim he was wounded in the shoot-out and died of his wounds or even died from illness or shock, as he was an ill man.

Many reports claimed that Taraki, in trying to remove Amin, was acting on instructions from Moscow. This cannot be verified, but it seems certain that Watanjar and other sacked ministers either were given refuge in the Soviet Embassy or were smuggled out to the Soviet Union. Some reports claim that Watanjar took part in the attack on Amin’s palace on December 27.

After he took power, Amin had consultations with the Soviet Ambassador and announced measures similar to those Karmal is now announcing: freeing political prisoners (60 were released in one day according to Tasker’s report); overtures to the Muslim population; an end to Taraki’s previous “one man rule”, etc. Amin removed the Ministers of Interior (Watanjar), chief of Agsa, the military intelligence (Assadulah) and Karmal’s present Interior Minister Gulbazoi (then Communications Minister). He also promised to replace Agsa.

Halliday claims that 4,000 Taraki supporters were arrested, and many of the military men loyal to him executed.

The Soviet government sent a congratulatory telegram to Amin after he became president, but obviously all was not well. We will examine later the reasons for the coup and probable Soviet involvement. While Amin was, and always had been, pro-Soviet, he was also opposed to total Soviet control. He told an Arab journalist on the day before his death that the USSR had shown it did not interfere in Afghan affairs by accepting his (Amin’s) veto on Soviet
military bases in Afghanistan. (See The Age, January 10, a reprint of a London Sunday Times investigation.)

Fred Halliday (ABC Broadband, February 11) claims from US and Afghan sources that Amin personally shot dead the head of the KGB in Kabul in December — a claim which is unverified by other sources, but which certainly captures the mood that undoubtedly existed (particularly seen from hindsight) between Amin and the USSR.

Here it is worth returning to Dr. Beverley Male's (The Age, January 21) analysis. Dr. Male has a very specific explanation for the Soviet invasion: it resulted not from a drive to the Gulf nor to save the country from Muslim rebels, but to "save" Afghanistan from "an independent-minded national communist government with no reason to love Moscow."

"The effectiveness of his policies (and rebel sources admitted they were effective) probably signed his death warrant. Soviet involvement in the first attempt to kill him (by Taraki — D.F.) would have ensured that he never again trusted the Russians. Once the rebellion was crushed there would no longer have been any need for a friendship treaty (with a military co-operation clause) with the USSR.

"With the increasing likelihood of US military intervention in Iran, as the hostage crisis dragged on, Moscow could not risk the abrogation of its treaty with Afghanistan and the expulsion of Russian advisers.

"The success of Russia's desperate gamble to 'save' Afghanistan depends on the speed with which it can defeat units of the Afghan armed forces loyal to the previous government and on the readiness of the Peshawar-based rebels to respond to Babrak Karmal's overtures .... "

Dr. Male also claims that Afghanistan under Khalq was an "international liability" to the USSR, alarming both Iran and Pakistan and making more problems with Carter. The cost of supporting Khalq's revolutionary measures was too high. They wanted to replace Amin particularly "with someone less committed to the regime's revolutionary objectives".

This fits into other explanations which claim that Amin went too far in carrying the revolution forward, and was brutal and bureaucratic in applying measures against the rebels, let alone against Khalq and Parcham dissidents.

But before we examine the question of whether Amin took the revolution too fast, too far, too brutally, let us examine an accusation which is seen as a justification for Soviet intervention, and is linked with the last point: was Amin the Afghani "Pol Pot"?

To conclude first on the accusation of him being a CIA agent. There is no evidence from his life history that this is likely. On the contrary, if anything, the evidence points to him being a too fanatical, too devoted, and too brutal a revolutionary.

Was Amin the "Pol Pot" of Afghanistan?

The Soviet and Karmal line is that Amin was responsible for all the repression of the previous 18 months. Taraki was "clean", a hero assassinated by the ruthless Amin.
Amin was the "Pol Pot" of Afghanistan. Space does not allow a long examination of all the evidence but we will summarise the main aspects regarding repression.

According to Keesing's Archives 1978 (pp. 29198-9) estimates put dead in the April 1978 coup at some 3,000. About 4,500 were estimated imprisoned (in July 1978). Some 1,000 political prisoners held before April 1978 were released in June and their dossiers burnt in public.

In July 1979, the US State Department said 3,000 political prisoners had been killed. In August 1979, Senator Frank Church claimed 20,000 political prisoners and 50 prisoners executed a day. In September 1979, Amnesty International claimed 12,000 in Kabul prisons, and the Far Eastern Economic Review speaks of up to 16,000 there, and 40 a day being killed.

The Amnesty investigation began with a visit to Kabul by an Amnesty team in October 1978, followed by a discussion with Amin in March 1979. He was then vice-premier and Foreign Affairs Minister. Amin said "72-74 women and children, members of the previous royal family, had been released" with three former ministers. He told Amnesty in March that there were only 100 in Kabul's Pul-el-Charki prison. The Amnesty figures are similar to the US and Senator Church's figures provided before. Even if we accept the highest figure of 20,000 in prison in August, and add on the 4,000 allegedly arrested by Amin while president, how do these figures compare with Pol Pot's massacres?

We must also recall the total situation. In March 1979 for example the rebels seized Herat after an army mutiny. According to the Washington Post (quoted in CounterSpy, op. cit.), the rebels massacred 5,000 in four days. Amnesty claimed the government jailed 1,000 after retaking Herat, others claim 1,000 were killed in a "red terror".

Similar massacres occurred on a smaller scale wherever the rebels seized villages or towns. The country was in a state of civil war at least until August when heavy reprisals had seriously weakened the guerrillas.

Even 20,000 is not a high figure for those in prison in such a situation, no matter how much it is to be deplored. Yet when Karmal came to power he found only 4,000 in Kabul prison, and released 2,000 of them. Far Eastern Economic Review claimed there were only 2,000 there in prison on December 28.

Karmal later claimed (Le Monde, January 31) to have released 15,000 political prisoners, but there is no independent verification of this figure. Whatever the truth, the repression does not add up to a Pol Pot massacre.

Second, who was responsible for repression? As we already noted, Amin was never Interior Minister. He was only one of a number with overall responsibility for repression on the Supreme Council for the Defence of the Country set up in March 1979, at the peak of rebel activity. When he took power in September 1979, one of his enemies was the head of the secret police. If Amin did emerge as the "strong man" in July 1979, he alone did not share the responsibility for the repression.

In the new Karmal government on the other hand, the former head of secret police is now Deputy Prime Minister, and the three former Interior Ministers Watanjar, Mazduryar and Nur are in Karmal's cabinet in prominent positions. And Taraki, as "father of the revolution", exercised real power at least until July 1979.

Moreover, no ministers purged under Taraki and Amin were executed and many of them are now in Karmal's cabinet. This is not exactly the style of an Afghan Pol Pot.

Indeed, Karmal can only claim that Amin would have been worse than Pol Pot if the alleged massacre of "half the population" had not been stopped by Amin's overthrow and execution.

It is not my intention to whitewash Amin. He certainly played a role in the constant factionalism and purges that affected the regime. He at least shared responsibility for the many mistakes and unnecessary repression and bombing of villages, etc.

It is even possible that he was the harshest of all previous leaders, although I do not regard that as proven: Taraki certainly was no angel, and we can ask what is the fate of pro-Amin forces (which were not inconsiderable) after Karmal took over.

Thus, it is difficult to believe that the
Soviet moved into Kabul in such strength simply to remove Amin for humanitarian reasons, as is suggested by the Akahata report previously quoted.

Moreover, the Soviet leadership has shown no such humanitarian concern over the much more brutal regime of Ethiopia's Mengistu.

Next, let us briefly examine the argument that the Soviet intervened because Amin had taken the revolution forward too fast, too far, and too brutally. Again, if the revolution did go too fast, etc., then it was not only Amin's responsibility. Taraki in his many public statements endorsed the rapid land reform and so on. If there were mistakes (as seems certain) in carrying out the land reform without providing the necessary back-up in terms of seed, finance, equipment (previously supplied by the feudal lords) then it was the responsibility of all the previous leadership, many of whom are in Karmal's government. In addition, there has been no suggestion that Karmal is slowing down the land reform. Rather, he is attempting to reconcile Islamic feelings by going to prayers, etc., admittedly something Amin does not appear to have done.

It is true that Amin promised after taking power last September that journalists could “expect the expansion and deepening of the revolution”. (Far Eastern Economic Review, October 5, 1979.) It is also true he stepped up the previous policy of bombing of rebel villages (but that still continues under Karmal).

Fred Halliday (New Left Review, November-December 1978) stressed a point that it is hard to contest: that the success of the revolution depended in large part on a land reform that would win the peasants to the revolution. In his New Statesman articles he appears rather to retract that, and argue that the land reform was too rapid. However, the contradiction is clear, in terms of survival of the revolution. Beginning from an urban base, it had to quickly win support from the peasants. In some areas it was successful, as Salamat Ali reports (Far Eastern Economic Review, October 19, 1979) in an article which earned him one year's jail from Zia. Salamat Ali reports that the Baluch minority in southern Afghanistan had welcomed the land reform, and that their Pushtun landlords had fled to Pakistan's Baluchistan province. No doubt similar stories could be told in other, particularly minority, areas where the landlords tended to be from the previous Pushtun-speaking aristocratic elite.

In other areas, intimidation by feudal gangs, the failure to provide back-up facilities and Islamic propaganda had their effects, particularly in Pushtun strongholds on the Pakistan border.

If one reason the USSR did move in was to moderate the revolution, as Dr. Male also suggests, then they miscalculated, as they have succeeded rather in whipping up nationalist feeling against themselves. Any hope of installing a Husak-style regime will be difficult to realise and such a plan would be unlikely to succeed. (That is, to instal, as they did after the invasion of Hungary, a liberal regime.)

Personally, I find it hard to see this as a major reason for the intervention. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine that the fear of unrest in the central Asian Soviet Muslim republics was a reason. First, there are very few signs of such discontent and, second, Afghanistan is hardly a model. Living standards in Soviet Central Asia are much, much higher than in Afghanistan, as are educational standards.
In fact, one reason the Soviet leadership seems deliberately to be sending soldiers from Central Asia to Afghanistan is precisely to inoculate them against any illusions of how great life is there!

Iran — a reason for intervention in Afghanistan?

Dr. Male and others suggest American threats to Iran was a reason for intervention. That is, to give evidence to Carter that the Americans would not be allowed to invade Iran with impunity. Certainly, Carter was making dark threats just before the Soviet intervention to blockade Iran's ports and even to invade, after the hostages were taken. He continues to do so. But the Soviet intervention has given hope to Carter that the Iranian leadership will see the USSR as the main threat, given its invasion of a Muslim country, rather than the USA, and that the hostages crisis can be solved, particularly by the new president Bani Sadr.

Thus, Soviet intervention has helped Carter's manoeuvres in Iran, rather than hindered them.

It is true, however, that an evident factor in the Soviet decision to intervene was the weakened position of imperialism worldwide, particularly following its defeat in Indochina. However, such calculations fail to take account of Carter's long-standing determination to "relegitimise" Viet Nam-style intervention.

The main purpose of this article has been to examine the explanations given for Soviet intervention. We, of course, completely reject any talk of long-term Soviet "drive for the Persian Gulf", to seize its oil resources, etc. Articles I have written in *Tribune* cover these and other similar extreme rightist explanations, which no one believes, other than the paranoid right. Nor is it in the compass of this article to examine such questions as the right of self-determination, non-interference in other country's affairs etc. Eric Aarons in *Tribune* (January 23, 1980) has touched on these questions.

Why, then, did the Soviet leadership intervene so massively in Afghanistan? It is, of course, still too early to give definitive answers to this question, particularly as we have so far no answers from the pro-Amin side. Maybe we never will.

In any case, I would personally opt for the obvious reason: they mainly intervened to get rid of Amin. For those who think it is impossible for the Soviet leaders to accept such risks and odium from public opinion for such a reason, we need only recall Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. For the Soviet leaders, Afghanistan after April 1978 was in the same situation as eastern Europe. It was no longer a "Finland". For the Soviet leaders, the risks they have taken were worth it to keep Afghanistan completely loyal to them. They were not prepared to risk seeing Amin transform Afghanistan into a central Asian "Yugoslavia".

In that sense, it was a defensive action given the Soviet leaders' view of what Afghanistan had already become after April 1978. But it is equally totally to be condemned.

We must, of course, (as *Tribune* has) concentrate on the way Carter and Fraser are using Soviet intervention in Afghanistan to step up the Cold War and endanger world peace. But that does not mean we must ignore examination of Soviet action, nor fail to condemn it in an appropriate fashion.
POULANTZAS
AND
MARXIST THEORY

By Peter Beilharz

For Athol — who dialogues with me still
— Peter Beilharz

Nicos Poulantzas died on October 3, 1979 in Paris, aged 43. He was the author of six books, theoretical works which most people could not afford, let alone understand. Socialists should not feel obliged to mourn the dead simply because the world — or Parisian fashion — tells us they were Great. So why mourn Poulantzas? Other recent deaths, such as that of Marcuse, have not been unexpected. The entire generation of socialists which has survived two wars is now disappearing; we can expect many more theoretical obituaries in the next decade. Though older than some of us, Poulantzas was of our generation. He spoke to those of us now in our twenties and thirties. And as Paul Patton pointed out in his obituary (Tribune, November 7) Poulantzas served as a point of introduction to the classics of marxism, or at least to a particular view of them.

What was it that Poulantzas had to say to us? Why was it important? What was his effect on the Australian left? We can proceed to these questions through the necessary historical context. The young Poulantzas left Athens for Paris where he examined law as a follower of Lukacs. By 1965 Paris, renowned for its vulnerability to theoretical fashion, was swept by the new trend in marxism initiated by Louis Althusser. Poulantzas followed in the wake of this wave without conspicuously joining the Althusserian entourage.

Unlike the others (e.g. Balibar), he did not co-write or co-publish with Althusser, but nevertheless came to be thought of as one of them. Poulantzas' distance from Althusser was an important one, because those directly associated with Althusser later found it difficult to modify their positions. Poulantzas did not publicly proclaim himself to be an Althusserian, and thus was more readily able to cast off the Althusserian shell when it became uncomfortable restricting.

Most English-speaking marxists came upon Poulantzas in the early 'seventies. Poulantzas had written a moderately scathing review of Ralph Miliband's book The State in Capitalist Society in New Left Review. New Left Books then translated Poulantzas' own book on the state, Political Power and Social Classes. Other translations followed, notably Fascism and Dictatorship and Classes in Contemporary Capitalism. These works witnessed a certain gradual development in which Poulantzas became progressively less structuralist. The main limitation of his study of fascism was that the living histories of the Italian and German working classes were forced into inadequate structuralist schemes. The most
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notorious of these schemes was the so-called "new petty bourgeoisie". NPB in structuralist jargon. The "NPB" was a strawman category which soaked up problem cases which could not be incorporated elsewhere in the set of structures. But Poulantzas was nevertheless able to distance himself from Althusser, and particularly from Althusser's mechanical position on the state (again constructed in terms of RSA's, ISA's, CMP's and other kinds of BS).

Poulantzas' study of class and his analysis of dictatorships in crisis saw further developments in the historicisation of marxist politics. In his last years this growing realism meant that Poulantzas rejected his structuralist standoffishness and became a left euro-communist. His final book, State, Power, Socialism contains many indicators of substantial developments yet to come. Poulantzas came to the conclusion that the leninist theory of revolution was not only obsolete but was also inadequately thought out in the first place. He came to reject the structuralist notion of the state as a monolithic bloc free of contradictions, arguing instead that it was an ensemble of relations between people and other people, and between people and things. The ritualistic references to class struggle in his earlier work became more concrete.

If the state was not a "thing" and could not therefore be "smashed" some alternative response to everyday politics must be arrived at. In standard marxist terms Poulantzas was arguing for "revolution from within", not precluding the possibility of violence but avoiding the old argument that a vanguard would seize state power on behalf of a passive majority who would of course remain passive under the new regime. But this last book was not free from elements of despair either. Poulantzas was casting off the security which structuralist-marxism had to offer and therefore had to admit that after all the prospects for socialism were not good. No doubt such elements of political despair participated in Poulantzas' eventual decision to take his life.

Marxists have always had a soft spot for science, for certainty. We can sleep better if we believe that history is on our side. This is an important factor in explaining the great popularity of Althusser in the English-speaking world. It is comforting to feel that we have all the answers, and anyone knows that Althusserians have all the answers. Like strangers overseas they find all solved in a phrase-book which closely resembles the Glossary to Reading Capital. It is still something of a heresy to suggest that Althusserian marxism has had a negative effect on the Australian left. The new Australian left was taken to the cleaners by Althusser but nevertheless took out franchise for the exclusive sale of his wares. Anyone looking up back numbers of Australian Left Review or Intervention will see clear evidence of this. It remains a real and living problem, for a reformed Althusserian has about as much credibility as a humanist stalinist.

Structuralist-marxists rarely paused to consider the real nature of their project. Structuralism began in France in the study of linguistics. People like Saussure argued that language was like a game of chess, there were rules to its system and basic units in its composition. Saussure, however, did not believe that these understandings could be transferred to the study of history or of economics. The originator of structuralism, it seems, was one of the few who understood that the study of society could not be reduced to the study of its structures. In contact with the Prague school another Frenchman, Levi-Strauss, denied Saussure and applied structural linguistics to the study of anthropology. Levi-Strauss claimed that his system had "practically unlimited capacity for extension". Levi-Strauss' own work was, however, quite productive; his studies were, still relatively "innocent" in terms of what was to follow. Other Parisians such as Barthes also displayed that structuralism could do much to enlighten us as to the meaning of social signs.

But people like Althusser could not enlighten us much, for they wanted to universalise structure into what they understood as Science, i.e. Historical Materialism. A long, long way from Saussure, Althusser sought to explain the world as a set of structures which speak through humans. Althusser's project was based on the death or denial of the subject and the theorisation of the world as an immovable object. After the failure of May
1968 such a theory had an obvious appeal to disillusioned Marxists. Structuralist Marxism had a peculiar appeal to the English-speaking left because of its fundamental positivism. Like any other theory with a claim to strict scientificity, structuralist-Marxism rested on a belief in absolute scientific truth. History could be known, and known objectively, known without reference to us as particular participating subjects. Such claims to objectivity unite the entire history of bourgeois thought. If the world of objects is in permanent control of the world of subjects, the project of changing the world is impossible.

How can it be that the Australian left was taken for such a ride. Perhaps it can be explained this way. Structuralist Marxism was never much more than a sophisticated variation on the Comintern base-superstructure schema. We should know the tune well enough: rub any Althusserian up the wrong way and you hear it with the order and precision of a juke-box. A social formation is a combination of three levels (i.e., the economic, the political, and the ideological). The economy is the primary determinant (i.e., the last instance) and the other levels are relatively autonomous and capable of overdetermining the other levels. On the economic level forces of production break through relations of production and the Great Day arrives. If it arrives, it has been explained; if it fails to arrive then we can blame relative autonomy. The alternative outcomes of the scheme are either the reduction of everything to the economy, in which case the last instance comes all the time and revolution is automatic; or the severance and absolute autonomy of levels. Nothing has been explained except that society exists of three building blocks which might lie directly one on the other or which might be cushioned by layers of relative autonomy.

What kind of Marxism is this? What can be the place of class struggle here? What is the place of the subject (i.e., people) in its series of architectural structures? This is politics made easy: but not so if Marxism is a politics which seeks to actively change the world so that people can become more autonomous or free from domination. If the capitalist social formation is built of bricks, it is held together by the living mortar of hegemony. The politics of bourgeois consensus then moves into focus. Poulantzas was able to work his way out of the Althusserian Scheme because he chose to focus on the “level” of politics.

Notions that the world reduces to sets of immovable or self-moving structures cannot theorize the transition from one social formation (capitalism) to another (socialism). Thus Althusser’s appeal for sociologists: structuralist Marxism explains not how we can overcome capital but on the contrary how it is eternal. In the structuralist scheme capital quietly reproduces itself unless a non-correspondence between forces and relations of production occurs. Need the futility of this kind of automatic Marxism still be pointed out? How long will it take for us to accept that socialism only makes sense in terms of the conscious struggles which we and other progressive forces take up?

Poulantzas’ work was a long process of dialogue from within the Althusserian framework with Gramsci and Lukacs. It is this dialogue which enabled Poulantzas to work his way out of the structuralist labyrinth. Gramsci is important for Poulantzas because he was the first Marxist to give serious reflection to politics as the decisive realm. For Gramsci the problem was one of facilitating the unity and autonomy which might allow people to take hold of their futures. Any rallying point which emerged in spontaneous struggles should be the contact point for Marxists; the world could be responded to only in its own terms, “common sense” could be transformed into “good sense”. The working class could come to understand how it had made the world of capital which in turn made it. People could come to understand the world in the process of changing it.

Lukacs has a different importance for Marxism. For Lukacs, as for Gramsci, the world is a world in motion. There can be no point in inquiring into its origin, into what comes first chicken-and-egg style. Men and women have never known the world in itself, they have only known it as they have constituted it. As Marx first understood in the Theses on Feuerbach, politics begins with the world as it is. Both materialism and idealism in the old sense are transcended, because neither material forces nor ideas can
be elevated to the status of prime mover if we are to maintain this focus on the combination of object and subject.

Marxism's point of departure then is not the sham objectivity of Althusser but the practices of real subjects in the world. For marxism there is but one order of reality which can be understood in different ways. There is no room in marxism for nonsense about the "real world" and the "thought world". The world can be understood in its subjective or everyday manifestations, or it can be understood critically or objectively. This means not that there are two worlds but that there are two ways of understanding one world, understanding it gut-wise or intellectually. Marxist politics is about the everyday world and the problems involved in changing it; marxist critique is concerned with decoding the chaos of everyday so that it can be systematically understood. Taken as a whole marxism is the project in which changing the world and understanding it can be combined. The development of marxist politics has been delayed for so long because people like Althusser have blurred this distinction. They have acted as though it were enough for marxist intellectuals to understand the world; but we know well that our object must be to understand and change it.

Lukacs also made mistakes; in particular he read the unity of subject and object as an identity. He thought that the subject, the working class, could come to understand and overcome its object, capital, simply by coming into contact with it in the labor-process. This was a different kind of automatic marxism, one based on the misconception of the correct principle of combination of subject and object. Structuralist-marxism in comparison only ever attempted to explain the objective world of structures, assuming that its subjective aspects were either silenced or alternatively were the mere consequences of structures. The subject here could only be reduced to victim or to Pavlovian outcome. In exaggerating the strength of the objective world the Althusserians reproduced the logic of the fetish of commodities, allowing the reproduction of a world view in which objects or structures are treated as the insuperable commanders of their producers, who must toil on endlessly beneath them.

Poulantzas began within this framework but was able to work his way out of it by focusing on politics and on the subjective moment. He was thus able to achieve something of a balance, a theoretical perspective in which we, the subjects of bourgeois society, can become conscious of its objective structures and be able to respond to these structures with a view to transforming them. Poulantzas' transition was slow and painful. Its most grating symptom was Poulantzas' difficulty in explaining class. Poulantzas began explaining class with the structuralist categories of structure and bearer. He misused the productive-unproductive labor debate to determined the working class as that class which produces material commodities. Only later did he see that whatever the situation in terms of objective class structure, class exists politically only in class struggle, when people take up positions regardless of whether they produce commodities as things or services. Poulantzas only realise late that class is therefore crucially subjective for marxist politics. In returning to these political/subjective interests he again ran the risk of becoming one-sided, of arguing as though the world were a world of subjects without objective structural limits and characterisations. He made the mistake of theorising class separately from capital, of abstracting from the objective moment, mode of production and labor-process.

His work on the state likewise avoided the accumulation process and the state's role in it. But what developments we witness here in comparison to the drone of the Althusserians! Poulantzas came to reject the classical reform-revolution dichotomy precisely because of the one-sidedness of these positions, which presume that revolution is either a concrete objective seizure of power or that socialism is the gradual internal accumulation of improvements.

Needless to say, not only Gramsci and Lukacs but also the "Italian Road" lurks behind these developments. Poulantzas came to argue that the autonomous movements were central to the struggle for socialism, that agitation and participation was necessary in all aspects of contemporary political life. In this context the Historical Compromise must be seen as a compromise
with established powers at the expense of autonomous struggles. Whatever the case with the PCI, Poulantzas was moving beyond the traditional dualism of party communism and council communism, beginning to visualise the struggle for socialism as a systematic exercise in prefigurative pluralism, a struggle in which only the particular victims of an oppression could respond to it by articulating their interest.

Poulantzas indeed introduced us to the classics of marxism. But this in itself does not set Poulantzas apart as a man who dared to think. People like Mandel, for example, introduce many to Trotsky, but do little more as neither the originator nor the contemporary have much to say to us. Poulantzas' great merit was to reintroduce the present generation not only to the classics of marxism-leninism but also to the innovative theorists of marxism's political tradition, Gramsci and Lukacs, and in the process of this introduction to contribute many new insights himself. Poulantzas' own uneven development was the development from structure to subject. His last writings suggest that he was beginning to combine them in a way which marxism has always pursued. Like many great forerunners Poulantzas has passed us the baton. If we believe that we must both understand and criticise and respond to and change the world, then the real struggle still remains before us. Poulantzas' place in the history of marxist theory was that of a rare educator who understood that in these senses the majority of marxists still need educating.

Further Reading


Articles by Poulantzas include "Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain", New Left Review 43. The debate with Miliband conducted in New Left Review 58/59 is reprinted in R. Blackburn (editor) Ideology in Social Science (London 1973); the initial debate was continued in New Left Review 82 and 95. Several other of Poulantzas' articles were incorporated into the books listed above.


Other Critiques of Poulantzas are P. Hirst's review of "State, Power, Socialism" in Eurored 9; and M. Plaut, "Positivism in Poulantzas", Telos 36. On the important relationship between structuralist-marxism and Gramsci, see in general the relevant papers collected in the volume edited by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, On Ideology (London 1978). The most thorough critique of Althusser is E.P. Thompson's The Poverty of Theory (London 1978); Thompson fails to confront the development in Althusser's positions, which are laced with Gramscian insights in his Essays in Self-Criticism (London 1976) e.g. pages 160, 72 and following, 78 and following, 36, 47, 49. A. Davidson, in a review of the new Italian edition of Gramsci's "Prison Notebooks", Telos 32, makes some fascinating comments on Gramsci's relation to Structuralism, comments which should be taken up in any discussion of the problems involved here for marxist politics.
The independence movement in West Irian

Recent writing on West Irian has described the cultural dynamics of the present conflict (Sharp, 1977) and the social origins and political development of the freedom movement (Savage 1978a, 1978b). This article describes, from the limited data available, the size and spread of the Free Papua Movement, and attempts to give some indication of the ferocity of Indonesian counter-insurgency measures.

Some Australian politicians have been quick to deny that anything of consequence is occurring in West Irian. Others, along with even fewer of their British and American colleagues, and one or two Australian newspaper editors, have waxed indignant at the impropriety of Indonesian actions in West Irian, with predictable lack of effect. As yet, no (publicly available) evaluation of the seriousness of the movement has been made. Nor has any systematic account been given of the number killed, nor of the destruction of industries and villages. It is the aim of this article to begin to remedy that lack.

Perhaps the first sign to the outside world that trouble, rather more serious than that conveniently described as "tribal fighting", was occurring in West Irian was the appointment early in July 1968, of Brigadier-General Saiwo Edhie as commander of the Province of Irian Jaya. Australian-trained Edhie had played a major role in the 1965 coup, had formerly commanded Indonesia's...
elite commandos, and had led the military infiltration of Dutch New Guinea which commenced in July 1965. After one week as Provincial Commander, Edhie had begun to build up the Indonesian troop presence. By the second week of July, there were estimated to be 20,000 troops in West Irian (Sydney Morning Herald, July 14, 1968). (1)

Resistance was centred on Manokwari where John Ariks, a former seminarian, and Ludwig Mandatjan, a former officer in the Indonesian army and veteran resistance fighter from World War II, were leading the Arfak people against Indonesian military and administrative personnel. By this time, according to General Maraden Panggabean, resistance was already two years old, and 182 “tribesmen” had been killed (Canberra Times, August 14, 1968). The Indonesians claimed that a further 150-200 people armed with spears, bows and arrows and weapons dating from World War II, were involved in the uprising (Australian, July 19, 1968). By early August the 150-200 poorly armed men were holding down, in the estimate of former Bulletin editor Peter Hastings, (2) one of the three Australian reporters permitted in West Irian to cover the “Act of Free Choice”, six divisions (4,500-4,800) men (Australian, August 6, 1968). By mid-August, the Indonesians had revised their public estimate of the freedom fighters’ strength; Edhie reported that 9,000 had surrendered, and that another 2,000 remained at large (Mercury, August 23, 1968).

Public estimates of casualties for the 1966-68 period of resistance in Manokwari remain scarce. Nicolaas Jouwe, at that time a leader of one of the 13-15 nationalist factions in West Irian, claimed in February 1969, that 3,000 West Irianese and 576 Indonesians had been killed since 1963.

Mandatjan and a large number of his followers surrendered on January 1, 1969. Resistance appeared to be spreading despite Mandatjan’s surrender, and was reported still widespread in the area in July 1969, led by Mandatjan’s second-in-command, Fritz Awom. One observer placed the strength of the freedom fighters at the time of Mandatjan’s surrender at 10,000, a significant number of a population estimated at 800,000 (Bulletin, May 17, 1969). By the middle of 1969, resistance to the Indonesians appeared to be “spontaneous and geographically spread” and had included since 1964 unrest in most urban areas (Sunday Times, May 11, 1969).

Early in 1969, resistance had emerged on Biak Island, an area which had a long tradition of indigenous participation in government through local government and district councils and in the highlands, an area in which foreign incursions had been very limited. In May 1969, freedom fighters closed down five airfields in the central highlands, in an insurrection centred on Enaratoli near the Wissell Lakes (Courier-Mail, May 13, 1969). The Indonesians claimed that only forty people were involved in the uprising and denied “unconfirmed reports” that 600 people had been killed (Canberra Times, May 19, 1969). By August, the situation in Enaratoli was “growing worse”, the freedom fighters numbering an estimated 4,000 including thirty-five policemen armed with carbines and at least one bren gun (Australian, August 21, 1969). The movement leaders requested the withdrawal of Indonesian personnel from the Paniai Province so that the people could exercise their “free choice” without pressure.

Resistance was also crushed by detention. Prior to the “Act of Free Choice” there were “several hundred” political detainees in West Irian, “most of whom advocated Papuan Nationalism” (West Australian, August 18, 1968). These detainees included the Governor of West Irian, Elizer Bonay, who was imprisoned and replaced by Franz Kaisiepo, for allegedly being sympathetic with the freedom movement. (3)

As resistance intensified so the number of people fleeing to the eastern side of the island, administered by Australia, grew steadily throughout 1968 and skyrocketed in 1969. In December 1968, about a thousand West Irianese nationalists were living in “refugee villages” bordering the West Sepik District of Australian New Guinea (South Pacific Post, December 6, 1968). Later, two hundred were granted “permissive residence” in Australian New Guinea, but 1,000 applicants were refused. Freedom fighters claimed that refugees were being “chased away like animals” by Australian patrol officers, and a number of refugees turned back by them were killed by Indonesians. (4)

Despite this, 80 more fled in June, and in
July, 380 refugees crossed into the Bosset area of Western Province (Post-Courier, August 20, 1969). By the end of October, the Post-Courier estimated that there were 306 permissive residents and 1,168 refugees without permissive residence in the Territory. The Mercury (October 31, 1969) claimed that there were more than 1,500 refugees in the Territory and Hastings, writing in the Australian (October 31, 1969), estimated that 4,000 refugees had crossed since 1963, 1,700 of them crossing between January and August 1969.

As criticism mounted in the Australian press, and leading Papuan and New Guinea politicians such as Ebia Olewale (South Pacific Post, May 28, 1969) and Michael Somare (South Pacific Post, December 6, 1968) (see also National Times, February 23-28, 1976) began to add their voices to the growing tide of concern, Indonesian incursions over the border into Australian territory began to occur. Towards the end of April 1969, the Indonesians attacked a refugee camp on the West Irian side of the border, chasing the occupants across the border into the Patrol Post of Watung, where they fired on the Assistant District officer and his two assistants, who all promptly also fled. The Administration despatched 53 policemen and some army personnel to the border, but on May 15, Indonesian soldiers attacked and shot up a refugee village of 250 refugees twelve miles inside the border (South Pacific Post, May 28, 1969). This was followed less than two weeks later by an attack on an Australian Administration Patrol six miles inside the border. Four West Irianese carriers were killed (Australian, June 6, 1969). The Australian Administration's response to this provocation was to attempt to “desensitise” the border area. A refugee camp was established on Manus Island, and the refugees were gradually shipped out.

With the withdrawal of the foreign press after the “Act of Free Choice” little was heard of the freedom movement until early in 1976 when the Indonesians, perhaps because of the situation in East Timor, made a concerted effort to smash the freedom fighters once and for all. The resistance movement had been reasonably active politically in the intervening years, formally declaring independence on July 1, 1971, and establishing a Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) containing both interior and exterior elements. It was the PRG's Foreign Minister in Dakar, Senegal, Ben Tanggahma, who broke the news of the heavy offensive in January and February 1976. Tanggahma claimed that the Indonesian airforce and 16,000 Indonesian troops were involved in a massive operation carried on close to the PNG border in the south-eastern corner of the Jayapura Province. 1,605 villagers were reported killed. Le Monde (March 18-24, 1976) which covered the Dakar report noted “the fact that the names of prisoners were published makes one think that the engagements did take place”. Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, suggested that the PRG “could be remnants of a rebel group from the South Moluccas” (Post-Courier, February 19, 1976), and towards the end of the month, an Indonesian military spokesman claimed “.... that it is well known that the Irianese rebels are finished”.

In mid-1976 the freedom movement was again declared finished. Brigadier Imam Munander, Commander of the Province of Irian Jaya, announced that twenty members of the OPM (Organasi Papua Merdeka — Free Papua Movement) had surrendered and that 50 more had crossed in Papua New Guinea. Munander said that the movement was “reduced to scattered remnants and did not constitute a military threat” (Post-Courier, July 13, 1976). By January the following year, Munander reported that “1,400 rebels and their followers had given themselves up” during 1976 (Post-Courier, January 10, 1977). The Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Richard Woolcott, inspected the border area in the same month and reported “that all was quiet” and that there were “not more than twenty rebels” left. Resistance, however, continued in the cities and most noticeably in the central highlands.

Early in March, 30 West Irianese students were dismissed from the University of Cenderawasih after boycotting classes protesting the “indonesianisation” of courses (Socialist Action, April 8, 1977; Pacific Islands Monthly, June 1977), and tensions mounted as the Indonesian elections approached. April saw an attack on a police patrol post in the Baliem Valley leaving fifteen Indonesian police dead (Tribune, May 18, 1977). It was announced
shortly after that the parliamentary elections had been postponed indefinitely in some inland areas "for security reasons" (Post-Courier, May 20, 1977). What these security reasons were became clearer later in the month. Early in April, fighting had broken out in Arso, 18 kms. south of the capital Jayapura, and in Paget, 112 kms. to the south-west. Later in the month, fighting erupted in the central highlands at Kabokma, Pyramid, Wamemna, Magi, Kelila, and Maki (Canberra Times, May 28, 1977). Risings also occurred closer to Jayapura in Magio, Epmy, Skotiaho, Waris and Namola. The PRG claimed 15,000 highlanders were involved in the actions, with another 2,000 people involved in anti-Indonesian activities in Merauke (Tribune, June 22, 1977). During the month of May "the Baliem Valley was flowing with bodies and for six weeks many local people lost their appetite for fish" according to the Indonesian newspaper Kompass (Sydney Morning Herald, December 2, 1977). Denis Reinhardt who visited West Irian in August for the Nation Review reported further uprisings in the highlands in June, at Kelila, Bokondini and Wamena. Reinhardt noted that "half the villages in the Baliem Valley had been burned to the ground" (Nation Review, September 15-21, 1977).

Fighting continued throughout the year, particularly in the central highlands. "Intelligence sources" claimed in October that the freedom fighters controlled six districts encompassing seventy villages (Melbourne Herald, October 19, 1977), and even in December, eight months after the first disturbances in the highlands, Bokondini and Kelila were still critical. Uprisings also occurred toward the end of the year in Manokwari. The Indonesians transferred a battalion of the Dipenogora Division from East Timor to deal with the increasing unrest (Sydney Morning Herald, December 11, 1977).

Both sides claim that the number of Irianese who have died in the highlands rebellion has been substantial. Indonesian officials informed Reinhardt that 800-900 "rebels" had been killed in the highlands between April and August (Nation Review, September 15-21, 1977). Jacob Prai, until recently the leader of the main interior faction of the freedom movement, claimed in October that 198 freedom fighters had been killed in the fighting around Wamena and that two thousand villagers had died (Bulletin, November 12, 1977). Indonesian casualties remain undisclosed, with Prai claiming "several hundred" Indonesian troops dead.

By any standards and on the admission of both sides, the slaughter has been considerable. The foreign press, however, gave more attention in 1977 to two rather more spectacular events, the downing of an RAAF helicopter and the closing down of one of the largest copper mines in the world.

On July 29, an Australian helicopter crashed in West Irian killing the pilot, one of the Australian military personnel in West Irian engaged in mapping the Province for the Indonesian government. The 145 Australian soldiers were made up of 2 Field Survey Squadron assisted by elements of 2 Squadron (Canberra), 9 Squadron (Iroquois), 38 Squadron (Caribou), the Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit, 36 and 37 Squadrons (Hercules) (RAAF News, September 1977). A very large amount of extremely sophisticated material was involved in the mapping operation. Eighteen
Hercules sorties and one Navy LCH were required to position the requisite stores at the old US airforce base on Biak Island.

Less than two weeks after the helicopter crash, a RAAF Pilatus Porter was hit at Warok, 50 kms north of Wamena in the Baliem Valley. The Defence Minister denied claims that these events were attributable to the activity of the freedom fighters. The Iroquois crashed, he said, through a combination of bad weather and altitude, and the shell that holed the plane came from sources unknown. Shortly after these two incidents, the Australian contingent was withdrawn, returning only in March 1978 (Adelaide Advertiser, August 7; 15, 1977).

The Sydney Morning Herald correspondent in Jakarta reported on August 13 that a series of explosions on July 23 had damaged the installations of the US-owned Freeport copper mine at Mt. Ertzberg in the Carstenz Range in the province of Fakfak. Extensive exploration of the rich ore body had begun in 1967, and the deposit was estimated to contain 30 million tonnes of high grade ore. Construction took place between 1970-72 at the cost of US $160 million. The Amume people (who form part of the Damal population) received compensation only for food gardens directly disrupted by the mine’s activity. The people of Waa village, close to the proposed town site were the only group thus affected and were accorded minor compensation. In December 1972, the first cargo of concentrate was shipped to Japan, and the mine was officially opened by President Suharto in March 1973 (R. Mitton, 1977: 365-371).

The full extent of the damage inflicted in July 1977 was revealed by Nation Review reporter Reinhardt in the second week of September. The July blasts had caused more than A $1 million worth of damage, and the export of copper concentrate worth A $7.7 million per month was still being held up in September by the continual sabotage of the 10 cm. diameter concentrate pipeline running 120 kms. from the crushing mill to the port of Amamapere. Three settlements close to the mine, the squatter settlements at Tembagapura (“Copper Town”), the village at Waa and the village at Timika, were levelled to the ground by Indonesian troops following the sabotage. The Indonesian military had been using Freeport’s jet airstrip at Timika to bomb and strafe Ilaga and Akimuga in the highlands.

Resistance in the highlands appears to have continued at least until the end of 1977, and possibly into 1978. Kompass reported on November 28 that parts of the Baliem Valley had still not returned to Indonesian control, and “informed sources” in Jakarta claimed 200 villagers killed in an army sweep through the Baliem starting in December. All in all, 20,000 people are said to have been affected by the highland uprisings (Melbourne Age, April 25, 1978). The Indonesians also reported significant defection by West Irianese freedom fighters. Defence Minister General Maraden Panggabean claimed that 750 “rebels” and their families had given themselves up at Urania village in the central highlands and had admitted to the Indonesian authorities that they had been “deceived by separatist elements” (Post-Courier, February 13, 1978).

Heavy fighting erupted along the border following the kidnapping of seven senior military and administrative officials by West Irianese guerrillas in May 1978. For the first time Papua New Guinean troops were sent to the border “to arrest or assist in the arrest of an OPM supporters they encounter; and to attempt to free the hostages if possible” (Melbourne Age, June 13, 1978). Papua New Guinean police and military strength on the border peaked at about 500 in June (Post-Courier, June 21, 1978). The border operation, utilising five Bronco OV-10 counter-insurgency aircraft and six helicopters, involved, OPM sources claimed, 15,000 Indonesian troops. The Indonesians admitted to have 700-800 men in action on the border, with 3,000 on standby in Jayapura (Post-Courier, July 7, 1978; Melbourne Age, August 15, 1978; Sydney Morning Herald, July 29, 1978). No estimates have been made of the number of casualties incurred by the border operation, but at least one hundred West Irianese were killed (Melbourne Age, August 31, 1978). It is likely that the death-toll among West Irianese was high, and that in the short-term the Indonesians succeeded in their objective of routing the guerrillas and punishing those who supported them, for at the end of September, Jacob Prai and Otto Ondowame, the two most senior leaders in the largest guerrilla group, were arrested in Papua New Guinea by PNG police while waiting to meet
with Prime Minister Somare who was attending a cabinet meeting being held at the border town of Vanimo.

Since the arrest of Prai and Ondowame, guerrilla activity has declined along the border. A number of estimates of the OPM strength prior to the June-August Indonesian offensive, are available. The Indonesian ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Brigadier-General Roedjito, estimated their strength at 1,800, two hundred more than Australian intelligence in Port Moresby (Nation Review, September 1-7, 1977). This tallies closely with the figure of 2,000 supplied by Jacob Prai himself (Melbourne Age, April 27, 1978), and the 1,800 of the Australian Foreign Affairs Department (Melbourne Age, April 24, 1978). As the struggle escalated, Indonesian, Australian and Papua New Guinean public estimates of the number of West Irianese under arms, fell. Indonesian estimates dropped by 100-150 (Sydney Morning Herald, July 29; September 27, 1978), Australian and Papua New Guinean to 200 (Australian, June 13, 1978).

One thing is clear, the resistance was geographically widespread, and what is surprising in a country where ethnic divisions are so strong, the guerrillas in a particular unit seem to have come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (Geoff Herriot, A.M., ABC Radio, April 24, 1978). In terms of casualties, Jacob Prai claimed that 5,000 West Irianese and 3,500 Indonesians had died between 1976-78. A “senior P.N.G. security official” suggested that the true death-toll may be even higher than 9,000 (Geoff Herriot, ABC Radio News, April 24, 1978). Australian military personnel involved in the border mapping operation complained of “indiscriminate shooting of the local population”. The soldiers, from a service not generally noted for a tradition of humanitarianism, claimed that Indonesian troops were “gun happy” and that it was common practice for Indonesian troops “to jump from helicopters or transport planes outside villages and open up with automatic weapons fire in every direction”. The disquiet of the Australian troops was expressed overtly in a stoppage held to discuss whether or not the mapping team should continue to co-operate with their Indonesian counterparts (Australian Financial Review, July 25, 1978). Nicholas Jouwe, presently leading a small faction of West Irianese emigres in Holland, claimed that “leaders of the underground movements in West Papua New Guinea estimate that Indonesian forces have eliminated more than 155,000 Melanesians” between May 1963 and May 1977 (Pacific Islands Monthly, April 1978).

The Indonesian “scorched earth” reprisals in the Baliem Valley brought in their wake a flood of refugees across the Papua New Guinea border. About 290 refugees crossed in the second week of May, from Irambi village into the Western Province about 250 kms. north-west of Daru. A further 200 crossed soon after from Pou village into Wawol village in the Western Province. A further 200 may have crossed in the last week of May (Post-Courier, May 20, 25, 31, 1977). The significance of the May crossings lies not only in that a large number (540-740) crossed in such a short period of time (less than one month), but in the distance travelled by the refugees from the Baliem Valley to the border, through some of the most inhospitable country in the world.

The June-August 1978 Indonesian offensive, which was carried out right on (and sometimes across) the border caused an even larger number of refugees. In the first week of July about 400 refugees crossed into the West Sepik Province. A large number of them were from Waris and Kenandega, two villages close to the border which had been subject to ground and air attacks (Post-Courier, July 11, 12, 1978). The attacks on Waris and Kenandega had begun with strafing by Indonesian aircraft. Troops had subsequently moved in, burned down houses and uprooted gardens. As the people fled, they were fired on by Indonesian troops (Melbourne Age, July 26, 1978). By the third week of July, the number of refugees had risen to 650 with an additional 350 reportedly on the way. The head of the Papua New Guinea medical team treating the refugees reported that more than half of them were children under five, and virtually all of them had become sick in the trek to the border. Many of the children were suffering from malnutrition as well as malaria, tropical ulcers, scabies, pneumonia and grille (a skin fungus) (Melbourne Age, July 26, 1978).

This influx of refugees placed a heavy strain on existing refugee-coping...
institutions, and in August the United Nations High Commission for Refugees contributed US$100,000 for the construction of a camp at Oksapmin in the West Sepik Province, 145 kms. east of the border (Post-Courier, August 23, 1978). By October, Prime Minister Michael Somare claimed that refugees were costing his government K2,000 per day (Nation Review, October 6-12, 1978).

As with the Indonesian offensives of almost a decade before, the 1977 and 1978 clashes involved the violation of Papua New Guinean sovereignty by the Indonesian military. The first major violations occurred at the end of May 1977, when Indonesian soldiers crossed into the West Sepik and entered the village of Wainda, 5 kms. from the border. A Papua New Guinean villager was killed in the incident (Post-Courier, May 30, 1977).

The Indonesians again crossed about 5 kms. into the West Sepik Province on July 17, 1978. This time about 100 infantry soldiers occupied Mamabra village, about 50 kms. south of the north coast. The same day a helicopter landed in Amanab, 20 kms. from the border (Melbourne Age, June 22, 23, 1978). The P.N.G. Defence Force rushed a contingent of 100 men to the Kamberatoro area (around Mamabra village) on June 21. The Indonesian troops withdrew on the 21st or 22nd (Post-Courier, June 22, 23, 1978; Melbourne Age, June 23, 1978). (5)

In July the Indonesians commenced bombing raids along the border. Despite a request from the P.N.G. government that the Indonesians restrict their bombing to within five miles of the border, reports reached Port Moresby that Indonesian aircraft had bombed the area around New Sekoutiaho village, 5 kms. inside the border. 200 Indonesian troops are reported to have crossed following the bombing (Post-Courier, July 7, 1978).

On July 29, the Indonesian ambassador explained over the national radio in Papua New Guinea that (presumably in June) Indonesian troops had “mistakenly landed at the Seram area ..... due to bad weather conditions” (Melbourne Age, July 21, 1978). One week later, an eyewitness report appeared as a letter to the editor of the Post-Courier written by “a pure citizen of Papua New Guinea ..... to say that this (what the
Indonesian ambassador had admitted) is not true". The villager who signed the letter claimed that, in perfect weather, the village of Seram was reconnoitred by a small Indonesian helicopter. This was followed by a larger helicopter which in three trips off-loaded 45 soldiers, who pitched six tents and camped in the village for three days, returning across the border on June 17. He claimed that this exercise was watched “from the bush” by Papua New Guinea Defence Force soldiers (Post-Courier, July 28, 1978).

On July 17, Indonesian troops again crossed the border and destroyed a village of 10-20 houses variously reported as being 1-4 kms. inside Papua New Guinea. The village of Sawan was in the centre of a sago growing area and was not permanently occupied (Post-Courier, July 25; 26, 1978; Sydney Morning Herald, July 25, 1978). This report was followed by news of “at least three sightings .... of unidentified gunboats on the P.N.G. side of the border” (Post-Courier, July 25, 1978). Official government concern reached a peak on July 26, when Patrol Officers and government employees near the border were assured by the Prime Minister that their lives and safety were assured, and that “if the worst comes to the worst” they would be advised well in advance and arrangements would be made for them to be removed (Melbourne Age, July 26, 1978).

Indonesian activities in the border area continued through August, with the systematic destruction of those villages which were suspected of supplying food to the guerrillas. One report from refugees detailed the total destruction of Wambis village, about 50 kms. on the Indonesian side of the border and the slaughter of all but two of about 100 inhabitants (Melbourne Age, August 31, 1978).
Although these limited reports outline a degree of Indonesian intrusion not generally appreciated, it is likely that they understate the extent and brutality of the penetration. An Australian eyewitness resident in the area stated that atrocities were far worse than those reported by the media and the P.N.G. government (Nation Review, August 4-10, 1978).

The peoples of the Pacific greeted the invasion of East Timor with disbelief and apprehension, an attitude not so much appropriate to the events as indicative of a short memory. Seven years previously, in the name of decolonisation and in the interests of “regional stability”, West Irian was incorporated into the Republic of Indonesia. That the incorporation proceeded under a thin veil of legality and before the gaze of a powerless and generally indifferent United Nations, did not conceal what subsequent events have made even clearer, West Papuans do not wish to be part of Indonesia.

The tragic history of West Irian has been one of constant betrayal in which the interests of a small Melanesian population have been sacrificed to those of its larger neighbors, proximately Indonesia and Australia and ultimately the United States and Japan. Most recently, Australian-dominated Papua New Guinea has attempted to buy its own security at the expense of those once referred to by its leaders as “our Melanesian brothers”. The arrest of Jacob Prai and Otto Ondowame and the subsequent insistence by the P.N.G. government that the duo leave the Pacific area entirely, plus the threats to and intimidation of West Papuans living in P.N.G. are but the latest in a series of cynical acts suffered by West Papuans over the last fifteen years.

The exigencies of “realpolitik” and the weakness of the smaller Pacific nations in the face of its logic, make it clear that in a Pacific dominated by the needs of international capital there can be no such thing as a “Melanesian way” much less a “Pacific way”. Pacific Islanders’ attempts to shape the Pacific are overwhelmingly constrained by the needs of US, Japanese and Australian capital. Capital’s prerequisite need is for an untroubled Pacific. Pacific peoples like, perhaps, the Kanaks and Vanuaakuans who may disturb that stability can expect a fate similar to that being suffered by East Timor and West Irian albeit at the hands of a different power. They can also anticipate from the other large Pacific powers the same tacit approval, the same wall of silence.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Canberra Times (July 23, 1968), noting that “some estimates put army strength at a much higher figure”, settled on a much more conservative estimate of 9,000.

2. Peter Hastings has a long and interesting career involving close connections with Australia’s Joint Intelligence Organisation. A close personal friend of Gordon Jockel, former Australian Ambassador to Indonesia and founding father of JIO, Hastings was initiated into intelligence in World War II. Not only has Hastings taken a keen interest in events in West Irian, but also in pre-independence Papua New Guinea. He has lectured JIO analysts on Timor and other questions at the Defence and Strategic Studies Centre at the Australian National University. Since the Timor invasion, Hastings has visited Papua New Guinea and the Solomons. He had been described as “one of JIO’s main advisers” and “something of an intellectual trouble-shooter for JIO”. (Freney, 1977: 41.)

3. Bonay crossed the border on August 23, 1979, seeking political asylum from the P.N.G. government. At the time of writing there is no information on whether he will be granted it or not (Sydney Morning Herald, August 30, 1979).

4. Twenty-eight refugees were reported killed in two separate incidents. There were probably others (Courier-Mail, November 20, 1968; South Pacific Post, June 11, 1969).

5. The Post-Courier report and the Melbourne Age report were contradictory, the Post-Courier suggesting that the Defence Force troops were much quicker to the scene and that the Indonesians had crossed into P.N.G. later.

REFERENCES


The last set of Economic Notes touched on the important question of the pricing of Australian electricity to be used in the expanded production of aluminium. That issue, and the broader issue of the pricing of Australian energy sources, deserve closer examination.

There is reason to believe that energy for the aluminium industry will be (is being) supplied at prices very close to costs of production, whereas Australian crude oil is being sold at prices far above, and bearing no relation to, the costs of extracting it. The pricing principles being applied in the two cases are quite different — and are quite inconsistent with each other. Both do, however, directly support the profits of some of the world’s largest transnational corporations.

The conversion of alumina into aluminium (the smelting process) requires vast amounts of energy. Australia has the advantage of being able to satisfy the demand for a large amount of electric power from its deposits of low-sulphur steaming coal and at a cost — it is estimated (1) — much less than that at which electric power can be supplied in the US, Europe and Japan.

Generating capacity has to be expanded very rapidly, however, particularly in Victoria and NSW. It is apparently likely that some new smelters will come into operation before the electricity authorities can cope with them comfortably. (2) If all proposals so far made for new aluminium smelters to go ahead, they would increase the demand for electric power by something in the order of 1,900 megawatt hours — a substantial percentage of all Australia’s present generating capacity.

The generation of electric power is, in all states, the responsibility of a statutory authority. What that means, in part, is that state governments can and do determine the rates which are set for various categories of users. Particularly where the statutory generating authority is also the distributor, each state government can, and does, employ the rate set for electric power as an inducement to attract corporations to locate plants within its domain. Competition between states has therefore produced a pressure to minimise the cost to industry in general of its use of electricity.

It is probably significant that the rates charged to aluminium producers at present are not made available to the public. Odd pieces of information gleaned by newspaper reporters suggest that in Victoria and Queensland, anyway, the rates negotiated for smelters soon to be established are
Gippsland Basin/Esso-BHP


Source: Stuart et al., op. cit., p. 15.

Notes:
1. The graph depicts calendar year totals.
2. 1979 and 1980 figures are estimates.
3. Post-royalty revenue to Esso-BHP is exclusive of company tax and costs of production. The royalties subtracted are for all "oil, and other hydrocarbons".
appreciably below the cost of producing the electric power (3). In other words, “it may well be that aluminium producers are being, or are to be, subsidised by other users of electric power. This is not curious in itself, of course, but it is curious in the light of Fraser’s oil pricing policy.

There is an argument commonly put about that the domestic prices of commodities that can be internationally traded should reflect international market prices (4). The argument, when applied to fuels, is that international prices for domestic use reflect the value of exporting foregone: the fuels used domestically could have been sold abroad at ruling international market prices. To justify their consumption of fuels, domestic industries must be profitable enough to absorb international prices; and households consuming fuels must be prepared to pay what other households would obtain if the fuels were exported instead.

Now the argument is an absurd one; but, be that as it may, it has been incorporated by the Fraser government into its defence of setting the price of domestic crude oil at the level of international prices. And if the argument applies to the pricing of crude oil, surely it also applies to the pricing of the coal burned to supply the electric power for aluminium producers and hence to the pricing of that energy.

It would be pure sophistry were any federal government spokesperson to argue that there can be no federal control over the pricing of electric power. Regulations with respect to export, foreign investment, taxation, foreign borrowing by state governments and so on can all be used to indirectly effect a particular pricing policy. In fact, it suits the present federal government well to have the states competing with each other to attract aluminium production (or any international producer). Fraser is committed to a restructuring of Australian industry by transnational corporations and he has chosen to rely largely on expanded production and investment in the mining sector for generalised recovery of the economy. (5)

It was earlier claimed that the argument in favor of “world parity pricing” is an absurd one. It is absurd in that it assumes that income accruing to corporations exploiting fuel resources is eventually channelled to workers and corporations put at an initial disadvantage by the pricing policy. As suggested in the last set of Economic Notes this is a highly uncertain event. Many local industries faced with having to meet high energy costs reflecting “world parity pricing” must become unprofitable; yet there may well be bars to the direct investment of any salvageable funds into the exploitation of fuel resources itself.

The corporations in control of the exploitation of fuel resources are large transnationals, in the main, and the latter are most unlikely to want to reinvest in activities within Australia other than the expansion of their mining activities; even the Australian corporations involved (BHP and CSR) seem to be concentrating on their mining projects to the detriment of their manufacturing. The employment available in expanded exploitation of fuel resources will assuredly be much less than has been available in the manufacturing industries rendered unprofitable by high energy costs.

Given this state of affairs, the “world parity pricing” argument is little else than an attempt at legitimising the transfer of surplus plus an increasing proportion of the wages previously achieved by workers to a few enormous corporations owned substantially abroad.

Talk of the windfall taxation revenue (6) accruing to the federal government as a result of the “world parity pricing” of crude oil has tended to obscure the extent to which the details of the policy benefit the oil corporations. “New oil” or oil coming from fields said to have been discovered since September 1975, commands the price of imported crude less a levy of $3.00 per barrel. So does a percentage of “old oil” (from fields discovered before 1975). (7) The rest of the old oil is priced in a complicated manner which reflects rises in the price of imported crude. (8)

The percentage of old oil that would command the full world price (less the levy of $3.00 per barrel) was to have progressively increased under arrangements determined in 1977. However, by mid-1979, the federal government had decided to allow the percentage to increase only to 50 per cent in 1980-81 and thence to maintain the size of the base it then had for petroleum taxation. (9)
Nonetheless, "the producers' increase has been particularly sharp since the policy changes introduced in the LCP government's 1977 budget". (10)

Were the "world parity pricing" argument to be applied to the case of electricity generated from Australian steaming coal, one would expect to see rates very different from those apparently now being negotiated with aluminium producers. Appropriate rates would not only cover the export price of steaming coal but would yield the statutory generating authorities at least an average rate of profit.

In fact, the rates evidently being charged are set at levels which allow the surplus value created by electricity workers to be appropriated by the giant users of electric power. This parallels the behaviour of the state in capitalist countries throughout the world, (11) namely, a growing tendency to underwrite the profits of the largest of the transnational corporations. Such behaviour is likely, however, to exacerbate two problems in particular.

The underwriting of corporate profits by means of setting low rates for state-provided utilities in itself worsens any tendency towards a fiscal crisis of the state. That is to say, it worsens any tendency towards there being a gap between revenue accruing to the state and the expenditure of the state. (12) In the second place, the support of the large transnational corporations is effectively support for a mode of control of critical investment decisions which acts in an essentially arbitrary manner from the point of view of any single country.

The logic of the current international integration of production under the auspices of the large transnational corporations ignores the needs of relatively small-scale capital within a particular, integrated economy and, furthermore, systematically undermines the position of workers in all economies. The most immediate problem for a conservative government is to protect the profitability of relatively small-scale indigenous capital and hence an important part of its electoral base.

The Fraser government's oil-pricing policy and its apparent attitude to Australian aluminium production are somewhat anomalous from a political point of view. In respect of the oil-pricing policy, in particular, there exists the possibility in principle of a federal policy which strongly supports Australian manufacturing. The price of oil (and the prices of LPG and natural gas) can be set at levels which give not only aluminium production, but other, small-scale manufacturing activities, a competitive advantage in energy costs. And it is clear that this can be done while still assuring the oil corporations adequate net returns and while still providing for the financing of further exploration or, more importantly, of research into the substitution of other energy sources for oil.

— Gavan Butler,

20.2.80.

FOOTNOTES

1. In the order of 1.5c/kwh in Australia, as opposed to 3c/kwh in the US, 4c/kwh in Europe and 8c in Japan. See *The Age*, June 1, 1979.


5. Recent large capital inflows are no indication at all that Fraser's strategy for recovery is working. Most commentators agree (as of the time of writing these notes, mid-February) that the inflow results largely from the speculative search for gain from the upward revaluation of the Australian dollar.

6. Estimated by the Hon. W. Hayden to be in the order of $3,000 million in 1978-79, as reported on the ABC News, 18.2.80.


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.


12. See ibid, for a full analysis of this tendency.
My Brilliant Career is the kind of film that makes you weep for lost opportunities. Beautifully photographed and transcendentally acted, what an immense pity that it isn’t about anything very much … or, to be more exact, anything very much Australian. Like many recent Oz films (Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Getting of Wisdom) it is picture-book pretty, but despite the glowing Australian countryside and deliciously rich turn-of-the-century colonial interiors, the film is famine rather than feast.

The psychological pseudo-feminism which the film’s makers seem to think suffices for a plot simply cannot carry the whole, and it becomes clear that My Brilliant Career is simply the start of someone’s brilliant career in international marketing: the film carefully packages those aspects of Australian which will travel best to overseas up-market audiences, insatiably demanding “history” as local color.

My Brilliant Career — like James Ivory’s The Europeans — is in the same genre as television’s “The Forsyte Saga” and “Upstairs, Downstairs”. The “star” of these efforts is the historical period itself and its display of British taste, recreated with impeccable attention to detail and buckets of money, every dollar of which can be seen on the screen. In My Brilliant Career, for instance, we simply wallow in luscious interiors (watered silk, damask, and cut glass) and landscapes that are cinematic celebrations. MBC also suffers from what critics are content to call “the absence of good screenplays in Australia”. But I would argue that in a genre grounded in the display of production values, something as complex as a screenplay would simply get in the way. Plot, in this genre, is of little interest. The narrative usually presents some strong characters involved in contests of will (Sybilla’s headstrong pursuit of a writing career/rejection of marriage in My Brilliant Career, the fortune-hunting countess’ encounter with New England canniness and obduracy in The Europeans) and this allows the often brilliant cast to get their teeth into what are basically extended cameo parts. Judy Davies (Sybilla) and Sam Neill (the rejected suitor) are superb in My Brilliant Career, so good, indeed, that the historical factors which are of such importance to the characters in the film’s terms — the claustrophobia of colonial mores and conventions, the unremitting, draining barbarism of scratching a living in the outback — are presented in a mechanical way, lacking any real dynamic force or presence. History, in this film, is merely a backdrop, providing attitudes for the characters the way the property department provides local color.

But it is true to say that there is a little more to MBC than Cobb & Co. coaches, the shed dance, and the swagman on the trail, and the harsh realities of late Victorian Australian life are not totally ignored. The grinding outback life of Sybilla’s mother who married for love — a baby a year in a bush shack — is grimly, but too briefly, portrayed. We see a good deal more, however, of Sybilla’s well-off aunt, who also married for love but now, abandoned by her husband, lives a life of genteel suffocation in the beautiful colonial family home.

The ease, comfort and culture which this life offers Sybilla if she marries the wealthy and patient farmer is so beautifully presented (in more celebratory camera work), that her rejection of such an alliance seems downright perverse. Particularly after her sojourn as governess to the McSwats, an immigrant Irish family to whom her father owes money, Sybilla’s dedication to a “career” is simply inexplicable. One would have thought that after the horrors of McSwat life (incidentally, this film’s treatment of the ignorant and unlettered is almost gratuitously crude and unsympathetic), of teaching civilisation in a pigsty, almost anything would be better. Where, precisely, does Sybilla’s dedication to a “career” and “culture” stem from?
The only answer available in the film is in Sybylla’s exceptional character, a quirk of her “individuality” and “genius”. (Admirers of Little Women and Horatio Alger please note.) And Miles Franklin, the author of the autobiographical novel upon which My Brilliant Career is based, undoubtedly believed in her own special spark as well.

But we don’t have to, especially in a film which itself subterraneously argues a contrary determining factor for Sybylla’s life and aspirations: the all-pervasive impact of British imperialism on Australian colonial life. As the whole film is at pains to lovingly display, colonial Australia is shot through with British taste in fashion, in wallpaper, in manners, and in ambition. It is no surprise then, given the weight of this imperial presence, that at the end of the film Sybylla pursues her career by sending off a manuscript to a British publisher. Career, for colonial Sybylla, is not a disembodied daydream, the product of individual whims and fancies. Rather, it is structured — particularly within colonial upper-class life depicted in the film — in a society infiltrated and permeated by British values — values which not only regulated obedience (mores and manners) but resistance (Sybylla’s aspirations) as well.

It is ironic that the circumstance which provides so much of this film’s glory — British colonialism, and its cultural lodgement in the country houses of Australian gentry — should be so absent when we attempt to account for Sybylla’s “career”. But then the film’s makers aren’t really interested in insights into Australian experience. Instead, the view seems to be that young-girl-makes-good in an exotic (but not too exotic) locale will satisfy the overseas market nicely, the crypto-feminism will satisfy any trendy thinkers in the audience, and Australians will love it because it is set in Australia. Let’s hope that somewhere in the ranks of Australian filmmakers beats the heart of someone who actually cares about this country and its history.

— Kathe Boehringer.

ERIC BURHOP
AN APPRECIATION

The obituary notices in January paid tribute to Eric Burhop the distinguished Australian nuclear physicist. A Fellow of the Royal Society, and Head of the Physics Department at University College, London, Eric was also the President of the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW) and was himself an indefatigable worker for the causes of detente and disarmament. References were made to his key role in the negotiations between Frederic Joliot-Curie and Bertrand Russell in 1955. These negotiations resulted immediately in the so-called Einstein-Russell Manifesto against nuclear weapons. The subsequent result was the setting up of the Pugwash Conferences, bringing technical experts from East and West together and, in the opinion of many, playing a major part in averting nuclear disaster.

Behind these impressive achievements were some deeply-held attitudes which must command respect even if not complete agreement. Eric was an experimental physicist who never lost his faith in two great experiments of humanity: one the pursuit of science and the other the social experiment inaugurated by the Russian Revolution in 1917. Consequently his two pet phobias in recent years were the irrationality and mysticism of the anti-science movement and the prejudice and hostility of the anti-Soviet
movement. With his experience of the 1930s Eric could recognise both movements as stepping stones to fascism and thus as threats to world peace.

Although the strength of his views gained him the reputation in some quarters of being a hard-line technocrat he was by no means intransigent. At one high point in his career, in July 1975, he presided over a major symposium in Moscow on Scientists and Disarmament. It was the week that the Soviet and American satellites, Soyuz and Apollo linked up in space and it was a crucial time for his beloved cause of detente. On the last night, the week’s work by over four hundred scientists from sixty countries was to be amalgamated into a Symposium Report and an Appeal to the Scientists of the World. But it became apparent that many participants had reservations or even objections to particular points: there were cracks that could not be papered over. Unprecedented! Surely everyone was in favor of motherhood, disarmament and peace? What was to be done?

With only a few hours remaining for the final Report to be printed and ratified in the final Plenary Session, and under great pressure from the dominant Soviet and United States blocs for a single Statement by the Symposium, the easy way out would have been to set the dissidents aside and go ahead. However, discussions went on in rooms all over the Sputnik Hotel until, at about 2 a.m. and with the guidance and approval of Eric, six statements of reservation were at last agreed upon and printed together with the Final Report. The depth of the challenge to Eric’s diplomatic skill is shown by the statement from one group opening with the blunt assertion “True disarmament cannot come about solely through detente between the governments of the superpowers.” Adding a new and perhaps more directly individual dimension to the Appeal they argued that it is the duty of scientific workers to help produce a society where science can serve the people. This could be done, they claimed, “by taking up the struggles of workers, women, and oppressed national minorities in our own countries and by supporting the struggles of Third World countries for national liberation and their right to self-determination. We can only win people to the active support of disarmament, which is a demand from the everyday reality of people’s lives, if we join them in their struggles.”

The full statement threatened to divide the symposium at its very climax. Eric Burhop must have been reminded of the tense moment twenty years earlier when Joliot-Curie argued with Russell that nothing in the Manifesto should deny the rights of national liberation movements to fight, with arms if necessary, for their independence. But Eric achieved a compromise solution that was acceptable to all participants and the result surely enhanced the credibility of the Symposium.

Recent years have seen a prodigious output of talks and articles from Eric on current problems in science and society. He was particularly active in opposing development of the neutron bomb and, as WFSW President, sent strongly worded letters to the relevant Heads of State.

He capped his distinguished professional career by spending a year as one of the high priests of particle physics at the European Centre for Nuclear Research, CERN, in Switzerland, and then going to New Zealand to deliver the Rutherford Memorial Lecture for the Royal Society. He returned to England via Australia in December 1979, when many of his friends enjoyed, for the last time, alas, the excitement of a discussion with him.

My own last controversy with Eric indeed arose from his experience at CERN and his wholehearted enthusiasm for Big Science. We both agreed that the cost of such an enterprise was not the point at issue. I held that humanity was being deprived of a wealth of talent that would better be deployed in other ways; he admitted some truth in this but felt that the organisation of CERN was probably the highest point yet of human endeavour, and if once taken down would probably never be built again. We promised each other to widen this debate by writing two articles for the WFSW journal Scientific World. With his tolerance and fairness in mind, I shall now have to present both viewpoints as well as I can on behalf of this fine scientist and fearless fighter for peace.

— Peter Mason, February 19, 1980.

DISCUSSION

Just for the record, I must correct the claim of Roger Coates that Ian Turner was the first manager of the Australasian Book Society. That honor, I am afraid, belongs to Will Wannan.

Back in 1951 when Bill was helping to launch the Society, Ian was still serving his proletarian apprenticeship with the Victorian Railways as a carriage cleaner.

It is worth noting that many years before the Gang of Six and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution were combining to proletarianise China’s intellectuals, the Communist Party of Australia was already doing much the same thing here. Ian, fortunately or unfortunately, let him decide, was either the model or the victim or, perhaps, both.

— Joseph Waters.
classics.

Museum hands down.....

They beat the British.