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As usual, Socialist Register is late in arriving in Australia, as usual it is expensive but, unlike many editions its contents have a unified theme — the uses which have been, and are being, made of hysterical anti-communism by rightwing politicians and governments. Some of the articles are historical, including one which compares the domestic politics of the first cold war in America, Britain, Canada and Australia, while others look at contemporary politics, such as the role of the "Red Threat" in U.S. foreign policy, and the nature of the "new philosophers" in France.


For much of Australian history, the ALP and other left organisations (including, at times, the Communist Party) have had the support of rural workers and at least some small farmers. Today, the most popular politician outside our big cities is undoubtedly Joh Bjelke-Petersen. This book may not offer a left analysis of how that conservatism has become entrenched but, in the absence of another analysis, studies by some of Australia’s leading political scientists of the organisation of rural politics, both nationally and on a state-by-state basis, provide some insights into a conservative force currently being mobilised against both state and federal Labor governments.

THE THIRD WORLD WAR — THE PHILIPPINES FRONT, Community Aid Abroad, Melbourne, 1985. $7.50 paperback, 50 pages.

A short, well-produced dossier on the current situation in the Philippines. It documents human rights abuses, examines health services and working environments, the state of the economy with particular attention to the role of transnational corporations, the growing militarisation, and the emerging forces for change. Of special interest is a chapter on the relationship between Australia and the Philippines, covering Australian investment, the tourist industry, and our government’s support for the Marcos regime through trade credits, development aid, and military training.

Available from Community Aid Abroad, 75 Brunswick St., Fitzroy 3065.

LIFELINES: STORIES BY WOMEN IN THE WESTERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE, edited by Robyn Hollander & Margaret Jacobs, published by Melbourne’s Living Museum of the West. $5.00 paperback. 68 pages.

Lifelines provides the autobiographies of five working class women, compiled as part of an oral history research project. There are differences in the ages, ethnic origins, and educational backgrounds of these women, but the shared experiences are clear — a procession of jobs which are tedious, physically exhausting and underpaid, with lack of recognition of their skills by male employers and foremen, and a family life of raising children without assistance from the father, or with physical abuse, without child care, and generally in inadequate housing. These are often tales of tribulation, but they also display marvellous tenacity, a rough humour and an indomitable courage.

Available from the Living Museum of the West, 1st floor, 42-44 Ferguson St., Williamstown 3016.


This collection demonstrates how greatly Australian culture has been enriched by the work of writers from non-English-speaking backgrounds, including — and the editor lays great stress on this — Aboriginal poets and story-tellers. It brings together the work of thirty-eight writers, all of whom have struggled both with an unfamiliar language, and with the everyday discrimination that has been the lot of non-Anglo-Saxons in this country. The strength and diversity of their stories and poems show how well they have overcome those barriers and, hopefully, this collection takes us one step closer to the day when such writings, and the experiences they describe, are fully recognised as an integral part of our society, not as something alien.


Whatever reservations one might have about the politics of the editor, The Stalinist Legacy is an interesting reader. It assembles various critiques of Stalinism, from Trotsky and the Left Opposition, through to writings on contemporary Eastern Europe and the USSR, and particularly the Solidarity movement in Poland. While many of the writers are, or have been, part of a political current that identifies itself with Trotsky, Khrushchev’s secret speech, various Yugoslav statements, and Josef Smrkovsky’s account of the end of the Prague Spring are also reprinted.

Ken Norling.