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**Eco-socialism**

Environmentalists and socialists met together for a weekend discussion in late 1984 to critically evaluate their common interests and the possibilities for united action.

Among the many issues raised in the workshops was the need to develop an environmentally sound economic strategy based on broad-ranging community discussion.

The meeting ended with decisions to establish groups in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales which would both continue discussion around these issues and plan and organise future conferences and publications. Over the coming year the groups hope to organise state conferences leading up to a national forum in late 1985.

For more information, contact Jack Munsey on (02) 265 9056.

Linnell Secomb

**Sandinista election victory challenges US**

On November 4, the people of Nicaragua went to the polls to elect a president, a vice-president and a 96-seat National Assembly. The elections went ahead despite the serious counter-revolutionary threats to the country.

The CIA-backed contra attacks continued on the northern border and in the south from Costa Rica. Washington continued its barrage of misinformation about the Sandinista revolution and claimed the elections to be a farce.

However, international observers have concurred that they were impressed with the fairness of the election procedure.

Gaby Gottwald, an MP from the Green Party in West Germany observed that “contrary to the elections in El Salvador, those held in Nicaragua have been free, equitable and secret with no political control or pressure by the Sandinistas.

Nevertheless, US Secretary of State George Shultz told a meeting of the Organisation of American States that “we are still waiting” for free elections in Nicaragua.

Eighty percent of the eligible population voted in the November 4 poll and, of these, 66.9 percent voted for the Sandinista party, the FSLN.

As well as winning the presidency and vice-presidency, the FSLN won 61 of the 96 seats in the National Assembly, with the Conservative Democratic Party (PCDN) trailing by a wide margin and receiving 14 seats.

The electoral system is organised on a regional representative basis, but some seats are allocated according to the overall national vote that parties received.

Accordingly, a number of smaller parties also have seats: Independent Liberals 9; Popular Social Christians 6; Communist Party 2; Socialist Party 2; and Popular Action Movement — Marxist Leninist 2.

Since the elections there has been a marked escalation in the activities of the US to overthrow the Sandinista revolution.

The day after Reagan was re-elected, two US ships were sighted in Nicaragua's territorial waters near the Pacific port of Corinto trailing a Soviet cargo ship. They later withdrew after a fishing boat with US citizens on board sailed out to protest against their presence.

The Reagan administration has not ruled out military intervention and has received support from many Democrats.

The solidarity movement in the US is stepping up its efforts to avert such US intervention and meanwhile the people of Nicaragua are making preparations for the worst possible scenario.

With US manoeuvres in Honduras and naval exercises in the Caribbean to continue over the next few months, the Nicaraguans have good reason for such preparations.

David Wooster

**Palestine Support Groups**

**Victoria**

Palestine Human Rights Campaign (Victoria), PO Box 275, Carlton South 3053.

**New South Wales**

Palestine Human Rights Campaign (Sydney), PO Box 240, Warrawong 2502.

**ACT**

Palestine Human Rights Campaign (ACT), PO Box 95, Lyneham 2602.

**Tasmania**

Palestine Solidarity Committee, PO Box 85 Lindisfarne 7015.

**Western Australia**

Palestine Human Rights Campaign (WA), GPO Box S1463, Perth 6001.
Political Parties and Mass Consciousness

At the Marx Centenary conference on "Prospects for Socialist Change in Australia", held in Melbourne in April 1983, John Alford gave the opening speech on the topic "Class in the 1980s". He dealt with the opposing theoretical concepts of "false consciousness" and the Gramscian idea of "hegemony".

From the discussion he concluded that a new orientation away from "the propagandist organ and the correct-line political party" was necessary, if we were to get socialist change in Australia.

Given the importance of these strategic concepts, and the practical event of the resignations from the CPA in Melbourne in April 1984, it is worth taking a closer look at John Alford's argument, which was printed in ALR No. 84, 1983, and is also available on tape.

The argument was crudely simplified, for the sake of impact, as Alford himself noted. This makes it difficult to really come to grips with. Firstly, he dealt with the question: why do the ordinary people acquiesce in the social order of capitalism?

He says that because the left has based its answer on the concept of "false consciousness", and has adopted a propagandist approach, it has failed spectacularly, and the proof is in its present small size.

Whatever else may be said about this argument, it is not historical. The history of the Australian left, and the CPA in particular, cannot be boiled down to one single strategic idea, and many factors are involved in the present parious state of the left, and of the mass consciousness of workers in relation to the capitalist class.

John Alford set out a more complex theory of consciousness, that of "hegemony", as elaborated by Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks, in order to show the weakness of the concept of "false consciousness". He argues that consciousness is composed of three elements: the material world and social relations, common sense, and ideology. "False consciousness" only comes to grips with the element of ideology, he says: "ideological arguments don't even touch the well-springs of experience and common sense which underpin popular conservatism".

It follows then that the left must stop bashing away at ideology alone, and adopt an approach which is oriented to people's experiences and common sense, as it appears to them, to change the issues we address, as well as our language and arguments.

Above all, the left needs to develop working class "organic intellectuals" able to connect day-to-day reality with the direction of the whole society, and build alliances which connect up all social groups: that is, a new type of cadre and a new strategic approach.

There are two things here to take issue with: firstly, the way Alford talks about the distinction between ideology, common sense and false consciousness; and, secondly, the conclusion he draws that the left no longer needs a "strident" newspaper or an organised political party in the tradition of Lenin. Both aspects, I believe, are at variance with Gramsci's own ideas about hegemony, politics, and the role of the working class party and press.

Ideology and Common Sense

Alford describes common sense as the "diverse, contradictory, ill-formed fragmentary opinions and perceptions" people hold within their view of the world; whereas ideology is "more systematic than common sense ... more or less worked out bodies of thought about what exists, what's possible and what ought
to be in political terms”. Ideologies justify the position of particular social groups or classes, e.g. liberal democracy and free market systems of thought support certain phases of capitalist class history.

As Alford would have it, “common sense” is constructed by people from the material and social conditions of day-to-day existence, and ideology is constructed out of common sense.

This is far too simple, and Alford himself contradicts it when he discusses the very active role of the capitalist class organic intellectuals in organising “hegemony”. As he says, the media’s “function of organising hegemony involves selecting some aspects of reality and common sense and suppressing others ... as the basis for ideological formulations”, for example about the dangers of unionism ... “the task of selectively emphasising is ideologically driven”. It is a more systematic version of common sense from their view of the world, and their criteria of selection correspond to their position (including their high pay).

This ideological element of the capitalist hegemony in fact helps to construct the “common sense” of the ordinary working people. In many cases, “common sense” is a collection of highly ideological positions. A good example is the ideology of white supremacy which is still “common sense” – though now generally debunked among scientists and other educated layers – that black skin denotes inherent inferiority, that warm climates produce lazy, unintelligent cultures, that somehow European ascendancy is entirely natural and the poverty of the Third World is similarly inevitable.

Another example is the idea of male supremacy held by many women and most men in our society — men are better because they are stronger, or more intelligent, or more like god, or the breadwinner, depending on which particular religious, pseudo-scientific or secular ideology is involved.

Another example is the way older Catholics simply repeat the straight ideological teachings of the Church about good and evil, about sex, about suffering, as part of their “common sense”.

The big one is the lack of a “working class” common sense among very broad parts of society, precisely because of capitalist hegemony being directly interested in suppressing this idea.

Gramsci recognised false consciousness as part of the historical movement of individual and class self-awareness from passive acceptance of inherited ideas to active critical marxism. He described it as “contradictory consciousness”, whereby a worker or a mass of workers could verbally assent to the ideas of the ruling class and, in their active working practice, actually live by a different conception of the world, a socialist one.

In Gramsci’s view of hegemony, the level of “common sense” itself is part of the hegemony (as Alford states), and equally so, the business of building working-class hegemony involves creating a new “common sense”. This strikes quite a different note from Alford’s argument which urges the left to tune-in to the “common sense” view of ordinary people in a much more uncritical way, and also diverts attention from the role of ideological arguments in helping to change that “common sense”.

This is so, even though Alford made a very strong criticism of capitalist intellectuals in their function of organising hegemony from a class position antagonistic to that of the people they are influencing.

The Role of the Party and its Press

A lot of revolutionary blood has flowed under the bridge since Gramsci crystallised his thoughts in Mussolini’s jails from 1926-37. At that time, he elaborated a very strong role for the revolutionary party and its press in developing a new intellectual leadership which could defeat capitalist hegemony in advanced capitalist societies.

It is often said that the present strength of the PCI owes a lot to its Gramscian heritage. How does Alford draw an opposite conclusion from Gramsci’s ideas on hegemony?

The answer to that question must have something to do with Alford’s view of the potential of the left and socialists within the ALP. However, he does not deal with this at all in his paper. Without some political-organisational perspective like this, there is no necessary logic to his conclusion, just as there is no necessary truth in his assertion that the role of the Australian left and the CPA has been basically propagandistic.

However, Alford, like many others, cannot fail to be suggestive about the need for a new strategic approach from the left, and a reassessment of the role of parties such as the CPA, if we are to overcome the particular Australian type of capitalist hegemony that does not elicit the ongoing consent of the mass of workers to its exploitative, racist, sexist, environmentally destructive and warmongering order.

On this point, Gramsci has quite a bit to say:

One should stress the importance and significance which, in the modern world, political parties have in the elaboration and diffusion of conceptions of the world, because essentially what they do is to work out the ethics and the politics corresponding to these conceptions and act as it were as their historical ‘laboratory’. The parties recruit individuals out of the working mass, and the selection is made on practical and theoretical criteria at the same time. The relation between theory and practice becomes ever closer the more the conception is vitally and radically innovatory and opposed to old ways of thinking. For this reason one can say that the parties are the elaborators of new integral and totalitarian intelligences (unified, all-absorbing intellectual layers) and the crucialities where the unification of theory and practice, understood as a real historical process, takes place. (Prison Notebooks, The Study of Philosophy.)

The real problem in Gramsci’s view is about combining the socialist vision with practical activity so that both the vision and political work become more and more clearly defined and unified. This is carried out by parties which have the role of intellectual leadership or organising hegemony in interaction with classes and social groups.

I think Stuart Hall gave some sort of reply to Alford’s wholesale rejection of the “propagandist organ and the correct-line political party” in his contribution to the “Class in the 1980s” topic:

If you ask me why economic class appears at the level of politics and political struggle in a form which is not reducible to that of capital versus labour, you have to introduce those things precisely which represent class politically. Now the class is not given its political consciousness by its economic position. It is represented by the existing political traditions, through the existing political institutions and organisations. Representation is an active two-way process ... We hear formulated...
for us by a newspaper, or a party, or somebody to whom we always talk, (emphasis added) a set of views in which we begin to recognise the position or interest which we ourselves have.... Class .... is the structuring principle of determinacy on our life in the area of material production but does not guarantee the political unity of a class .... only the conduct of political struggle guarantees this .... the business of constructing political programs .... is the essence of politics .... and requires much new thought.

The material conditions and social relations of working people are the very stuff of the concept of "working class". This is equivalent to "economic class position". This position gives rise to a part of "common sense" which at best is oppositional to the capitalist class.

Our present experience is that the capitalist class has its ideological and political unity ensured by an array of institutions — economic, political, legal, social, ideological — staffed by a veritable legion of "organic intellectuals". These forces also organise as much consent as possible from the working class and small capital, and even groups as alienated as Aborigines, and accommodate social movements, especially feminism and environmentalism, as much as possible.

Where necessary, force is applied (more or less).

As Alford put it, working class propagandists find their pumps overwhelmed by this situation. But I suggest that the picture is much the same for working class organic intellectuals, seeking ways to unite the class, build alliances, and really change all the elements of the capitalist hegemony over to our favour.

What probably keeps both forms of left activism going is the never-ending change and movement within the capitalist societies we are a part of — always challenging, always enraging, always offering new opportunities to develop the socialist movement.

But, I insist, the struggle requires well-organised mature leadership — a party — if it is ever going to succeed.

To quote Stuart Hall again:

If we look not only at those (Winter Palace) moments, but at all those long important periods in between, we will find that politics consists of bringing together in some kind of dominant or ruling bloc precisely different elements of different classes and linking them with a variety of popular movements which arise from contradictions in other spheres of society apart from the strictly economic, and that until this link is made, political forces, political struggles, political settlements are never achieved. That is the actuals of the instruments of political, ideological and social struggle and contradiction.

Peter Murphy works as a journalist with Tribune.
Exploring Socialist Renewal

The recent Special Congress of the CPA came at the end of a two year party discussion on "Prospects for Socialist Growth in Australia". This topic, of course, has implications beyond the CPA, and the Congress recognised that many more socialists need to be involved in discussions and joint action to realise both theoretical and practical possibilities for socialist growth.

While the calling of the Special Congress eight months ahead of the next scheduled Congress resulted from the resignations of some 40 leading and other members in Victoria and Queensland earlier in the year, its main purpose was to draw some conclusions from the debate that has been going on in the party and reach agreement on some of the implications arising from it. There was unanimous agreement among the 107 delegates on a number of major questions, and on others there will be ongoing discussion and debate. While those who had resigned were not condemned for doing so, there was no support for their idea that a viable socialist party, to the left of the Labor Party, was not necessary or possible in the Australian political climate.

The immediate perspective agreed on unanimously by Congress, which opens up very positive possibilities for future work, was to begin a process of discussions and forums with others on the left. The purpose of this will be twofold: firstly, to meet together as equals with "all those left activists who are genuinely concerned to develop a more effective socialist alternative ... to discuss more effective joint activities and initiatives around current issues"; and secondly, to search for "the most effective forms of organisation and activity which will best serve the goals of the socialist movement", including "the potential for a re-formed socialist party".

Congress stated, "In the first instance, we propose that a series of socialist forums and discussions be held in as many centres as possible ... These would be held at grass roots levels and in all areas of political work and interests, as well as between representatives of organisations and trends of socialist opinion." In the process of these discussions CPA members "will base their contributions on the CPA Program and policy statements", but the party indicates its open-mindedness about policies, strategies, methods of work, and organisational forms and asks others to be similarly open-minded.

Congress reaffirmed without opposition that in the long term "a democratic socialist society will require a revolutionary and democratic transformation of the state, and of economic, social and personal life". While recognising that various progressive mass movements contribute their own ideas, forms of action and organisation to the process of social change, Congress agreed that an independent socialist party is essential in fighting for mass support for radical social change.

Socialist advances can only be democratically achieved if there is widespread popular support for socialist alternatives, and today the ALP (even with its shift to the right) enjoys much of this support; but on its own the ALP is unable to develop socialist consciousness, Congress said. One reason for this is that there is a large constituency in the ALP who are not socialists and in seeking to change this situation, the left inside the party risk retaliation from rightwing and conservative forces in and out of the party. Therefore, in the absence of developed mass support for their position, they risk electoral disaster for their party.

"This makes the development of extra-parliamentary mass movements the key to creating new possibilities for change and to developing mass support for more far-reaching changes."

For these and other reasons only an independent socialist party can begin to build support for socialist alternatives which can ensure that attempts by the left in the Labor Party to influence policy don't threaten the electoral viability of the ALP with a return to the reactionary climate engendered by conservative governments.

"We need," Congress decided, "a party which provides a focus for socialists to develop a strategy to build this support in every sphere of social and political life." The historic failure of the Labor Party to tackle fundamental problems and issues and the rightward shift of the Hawke government in more recent times makes the task of building such a socialist movement and party more urgent. The many dedicated and sincere socialists who are members of the ALP are regarded as comrades in this struggle for socialism.

It was not suggested that a significantly larger socialist party could challenge the ALP electorally in the immediate future, but such a party would participate in electoral activity while placing its main emphasis on building extra-parliamentary mass work and movements.

The continuing social and economic crisis of capitalism, including mass unemployment, the threat of global...
Joyce Stevens attended the Special Congress of the CPA held in Sydney in November. In this report, she outlines some of the important decisions made at the Congress. ALR will continue to publish discussion on the future of the socialist movement, including issues arising from the Congress.

In the immediate period a number of specific issues were nominated as being ones which could create more favourable circumstances for united work and build bridges between mass movements with diverse priorities. These include the ALP ACTU Accord, tax reform, social welfare, equal pay, nuclear disarmament and anti-uranium, racism and land rights, unemployment, environment and resource management.

It is beyond the scope of this report to traverse all these issues, but if we take, say, the Accord, it is possible to see that it holds both big potential for the development of political activity and consciousness, as well as many difficulties. Implementation and extension of the Accord has already been given wide support within the labor movement, but not without some opposition, and there are still unresolved problems about how to make it the property of the majority of even the militant workers. However, the Accord has helped to partially maintain wages, particularly for the lower paid, and has acted as an impetus for some unions to intervene in economic planning at a national level. Yet the relationship between advances for some of the paid workforce and continuing unemployment and escalating profits pose real problems for the left and for full implementation of the Accord.

Continued pressure for implementation and extension of the Accord is nevertheless seen as the most viable immediate strategy. This means building up pressure around some of the issues so far neglected, such as full maintenance of living standards; effective price control, effective job creation, taxation reform to redistribute wealth (including through the social wage), and renegotiation of the centralised wage-fixing guidelines so that claims for equal pay for women can be dealt with. While an Accord predicated on a Hawke-style consensus also poses problems for the left and labor movement, the building of campaigns and struggles which defend and extend this agreement seems an essential part of creating any mass-based alternative to this "consensus".

The main areas of political debate at Congress centred on attempts to define the relationship between class struggle and other contradictions such as race and sex, and the nature of marxism and its relationship to other theories of oppression.

The main Congress document attempted to pose these issues as critical ones for the socialist movement without pronouncing on areas still open to theoretical debate. Concern was expressed, however, that this meant giving away the working class, class struggle and marxism.

The Congress draft, however, (which was endorsed) speaks of "a strategy which promotes intervention by popular forces in all the issues of the day, with the aim of expanding the control of working people over their lives in the workplace, community and home, and in national political affairs. Democratic control of production, services and the economy is crucial, and will depend on the extent to which workers' organisation has developed the confidence and experience to challenge the rights of capital" (that is to engage in class struggle). Similar references appear elsewhere in the document.

What Congress resisted were attempts to describe class struggle "as the prime antagonism in contemporary society" preferring to see the exact relationship between class and other contradictions as problematic. The further development of theoretical and political understanding of the relationship between class and other social contradictions is an urgent problem for all socialists.

Congress took a similar position on debates over the relationship between marxism and other theories suggesting that a socialist party "must be based on a scientific approach to socialist theory, drawing on an open marxist analysis expanded by feminist, anti-racist, environmentalist and other theories". The party also draws on the analyses, views and concerns developed by the labor movement, the feminist, disarmament and other progressive and people's movements.

There are many important aspects of this and other debates that are beyond the scope of this article. However, it was a very good omen for the future that at the end of a number of strong debates, Congress was unanimous in its agreement on proposals for exploring socialist renewal.

Joyce Stevens is an activist and writer in the women's movement and is a member of the CPA national committee.
Any Publicity is Good Publicity?

The Communist Party has attracted an unusual amount of media exposure over the past 18 months over various issues. In this article Greg Giles analyses this coverage looking at the problems and benefits associated with it.

It is rare indeed in this age of 90-second grabs and bingo-based media monopolies to see the Communist Party getting a mention in the mainstream media.* But it has been an unusually newsworthy 18 months for the CPA.

The sixtieth anniversary of Tribune received substantial coverage, and this was followed closely by the landmark decision of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in the Rix case. Then, in April this year, came the resignations from the CPA in Victoria and Queensland.

The press took up the resignations with glee. They had an important effect in "mainstream" politics because of positions some of the resignees held in trade unions, and "mainstream" politics is news. But the press on this occasion took the unusual step of airing the complex issues underlying the resignations. Bernie Taft was given the rare privilege of a lengthy piece in The Age explaining "What happened to the communist dream"; it was also carried by the Newcastle Herald. The Bulletin carried a long article looking at the inner party discussion on the prospects for socialism, and spoke at some length to CPA members and the Victorian resignees.

The Age and Newcastle Herald both allowed a "right of reply" to Bernie Taft's article. It was no coincidence that the most detailed analytical coverage of the prospects discussion was allowed to surface because it involved a split in the CPA. Newspaper proprietors will not let that sort of opportunity pass.

On re-reading many of these articles I was constantly reminded how the complex issues involved suffered under the combination of poorly informed journalists, sensation seeking sub-editors and the need to make even subtle questions "short and newsy".

The newspaper coverage of the Special Congress, before and after, reflected this deadly combination. The Congress was largely a discussion of ideas, strategy and future possibilities. To outsiders there was little "hard news" in that. One solution to this is to invent some "news". "New name and facelift to tidy up Communist Party image" is how the Sydney Morning Herald previewed the Congress — despite specific statements from CPA officers that a name change (let alone a facelift!) was not on the Congress agenda. This became even more specific — "Communist Party to change name" — by the time it had reached The Age.

They Got it Wrong

Apart from the name change furphy (which prompted at least one CPA member in Sydney to ring the day after Congress to inquire in all innocence as to the CPA's new name), there have been some other clangers. The "Half Awakely" award goes to The Age journalist who interpreted Tribune's policy of "providing a voice for the left" in this way:

"Since Tribune abandoned its attempts to stick to official party edict, it has devoted its pages to such diverse Marxist factions as the CPA, SPA, CPA (M-L), the SWP, the anarchists and the two man party called the Communist Left."

But it is not only the journalists who get it wrong. The sub-editor is responsible for the "slant" of the story and the headline, and they often...
advance the "juiciest" bits to the front of an article even if it has little importance in the context of the story. This is where the fixation with a non-existent name change began.

It is also the reason for the headline on a reasonably straight article in The Australian about Tribune's anniversary which proclaimed "Black over new image angers Tribune bosses". Shock, horror!

It is a peculiar thing, but I cannot remember The Australian ever referring to BHP "bosses" or CRA "bosses".

**Not Right, Not Wrong — Just Silly**

There is a special brand of journalism which deals with complex issues by trivialisation and ridicule. The end result may be the same as distorted or inaccurate reporting, but it deserves a special mention because the motivation behind it is conscious and deliberate.

"Communism is a laughable thought for an Australian political system" the Adelaide Advertiser editorialised. According to them, the CPA "coyly planned to drop the word 'Communist'" because with "the fragmented Hegelian-Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist-Maoist-etcetera mish-mash of ideologies that is communism today, it must be getting pathetically lonely on the extreme left".

Another expert in the capitalist-school-of-trivialisation is that erstwhile editor and libertarian anarchist, P.P. McGuiness of the Financial Review. In an editorial which was supportive of the CPA's victory in the Rix case, he nevertheless managed to describe left parties as "a source more of amusement than concern"; as attempting to "give intellectual respectability to essentially non-rational notions"; of "contributing a good deal to the pernicious influence of 'radical' political economy (a kind of left-wing creation science)", and of advocating "what one wit has described as Land Rights for Black Lesbian Whales".

Perhaps any anarchist who can write editorials like that has the chance of becoming editor of the Financial Review. That's what freedom of opportunity is all about in this great country of ours.

**Is It Worth It?**

Not even a good journalist can guarantee a fair coverage of issues on the left. Editors, sub-editors and news editors can chop and change stories to suit their particular slant. After all, you can't really expect a fair go in the capitalist press, can you?

Despite the gremlins and outright distortions in much coverage of the left, I should stress that some is very good (see Michael Stutchbury's coverage in the Financial Review, 5.11.84) and even the most twisted articles contain much that is true. The great reading public would have learnt that Tribune and the CPA are independent of the USSR or China; that we have a democratic model of socialism; that we support women's, Aboriginal, gay and environmental issues as well as the labour movement; and that we are seeking greater unity on the left. This information would have gone to millions, rather than the thousands we usually reach.

Of far greater concern than the inaccuracies and trivialisation is the common attitude that the left is not newsworthy at all. Whether we like it or not, getting into the newspapers, on the radio, or — best of all — on TV, gives a legitimacy in the media-glazed eyes of the public. If the coverage is "over the top" there is always a letter to the editor or a right of reply to correct the mistake(s).

In general the left is too shy of publicity, and I look forward to the day when, like the Italian Communist Party, CPA Congress is broadcast live on national TV.

There is a saying in the media world that "any publicity is good publicity — as long as they spell your name right". I don't know if Brian Aaron?Arons?Arrons?Aarons? would agree, but I hope that when and if a new socialist party is established in Australia they choose a name that even sub-editors can spell correctly.

* I have not considered either radio, TV or "alternative media" coverage in this article. Coverage of events or these media was quite extensive, however I don't have recordings of the material. Also, the alternative media who, in many ways, give the left the best coverage, do not have the mass audience enjoyed by commercial outlets. At least, not yet.

Greg Giles is a Sydney organiser for the Communist Party of Australia. He worked for two years on Tribune as a journalist and sub-editor.
David Brown enters into the complex debate on "organised crime" and "corruption". He discusses the question of definition; analyses the various pre-conditions of organised crime networks; looks at the role of the media in constructing news; points out the dangers associated with the tendency in the current debate to reduce everything that happens to an effect of corruption; and finally stresses the need to change practices and relations rather than merely expose individuals.

Organised Crime

Changing Practices, Markets and Relations

A n increasingly volatile political debate has been building in Australia in recent years around the issue variously conceived as "organised crime" and "corruption". Previously confined to the legal sphere and treated as a discontinuous series of individual allegations to be dealt with through the courts, the debate has opened out to constitute a daily staple of contemporary Australian political life, with significant political effects.

It is a difficult and complex debate to enter, for a range of diverse issues are thrown up. The political affiliations of some of the figures who have been named have further complicated reactions. There have been some strong disagreements about the appropriate responses and considerable differences of approach and emphasis have emerged within the legal left. In this brief note I would like to make a few general comments about the way the debate has been constituted. My starting point is that the field of "organised crime" or "corruption" is diverse, discontinuous and complex, that it cannot be easily or mechanically appropriated either by progressives or conservatives and that an important area of struggle lies in the terms, categories and concepts within which the debate is constituted and structured. The note does not attempt to address specific issues or events, but rather to suggest some general themes.

The Question of Definition

F irstly, there is the issue of definition. How are we to constitute our object of inquiry? One of the leading protagonists in the debate, crusading journalist Bob Bottom, in his recent best-seller Without Fear or Favour, offers the following different ways of conceiving organised crime within the space of one rather slim text: a form of unrestrained power, a cancer on Australian society, an octopus, a two-headed monster, an adversary that is outside and threatening to Australian society, nameable individuals who occupy particular positions of power within a variety of institutions (a series of "Mr Bigs") and a structure of alliances between particular institutions such as the police, politicians, judiciary and criminals, with an existence like a corporate body over and above any particular individuals.

The thread which unifies these inconsistently conceived and contradictory objects is moralism: the world is ultimately divided into "goodies" and "baddies". The struggle against "organised crime" or "corruption" is part of the wider struggle between good and evil. It may well be personally reassuring to conceive the issues in such essentialist and religious terms. But such conceptions are hardly rigorous, they do not assist us in grasping the complexity and specificity of the issues, they preclude the possibility of a structural analysis and they feed into conservative ideologies that have been historically ranged around issues such as crime, punishment, imprisonment etc.

Similarly in relation to the category "corruption", there are real dangers in treating this as a self-evident and unitary form of behaviour or relationship. "Corruption" tends to roll up a diverse range of differentiated...
and specific practices, from the direct receipt of payment for services rendered to a variety of forms of what we might call “influence peddling.” Some of these practices are part of the currency of politics in particular historical contexts. This is not to excuse or defend such practices, but to suggest that they should be addressed within their political and historical context in all their specificity rather than within broad moral categories.

Analysing the Pre-Conditions

Secondly, we need to analyse the various pre-conditions, or “conditions of existence” of organised crime networks. Foremost among these are the economic conditions, namely the constitution, circulation and regulation of a market in illegal goods and services which generates profit for the suppliers. It is the very illegality of the goods and services offered which is both a major source of profit and a barrier to alternative, accountable and more social forms of regulation.

There is an irony here which must be brought home to the moral and political conservatives in the strongest possible terms: their opposition to various law reform initiatives like the legalisation or decriminalisation of current illegal goods and services in the gambling, prostitution and drug areas, is one of the major preconditions of the continuance of current patterns and networks of crime, organised or unorganised. Remove illegality through law reform and you remove much of the source of profit, monopoly and stand-over as well as opening up the field to social and accountable forms of licensing and regulation.

Both the judiciary and the government in NSW have faced serious allegations of corruption.

Among the political preconditions of crime networks is the historical legacy, especially in NSW, of accommodations and interconnections between the financiers and organisers of these illegal markets, their employees and enforcers, sections of the police, particularly in specialist squads and in high ranking positions including past Commissioners and Asst. Commissioners, and sections and individuals in all major political parties especially the Liberal Party under Askin and more recently, the right wing of the NSW ALP. Here again, an attempt to change the preconditions generating and sustaining organised crime must confront the issue of changing political alliances and practices. This would involve, among other things, an attempt to shift sections of the left in the ALP away from the closed, defensive, manipulative “numbers” oriented style of politics which mirrors the right wing.

And finally, one of the major social and cultural preconditions of organised crime is the historically constituted popular support for certain illegal activities such as SP gambling. Whatever position we may take as to the desirability of such popular ideological support the point is that we must take it into account in both attempting to understand and change our object of inquiry.

The Social Construction of News

Thirdly, we must devote some attention and analysis to the dominant forms through which debate about organised crime/corruption is constructed. These forms, predominantly the news media monopolies, are not “neutral” or “technical” agencies for the dissemination of “information”. The news media produce and construct the product “news” for circulation and exchange in a commodity market. The Australian media are highly monopolised. One does not have to adopt a crude conspiratorial and reductionist approach to recognise that journalistic news production takes place within certain constraints and limitations. These constraints are not only those of monopoly ownership patterns and prerogatives, but a complex of technical and social conditions under which news production is organised: time constraints, concepts of newsworthiness, the relationship between the media and “primary definers”, the processes of signification, hierarchical authority structures, etc.

The point here is that certain codes, practices and forms of representation think us as much as we think them, we think through them and thus they are an active ingredient in the debate. Such a recognition of news as socially constructed through the institutions,
instruments, practices and relations of its production, forces us to adopt a critical attitude to defensive journalistic claims to be merely "reporting the facts", "revealing the truth", etc. in terms of some general "public right to know". It should also evoke in journalists an attempt to evaluate the political effects of particular journalistic accounts and an acknowledgment of the wider context into which their work is inserted. The pre-established, although frequently unacknowledged, interpretive framework which largely structures the meaning to be given to particular journalistic accounts, should be opened up to analysis, the implicit made explicit.

Reductionism

Fourthly, we should be aware of a tendency in the current debate to reduce everything that happens to an effect of corruption. Such reductionism contains a number of dangers. Firstly, it obscures the mundane, routine exercise of economic, political and social power. Bourgeois hegemony is constructed out of the normal routine operation of an economic system predicated on the division of society into owners and non-owners: the "dull compulsion" of the economic. The basic relation of exploitation embodied in the heart of a capitalist social order wreaks its divisive and destructive effects through the normal legal operation of the commodity market; it does not depend on "corruption". Similarly, the dominant form of exercise of political power lies in the daily, routine, mundane networks of influence in the establishment boardrooms and clubs.

A related effect illustrated in the discussion of a number of alleged "fixes" involving prominent people obtaining favourable treatment through various forms of improper influence is that much of the discussion has cast these cases against a perceived norm: an ahistorical, universal "equality before the law", enjoyed by widely different class subjects. Thus, the apparently radical expose notion of "double standards" of justice, one standard for those with influence and one standard for everyone else, actually ends up promoting one of the most conservative elements in dominant legal ideology. The point is that there are many different standards of justice depending on a host of factors: the nature of the charge, the class, sex, gender, national, cultural, etc. background of the defendants, the outcome of a number of pre-trial processes and negotiations, the adequacy of legal representation and so on. The numerically and legally most significant "fixes" are the routine, daily practices of police verbal, the institutionalised production of evidentiary material in the form of alleged confessions in the secret confines of police stations, structurally outside effective mechanisms of regulation and accountability.

The reduction of events to an effect of corruption and the conception of corruption as a unitary, continuous pattern of relations within which corruption can be solved by a war, a crusade, against individual "criminals", whether organised or unorganised.

Transforming Practices

Finally, we should remember the historical lesson: reform movements in the criminal justice arena that have pinned their hopes on exposing, prosecuting, punishing individuals, have had little success in transforming the basic pattern of relations within which individuals carry out activities. Some of these individuals may well be unpleasant, immoral, brutal, etc. and should be brought to book for particular criminal actions. But if we are serious about changing the relations within which these, or other largely interchangeable individuals operate, we must attack the broader economic, political and ideological conditions that sustain and generate these relations and structures. We do not make history under the conditions of our own choosing. Progressive forces seeking to intervene in these complex and difficult debates should not abandon a commitment to historical and structural analysis and to a study of the political economy of the market in illegal goods and services. In seeking to force change in a progressive direction we should struggle to change practices, markets and relations rather than holding out the illusion that the question is one of individual morality or "corruption" which can be solved by a war, a crusade, against individual "criminals", whether organised or unorganised.

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**Combinado Textil de Santiago de Cuba**

For the first and only time during our stay in Cuba, we are subject to strict security — no cameras, no bags.

The factory is a prime target for CIA saboteurs.

In the foreground a welcoming committee from the complex is clustering tightly. Perhaps 200 people: women favouring bright bandanas to cover rollers in their hair, some of the men affecting cord or denim peaked caps, all — save for a sprinkling in white lab coats — wearing T-shirts and jeans.

Behind them, standing the law of perspective on its head, shrinking the group to a tiny vari-coloured mass, is a huge, functionalist topography of flat, bland surfaces and blind factory walls. The textile complex cuts a great raw swathe across a Santiago hillside through the detritus of an urban slum.

My focus is pulled back to one of the figures, a director, who, with the aid of a hand-held megaphone, is telling us that the complex, just brought on line, consists of five integrated factories: three textile units, one mechanical plant and one industrial service and energy plant. The annual output of 80 million tonnes of cloth (40 million tonnes cotton, 40 million tonnes polyester fabric) is produced by a workforce of 7,000, two thousand working in the cotton plant.

We are bussed to one of the textile units and, after another security check, are ushered inside. The scale of the machinery is daunting, the nature and degree of automation more so. Plant items bear the stamp: “Made in the USSR 1982”. The complex is part of a Russian economic aid package.

All skilled processes are automated, as is the movement of materials through the stages of production. Labour appears of two kinds. Most workers are engaged in one form or other of machine minding. On the floor of the weaving section the clatter of the mechanical looms is ear-shattering. Workers stand in rows, several metres apart, hooking up broken threads, clearing Huff. Talk is impossible. Few wear ear plugs. Hidden from view from the floor, in the mezzanine control consoles and computer rooms, smaller groups of technicians monitor and synthesise the process.

The largest textile factory in Cuba, the largest in Central America, and one of the largest in the world, this is a showpiece of Cuba’s industrial growth — and of the New System of Economic Management and Planning instituted in the mid 70s. For me, it also concretises a cluster of crucial contradictions in the achievements of Cuban socialism.

Cuba’s continued survival as an independent national entity is dependent on it achieving a large degree of economic autonomy and diversification. To what degree this achievement may be gauged socialist will depend on what theoretical tools the Cubans are
brings to economic practices, how they are being deployed, what new ones can be produced out of the specifics of the Cuban situation.

In the struggle against underdevelopment, Cuba's industrial growth, averaging 6.25 percent per annum since 1961, has latterly been spearheaded by light industry, its expansion averaging 23 percent per annum since 1978 being in large part due to textiles.2

At the international level, whether this quantitative expansion will allow Cuba to make a qualitative leap out of relations of economic dependence is a moot point. The newly set up textile industries — exemplar of Cuba's latest attempts at industrial diversification — are not supplied by any indigenous cotton growing industry. While highly desirable potential suppliers of raw materials exist within the Caribbean Basin — Nicaragua, for instance — I was told that current supplies are from the Eastern Bloc, particularly the USSR. Moreover, while a large potential market exists in Latin America, Cuba exports the majority of its textile products to COMECON countries. Certainly, such exports to COMECON countries are part of repayment schemes built into trade and technological aid agreements generous to Cuba. However, a significant effect is that such arrangements, far from building long term Cuban economic autonomy, integrate Cuba into a new structure of dependence. Cuba's textile industry, like her sugar industry, seems destined to become part of COMECON's international division of labour, subject to COMECON priorities of planning and methods of organisation.

Within Cuba, the ways in which industries are being set up or restructured, and the mode of technologies being introduced, points to a new form of dependence at another level. Reorganisation of central planning and management structures, technical assistance to mechanise the sugar industry, to develop the nickel industry, to increase the electricity output, to modernise the oil refineries, and to reorganise enterprise planning methods through the use of computers — all are part of economic strategies to combat underdevelopment produced in tutelage to Soviet and COMECON specialists. The Santiago textile complex is a classic case.

What has been imported here is not just machinery but a whole technologically specific structuring of relations of production. The textile complex utilises capital intensification, computerisation and automation in such a way as to structure the factory's relations of production in a neo-capitalist mode all too familiar to first world industrial workers. The pattern is one of a pyramid of work with direction flowing downwards from an apex, where planning is centralised, where "synthetic" intellectual and management skills — together with advisers — are located, to intermediate strata of technological workers, and thence to a shop floor base at which level only basic, easily learned manual skills are required.

At the base the work is alienating, repetitive and potentially hazardous. I could have been standing on the weaving floor of Bond's in Sydney.

At another level, a further complex of contradictions and potential problems seems to emerge. What is going on here is not a process of "de-skilling", as in first world countries. Rather, there is another process at work. On one hand, certain technical capacities are being developed as new forces of production which have the capacity to challenge the very relations of production presently being instituted. On the other hand, imported theoretical tools are being reproduced locally which do not appear to have the self-reflexive capacities to deal with such a challenge.

Let me try to spell that out. Cuba has made massive achievements in education, first of generalised literacy, then of universal junior secondary levels. However, the quantitative emphasis in the earlier years, given limited educational resources, was not able to be balanced by attention to the quality of much higher or specialised education.1 Over the last five years attempts have been made to redress this. In interviews with the Rectors of Santiago and Havana Universities, I was told that university priorities were now very sensitive to training relating to economic development. The government's adult education policy makes similar attempts to relate study to work skills. However, results still appear limited. As Beauvais puts it, "the massive development of education has had little effect on labour productivity".
The new: Modern sugar loading operation.

Thus, after 25 years, the Cuban economy must still work to increase productivity using a technologically unskilled workforce. The swing in education policy at technical and university levels to redress the balance may produce a potentially more sophisticated workforce over the next few years. However, the "new workers" will confront over the next 20 years — the work life of whole industries now being established — structures of work relations as typified by the Santiago complex. For these workers, a potential contradiction lies in the ironies of "over-skilling", where discontent emerges from the insertion of people into jobs where they possess more capabilities and expectations than the work relations permit.

Meanwhile, the production and reproduction of divisions between mental and manual labour via imported industrial structures must create a fledgling elite of technicians and planners, hence a division of interests among the workforce. It will also create pressure for a further fine tuning of educational curricula to produce knowledges limited to the requirements of a technically stratified workplace. Certainly, overall, the possibility exists that these divisions will replicate the sorts of contradictions already experienced, not only in capitalist countries but, as documented by Bahro, in Eastern Bloc countries, especially the USSR.

What sort of responses may be likely to such contradictions? Answers I could elicit from Cuban guides and advisers did not sound promising. Significantly, I encountered problems at a basic theoretical level. There was an a-critical emphasis on the development of the forces of production. Relations of production were regarded as unproblematic epiphenomena which would evolve benignly with that of the forces of production now that control was not with capitalists but with the workers' state. There was no knowledge of western marxist critiques of Soviet marxist "orthodoxy". The latter was being reproduced, via "Marxism-Leninism" classes, as a neutral, value-free "science" at every level of the educational system, following — like all technical courses — syllabuses imported from the USSR.

But at this stage another fundamental division which could be the source of future contradictions must be taken into account. If the practices emerging from industrial work relations appear in themselves inadequate for the task of transforming those relations, and if the theoretical tools in deployment seem set in the function of acceptance, if not legitimation, this is not the case in the other major category of Cuban social reality. Concepts of collective control and potentially transformative practices are definitely in play in civil and political life.

In this sphere, popular control and decision making operate at the basic level of Cuba's system of decentralised civic administration. Principles of participation, accountability and recall, and collective responsibility inform the practice of CDRs (Committees in Defence of the Revolution: neighbourhood or locality committees) and Assemblies of People's Power (municipal councils). Community experience and involvement within this practice are wide-ranging. Delegates elected through the CDRs to Assemblies of People's Power, together with the sub-committees co-opted, are responsible for the running of "schools and educational activities; the radio stations, cultural events, bookstores, movie theatres; the restaurants, hotels and tourist centres; internal trade; gas stations and auto repair shops, garages and bus terminals; the post offices, telegraph offices, and press offices; the hospitals, polyclinics, and health centres; the centres for purchasing agricultural products, distributing produce; the grain mills; the power stations; the courts and the system of justice - and much more".  

In so far as the ongoing, collective practice of social democracy and popular control within this sphere is a real "experience, the resultant insights, dispositions and
knowledge must sooner or later overflow from the
category of civil life into that of working life. There they
will confront the theoretical "orthodoxy" that orders the
concepts at work. Unless there is prior insight at party level
(see section below, Maps of the Forest), as they come
into contradiction with that order now being legitimated,
they will be arraigned as heretical and threatening. We
have, in the development of differential, contradictory
experience in each category, the elements of a fundamental
crisis in Cuban socialism.

The Kaolin Factory, Isle of Youth

We visit the Kaolin Factory in Nuevo Gerona, the
port of the Isle of Youth, which is a small Cuban
island 100 km west of the mainland. Among the
models of the island's economic reconstruction, this is one
of particular interest. Of the 1,000 workers here, 80 percent
are women and the factory director is a woman. In a front-
office interview, she tells us that the factory has an annual
output worth $US6 million and that 45 percent of
production is exported.

During a tour of the factory, a number of things strike
me. This is no example of a creative artisans' workshop.
The mode of production here is what Marx would
categorise as "manufacture": skilled potters - all women
- turn, throw and paint pottery mostly by hand or by
working with moulds. Productivity has been intensified
and rationalised by bringing potters together literally
under one roof. Their skills have been developed and
specialised using a division of labour on assembly lines
corresponding to traditional stages of pottery production
for each commodity. Economies of scale have been
achieved further by the use of large kilns and multiple
moulds.

That the factory is export-oriented is obvious. Women
knock from moulds hundreds of identical teapots - alien
artifacts to their makers, who drink only short black
coffee. Others, surrounded by huge flocks of tiny,
ornamental ceramic fowl, hand paint monochrome
plumage. I watch a woman, one of her hands steadying the
other, painstakingly write endless "Cuba"s on miniature oil
urn souvenirs. If this is art for export it is certainly down-
market, kitsch end. Others produce inexpensive
plain white household crockery for the domestic market.

On my bookcase at home, facing me now as I write this,
stands my memento of that particular unit of socialist
labour: a small pottery pigeon (perhaps dove?). I had
watched a woman expend her labour power in the
exclusive and repetitive task of painting three brown brush
strokes on each side of thousands of similar birds to accent
the bulge of furled wings, placing daubs of brown to
delineate eyes and beaks. quickly and crudely inscribing
"Cuba" on the pedestals that had perfunctorily replaced
feet. Who, I wonder, and on what criteria, had determined
that she truncate her skills on such an object?

Export credits, whether in dollars or roubles, are crucial
for the purchase of capital goods necessary for Cuba's
industrialisation and its struggle against
underdevelopment. However, on the model of
international division of labour presented by this factory,
Cuban industry develops no autonomy but ties itself into
the pattern of producing second-rate commodities for
COMECON "Woolworths". In doing so it moves itself into
a position of dependency akin to that of other Third World
countries, where industrial sites are exploited to provide
junk goods for the First World masses. Moreover, despite
differences in size and kind of technological investment, at
the Kaolin Factory, as at the Santiago textile complex, the
nature of the relations of production and the estrangement
of the workers from the objects they make generated by
those relations seem set to produce in their workforces an
alienated consciousness very much at odds with the
consciousness which has the potential to be generated out
of their experience of social relations in civic life.

Another, problematic aspect in the development of a
multiply divided Cuban collective consciousness which I
glimpsed at the Kaolin factory was a division between the conceived and actual role and status
of women.

Since the Cuban Wars of Independence in the 1860s, the
struggle of women had been hound up in the movements
for national liberation. Cuban women gained the right
to vote in 1934 after the overthrow of the Machado
dictatorship. Under pressure from the newly organised
trade union movement and the communists, the Cuban
Constitution of 1940 put the principle of equal pay for
equal work on the books, together with equal civil rights
for married women and laws against sexual
discrimination. These weren't enforced until after the 1959
revolution.

In 1974, a series of laws was passed including a Family
Code which legislated against discrimination against
women and children, and for equal rights and
responsibilities for men and women within marriage. The
Code gave joint control over family property, equal
responsibilities for child-rearing, education and even
housework. It "established the rights of children to
stability, care, love, health and education". Laws 1100
(1963) and 1263 (1974) generalised social security and,
among other benefits, extended maternity leave benefits
to all working mothers, provided breast-feeding time
during the working day and free pre- and post-natal care services
and materials. These laws were formulated in a process
of discussion and analysis with working women and with the
mass organisation, Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas
(Federation of Cuban Women, or FMC) to which four of
every five Cuban women over 14 belong.

The FMC has:

... participated in every mobilisation, campaign and day to
day task of the revolution: building the militia ... organising the
literacy campaign, educating peasant women and domestic
workers for productive jobs, encouraging women to take
productive jobs outside the home, supporting the educational
and public health campaigns and raising the political
consciousness of Cuban women.

The core of the FMC's work ... is the involvement of women in
productive work - a prerequisite for the full equality of
women.

The FMC carries out a struggle against old cultural
attitudes, habits and prejudices of men and women in the
various organisations:

in the trade unions, to open up jobs for women and to convince
male workers it is in their interests to do so; in the CDRs ...
work out problems in the home and help provide services that make it easier for women to leave the house; in the government, to provide services for working women and young children, and to convince reluctant administrations to hire women; and in the Communist Party, to carry out educational campaigns against old prejudices.\(^{16}\)

Juridical equality and the work of the FMC in political, civil and union organisations are part of the impetus to change conceptions of the role and status of women. The effects of new social relations developed over two generations in the education system and in the continuing work brigades reinforce this impetus. Most Cuban secondary schools are “Schools in the Countryside”, co-educational boarding schools, collectively producing their own food, operating under a degree of school-community self-management, and supplying units in the huge mobilisations of people for harvest work. Experience in the egalitarian practices of these communities, in the supra-familial organisations of the CDRs and youth movements, together with sex education programs, has dramatically undermined the prejudicial influences of the family — and possibly the old role of the family itself. In an interview with representatives of the FMC which I attended, it was claimed that sexual crimes and prostitution had “ceased to be social problems”.

However, it is in the actual nature of women’s involvement in work that I suspect major ongoing contradictions will continue to unfold. That this tends to happen behind the backs, so to speak, of those dedicated to the struggle for women’s equality, seems due to at least two factors. One is the blind spot — well known to western marxist feminists — in orthodox “Soviet Marxist” theory regarding women’s exploitation; and this is the only body of theory available to Cuban women. The other is the belief that women’s emancipation has been achieved in all areas of life. In actuality, often the very plans to integrate women into the workforce (women now comprise over 30 percent of the Cuban workforce) have reproduced sexual discrimination by a sexual division of labour which has gone unrecognised.

At the Kaolin Factory, I asked the woman director why women were the majority of this particular workforce. Was it part of some policy of positive discrimination?

“No,” she replied. “One of our fundamental tasks was to find jobs for women. Here, practically all the jobs are appropriate to women.”

What did she mean?

“Well, the women were used to making pottery utensils at home. It’s natural for women to work with the earth, with clay.”

A familiar pattern seemed at work. The old village sexual divisions of labour had been naturalised via sexist, essentialist concepts of “women’s nature”, generalised, romanticised and even internalised by women planners coming from an urban background, thence industrialised and reproduced at the Kaolin Factory.

In that instance at least there seemed no qualitative improvement in women’s work; rather, now women, as well as men, were drawn into the general web of impoverished relations of production.

Although women make up 30% of the workforce, they are still relegated to traditional areas of labour, paid or otherwise.

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It remains to be seen whether these contradictions become overt, and whether the double experience of women coming out of the work of the FMC and the practice of popular power in civic relations will provide alternate strategies for the liberation of the workplace.

Maps of the Forest — Party, Planning and Practices

Marx argues that capitalism itself develops, in its technological and material innovations, characteristics suitable for its transformation into socialism. Out of capitalism's development of the cooperative form of the labour process potential agents for such a transformation are created. While, under socialism, material production is still dominated by necessity, its defining feature is its transformation of capitalist relations of production into ones in which collective control is exercised over the production process. It is only via such collective control that any form of social emancipation is possible. Its achievement is a necessary — but not sufficient — condition for the further transformation into communism. An implication is that the thus defined freedom itself becomes a productive force, allowing a qualitative increase in social productivity. Hence the issues of workers’ control of industry and of the democratic self-management of society should be core concerns of socialist theorists and practitioners. In most actually existing “socialist” economies, this is sadly not the case.

No longer capitalist, claiming to be different from Eastern Bloc countries, Cubans speak of tracing a “third way”. In terms of the concerns expressed above, the Cuban creation at the moment appears a hybrid fraught with difficulties as well as hope.

In the decade following the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest goals, the leadership, in a desperate attempt to increase national productivity, implemented policies which have, in effect, built into Cuban socialism two divergent, potentially contradictory categories of social organisation.

In the region of social and civic life there has been an institutionalisation of organisations thrown up by the practices of the early period of the revolution, to form the decentralised system of collective administration called People’s Power. This system seems to be producing new democratic social relations and practices of communal self-management.

In the region of production, there has been a comprehensive rethinking, then a reorganisation of national economic planning, and a large-scale implementation of new industrial and technological structures under the New System of Economic Management and Planning (SEMP), introduced gradually during the 1970s. The theoretical tools, the planning modes, the technological systems and industrial packages predominantly derive from the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries. The new relations of production replicate those of their countries of origin.

Features of SEMP include a neo-capitalist division of labour according to skill, and in some cases sex. This favours, through the creation of technical and managerial elites, the growth of aristocracies of labour and the attendant self-interests on one level, and on the base level, alienation and “subalternity” among most workers. Subalternity is reinforced by a competitive system of output-linked norms and material and moral incentives to exceed them. Known as “Socialist Emulation”, it is democratically but unquestionably administered by the trade unions.

SEMP operates at the national level by the central coordination of the economy under a series of five-year plans. At the level of industrial sectors and individual industries it is relatively decentralised, sectors and enterprises having an amount of autonomy in the use of state funds, and in the “contractual” relations they form with each other and other sectors. Within the industrial enterprise, while being accountable to the relevant assembly of People’s Power, the director is responsible for the enterprise’s operation, organisation of production and relations with other productive units. The director only really shares powers of decision-making with workers’ union delegates in relation to the allocation of the enterprise’s “profits” in the form of bonuses and social funds.

Since bonuses — both for management and staff — depend on enterprise results, dialogue will tend to pose questions and answers within a discourse concerned with conditions for profit maximisation. Such a discourse also has the potential to favour sectional and regional interests, reproducing their inequalities. In the absence of a discourse concerned with workers’ control or any real mechanism for democratic participation at the factory level, Socialist Emulation can hardly be seen as an answer to the problem of raising the economic consciousness of the masses.

How did such a state of affairs come about? A full answer requires an historical explanation which I have no space for here. Instead, I want to sketch in one part of the answer, which I believe lies in the general, relative theoretical poverty of the Cuban Revolution and, in particular, of the leadership.

The success of 1959 was one of the 26 July Movement: a broad coalition of popular discontents articulated on not much more than bourgeois sentiments of national liberation and revolutionary but untheorised populist notions of social justice. The communist Popular Socialist Party, a creature of the Third Internationale, was suspected because of its reasonable criticism of the adventurism of Castro’s group, and carried a legacy of discredit because of its brief association with Batista’s short-lived radical phase during the 1940s. There was no strong tradition of independent Marxist theoretical work or political practice.

The lack of theoretical coherence can be seen in the dramatic pendulum swings in socio-economic experimentation after the revolution — from the “Utopian Period” of revolutionary voluntarism of the early 1960s to that of the SEMP in the 1970s — as Cuba struggled with the effects of underdevelopment in the economic isolation of the Blockade and as misinformed US punitive actions pushed her step by ad hoc step into dependence on support from the USSR.

Castro had said in the ’60s that, for him, discovering Marxism was like finding “a map of the forest”. If the simile is to retain its aptness, it has to be stretched. The map was not one drawn up in accordance with a coherent Marxism, but a series of
compilations — made by Cuban revolutionary practitioners as they faced problems in the field — of perceived correspondences between their own previously expressed humanist objectives and various ideas rendered up from the texts of marxism-leninism then in use by the Cuban communists of the Popular Socialist Party.

In the mid-'60s, the vagueness of the compilations, together with confidence engendered by the assertion by the leadership that a politically accepted map for Cuban Socialism did exist, covered the reality. The 1965 fusion of the three uneasy organisational partners in the revolutionary alliance (the 26 July Movement, the Popular Socialist Party, and the students of the Revolutionary Directorate) under the leadership of Castro's own informal group was of a politically expedient, rather than a theoretical nature.

Significantly, the First Party Congress was not held until 1975, when the new map of SEMP, drawn up by the leadership, had begun to be put into operation three years before. What was required from the party congress was not the map's construction, but its legitimation.

The strength of the Cuban Communist Party, as it has been hitherto developed, is not so much in its theoretical capacity but in its highly functional but informal influence on opinion at every level in which its members are located. Both party and its cadres see their role as "agitational", but, in a single party state and in the absence of any body of independent theoretical practitioners, the leadership compiles and the membership disseminates the maps.

Other forest-dwellers can either accept the proffered orthodoxy of the agitators' latest piece of orienteering, suggesting improvements in the pre-given route, or are left to find other, informal routes in the heretical dark.

The new map, as a piece of theoretical cartography, was a product which could be likened to the early Renaissance navigators' projections of the New World. Significant blanks occupied the space between the vague regions of socialist democracy and those, well-charted by Soviet marxism, of the planned economy.

After the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest hopes, the vagueness of the earlier cartography was now seen as vacuous. As the leadership searched for ways to reconstruct the economy, it did so in terms of a conception of a simple division between what were perceived as the sins of early pride — the errors of Utopian vanguardism — and the latest revealed doxa of a scientific marxism grounded in the achievements of existing socialist economies, together with the mature revolutionary theory they produced. This doxa, now grasped, informed SEMP. Reinforcing this perception must have been the fact that during this period of rethinking, the whole field of Cuban-USSR economic and commercial relations were renegotiated and the Cuban economic effort integrated within COMECON.

The leadership's real but untheorised concern for the Cuban people and for developing their capacities to participate in decision making found no point of reference in the new doxa. It seemed grounded in a different, if not dislocated, region of the experienced Cuban world.

When organisational forms thrown up by the practice of the earlier period were incorporated and legitimated in the governmental apparatus of People's Power, so too were the potentialities of their functions.
he CDRs already function as supra-families, providing the fundamental point of cohesion, of collective belonging within any locality. Records of individual comings and goings, births and deaths, local events and history are kept. Open discussions are held, and decisions collectively made regarding not only administrative matters but also codes of inter-personal behaviour such as issues of sexism, sexuality and parental responsibility. With the decentralisation of population into new towns and the movement of young adults brought up in the self-management boarding-school system to new areas of work, the CDRs have the potential to become basic instruments of social and political continuity, reproducing and developing practices of collective control. They also provide a terrain for the combat of patriarchal dispositions still being reproduced in family units.

Other “progressive” practices, such as those evolving in the work of the FMC, the CDRs, and in the peasants’ experience of collectivisation in co-operatives as rival models of organisation of agriculture to that of the state farms, may have the potential to overflow and offer alternatives in the industrial workplace.

However, there continues a “dis-relation” — an unacknowledged, unexplored gulf between such practices and the potential of similarly organised practices of workers’ power. This lack of connection has meant that experiences partially theorised, and redeployed in people’s government could not be theorised via solutions involving workers’ control in the debate over the key problem of labour productivity. The essential question of the low “economic consciousness” of the workers could not be addressed in terms of a comprehensive theoretical strategy.

Tending to act as a barrier, and in contradiction to its own “best sentiments”, are the limitations of the Cuban leadership which are passed on down through all levels of party functionaries. The tension is observable in many of Castro’s speeches between a voiced concern for popular participation and a paternalist conception of the party’s relationship to the people. While the population may participate in choosing the best routes, it is the party which provides the map. The present map provides no avenues of workers’ control, no real bearings, no adequate theoretical instruments to discover the way to truly democratic planning or self-management of the units of production.

New Havana (above) and the old section (top right).
While the managerial and technical changes implemented under SEMP have created a space for a quantitative increase in productivity to fill, that space will soon be used up. Both leadership and people will be at another crossroads. What are the conditions in which decisions will have to be made?

Objectively, the stage is being set for a series of clashes and confrontations if the practical insights, dispositions, knowledges and expectations being produced among the majority of Cubans in the region of socio-political relations are brought to bear critically on experiences within the region of production. The outcome of those confrontations will depend on the resolution of at least the following questions:

- Will the model of People's Power, with its decentralised popular control of institutions, provide an alternative to those exemplified in the Textil Combinado and the Kaolin Factory? Can the organs of popular administration transform the elitist managerial organs of industries rather than merely supervise and maintain them, as they do now? (Affirmative answers here provide the only socialist solution to the long-term problem of increasing productivity and raising economic consciousness.)
- Can the question, whether women's entry into industry has tended merely to industrialise already existing sexual divisions of labour, be addressed by strategies emerging from the emancipatory practices developed in the FMC as it works among the people's mass organisations?
- What will be the future role of the Cuban Communist Party as it interacts with the organs of popular government? Has its vanguardism laid the foundations for an elite to exercise informal bureaucratic control?
- Can the problems in self-criticism involved in the limitations of an imported Eastern marxist orthodoxy — the dominant theoretical discourse — be overcome if and when the social consciousness born in the practice of People's Power comes into conflict with the effects of technological elitism built into the new industries and directions in education? How can key thematic concerns of socialism — the issues of workers' control of industry and the democratic self-management of society — be properly addressed if the largely informal insights and knowledges of Cubans are permeated by a theoretical discourse which marginalises such concerns?

Footnotes
4. Bahro, R. in his *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*. (New Left Books 1978), pp.146ff., uses the term "synthesis" to describe social self-knowledge that comes from people experiencing the labour process as its subjects, through forms of work which involve the co-ordination of concepts — "general work" — and the organisation of control functions. This he contrasts with "subalternity": the limited, particular knowledge of workers who remain the objects of a labour process, where their skills are manual, schematic and unconnected to the decisions that formulate the mode of that labour process. Bahro's book is crucial to any discussion of "Eastern marxism" and "actually existing socialist economies".
5. There seemed little consciousness of factory safety procedures. Not only were ear protection devices unused but machinery had few safety guards over moving parts. Dust prevention devices operated to service machines more than to protect workers. When questioned on these matters, our guides said protective devices were available but workers seemed disinclined to use them, claiming they were hot and uncomfortable.
9. Bahro, op. cit.,
11. Bourdieu, P. in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press 1977) uses the following terms, which I find valuable. In class societies, where the definition of the world is at stake, one form of struggle is for the imposition of dominant theories, explanations and systems of classification — a contest for symbolic forms. Some fields of knowledge may be dominated by DOXA (that which is accepted as the truth, undisputed and unquestioned). Dominating groups have an interest — whether or not — in defending the integrity of DOXA, or short of that, establishing in its place the necessary imperfect substitute, ORTHODOXY (the "right line"). When ORTHODOXY is established and one set of knowledges is regarded as legitimate, other, alternative knowledges can only appear in the struggle as illegitimate, blasphemous, HERETICAL.
17. Quoted in Cannon, op. cit., p.249.

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The Accord

Intervening to Deepen the Democratic Process

Following the recent re-election of a federal Labor government, it is probably time to take stock of the effects of the Accord, the direction it is heading and its impact on the strategy for the left and the union movement.

Initially, many people saw the Accord as simply a pragmatic response to a given situation. With high unemployment and the possibility of defeating the Fraser government, it was felt that, for the moment, an agreement between unions and the Labor Party would be of some value. The alternative of relying on the marketplace was not proving very successful.

For their own reasons, the right saw the Accord as a useful election gimmick, after which it would be played down. On the other hand, some on the left saw it as only a short term practical approach, while many others in the centre and left were somewhat confused.

I would argue that, while the Accord must have elements of the pragmatic, it is more far-reaching and represents the most fundamental change in the union and left strategy that we have seen in the Australian labour movement since the development of the arbitration system and the high tariff barriers in the early part of the century.

We are looking at a totally new approach for the development of socialist consciousness and it is necessary that this be understood in order that the strategy can be pursued with greater clarity. In essence, it boils down to the question of when the left and the labour movement make their best advances. Is it in a period of economic recession, or during boom periods?

An examination of history in this century and current events in various countries, would suggest that there is little doubt as to the answer. We make our best advances in periods of economic buoyancy when we have more room to negotiate. For the first time, we are now looking at a strategy concerned with all aspects of the economic and political situation, and we have the potential to put reforms into place which will be very difficult to change in the future.

This compares with the past when, in economic boom periods, we concentrated overwhelmingly on the individual wage packet as, for example, in 1974, and we stood aside from intervening in any major decisions concerning the direction of the economy, and thought that slogans, criticisms, and opposition were going to solve the problem.

What we are witnessing is the development of the Australian union movement as a major political weapon the like of which we have never seen before. It is noticeable and highlighted by recent Labor Party conferences that the most important initiatives on the economy and social policies are coming from the trade union movement, not from the Labor Party.

There is a fundamental difference between the reformism of the right and some in the centre, and what is intended by those on the left who support the ALP/ACTU Accord. This is the key if we are to understand the potential for developing the strategy effectively.

On the one hand, the right wing allied with various forces in big
business are quite happy to pursue reforms which look good on the surface but involve little change at the base and, in particular, maintain an elite form of politics.

Basically, they seek to understand public opinion in order to get into power and stay there. Our approach must be to understand public opinion to get into power and stay there with the clear objective of changing public opinion in a left direction. That is the difference between the two approaches.

Our fundamental concern is that the reforms open up the possibility for us to mobilise and involve unionists and the public in the broadest possible way. This means that people on different sides of the political fence will view the same reforms quite differently. In essence, it means that it is up to us to make effective use of the new atmosphere created by such things as commitments to tax reform and especially the process by which it has been negotiated, and the strengthening of the free medical health services, to generalise commitments to egalitarianism and strengthen the democratic process whether the government intends that or not.

Such a strategy has got nothing whatsoever to do with whether or not we trust Bob Hawke or the employers or anybody else for that matter. In essence, it has got to do with our having the capacity to develop and change public opinion and the atmosphere, to the extent that Hawke and even business will increasingly be locked into a situation which will not necessarily be of their making.

Max Ogden

There is no other way, nor can we avoid the step-by-step process which is very hard going. There is no mass base for socialism in Australia, nor in the working class, nor even for what would be reasonable reforms for such things as access to company information.

As long as Hawke can claim 78 percent support and develop his idea of a consensus, we have no choice but to seek to change the content of that consensus. This does not suggest for a moment that we should not have criticisms of the Labor government or its leaders, but that such criticisms should be kept within the perspective of the realpolitik in this country. The alternative is simply to blame leaders for everything that happens, thereby falling into the trap of conservative politics that is all about leaders and the elite and opting out.

The classic example at the moment is around the uranium issue. It is true that ALP policy has been undermined and moulded to the dictates of business to some extent, but not entirely, and to the whim of certain leaders, and for this we can be critical. However, this should not blind us to the fact that the issue of uranium mining, despite the large mass participation in recent times, is still not strong enough in the public mind to bring the government to heel. This being the case, there is no substitute for working to double and triple involvement and mass demonstrations. The alternative is to do nothing and carpet leaders.

The real issue for us, then, is how do we make the change in a way that the process we use embodies the very objective we have in mind.

The strategy is mass education of Australian unionists and the public, based on two principles:
- People learn best when they are involved in issues, and they are mainly involved when these issues are close to their day-to-day experience and concern.
- It is important to move to the unknown from the known.

Unfortunately, this is not always reflected in the labour movement as we often concentrate on issues, no matter how important, that are far removed from the day-to-day experiences of people. This was manifest in the recent national conference of the ALP where some of the fiercest debate was on issues which, despite their importance, had little relationship to the average person, at least as far as they understood it. Such general approaches will always suit the right and, in future, we should seek to give priorities to those issues which are of closer interest to the average person.

One of the arguments and perhaps even some confusion surrounding the strategy is that it demobilises workers because there is less industrial action and conflict. This view is based on the idea that the only involvement that we can have is one of conflict manifested by militant action.

Already, we can demonstrate that a number of the initiatives resulting from the strategy, which is not simply the Accord but a broad approach within which the Accord is central, have seen a greater involvement on a range of issues. For example, the big
increase in activity around occupational health and safety, involvement of both officials and union rank-and-file activists, in various tripartite and other bodies concerned with job and industry development, and the excellent developments around industrial democracy in a number of state and federal government instrumentalities, all of which add up to more people being involved in meaningful positive activity than has normally been the case.

The left has tended to assume that because conflict is necessary to make gains, we have to like it and welcome it. This view is at odds with the overwhelming majority of people who do not like conflict. By understanding that view we should seek to make gains by involvement in committees and negotiations as we are likely to generate greater support. Most would see this as a more productive method. If there is any lesson to be learnt from the Hawke approach to consensus, this is certainly it.

This is not to suggest that conflict is not necessary because, as we set out to intervene more in major decision making about the economy and the workplace, there already is and will be an increasingly bitter class response from employers and some ministers and government officials. The difference will be that the conflict will manifest itself more in vigorous negotiation in the tripartite and other processes at all levels across the working class, rather than the traditional widespread and rather ad hoc industrial action. Nevertheless, at times, it will be absolutely necessary that we bring the full weight of the union movement to bear in industrial action.

As Winton Higgins points out in his forthcoming chapter in a book which will be titled *Socialist Strategy in the Hawke Era*, it will be an important class victory if we can minimise the market forces of the owners of capital. Far from being in our interest to allow the marketplace to run riot and the economy to boom and bust in the traditional way, it will be important to minimise the room in which the ruling class has to move. Conversely, we need to maximise economic buoyancy with intervention which will give us a greater chance to negotiate a social wage, maintenance of living standards, and democratic controls. This would be a substantial class victory. In other words, it is not a question of no class struggle, but the manifestation of that struggle into the national arena, and not limited to each individual workplace as has been the case in the past.

A major lesson of the last eighteen months has been that the strategy must be all-embracing and have clear objectives and priorities, and have a national approach to wages as its linchpin. A socialist wages policy has been an elusive issue for us and was highlighted during the 1974 wages explosion when, despite massive gains, we could not point to very much development of critical consciousness as a result. If anything, it strengthened capitalist ideas of the role of the marketplace.

We now understand that a socialist wages policy is one that has a firm commitment to the whole of the working class, minimises the role of the marketplace, and has linked to it a range of issues generally known as the social wage and a concern to intervene democratically on economic planning around maintenance of jobs and the direction industry should take. We are only at the beginnings of this strategy of which the Accord is the first manifestation, and it will take us quite some years, perhaps a generation, to develop and win a consciousness right across the union movement.

In essence, what we are talking about here is a totally new kind of union movement which is equipped to identify all the problems from the workplace through to the national and international. Such a movement would require an activist core with the following characteristics:

- skilled and trained in research
- able to negotiate with government and within the tripartite structures
- understanding the concerns of its members beyond just wages
- understanding the processes through which the strategy needs to develop
- understanding the role of education
- having some grasp of the economy
- having a knowledge of how companies make decisions in their corporate planning processes
- having a knowledge of the role of industrial democracy within the overall process.
A key to this will be a far deeper theoretical and ideological understanding of the strategy. Very little has yet been written on this aspect as the Accord has largely been seen as a tactical rather than a strategic development.

With that in mind, we need to start looking at the decision making processes within the broad labour movement and seek to change them in line with the strategy. In particular, it would seem quite inadequate that unions, ACTU congresses and Labor Party conferences should simply put together a whole series of ad hoc policies which do not necessarily relate to one another. This is clear when examining the recent Labor Party National Conference where some decisions are in clear conflict with others. Maybe at the moment this is inevitable, given the factional balance. However, from the left, we ought to have the aim that, at the next ACTU congress and future union conferences, we produce a strategic action program for the ensuing three or four years where there is a clear connection between the policies. This is already happening as a result of future thinking about the Accord and in the metal industry around jobs, but it needs to be carried much further and the consciousness of that strategy needs to go much deeper.

There are a number of advantages, even in the short term, in this approach. One is that by hammering out agreements on action programs and associated priorities and objectives which are real issues and able to be achieved, we are more likely to get agreement between different factions than when we discuss things in generalities and theories. Secondly, and very importantly, by deciding on such action programs, we will have a clear criterion by which to judge our success or otherwise.

In the past, by simply espousing slogans or blaming leaders, we would opt out of responsibility for judging our effectiveness. We would always say that the system had not matured enough to have done any good anyway, or that we were sold out by certain leaders or whatever. But, above all, we had no responsibility for the results.

Being able to set criteria by which to judge success does not mean that we would ignore the material conditions in which we work but, in taking them into account, we will more objectively determine our success. This has already been shown in the short term with the Accord where, for the first time in many years, we can make a reasonable judgment as to what has been achieved as against what we expected. We now need to develop that over the next five years and, in particular, set real objectives to be gained within the life of this Hawke government. For example, we should, in the industrial field, set objectives such as legislation for the protection of shop stewards and union activists, initiatives on company information access and perhaps even legislation, a substantial development in occupational health and safety, etc. We will need to argue these issues and agree on the priorities fairly quickly in order that we can lay a basis for united action.

The trade union movement in Australia has one of its best opportunities ever to intervene in the most important areas of decision making, and to become a political movement with a large involvement of rank-and-file activists in an enormous range of activities throughout the political and economic structure. The success of this will depend, to a large extent, on strengthening the strategy by further developing it in its broadest sense, which goes beyond the ALP/ACTU Accord which, nevertheless, is the centrepiece, by making it understood by, and the property of, not only the union movement but the public at large. The unions can become the spearhead for this movement, and the public at large. The unions can become the spearhead for broad mass issues which, in a step-by-step process, can intervene and open up untouchable areas and truly deepen the democratic process. We cannot afford to let the opportunity go as we will not have another one for a generation.

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Saluting the Nationalism and the Olympics

David Rowe & Geoffrey Lawrence

When Jon Sieben, the "slight, unheralded" 17-year-old Queenslander, won the Men's 200m Butterfly final at the recent Los Angeles Games, the Australian media went bananas. Sieben had managed to defeat the West German champion Michael Gross, set a new world record and win a gold medal for Australia. He also sparked off an orgy of patriotism which, for a brief moment, recalled the emotional excesses of the America's Cup win. It was a win in real Hollywood style — the young smiling Sieben, physically dwarfed by Gross, had been able to cut four seconds from his best previous race time, and, against all odds, beat the world champion. Cecil B. De Mille couldn't have done a better "David and Goliath" epic.

This was, as one paper acknowledged, "genuine gold". Another reported "A kid without a job takes on a giant killer". For another, he was an "Aussie battler". As the Sunday Telegraph told us on its front page, "Out of Work Aussie Beats All the Odds". He had won, as the headlines read, "Gold on the Dole", and had become a symbol of hope for those unemployed kids whose social security cheques had not yet brought them fame and fortune. As a culmination of his success he was photographed, upon returning to Australia, with gold medal on one arm and girlfriend on the other, receiving a congratulatory kiss. Next stop, presumably, was the Commonwealth Employment Services (CES) office.

Success of the Sieben kind causes the media to break out into a nationalist sweat because it contains three key elements. First, it is a "mega triumph", unlike the success of coming in a worthy second or a plucky fourteenth, and so permits unbounded rather than qualified exultation. Second, it recalls and exaggerates the myth of upward mobility, that vein of aspiration that has sustained "models" like those of Horatio Alger (from boot-cleaner to multi-millionaire) in the USA and Alan Bond (or even Paul Hogan) in Australia, as rags-to-riches achievers to be emulated by all. Third, the hero or heroine embodies an abstraction — the spirit of Australia — and so helps to heal concrete rifts and overcome material divisions between competing social groups in the name of Australia and its progress. Here s/he becomes an agent in the "national reconciliation and reconstruction" of Australia through stimulating a concentrated bout of national self-congratulation. The cultivation of this fervent nationalism makes a nonsense of any claim that sport is separated from politics. because every time someone extrapolates from a sporting triumph to another area of social life (e.g. the area of work), they are making a political and ideological connection.

In this article we will explore some of these connections in order to reveal how rampant sporting patriotism, while temporarily edifying the spirit, undermines attempts to challenge and alter exploitative relations under capitalism. The L.A. Games were a vehicle for the promotion of American ideals and values, and also provided an opportunity for Australia to assert its own identity. We will provide examples of the media presentation of nationalist ideology in the advancement of our central thesis that nationalism tries to reconcile at the cultural level class conflict which emerges inevitably at the material level.

The Rise of Nationalism

Where the ancient Games in Olympia were held in honour of the Greek God Zeus, the modern L.A. Games paid homage to the secular God of Nationalism. The Games — and their representation — were structured in a manner which fostered national identification and glorified national achievement. Countries were in direct competition: "Australia is in lane 4, the Americans in lane 5 .... " and so on. Following an event the world watched as the young, fit champions, wearing national colours, mounted the dais and stood reverently, with eyes affixed to the...
The unfurling flag of the winning nation. Many were still panting from their exertion and the magnitude of their effort was further emphasised. The Americans, as if in automatic fashion, held their hands to their hearts and mouthed the words of the anthem. Many eyes were blinded by tears — or perhaps dollar signs.

The award ceremony was introduced into the Olympics during the first Los Angeles Games in 1932 in economically troubled times when there seemed to be a great need for Americans to "rally around the flag". The award ceremony which shows the winner standing tallest on the dais, the flag raising, and the playing of the national anthem, is saturated with symbolic meaning. Hence, in the Los Angeles Games much of what was transmitted, directly and indirectly, was a statement of American achievement, of national superiority. Viewers were exposed to 83 renditions of the Star Spangled Banner (the American Anthem was played four times more often than any other anthem), while on American TV, whenever another nation's heroes had won gold, the ceremony was replaced by an event — any event — in which the Americans were participating.

The chauvinism was so apparent that the President of the Los Angeles Olympic Organising Committee (LAOOC) was asked to appeal to the ABC network to alter its coverage of the Games. Apparently, the American commentators had a tendency to use words like "orientals" and "aliens" to describe contestants from other nations. Such language, which is more appropriate for filling out visa applications than sports commentary, demonstrated that this was essentially a clash of nation states (and, by extension, social systems) not an athletic contest.

Through the identification of the sports champion with "The Nation" we were asked to celebrate a country's power and strength. The opening and closing ceremonies were costly extravaganzas — and a reminder (if one were needed) to the rest of the world of America's wealth. The open displays of patriotism were couched in terms of international fraternity — something already negated by the boycott of the Russian and other Eastern bloc countries. Of course, the ceremonies provided a format for national comparisons. While the previous Moscow opening was "superbly drilled" it was nevertheless a "pretty solemn" affair. The Los Angeles opening, in contrast, had "an air of joie de vivre which was missing from Moscow". The difference was one of control versus freedom, rigidity versus spontaneity, stolidity versus ingenuity.

Yet when authentic (as opposed to manufactured) spontaneity was demonstrated by the athletes who ran onto the track to get a closer view of the opening and closing ceremonies, it was quickly squashed. The athletes were admonished over the loudspeakers like errant school children and some were physically relocated by "helpful" and "courteous" security staff.

Interviews with selected athletes became another forum for outbursts of national pride. Where comments were interspersed with religion the effect was intensified. Carl Lewis was first to forge the link between God, nation and athletic success:

"As far as I'm concerned, I can't fail because I, Carl Lewis, will just try my best. I know I have a God-given talent and I know the Lord has given me the talents and ability. All I compete for is the love of sport, for myself and of course for my country — and then all glory goes to God." Conveniently, he forgot to mention the sponsors.

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National heroes are important because they provide a model for younger athletes. Lewis, as a sort of athletic equivalent of Michael Jackson, provides all the right patriotic clues for his fans. His political statements? Lewis is above politics — his beliefs are simple, homespun, all-American. There is no need for a Black Panther salute with God
and nation on your side, at least not if you’re smart in Reagan’s America.

One newspaper, anxious to cover “background” events at the Games, interviewed a rather overweight George Foreman, ex-Olympic (and world) heavyweight boxing champion. He told of his feelings at the ’68 Games.

The people all applauded so loudly and I had a flag in my pocket and I held it up and waved that flag just as hard as I could. I was so proud. I wasn’t black or white. I was American. These days you can add one more. Now I’m a Christian.7

He could have added “Reaganite” or “monetarist”, perhaps, but in the age of the Moral Majority this was probably redundant.

Whether or not George’s brains had been scrambled in one of his many encounters is irrelevant here. What matters is the undiminished patriotism — the national loyalty which underlies achievement at the Olympics. The message is that athletes, by training hard, by showing complete and unrelenting dedication, can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, can serve as role models for others and assert the superiority of their nation all at the same time. As we have come to expect from The Australian, one of its editorials acknowledged:

The success of Carl Lewis and Edwin Moses, both athletically and financially, offers hope to those black Americans who are still fighting for equality. They can see, through dedication and hard work, there is a way out.8

Sport and Class Relations

Comments like those above have led writers like Jean-Marie Brohm to dismiss sport as an ideological apparatus of the state and as a parasitic institution for regimenting youth.9 Brohm insists that the “champions” serve as propagandists, enhancing national prestige and fostering identification of the masses with the state. This argument can be located within the tradition of orthodox western marxism, with its high suspicion of nationalism. Nationalism, it is argued, is biased towards bourgeois social relations because it is based upon the assumption that people comprising a nation state have a common bond with each other — a bond stronger than that which they have with members of their own class. The “national interest” (preservation of capitalism) is seen to be enhanced if all harmoniously work to advance a particular country. Nationalism, insisting upon the desirability of internal supra-class solidarity, is seen to undermine class consciousness, which stresses that economic and social improvement will only be attained through working class recognition of the source of oppression and exploitation and action to challenge ruling class domination.

While Brohm’s account has a certain immediate appeal, it is limited. It fails, for example, to recognise the potential for revolutionary (classbased) activities under a nationalist banner, a significant feature of Third World peasant mobilisation where nationalism may be strategically useful. The Sandinistas of Nicaragua, for example, have shrewdly utilised nationalist sentiment in generating popular resistance to American attempts to re-establish a puppet government. Brohm also tends to ignore or dismiss the contradictory elements of national grandstanding despite its “dialectical method”. For example, what effect might America’s dominance of the Games have on, say, a Third World nation? We might agree with Brohm that it enhances American cultural imperialism. But might it not also, in having exposed American chauvinism, strengthen the resolution of some smaller nations to challenge US hegemony? Again, a single win by a representative or team from an underdeveloped country may be read as general lack of physical prowess of that country, but it might also suggest that a challenge to the domination of the larger nations is possible. The win of Cuban Alberto Juantorena in Mexico is a particularly striking example, as that athlete took the opportunity to dedicate his victory to the Cuban revolution.

While the winning ceremony is obviously structured to glorify the nation, a black power salute beamed to half the world’s population may give hope to those who are oppressed. Seeing blacks win race after race may promote the view that they are biologically “different” (a cornerstone of racism), but it might also provide a glimpse of the black success which will follow liberation from white
domination. This should not lead us, like the editor of The Australian, to the mythical conclusion that upward mobility is guaranteed to all who work hard. The idea that “drive” and “initiative” can magically overcome class, racial/ethnic or sexual disadvantage is clearly absurd, but enough cases of spectacular success can be drummed up to lend weight to the proposition that an inequitable social structure does not exist and that, ultimately, its victims are at fault for their personal failure. Last year it was the “spinnaker” led recovery and this year perhaps the “javelin” led recovery in a continuing search for variations on the theme that the only thing really wrong with the nation state is the under-achievement of its lowly citizens and the petty squabbling of its interest groups. Such a perspective demands an almost religious belief in the nation state as transcendent deity and is constantly challenged by prosaic phenomena like exploitation, unemployment, poverty and class conflict.

What we should not deny in our analysis is the contradictory nature of the “images” of the Games — the dialectics of the dais if you like. We have condemned the overt ethnocentrism and xenophobia of the Americans and their use of the Games as a forum which bosters national pride and patches the splits and cracks of capitalism. Yet, we must also question the sentiments of Hu Quili, a leading member of the Secretariat of the Chinese Central Committee, who described the victories of Chinese athletes as:

An historical breakthrough, signifying the growth of the Chinese nation. This shows that we Chinese are people of high aspirations and proven capability and that we can overcome all difficulties and achieve our objectives when we unite as one and march forward firmly.10

Of course, China is beginning to embrace elements of capitalism, so sport may well become increasingly central to its economic structure and its political ideology.

However, one thing that we can acknowledge is that the media are able to create and/or reinforce cultural stereotypes through their interpretation of Olympic contests. We learned of the “highly disciplined gymnasts from Romania”, of the Americans who set their standards so high that they “felt shame” when they could not win a race. The Australians were the “quiet achievers” who “won the hearts of the crowd”. The Italians were, as expected, “emotional”.11

These socially constructed views of a country’s participants provide a cultural typification which is as shallow as it is misleading. We learn on the basis of these supposed differences to distinguish ourselves (as “Australians”) from those of other nations. Such attempts to establish an absolute separation between the citizens of different nation states is at the very heart of nationalist ideology. For once a country’s people believe that “aliens” are biologically different or that cultural differences are insuperable and fundamental, then they may be more easily mobilised to oppose (often through violent means) “aliens” and so to preserve the nation’s unique qualities. Nationalism is false consciousness because it convinces the exploited people of one nation state that they have a common interest with their own exploiters and an essential antagonism to the oppressed of other nations. Workers of the world do not often unite because they are encouraged to vilify working class “aliens” and to support their local bourgeoisie.

The spectacle of the Olympics was able to blind us and 2.3 billion others to the more significant political events of August. The Olympics coincided with the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. It was also exactly 10 years since Richard Nixon was forced to resign from the White House. Somehow, in the razzle-dazzle of rhapsodies and races, the bleaker periods of American history were overlooked. What emerged was a New Nationalism. Americans were being asked to celebrate alongside the economic “recovery” a resurgence in US influence and supremacy. But, as is the “American Way”, confidence spilled over into national arrogance. Within two weeks of the opening of “the Friendly Games” from his bulletproof lookout, President Reagan (in the preliminaries to a radio broadcast) whimsically announced that he had “outlawed Russia” and would be “dropping bombs within five minutes”.

Conclusion

The hysterical national chauvinism unashamedly celebrated in the Olympic Games reveals how central it is to the maintenance of social relations within and between nation states. We have noted how the Los Angeles Olympics were an example, par excellence, of a rightwing government vigorously appropriating the emotion-charged symbols of nationalism, yet we have also seen how nationalism may be used by governments or movements of other political persuasions for quite different ends.

It is an apparent paradox that as the international order has increasingly eroded, both materially and culturally, any conception of “national independence”, there has been a considerable resurgence of patriotism. It seems particularly ironic that multinational corporations, who owe allegiance to no single nation state, have carefully cultivated a nationalistic image in every country where they invest capital or sell commodities.12 Indeed, the spread of international capital may outrage the local elites who are supposed to share ruling class solidarity with other “fractions of capital”. As Connell has stated with regard to the developing international economic, military and intelligence apparatuses, such moves run “a real risk of offending the nationalist sentiments that rightwing politics trades on”.13 Hence,
nationalism may generate a struggle between fractions of capital and frequently between capital and labour, as radical left movements seek to utilise its symbols to unite workers against the class enemy in the establishment of "socialism within one country".

Nationalism is, then, an ideology fraught with contradictions because it rests on the fundamentally false premise that the nation state is an abstracted, mystical source of communal identification rather than a particular socio-political order whose citizens are often tenuously linked.¹ Sport is a particularly compelling ideological cement because it encourages the suspension of class and other forms of antagonism in favour of a fabled "national interest". The Los Angeles Olympics as we received them through the Australian media attempted to persuade us that we are essentially united in our citizenship, and that class divisions, if they exist at all, are no more than mere trifles compared to the great power of our common land.

Footnotes


2. Just as Roland Barthes saw on the cover of Paris Match a picture of a "young Negro in a French uniform ... saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour" and knew that he was in the presence of a vast meaning system, so we were drawn inexorably towards a compelling cultural spectacle of strength, joy and maudlin sentiment (see Barthes, R., Mythologies, StAlbans, Granada, 1972, p. 116).

3. See National Times, August 10-16, 1984, p. 35.

4. ibid.


12. See, for example, Paul James, Australia in the Corporate Image: A New Nationalism, Arena, 63, 1983.


Early this year, a British-Palestinian journalist, Faris Glubb, was refused a visa to visit Australia for a speaking tour. The decision was in keeping with the policy of both Liberal and Labor governments of excluding Palestinian speakers from Australia.

The only exception to this ban was the 1976 tour by two members of the General Union of Palestinian Students. Ironically, they were admitted by then Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock — mainly because the Liberal government was keen to increase trade with Arab countries such as Egypt and Iraq.

The Labor Party's Middle East policy, developed under the Whitlam government, was posed as more "even handed" than the Liberals pro-Israel policy. In opposition, Labor held some talks with the Palestinians (Bill Hayden met Yasser Arafat in 1981) and called for the withdrawal of Australian troops from the Sinai. Although calling for a "just solution" to the Palestinian problem, ALP policy has stopped short of recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation — even after many European social-democratic and conservative governments did so.

ALP policy has always been sensitive to the pro-Israeli lobby in Australia. This has meant a less than even-handed interpretation of their "even-handed" policy. But even this policy was destined to change with the victory of Hawke over Hayden as ALP leader, followed by his victory in the election. Bob Hawke admires Israel greatly, and he quickly instituted a review of Labor policy.

Labor's promise to withdraw from the Sinai "peace keeping" force was dishonoured within weeks, after Hayden held talks with the Israelis, the Egyptians and the United States. In the United Nations, Australia continues to vote as close as possible to Israeli and United States wishes, despite the shift in international opinion towards recognition of Palestinian rights.

And, as Faris Glubb has shown, the Hawke government continues the "bipartisan" policy of Australian governments of banning all speakers who are even vaguely associated with the PLO. In this article, ALI KAZAK argues the case for Australian government recognition of the PLO....
Continued from previous page.

There seems to be widespread agreement that Australia’s approach to the recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation should be based on the assumption that its fundamental interests lie in a just and lasting peace in the area. Feelings run very strongly in that part of the world. The conflicts within the region are overlaid by power struggles between East and West, and it would be very easy for a regional quarrel to develop into a general confrontation.

The question that must be posed and answered therefore is whether recognition of the PLO would enhance or diminish the chances for peace.

**Support for the PLO**

At the outset, we confront the extraordinary fact, given the existence of the recognition controversy, that there seems to be no doubt in almost anyone’s mind that the PLO is in fact the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

All available evidence supports this fact. A 1982 poll of West Bank Palestinians, commissioned by *Time* magazine and conducted by the Tel Aviv Public Opinion Research Institute, revealed that 86 percent favoured “a Palestinian state run solely by the PLO” (*Time*, 24 May, 1982). The Jerusalem Post (international edition, 20-26 February, 1983) reported a February 1983 poll of West Bank opinion showing “massive backing for Arafat” to the extent of 90 percent. And a recent book on the West Bank by an Israeli journalist (*West Bank Story* by Rafik Halabi, reviewed by Bernard Avishai in the *New York Review of Books*, 10 June, 1982) cites and concurs with the statement by a Palestinian journalist that “There are two camps on the West Bank today — PLO supporters and PLO members”.

In addition to these empirical findings and observations, we have the singular fact that nobody other than the PLO even claims to speak for the Palestinian people. For serious observers of the Middle East conflict, there is no question of splitting the Palestinian people from the PLO. As even Labor federal parliamentarian Ralph Jacobi remarked on 7 May, 1984, “The political basis of the PLO is the predicament of the Palestinian people”.

If the PLO is, in fact, the representative of the Palestinian people, how can Australia refuse to recognise it as such and at the same time support its right to participate in negotiations to determine their future? Not only does such a contradictory position smack strongly of insincerity on Australia’s part, but it also places great obstacles in Australia’s way if we want to play any role in aiding or encouraging negotiations leading to real peace. To find out what Palestinians really want, one must listen to and talk with their real representatives. Negotiations that exclude the PLO exclude the Palestinians.

The Australian government seems to realise the inconsistency of the position and attempts to resolve it by having diplomatic contact with the PLO (outside Australia) but not recognition.

The government has refused to grant a visa to Palestinian journalist Faris Glubb to tour Australia, and will exclude the overwhelming majority of Palestinians (who support the PLO) from obtaining a visa because “Consistent with its firm opposition to the use of force, the Government did not agree to a visit by a propagandist for an organisation some of whose constituent members engage in violence, and publicly claim attribution for acts of terrorism”. Putting one side the question of “terrorism” (which we shall deal with shortly), this policy stance has not been evident in the visits to Australia of representatives of numerous national-military resistance organisations, ranging from the Afghani Mujahedeen to SWAPO, the IRA or groups in the Pacific, Asia and Central America. In particular, the representative of the neo-fascist Lebanese Phalange, Naoum Farah, was warmly received by Prime Minister Bob Hawke on 13 September 1984, just days before the second anniversary of the massacre of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila camps by the Phalange, assisted by the Israel Defence Forces.

Since Australia places no such artificial limits on its contact with Israel, it is inevitable that we are getting a one-sided and inaccurate understanding of the situation as a whole. Even if non-recognition were merely symbolic, and it is hard to see how it could be, it would involve Australia in a dangerous game of failing to encourage negotiations with the real parties, making it all the less likely that any negotiations will occur and, even if they do, that the results will bear any relation to Palestinian aspirations. It is hard to see how a just and lasting peace could be achieved in those circumstances.

**Following Israel’s Wishes**

Of the various reasons offered to justify Australia’s position, there is one deserving attention at the outset, because it seems, for many people, to override all other considerations. It is the claim that Australia should not recognise the PLO because Israel refuses to negotiate with the PLO.

In the first place, it is not true that all parties in Israel oppose recognition of the PLO. Not only do Rakah and the Progressive List for Peace, parties with a mostly Palestinian base and six members in the Knesset, support recognition of the PLO, but so does a growing body of Jewish opinion in Israel.

In January 1982, three prominent Israelis (editor Uri Avnery, Reserve General Mattitiyahu Peled and former finance ministry director-general Yaacov Arnon), leaders of the Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and members of the Sheli party, had official talks in Tunis with PLO leader Yasser Arafat. According to the Jerusalem Post (international edition of 23-29 January, 1982), Peled said on Israeli television after the talks that he was “convinced the PLO’s activities were now aimed at reaching peace by establishing two states — Israel and a Palestinian state — side by side”.

While Israel’s government and major parties are opposed to peace negotiations with the PLO, Jewish opinion in Israel is far from monolithic in this regard. It would be a grave error to allow Israel’s refusal to deal with the PLO on fundamental issues to determine Australia’s policy.

The basic reason for this is Israel’s claim, on religious and historical grounds, to all of Palestine and its systematic effort to overwhelm the Palestinian population by settlement and land acquisition. This has been the claim and aim of the Zionist movement from its inception to the
aware of the Palestinians' sovereign aspirations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. 

mandatory power and were people, especially since Israel is well superior in the region, obviously it would be in Israel's pure self-interest not to deal with the PLO precisely because it is the only real representative of the Palestinian people, especially since Australia continues to deal with Israel despite all the features of Israeli policy towards Palestinians that Australia finds objectionable.

Israel's "Right to Exist"

The Australian government has suggested that it would recognise the PLO only if the PLO would recognise the existence of Israel. This, of course, is the position of the US government, as set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between Yigal Allon, Israel's then foreign minister, and Henry Kissinger in September 1975, which stated that the United States "will not recognise or negotiate with the PLO so long as the PLO does not recognise Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338". This issue seems to have two distinct aspects, one having to do with Israel's "security" and the other with a kind of moral assent by the PLO to the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

The word "right" is of crucial significance here, because what is being asked of the PLO is not that it merely recognise the fact of existence, even in the sense of entering peace negotiations that could ultimately lead to the peaceful existence of two states, but that the PLO accord moral legitimacy of the Zionist movement and the establishment of the state of Israel.

Such a precondition is really an extraordinary phenomenon, apparently unknown to international law and practice. Is Australia required to grant moral legitimacy to every regime and state with which it has relations? Is such moral assent entailed by having such relations, so that we must be taken to approve of every state with which we deal? Of course not. So it is hard to see why recognition of the "right" of Israel to exist should be at all relevant as a precondition to the recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian organisation with no link to the Palestinian people that led directly to this tragedy. It could only have occurred against a population rendered defenceless by a two-month siege aimed precisely at dislodging its only defenders.

Even if Australia should disagree with the means used by the PLO in the past, this is no basis for refusing to recognise and deal with it as the representative of the Palestinians, especially since Australia continues to deal with Israel despite all the features of Israeli policy towards Palestinians that Australia finds objectionable.

The Question of "Terrorism"

Another recurring theme has been the question of "terrorism". The PLO has long been characterised by Israel as a "terrorist organisation", no doubt in part to suggest that it has no organic relation to the Palestinians, but also to give grounds for Israel's refusal to deal with it. Israel seems to claim a moral right not to negotiate with the PLO either because, as "terrorists", they are morally inferior to the Israeli government or because the wrongs responsible for many acts of terror such as the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946 and the massacre at Deir Yassin in 1948? Remember that these events took place many years before the PLO was even founded.

Can the government that carried out the brutal bombing of Beirut in 1982, which left tens of thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians dead, claim that the balance of righteousness or injury is on its side? Can the Israeli government make this claim after being held responsible by its own judiciary for the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, two days and nights of hell on earth that left at least 800 Palestinians dead? This minimum estimate is more than twice as high as the claims made by the opponents of recognition for total Israeli deaths attributed to the PLO. In his book on the war, the then Israeli Jacobo Timerman wrote that in July 1982 alone (i.e. not counting the massacre of Sabra and Shatila), "more children were killed in Beirut than during thirty years of terrorism in Israel". (The Longest War, p.140). It is important to remember that it was the Israeli claim that the PLO was merely a "terrorist organisation" with no link to the Palestinian people that led directly to this tragedy. It could only have occurred against a population rendered defenceless by a two-month siege aimed precisely at dislodging its only defenders.
people. Certainly Australia has relations with many states, including most of the Arab states, that do not recognise Israel.

If the Palestinians feel aggrieved by the creation of the state of Israel in their midst and the general disaster for them that has followed the advent of Zionism in the region (and can anyone deny that they have at least some grounds for this grievance?), and if they project a vision of a secular democratic Palestine or express a desire for the status quo ante, should they be forced to abandon their vision if there are sufficient objective guarantees that they will not seek to impose it by force? In any event, why should they be forced to abandon it before they are offered anything in return, as a precondition for negotiations?

In 1937, David Ben Gurion, a leader of the Zionist movement, said:

*The acceptance of partition does not commit us to renounce Trans-Jordan; one does not demand from anybody to give up his vision. We shall accept a state in the boundaries fixed today, but the boundaries of Zionist aspirations are the concern of the Jewish people and no external factor will be able to limit them.*

(Zichronot, Memoirs, Volume 4 [1937]. Tel Aviv Am Oved Publishers, 1974, p. 151.)

And of course in 1947, Menahem Begin said of the partition resolution:

*The partition of the homeland is illegal. It will never be recognised. The signature of institutions and individuals of the partition agreement is invalid. It will not bind the Jewish people. Jerusalem was and will forever be our capital. Eretz Israel will be restored to the people of Israel. All of it. And forever.*


Australia does not make it a condition of recognition of Israel that it abandon these claims. Australia continues to stand by Israel even as Israel imposes them on the Palestinians by force. Israel's hypocrisy in these circumstances in refusing to deal with the PLO on the grounds that it does not recognise Israel's right to exist is manifest. How can Australia make it a condition of recognition of the PLO that it first grant moral assent to the legitimacy of a continuing attack on its national existence?

In addition, Australia should not forget that Israel has indicated more than once that it would not recognise the PLO even if the PLO were to recognise Israel. Conservative Israeli governments have already given explicit support to the policy of Labor governments, which is "total opposition to negotiation with the PLO even if the latter recognises the state of Israel and its right to exist and stops terror acts altogether". (*Davar*, 4 July, 1975.) Israeli Cabinet Secretary Dan Meridor declared in early 1984 that "Israel has reiterated it will never negotiate with the PLO even if the guerrilla organisation recognised the Jewish state's right to exist". (*Australian Jewish News*, 16 March, 1984.)

Numerous other national resistance movements, which do not recognise the regimes they oppose, are not treated by the Australian government the way the PLO has been.

The fatal flaw in UN Resolution 242, so far as the Palestinians are concerned, is that it does not recognise the Palestinians at all. Add to this the numerous UN resolutions not recognised by Israel (including the Palestine partition resolution itself and the resolution admitting Israel to the UN on the condition that the Palestinian refugees be allowed to return home), and the real double standard seems to be operating in the requirement that the PLO must first recognise Resolution 242 before it will be recognised as the representative of the Palestinians.

The whole issue of recognition is based on a completely false reciprocity. The PLO is being asked to recognise Israel's right to exist, not as a condition of the right of a Palestinian state to exist, but as a condition of the right of the PLO to represent the Palestinians. In return for this, the PLO should in fairness be asked only to recognise the right of the Israeli government to represent non-Palestinian Israelis, in other words, the right of non-Palestinian Israelis to choose their own representatives. But, of course, nobody suggests that the PLO has ever refused to do this.

The PLO has more than once expressed its willingness to negotiate an accommodation that could include peaceful coexistence, more recently in
the endorsement by the Palestine National Council of the September 1982 Fez plan. That plan envisages withdrawal from the 1967-occupied territories and the dismantling of all Israeli settlements established since then, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and "formalising guarantees for peace among all states in the region including the independent Palestinian state". But even the PLO's ultimate vision, made in the form of an official offer by chairman Arafat at the United Nations in 1974, for a "democratic state where Christians, Jews and Muslims live in justice, equality, fraternity and progress" including "all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination", is more than any Israeli government has ever offered to the Palestinians.

**Israel's "Security"**

Separated from the question of moral recognition, it is hard to see how Israel's "security" could be an obstacle to negotiations with the real Palestinian representatives. Naturally, a major aspect of any talks would have to be the security of both parties, but it is hard to see how the talks themselves could threaten Israeli security. In fact, it seems that the notion of a Palestinian state is often perceived to be the threat, and recognition of the PLO is feared merely because it might lead to the creation of such a state. Two responses can be made to this view.

Firstly, Australia must be even-handed in its concern for human security. Could anything be clearer from the events in Lebanon in 1982 than that it is Palestinian security that is endangered by the lack of a state?

Secondly, what does Israel, the world's fourth-ranking military power, have to fear from a new Palestinian state? More importantly, would not a Palestinian state give some measure of dignity and satisfaction to a people accustomed to the dependency, desperation and frustration of nearly four decades of refugee marginality, and wouldn't this be the best objective guarantee of security for everyone in the region?

If fear of the possible eventuality of a Palestinian state is the ground on which Israel refuses to recognise or negotiate with the PLO, it has nothing at all to do with security, and can only be related to the pursuit by force of the self-interested Israeli claim mentioned earlier to dominion over all of Palestine, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip, at the expense of the Palestinian inhabitants.

**Conclusion**

One of the reasons advanced for Israel's refusal to negotiate with the PLO stands up to close scrutiny and certainly none can serve as a basis for Australia's refusal to recognise the PLO, or to refuse Palestinian representatives the right even to be heard in this country.

Israel's refusal to negotiate with the PLO, even if the PLO recognises Israel, seems to be part of its strategy to extend the dominion of the Jewish state to include all of Palestine. Israel's policy of delegitimising the PLO has been the basis for all of its attempts to eradicate Palestinian nationalism and aspirations, from the banning of the Palestinian flag throughout the territory occupied by Israel and the dismissal of faculty members of West Bank universities who do not disavow the PLO in writing, through to the slaughter of the Palestinians in Lebanon in the name of eliminating the PLO. These actions are only rendered defensible by the artificial splitting of the PLO from the Palestinian people, and they are indeed necessitated (from Israel's purely selfish point of view) because the PLO is so closely bound up with Palestinian nationalism and expresses it so well.

Over a hundred UN member states currently recognise the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, including Austria, China, Greece, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Turkey, the USSR and Tanzania (who accord the PLO full diplomatic status), and Belgium, Brazil, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru and Spain (who accord it political recognition without diplomatic status). In June 1980, nine heads of states of the European Economic Community accepted the PLO as one of the participants that must be included in peace negotiations. This was reaffirmed by them in March 1983. And, of course, the UN General Assembly resolved in 1974 that the PLO was the "representative of the Palestinian people" and in 1975 the
1984-85 marks the fiftieth anniversary of China's Long March. Jean Bailey recalls some of the stirring incidents of this event and draws attention to political, social and economic consequences arising from it.

Nineteen eighty-four marks the fiftieth anniversary of an event which brought a new idiomatic phrase into the major languages of the world, an event which changed the history of Asia, an event which, to this day, determines actions of a people more numerous than those of Europe and the USA combined.

This event was the Chinese Long March. Because our ties with China grow increasingly strong it is important that we know what the Long March was, know something of its almost legendary happenings, something of its consequences both good and ill.

Main events are soon told.

In October 1934 the Red Army retreated from its base in south-east China pursued by the Kuomintang (moneyed classes and their followers led by Chiang Kai-shek). Twisting, turning, redoubling, fighting on the average almost a battle or skirmish a day, they travelled 18,000 km, a distance further than from Beijing (Peking) to New York, than from Sydney to Perth and then back again. In their path lay twenty-four major rivers and eighteen mountain ranges, six of them above the line of perpetual snow. Twelve months later, 20,000 of the 90,000 who set out arrived at their destination — a Red base in China's north.

Preparations were thorough, even to a needle and thread stuck in the underside of each cap. Morale was high. This is how an Army engineer describes the setting out:

When no enemy was near, whole companies would sing and others would answer ... If it was a black night and the enemy was far away, we made torches from pine branches or frayed bamboo and then it was truly beautiful. When at the foot of a mountain we could look up and see a long column of lights coiling like a fiery dragon up the mountainside. From the summit we could look in both directions and see miles of torches moving forward like a wave of fire.
Long March

For five months, they manoeuvred in the southern provinces, eluding, fighting, advancing, retreating, baffling the enemy by diversionary tactics made simultaneously from half a dozen points along their flank. Then, after one last pretended thrust at Kunming (Burma Road terminal), they swung north.

They were now in rough mountainous country where great rivers rush down between immense cliffs from the Tibetan ranges. Few Red Army men could swim but sometimes those that could managed, with the help of skin boats and bamboo rafts, to get rope across and set up makeshift pontoon bridges.

At the well-fortified Yangtse River, Chiang Kai-chek thought he had them. His planes reported that the Red Army had halted to build a bamboo bridge, so Chiang ordered his troops to bear down on this bridge from all sides. But in the dead of night the Red Army left their bamboo bridge and, after an eighteen-hour march, reached one of the few spots where a ferry plied. Here, dressed in Kuomintang uniforms, Red Army men summoned a boat from the northern bank, overpowered an unsuspecting defence force playing mahjong, took over ferries and, working non-stop for nine days and nights, transported the whole Red Army across.

Even more spectacular was the crossing of the flooded Ta Tu River, wider here even than the Yangtse. After a series of adventures, each an epic in itself, the Red Army again captured boats and managed to get at least one division across the rushing, seething Ta Tu. But then Kuomintang planes spotted them and began dropping bombs. So the main force still on the south bank set off on another march, this time to the chain bridge at Lueling. By now, the Red Army was barefoot and their track ("twisted like a sheep's gut" says a participant) went high over mountains and then low again to the flooded water level. Parallel to them on the northern bank were both their own division which had got across and an enemy warlord trying to race them to the bridge. On their own side, hot on their heels, was the Kuomintang.

For two days and nights they marched, with breaks of only ten minutes for rest and meals. They fought a battle at the foggy summit of Wild Tiger Mountain, and another at its foot. Then came a downpour that blackened the night. At first they tried marching with the hand of one man on the shoulder of the man in front. But then, observing that the warlord forces across the river had lit torches, and coming themselves to a hamlet with reed fences, they bought all the fences and made torches too. Soon two long lines of flame "crimsoned the Ta Tu" (Chinese poem).

At daybreak on the third day they reached Liuting. The river narrows at Liuting and rushes between high cliffs. Centuries before, a chain bridge had been slung between these cliffs with wooden planks for flooring. The Red Army should have been safe. Both foes had been outdistanced. The small outposts on the opposite bank would soon be captured.

But what had happened to the bridge? All that met the gaze of the weary Red Army were dangling iron chains. No flooring between. All planks had been removed to a point midway across. Far below, the water churned and frothed. No footing there. No footing on the chains above.

But men have more than feet and soon twenty-two volunteers with guns tied to their backs and grenades tucked in their belts, were clinging to the chains and moving along them hand over hand. Three were struck by bullets and dropped into the foaming river. The others reached midpoint and clambered up only to be greeted by a sheet of flame. The outpost men had spread paraffin and lit it. Through the flames rushed the volunteers. Behind them, other Red Army men were now swinging on the chains, clambering up, dashing through the flames. Unbelieving, the outpost men turned and fled. Shouts of joy rose from the men on the south, and amid them came the thud, thud of felled tree trunk planks falling into place between the dangling chains.

When the pursuing Kuomintang arrived, they found no Red Army, no bridge. This time, even the chain moorings had been destroyed.

The Red Army's reputation flew ahead of it. It was the poor man's army. It took land from rich landowners and distributed it among peasants and tenants. It cancelled usurers' debts, it set up peasant councils so that even the poorest managed their own affairs. And, unlike the Kuomintang, it did not want to fight other Chinese; it was northward bound to drive out the Japanese.

As individuals, too, Red Army men behaved as had no other soldiers the peasants had ever heard of. They stole nothing, not even a grain of wheat. Borrowed articles were returned, damaged ones paid for. Women were respected. Latrines were dug far from the homes. Wounded men left behind said that the Army rule "Be kind and courteous to each other" was meant to be applied as much to peasants and tribespeople as to fellow Red Army men.

Many peasants joined the Red Army. Many Kuomintang deserted to it.

For seventeen days after the Ta Tu crossing, the Red Army rested and re-equipped. Then their commander-in-chief called them together and addressed them:

The way before us is even more difficult than the one behind us. We must cross some of the highest mountains in the world, glacier-clad mountains wrapped in eternal snow .... In this vast Tibetan-Chinese borderland are war-like tribes whom for centuries Chinese oppressive
When all mountains were crossed, the Red Army rested and re-equipped itself and then set off again. One section crossed was the Grasslands.

The Grasslands. How pleasant Grasslands sounds. But crossing was to prove the Red Army's greatest feat. One historian rates it "undoubtedly the most difficult episode in the history of logistics".

A more apt name than Grasslands would be Icy Swamps. The Grasslands are on a plateau higher than Australia's highest mountain and for over half the year are swept by torrential rain. Except for a maze of narrow strips, high wild grass grows over an ocean of black, ice-cold mud deeper than a man is tall. One false step and a man or a horse sinks from sight. Many did. So narrow were the strips of solid land that men could not lie down at night but slept standing, and for warmth leant against each other. Some tied the high grass over their heads as a defence against the rain; the lucky ones came to bamboo shelters which their advance guard had built for those that followed.

Conditions varied. Sometimes they marched in single file, at others they marched side by side in a long line, all holding hands. Always they were short of food. Always — having no firewood — they ate what they had raw.

For ten days they marched, through the rain-swept, ooze-based Grasslands. The Grasslands took its toll but not nearly so great a toll as it did of their Kuomintang pursuers. These got lost in the maze of swamp and wild grass, and those that were left of them turned back.

Sixteen thousand kilometres now lay behind the Red Army, 2,000 still to go. But at last these kilometres too lay behind and the Red Army, their marching over, joined forces with their northern comrades and with them began a new series of tasks.

All in all, the men of the Long March had passed through eleven provinces in which lived 200,000,000 people. Wherever they had gone they had confiscated great estates and had distributed these among the peasants. In every province they had left little knots of men to help the peasants set up self-governing councils, to teach them how to wage guerrilla warfare. Every day of that year of marching had scaled more strongly the fate of the invading Japanese, every province traversed made yet more certain who would win in the coming struggle between Communists and Nationalists.

The ethos of the Long March lived on after '49. Nothing was too hard. Too hard to rid a quarter of the world's population of venereal disease, prostitution, drugs, gambling, malaria, TB, leprosy? Not a bit of it. When the Red Army said these must go, go they did.

Too hard to get suspicious, individualistic peasantry to cooperate? Had not the members of the Red Army too been suspicious and individualistic when they first joined? Had not they developed a camaraderie of mutual trust and help? So Mutual Aid Teams were born, developed in time into Agricultural Co-operatives; which, in later time, developed into Communes where industry and agriculture worked in harmony.

The ethos of the Long March did not always lead the Chinese the right way. After '49 they carefully set up a democratic structure. But the tradition of Mao-at-the-top which had worked so well with an army on the move, now in civil life persisted right throughout Mao's lifetime, even when old age had made his leadership no longer beneficial.

Perhaps the rectification campaigns with their endless arguing sessions can be traced to Mao's "Conviction not Forced Obedience". Perhaps the many "incidents" on China's border or the excesses of the Cultural Revolution can be traced to that year of danger and never-ceasing vigilance.

Perhaps...

But there is no perhaps as to the effect of the Long March on China's national pride and on her determination to succeed, nor to the effect her achievements have had on other Asian nations, nor indeed to the effect it has had on the whole world's confidence to "Long March" when trouble strikes.

During four decades Jean Bailey had district responsibility for widely differing areas of CPA work. Nowadays she specialises in writing.
The Power Dilemma

"Chile! What does he know about Chile! Was he there?" A loud Texan drawl emerged from the seat next to me. Sadly it was not an isolated sentiment. In fact, on the night that I saw The Blind Giant is Dancing, the Opera House audience itself was a problem. Many seemed unable to recognise some of the complex problems which Sewell begins to explore. At times, sections of the audience responded with untimely laughter as if for want of a better response.

Perhaps this is not so surprising, given that The Blind Giant is an immensely dense and complex play. In the course of some three hours, the play considers the relationship between worker and capitalist, husband and wife, father and son, between government and people, and between party and activist. Different scenes tend to focus on one or another of these relationships, often in rapid succession. But the play does not consider them in isolation: the scenes feed into one another and the play is held together by both the narrative and a number of underlying themes.

The narrative centres around the character of Allen Fitzgerald, a marxist economist and leader of the socialist left within the Australian Labor Party. The play deals with Allen's struggle for, and accession to, power; and the effect which this has on those around him — comrades, lovers, wife, brothers, parents, friends — and the effects which they in turn have on Allen. It is the nature and exercise of political power which is Sewell's most important underlying theme and it is to this theme that I now want to turn.

I say "theme", but it would be more appropriate to refer to the question of power as a "dilemma". Given that we need power as a means, can we avoid making it an end in itself? The dilemma is reflected in Allen's changing attitude to power. Early in the play, we find him arguing against a proposal by his comrade Ramon to do a deal with Charlie Palmer who is a crime boss in the Labor Party. Allen states clearly that:

"We're fighting for a society where people can live with some kind of dignity ... at the heart of socialism is the idea of justice and if we betray that, we betray socialism, even if we achieve power." (p.20)

He even goes so far as to invoke the anarchist dream "to destroy power". (p.20) All the same, Allen chooses to do the deal.

By the end of the play he is arguing the very opposite:

"The only thing that matters is power .... We're creatures of power! .... There'll never be socialism in this country: that's the joke. We've been fighting for nothing." (p.71)

Allen concludes that he has finally discovered that:

"... the appalling beauty of capitalism is that it creates the illusion of our freedom; that it makes us think we can change it or alter it — that we create it. But that's not true. It creates us. It makes our desires and our thoughts .... it employs us to maintain and expand itself ...." (p.75)

Those who seek to exercise the levers of power which capitalism provides merely become trager (supports) for capitalism itself. "... All we are are momentary carriers of its power and what's finally real is capitalism". (p.76)

Of course, it is true that power is a neutral means. The institutions in which power is distilled, and through which it is exercised, are not neutral mechanisms that are equally able to help us whatever our goal. In a capitalist society power is distributed in such a way that it tends to reproduce capitalism. The trouble with Allen's conclusion is that it goes one step further and hypothesises the existing distribution of power in capitalist societies. But the institutions through which power is exercised are not fixed and unchangeable for all time. It is possible to struggle for the redistribution of power and the establishment of new democratic and popular institutions through which power can be exercised. This is the very essence of socialism.
must also be clear that this does not allow us to avoid the need to engage with existing sources of power. Ramon clearly recognises this in his response to Allen's original objections to the deal with Charlie Palmer:

Ramon: Capitalism makes the rules!
Allen: They're not our rules!
Ramon: As long as the bourgeois is in power, they are. (p.20)

If we are to influence existing political struggles then we must participate in existing political institutions. This, in turn, involves us in seeking to exercise political power in these institutions.

The study of Allen Fitzgerald is in part a study of his attempt to exercise power through one such institution — the Labor Party. Throughout, Allen remains somewhat ignorant of the real means by which power is exercised in the Labor Party. For example, he asks his rightwing rival Michael Wells whether he has "gone to the police" about a murder ordered by Charlie Palmer, only to be told by Wells that, "It was a fucking cop that did it". (p.52) Nor does he understand Wells' ominous warning about "the power of the Americans" (p.78) until much later when he discovers that he, too, is trapped.

Nevertheless, Allen does begin to learn where power lies in the Labor Party and, since he is determined to exercise power through that institution alone, he must try to master its sources of power: not least the branch stacking; the ballot rigging; and the Americans. The irony is that in seeking to master these sources, they actually master him. Allen's predictions become self-fulfilling. He becomes no more than a carrier for the power of capitalism.

But the problems which confront Allen are not just problems for those in the Labor Party. They are problems for all who seek to intervene in existing political struggles. The Communist Party, for example, makes this sort of intervention central to its strategy, arguing that "Unions and workers ... must intervene in the (capitalist) structure of power" (p.46, Towards Socialism in Australia) in order to challenge that same power. Similarly, many feminists seek to intervene in male-dominated institutions in order to challenge the sexual structure of power. In both these cases, socialists and feminists face the problem of trying to change the distribution of power without first succumbing to the existing power structures.

The dilemma can be summarised as follows:

- In order to change the distribution and exercise of power, we need to intervene in the institutions in which power currently resides.
- To effectively intervene we need to exercise power within these institutions.
- But how can we use this power against itself? How can we use the power which is embodied in these institutions to change the distribution and exercise of that very same power?

More simply, given that "capitalism makes the rules" (p.20), can we use the rules to change the game itself?

It seems to me that Sewell's success lies in his ability to resist the temptation to offer us easy solutions and, instead, to make us feel this dilemma. He concentrates our attention on the unavoidable contradictions involved in socialist struggle. In a completely different context, Denis Altman has also pointed to these contradictions in his recent ABC radio series Radicalism in the Age of Consensus. Altman interviews a number of prominent radicals who seek to work against "the system" from "within", and at the same time the same dilemma arises.

Thus, for example, how can socialists within the Labor Party seek to use the power which results from popular support for social democracy to undermine social democracy and build support for socialism?

Or, how can revolutionaries in parliament use the power and political legitimacy endowed by parliamentary representation to undermine the notion that politics equals parliament and build support for radically extended democracy?

Or again, how can socialist "mandarins" in the public service use their power to implement, say, industrial democracy programs when the whole point of such programs is to reduce the power upon which this mode of implementation relies?

Sewell cannot offer us an easy solution to these dilemmas because there simply is none. In part, however, an answer lies in the fact that capitalist power both within and between these institutions is often contradictory and these contradictions allow different sources of power to be played off against one another. Thus, socialists "outside" of capitalist power structures can make mutually beneficial alliances with one source of power against another.

The metal unions, for example, have currently made a loose alliance with manufacturing capital against the interests of capitalists in the finance and resource sectors. Similarly, an alliance can be made with one section of an institution against another section. For example, unions can make an alliance with those within the state bureaucracy who seek political control of economic planning (in, say, the Department of Trade or the National Parks and Wildlife Service) against those (in, say, the Treasury) who seek the free reign of market forces. Or, to look beyond Australia, in the Philippines and Nicaragua, socialists make vital alliances with radical priests and lay workers against the conservative church hierarchy.

All this talk of alliances with established institutions of political power raises another point. For to talk of alliance in this way is to recognise the existence of alternative sources of power which make these alliances. The possibility of creating alternative sources of popular power is a fundamental part of any
answer to the dilemma Sewell poses. It is possible to establish popular democratic institutions outside of "the system". We can, and do, develop new ways of exercising power in the workplace, in our local communities, in the household, and in personal relationships. If those who intervene in the established institutions of power tie themselves firmly to these alternative institutions, it is far easier to avoid the corrupting effects of existing power structures.

Only when Allen rejects any connection with these alternative sources of power, and tries first to limit them — "I can keep the left under control" (p.79) he tells Wells — and finally to destroy them, does he become completely compromised.

We have already noted that The Blind Giant is primarily a vehicle to pose, rather than solve, dilemmas. Indeed, as Ramon points out, Allen's desire for absolutes simply cannot be fulfilled: "This isn't heaven, mate and it's not hell: this is the world." (p.20) The priesthood, suicide and, finally, socialism each fail Allen in his search for "somewhere to stand that's not moving". (p.60)

Unlike the metaphysical notions of heaven and hell, the real world cannot provide us with absolutes, certainties, and simple formulae to tell us what to do. The best we can hope for is to resolve the contradictions which confront us in the concrete situations in which they arise. Nevertheless, although The Blind Giant emphasises the dilemmas facing socialists in all their complexity, it is not a play of despair. By the play's end, the characters of Bruce (Allen's brother) and Louise (Allen's wife) represent, in their different ways, a kind of hope for the future — an expression of confidence in the viability of socialist and feminist struggle.

We last see Allen, having completely rejected popular power, screaming "Burn ... burn ... burn ... burn ..." (p.82) at the protesters outside his party office. Bruce, on the other hand, is a part of that alternative popular power, and recognises its crucial importance by abandoning the Labor Party. "What's the point in being in the fucking thing anyway!", he argues. "We have to organise outside the Party: the whole thing's fucked." (p.79) Bruce's growing commitment to militant struggle represents an important thread of hope running through the closing scenes of the play. Louise, too, despite her confusion and anguish, maintains her commitment to "build a better society" as well as her belief that she and "all the other cripples in this world" (p.77) have the collective strength to do it. Louise wants to understand her identity, her emotions and their social reality. Allen comes to think that there is nothing to understand beyond the fact that hate, fear and personal desire is all that there is. Here at last Allen feels certain:

"I've found myself. I've found my hate, my fear, my truth. Nothing can stop me now." (p.72)

In fact, Allen is lost; but Louise, Bruce and their struggle continue.

The final word, however, should go to the Chilean exile, Ramon:

Ramon: What is it in your country that feeds on hate?
Allen: How can't you hate?
Ramon: Because it kills your heart. You think you've experienced it hard. My father and my brother were tortured and killed by the fascists in seventy-three. I saw things no man should see; I did things no man should do. But if all that was left of me was hate it would be best for everyone for me to be in the grave! You have no right to say these things, because you don't know!

"What do you know!", I said to the Texan beside me.
Review

Disseminating Radical Ideas in a Hostile Environment

John Sendy has written a book, *Melbourne's Radical Bookshops*, which is both fascinating and informative.

Its title is perhaps a little deceptive. To be sure, the story of the bookshops is there, and is well told. But Sendy also writes as much about the lives of the people who made the bookshops, and the temper of the times, as he does about the shops themselves.

In so doing the book avoids becoming a dry and barren history; it rarely falters in this respect.

Sendy also tells us a great deal about the titles which graced the shelves of the bookshops and the various distribution networks that helped these books reach out to wider audiences.

The book is largely based around a chapter by chapter description of Melbourne's radical bookshops and sellers of the past 100-odd years. An opening chapter deals with the "early days" — a time of diverse origins and efforts. Perhaps not surprisingly we learn that: "Bookselling in Melbourne appears to have commenced in 1841 when an Irishman opened a bookstall under a gum tree on the site where the Town Hall now stands." Something poetic about that!

The reader is then taken through the ventures of the anarchist Andrade, of Ross's Book Service and the Victorian Socialist Party, of the Esperantists Rawson and Pyke and various other sellers and outlets.

The origins of the International Bookshop trace back to 1933 when a small shop called the Modern Bookshop was established by the Communist Party as part of its then newly acquired headquarters. A year later the shop had changed its name to "International Bookshop". "No explanation for the change has been found," Sendy reports.

By 1937 the business had become a private company. Predictably, "it concentrated upon CPA literature, the classics of marxism and material from the Soviet Union". Many novels were also available.

However, it was only with the onset of World War II and more favourable political conditions at home that the International really became a bookshop of lasting significance.

The story of its next forty years links closely with that of the CPA in the post-war period — a story with which I'm sure most readers are familiar.

The one real difference in their respective fortunes has been the growth and consolidation of the bookshop over the last 10 or so years. As the shop has assumed a more independent management policy and stocked a greater diversity of literature, it has benefited greatly from the expanded interest in "radical" literature. As Sendy notes: "Customers these days come less from the traditional industrial working class and more from student, academic and teaching circles". Some would bemoan
this; others would suggest it has been an inevitable development. None can contest its truth.

Strangely, this book can make a young (and "intellectually trained") person like myself feel rather inadequate in his/her past reading. Sendy's research reveals bits and pieces about the intellectual diet of earlier generations of radicals. How different the nutritional diet of latter-day radicals is!

I looked with envy at the rich collection of "130 Books for a Working Class Library" advertised by Andrade's Bookshop in 1921. I can only claim to have seriously read ten of them (and those mostly "classics" like Marx, Engels and Labriola).

What a well-balanced diet it was: combining marxist classics with anarchist, socialist and social-democratic writings; leading progressive novelists with the new evolutionist trend in science and positivist trend in philosophy; and standard texts on world history with books on how to write, argue and speak well.

Unfortunately, the author fails to tell us whether anybody (or organisation) ever bought a complete set. He does, however, mention those books which were most in demand. For example, the novels of Upton Sinclair and Jack London were better read in the '20s than the pamphlets of Lenin. Although the novelists are different, I doubt whether the situation would be much different today. And so it should be, some might say.

The radical bookshops of the 1900-1935 period also reveal a decidedly libertarian streak. There was as much interest in "free thought", utopian and sexual matters as in communist literature. Indeed, it appears these early radical bookshops were a primary source of information for a public denied ready access to material about matters sexual and marital.

Not until 40-odd years later, under the impact of the anti-censorship, women's and gay movements, does the radical bookseller again appear to promote stocks devoted to such subjects. Undoubtedly someone more familiar with the earlier literature than I could point to the great differences in approach of writers then to now.

By the 1930s, the graduated impact of the Russian Revolution, the narrowing of focus to a new political orthodoxy, and the sanctions imposed by a "Victorian" morality, largely eliminated the desire on the part of radical booksellers to promote such reading.

A few of the more revealing examples of these early libertarian interests deserve recounting. Ross's Book Service, closely associated with the Victorian Socialist Party provides one example:

The January 1916 edition of Ross's, under the heading "Know thyself", advertised "a series of usually hard to get books on sex". The next issue declared that Ross's Book Service had "a long list of sexological works".

My dictionary tells me "sexological" means "relating to interaction between the sexes, esp. among human beings".

An amusing episode is recorded in the days of Andrade's business:

The shop sold plays and theatrical goods to schools and amateur theatre groups. Catalogues were circulated to state and convent schools. May Brodney, a veteran of the socialist movement, has recorded the story of how a leaflet advertising contraceptives was inadvertently enclosed with the play catalogue sent to schools and how the Andrade employees thoroughly enjoyed the prospect of teachers and nuns being shocked because of the mistake.
In reading Sendy's book there were only a couple of things which I found myself at odds with. The style of presentation, while usefully employing a thematic method and building chapters (mainly) around booksellers, is not without its drawbacks. For those not already familiar with the period concerned, this method tends to confuse the historical sequence and interconnections of events and bookshops for the reader.

On a more technical note, one might question the wisdom of citing various circulation figures (especially in Chapter 10) without comment. By reputation, the Guardian was a good paper, but Communist Party claims in such publications have been known to be inflated for public consumption.

It was also a bit unfortunate seeing a graphic so badly mis-labelled as the reproduction of the 1977 anti-uranium pamphlet Red Light for Yellow Cake. The caption reads: "A disarmament pamphlet (1983)". (p. 145)

But such minor criticisms should not deter the prospective reader from the immensely rewarding insights the book offers.

It needs to be pointed out that Sendy has not attempted to write a history of the intellectual influences on Melbourne's radical movements over the past 100 years. Nevertheless, he does provide enough detail and comment to stimulate further reflection (and research, hopefully) on this topic.

A common assumption of the left in Australia, when trying to come to terms with its historical roots, is to assert the anti-intellectual nature of the working class. Indeed, it is quite common to see left groups pandering to this anti-intellectualism; and this in the name of being "in touch" with the working class.

Sendy, however, cites an observation of the American historian, C. Hartley Grattan, to dispel the more facile of the interpretations that have been made of this claim:

> Whether benignly or aggressively anti-intellectual, the Labor movement has consistently been subject to ideas; or differently put, it has been subject to intellectuals located elsewhere than in Australia.

Perhaps no other single fact accounts for so much of the failure of left ideas to take deep root in Australia. While most left radicals today have thrown off their dependency on "Russian" thinkers, the suspicion remains that they have been replaced by others equally alien to the Australian situation. Worse still, they have been replaced by nothing more than the received wisdoms of past eras.

Before I am mistakenly accused of advocating a form of nationalist chauvinism in the international marketplace of ideas, let me come to some related points.

The anti-intellectual origins of Australian working class history are different. I would argue, than the intellectual wastelands common to its present predicament.

In his "Afterword", Sendy rightly points to the popular culture of today as having replaced the working class reader of the late nineteenth century. "Commercial television, pulp fiction, crass consumerism and the vulgar entertainment of the mass society" are the main intellectual diet of today's working class.

Serious reading itself — or the rediscovery of it in some form — has become a value which socialists will need to argue is essential for the making of a new society. In doing so, we will be asserting the need to "conserve" an old art which, for centuries, was the preserve of leisurely and scholastic classes. Having won the right and means to share in this art, the working classes of today find this right has been devalued and is progressively being rendered obsolete.

In arguing to preserve the value of reading, socialists will be arguing against the objective trends of our society. This, however, is not the same as an argument against television, computers or rock music (although there are plenty of radicals today who would wish to run the argument in this logical direction). The socialist argument with those elements of popular culture which are replacing or devaluing reading is pitched against the exploitative, controlling and homogenising aspects of their influence.

How can this battle best be waged? Is the radical bookshop a fortress from which the proletarian, girded with knowledge, can then sally forth?

We are well beyond the scope of Sendy's book with these questions. What can be said is this: radical bookshops have in the past played an important part in disseminating radical ideas in an otherwise fairly hostile environment. But if these bookshops are ever to be more than a "residual" corner of a highly differentiated capitalist market, then a new audience and new lines of communication must be created which reach deep into the Australian situation. Like the Irishman of last century, selling books under a gum tree where the Town Hall now stands, we need more than novelty value to attract the passers-by.

Phil Hind is a disarmament activist who has worked in a full-time capacity for the peace movement.
Terrorism — Fact or Fiction

The title itself is an ambiguous play on words. It comes from an editorial printed in The Australian under the banner "Stop knocking the security forces". This appeared just after the Hilton explosion. The shadowy and sinister figures referred to in the editorial are those who had been calling for the abolition of the Australian secret police before the incident. (About a week before 13 February 1978, Neville Wran had announced he was going to order an inquiry into the then Liberal Opposition leader Peter Coleman's links with ASIO and Special Branch. He dropped this proposal after the Hilton bombing.)

In the film, this editorial is read news style by an actor. The actor's voice and image become increasingly distorted until the words are an indecipherable noise and the face a sinister caricature .... so the reader himself becomes what he is describing.

The script for the film is an interesting mix of dialogues created for the actors and monologues taken from academic and journalistic works on terrorism and, in particular, the Hilton explosion. Obviously, quite a bit of research has been done for there are pieces from court transcripts as well as newspapers. This blend of fact and fiction suits the paradoxical nature of the Hilton bombing and its consequences.

The film was made with a minimum of resources. Shot on Super 8, it takes on the very grainy texture of that kind of film. It runs for about twenty minutes. The film is too repetitive in parts. An example is the scene in which the anti-hero is running to give the warning phone call. Although I began to feel a little sorry for the pathetic celluloid figure trapped in his seemingly endless journey, it did go on a bit long; the same can be said for the "goon squad" walking through the airport foyer at the beginning of the film.

The paradox of state agents being involved in terrorist activities against the state and the people is articulated by an "academic" in the film. She speaks in a distant but knowing way about the state's involvement in and (over-)reaction to terrorism, and the media's depoliticisation of terror and dehumanisation of the terrorist. In some ways she becomes the conscience of the main character — the anxious spook who fears something may go wrong. This man increasingly becomes the victim in this side of the plot.

All in all, it is a good depiction of a much talked about side of the Hilton bomb explosion of 1978. With a mix of distorted fragments and straight acting, of fact and fiction, it builds a credible story around the possibility of the use of terrorism by the secret police to gain credibility and shore up their tenuous position in society.

John Tebbitt is a journalist who is actively involved in the Campaign to Acquit Alister, Dunn and Anderson (CAADA).
It is very easy when listening to Ronald Reagan to regard American foreign policy as bumbling idiocy. This book makes it clear that it is not.

The Reagan administration may be simplistic in its view of the world, but it has clearly identified goals and assumptions, and its policies cannot be characterised as inconsistent. Foolhardy and dangerous, certainly, and probably more so because their direction is so deliberate.

As this book makes clear, the goal of US policies now is a direct continuation of that of previous administrations — the maintenance of US global hegemony by any and every means.

The arms race, and especially the determination of the US to maintain an overwhelming superiority in nuclear weapons, is not madness, however economically destructive it may be in the longer term. By drawing potential economic challengers under its nuclear umbrella it can continue to assert its international leadership, as in the case of Cruise missiles.

It is also a conscious intention of US policy-makers to force the USSR into the arms race because they believe they can make the cost great enough to cripple the Soviet economy.

McMahan provides a detailed analysis of these positions and, along with them the sham commitment to arms negotiations, supported by careful documentation of the statements of American officials and ideologues, both on and off-the-record.

He also examines in detail US policy towards the Third World, showing how it consistently intervenes to prevent social change even when there is no threat to its economic or strategic interests, because the policy-makers believe they are demonstrating the credibility of American power. In three case studies — El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Grenada — McMahan shows the terrible consequences of this attitude.

This is a grim and frightening book, but an important one. Through its examples, and the black humour of some of the statements quoted, the crazed consistency of the American position is made clear. Anyone who wants a picture of what Australia has involved itself in through the US alliance will find it invaluable.

Ken Norling


The Viet Nam War has been described as the “living-room war”. Every evening, television brought its suffering and misery into people’s homes, and helped create a revulsion that undermined support for US and Australian involvement.

Ireland: The Propaganda War shows how the British state has worked to prevent the same thing happening to its intervention in Northern Ireland.

By a mixture of direct censorship, self-censorship by the media, and careful and deliberate manipulation by the propaganda machines of both army and government, the British public has been kept ignorant of the political positions involved, and of the daily course of events.

Curtis details numerous cases where army reports have been reprinted verbatim by the press and electronic media, of harassment and persecution of critical journalists, of banning of television programs with even the slightest pretensions to “even-handedness”.

She also makes plain that Fleet Street particularly has lived up to its usual standards, with a catalogue of fabricated stories, blatant misreporting and sensationalism that could serve as a comic script if the subject matter were not so serious.

The result has been a shift from 1971, when 59 percent of British people wanted the troops withdrawn, to now, when the British political consensus holds that they have to stay to prevent the locals murdering each other. Any suggestion that the troops are themselves part of the institutionalised violence does not make it into the public arena.

This is a book of much wider relevance than simply an indictment of the British role in Ireland. Its account of the limitations of the media, both public and private, in filling the role it supposedly has in a democratic state, deserves far more general attention.

Ken Norling
THE INTERNATIONAL BOOKSHOP CARRIES AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RANGE OF BOOKS ON POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES. 'BOOKNEWS' - QUARTERLY LIST OF NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST MAIL ORDER SERVICE PROVIDED ALSO SECOND HAND LEFT BOOKS, JOURNALS, PAPERS.
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