FIRST MONTHLY ISSUE
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**Good Evans?**

For over ten years, Australia has had a particular interest in the plight of Cambodia. In 1979-80, Australians donated more per capita than any other country to the international relief campaign there, after the overthrow of Pol Pot’s genocidal Khmer Rouge regime by the Vietnamese army.

Both the Governor-General, Bill Hayden, and the Opposition Leader, Andrew Peacock, have taken strong public positions in opposition to the Khmer Rouge. As Foreign Minister in 1986, Hayden called for the Khmer Rouge to be tried by an international tribunal. Peacock, who resigned as foreign minister in 1981 over the Fraser government’s diplomatic support for the Khmer Rouge, continues to support the proposal for a World Court case against them. The Australian section of the International Commission of Jurists recommends such legal action. Two thousand Cambodian refugees around the world and three thousand Australians have signed petitions supporting the idea. The Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, is considering it. Only the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, like his allies in Washington and Beijing, adamantly rejects the proposal that Australia take a strong stand against the Khmer Rouge.

There is considerable community support in Australia for concerted steps to reduce the power of the Khmer Rouge and help thwart their attempt to retake power in Cambodia. It is in Australia’s interest to take them. It is not in Australia’s interest to pander either to US obsessions with Vietnam or to China’s regional ambitions.

Here are some things Australia could do:

- Recognise the State of Cambodia and establish an embassy and a normal bilateral aid program in Phnom Penh. And restore normal bilateral aid as promised to Vietnam, now that it has withdrawn its troops (and advisers) from Cambodia; Italy has already done this, and urges other nations to do the same.
- Offer to resettle in Australia some of the 300,000 Cambodian ‘displaced persons’ now held captive in camps in Thailand by the Khmer Rouge and their allies, encourage other Western nations to do so as well, and encourage Thailand to allow those refugees who wish to return to Cambodia to go home.

If Australia were to take these steps, the Khmer Rouge’s international prestige and political power would suffer significantly. China, Thailand and other countries which support the Khmer Rouge, as well as Cambodians allied to them like Prince Sihanouk, would be made aware that at least one country in the region is prepared to act against the Khmer Rouge. Thailand’s civilian Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan would be more confident about the backing he would receive if he tried to deny the Khmer Rouge crucial supplies and sanctuary.

It was only last November that Foreign Minister Evans dropped his support (which it must be said Hayden had never shared) for inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in a future Cambodian government. Evans announced this the day after John Pilger’s documentary film, *Cambodia Year Ten*, was shown on Australian television. The film had highlighted the plight of Cambodia under Khmer Rouge attack and the West’s political support for the Khmer Rouge.

Evans’ new proposal followed concessions by the British government after the earlier showing of Pilger’s film in the UK. But it was a decided improvement. All other Western countries except for Sweden and Finland continued to support the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in government, even before consulting the Cambodian people through general elections.

The United States’ Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon, for instance, concedes that there is "tension ... between our moral position ... and looking for ways to deal with the reality of the situation". Thus the US claims that it opposes the Khmer Rouge, while insisting that these genocidists be included as full partners in a new Cambodian regime. China, for its part, has threatened Prince Sihanouk that it would ‘fight’ him if he abandoned his alliance with the Khmer Rouge.

In this context, the Evans plan of November 23 was a breath of hope. The Australian Foreign Minister proposed that the Khmer Rouge be excluded, and that Pol Pot and his allies vacate the UN’s Cambodia seat which they currently occupy. However, in return, he suggested that the
opponents of genocide should also be excluded. A UN administration (and 5,000 to 7,000 peace-keeping troops) should take over power from Hun Sen’s government, which currently rules the State of Cambodia but is recognised only by the Soviet bloc and India.

This proposal has gained significant approval and, at the time of writing, is about to be considered by the UN Security Council. The major obstacle there is China’s veto power. But there are two further hurdles. Firstly, the Khmer Rouge cannot be removed from the UN seat unwillingly (and there is no reason for them to vacate it willingly), except by conviction in the World Court for genocide. Filing such a case thus seems a necessary precondition for the Evans plan to succeed.

Secondly, even ‘success’ could degenerate into tragedy. UN troops could not hold the country against a Khmer Rouge insurgency. The only army that can defeat the Khmer Rouge is the Cambodian one loyal to Hun Sen’s government. But the Evans plan is to deprive this army of the government it is fighting for.

A more sensible policy is to stop the Khmer Rouge bullets before they are fired. All military and other supplies to the Khmer Rouge must be cut off. Here Thailand is the key, for it passes Chinese arms and ammunition to the genocidists, and still provides them with the sanctuary that enabled them to escape destruction by the Vietnamese army from 1979 to 1989. Contrary to what Evans argues (without fear of contradiction by a poorly informed press), if Thailand were to deny these supplies and sanctuary to China’s allies, China could do little for them.

Thailand currently has two policies on Cambodia. This situation is quite similar to World War Two, when the pro-Japanese militarist dictator Phibun coexisted with the democratic socialist regent Pridi, allowing Thailand to change sides as smoothly as possible when the outcome of the war became clear.

Today, Thailand’s Foreign Minister is Air Marshal Siddhi Savetsila, a pro-Chinese militarist who has been the major regional backer of the Pol Pot forces for ten years, providing diplomatic cover for the revival of their genocidal threat to Cambodia. The second Thai policy is that of the new civilian Prime Minister. Sensing advantage to Thailand’s burgeoning economy, Chatichai wants to turn neighbouring Indochina “from a battleground into a trading ground”. He has hosted several visits by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. But, according to the Far Eastern Economic Review last September, ‘Thai officials believe that, despite its publicly expressed revulsion towards the Khmer Rouge, the US has been quietly aiding the Khmer Rouge war effort for several years’. One senior Thai official said: "We would like to see a lead against the Khmer Rouge taken by the US before we close the Chinese supply route."

The first non-communist journalist to be based in Phnom Penh, Kawi Chongkittavon of the Bangkok Nation, has recently called for Thailand to stop the bullet and give recognition and “solid support” to the Hun Sen government in the interests of Thai-Cambodian relations, to prevent an anti-Thai backlash in Phnom Penh. "Thailand needs Hun Sen as much as he needs Thailand," says Chongkittavon. Bangkok should end its ‘fence-sitting’.

But Indonesia, too, is following a two-track policy on Cambodia. While independently pursuing better relations with Vietnam, in ASEAN forums, Indonesia still goes along with the shrill anti-Vietnamese rhetoric of Singapore and its US mentors, including calls for the Khmer Rouge to be restored to positions of power.

That is why the Paris negotiations broke down last August. The diplomatic paralysis hides the prospect of another conflagration in Cambodia which could affect the whole region. But even if the Evans plan founders as well, there is plenty Australia can still do. The fate of millions of Cambodians hangs in the balance.

Ben Kiernan
Until recently the NSW Labor Council, like the NSW ALP, was considered the jewel in the crown of Australia's labour movement Right. But just as the reputation of the NSW ALP was severely dented by Labor's massive defeat in the 1988 state election, the NSW Labor Council's grip on union politics has started to fracture, even without serious challenge from the Left. Thus the setting for the extraordinary revelations of December, when a breathtaking document prepared by two young likely lads from the council's staff turned out to have been distributed (albeit in a different, sanitised form) with blessings from Labor Council secretary Michael Easson. The document was prepared by Labor Council organiser Michael Costa and industrial officer Mark Duffy, then two bright young things of the NSW Labor Right.

Among other things, it declared the federal government electoral out- saners, the Accord a failure, the Labor Council moribund, centralised wage-fixing a loser, union amalgamations a mirage, the state ALP 'strategically bankrupt', the NSW Liberal government a swinging success, and single-union enterprise agreements (outside the centralised wage-fixing system) the way of the future.

Small wonder, then, that Easson at first labelled the document the 'naive and ludicrous' views of two junior officers. Small wonder, as well, at his discomfort over the revelation that his own office distributed numerous copies of an abridged version to media commentators; or, even more bizarrely, that Duffy facilitated the leaking of the full document to a Canberra businessman who, in turn, passed it on to the Liberal Party.

Of course, the media had a field day. An edited version of the full document with most (though not all) of the offending passages was published in *The Australian*. And, after escaping the sack for co-authoring the document, Duffy (though not Costa) was finally sacked for leaking it, whereupon he let off an astonishing tirade to the press which *inter alia* compared a recent speech of Bill Kelty to the Nuremburg rallies.

Yet amid all the sound and fury, the real significance of the episode seemed to slip by. For the media the story lay in Easson's discomfiture and in the criticisms of the Accord and federal Labor. For the Left, it was a great opportunity to take some potshots at the Right's dented authority. A few on the Left chortled at how closely the document's criticisms of centralised wage-fixing resembled those of laddery left critics of the Accord. And the debate around the Sussex Street headquarters seemed to revolve around how to sack the hapless authors, rather than upon the arguments of the document itself.

Yet almost nobody thought to ask one or two simple questions. How plausible was the strategy for unionism presented by the document - one which was to bypass the ACTU and the 'solidaristic' framework of the Accord? And was it just the opinions of two *enfants terribles*, or did it mirror the instincts of wider forces in the union movement about life under a Coalition government?

The answer seems fairly clear. In fact the document did present a coherent strategy for the union move-
award restructuring is not helping. Instead, it argues for the market-oriented perspective of the NSW Liberal government (and the federal Coalition), with its emphasis on enterprise bargaining and single-union agreements outside the wages system.

Of course, ACTU policy has advanced at such a pace that many on the Left might reply righteously 'so what's new?'. Both enterprise bargaining and single-union agreements on so-called 'greenfield' (new construction) sites have been endorsed by senior union figures such as Kelty and Tom McDonald in recent weeks. But the key to the document's strategy (as to Mr Greiner's), is in bypassing a centralised wages policy and national trade union organisation altogether. And in a very populist cause. "If the BCA is right a 25% productivity wage rise is out there to be taken", the document notes. "Why should we not indicate on behalf of workers in NSW that we are interested in winning for our members a share of this?"

Of course, winning pay rises of such an order would require abandoning any pretence of the union movement's solidaristic principles. And doubtless they would be available only to unions with the appropriate 'muscle'. Individual unions could find themselves bargaining conditions away against one another for the right to coverage in greenfield locations, on the model of the EEPTU in Britain.

But under a federal Coalition government, with the centralised wage-fixing system reduced at best to a residual role for 'second-class' unions, the attractions of such a strategy for parts of the union movement, both Left and Right, would be great. And the legacy of six years of the Accord could be washed away almost overnight.

All of which suggests that, in focussing on the sins of Messrs Costa and Duffy, the Left may have been shooting the messenger. And also that much more hangs on the outcome of the federal election in March or May than some on the Left are willing to admit.

David Burchell

ABC Radio's Pierre Vicary was in Romania for the dramatic events of December. He spoke from Zagreb to ALR's Mike Ticher in mid-January.

Just before Christmas, the contrast of Romania to other Eastern European countries was very marked - it seemed there really had been a revolution. Elsewhere, change had seemed to take a more bureaucratic form - the various ruling parties had simply admitted that things couldn't go on the way they had. In Romania, however, when you went into the buildings of authority you felt that a popular revolution was in progress.

That feeling has stayed with me. Nevertheless, the impression is that the Romanian people are very ambivalent about the National Salvation Front. There is a feeling that the revolution has been hijacked - that Communist Party apparatchiks have managed to keep control by painting themselves in different colours. Many of those running the country today are people who did very well under the old regime, though not necessarily in the immediate past when many were in disgrace. I also felt the news was being manipulated and that a lot of things had happened long before we were told about them. The impression, which was shared by quite a few other foreign journalists, was that somebody was pulling the wool over our eyes.

The students, in particular, feel betrayed because they were the ones who actually put their bodies in front of the tanks to make the revolution, and now they feel that revolution's been hijacked. Indeed, that was the emotional reaction of most Romanians I spoke to. However, the problem is that when Ceaucescu's rule collapsed there were no structures to replace it. Thus it was more or less inevitable that the apparatchiks would fill the vacuum.

The opposition groups are in a very
difficult position in preparing for the elections, if, as seems likely, they are held too early. Under 'normal' circumstances the various opposition groups ought to do fairly well. But what complicates the situation is that the Salvation Front is as much in command as was the former dictatorship. They control all the media and all public appointments, and they're making decisions by decree. In a country that has been controlled so closely for so long, the media is absolutely critical.

When I was there, the Peasants Party - one of the resurrected pre-war parties - had just been given a house to operate from, but they had no phones or equipment and no access to media of any sort. If the elections are held too early - and the opposition would prefer some time after July - my suspicion is that the candidates sponsored by the Salvation Front will romp it in, simply because the opposition groups aren't organised enough to campaign effectively.

The economic signals from the Salvation Front are ambiguous. Initially, they abolished food rationing and emptied all the specialist government stores of 'luxury' goods - people were saying that it was the first time in over ten years that they had seen coffee on sale at local prices. But then, because of the heavy snows, they had to reimpose rationing; not, they said, because there wasn't enough food, but because it couldn't be distributed around the country fast enough.

Whether that was true or whether it was just a ploy I'm not sure, but rationing is certainly now back in place. On the other hand, some Salvation Front leaders I spoke to in Craiova told me they thought they could stabilise the food situation within two months. The food problem in Romania isn't a result of inadequate production so much as the fact that Ceausescu was exporting large quantities for hard currency in order to pay off the country's foreign debt. Nevertheless, that prediction seems extremely optimistic.

Equally pressing, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, is the national question. There are fears that the Hungarians might form their own political party, although I suspect they are unfounded. I don't think it is a chauvinistic question in the way that it is on the Soviet (Moldavian) border, or that the Hungarians will be interested in secession. The Hungarians want to ensure that they will never again suffer as they did under Ceausescu. A couple of the Hungarian members of the Salvation Front have already said that they want special laws guaranteeing the rights of minorities.

The fact that the revolution started in Timisoara and that the Hungarians were in the forefront of the opposition means that there is still a lot of goodwill towards them, even though the old hatreds are still in place. Those divisions are very real, and were intensified by the fact that Ceausescu played so heavily on them.

The nationalities problem has, of course, now become the biggest danger to the forces unleashed by Gorbachev throughout Eastern Europe. I think he is well aware of that danger, but he had no choice. The only way he could save any form of socialism in Eastern Europe was to take that risk, which he has, and he is clearly prepared to see it through.

With elections due in virtually every Eastern European country in the first half of this year, and the development and exacerbation of the national problems, 1990 really is going to be the turning point both for perestroika and reform in Eastern Europe.

I think we're looking at a very difficult and potentially dangerous next 12 months.

After the Party

It might seem more than a little presumptuous to compare the events of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of Australia last December with some of the earth-shattering decisions taken by ruling parties in Eastern Europe over the past six months.

After all, how many Australians would even care either way whether the CPA existed or not? For any who doubted it, the miniscule impact of the congress on Australian politics was amply demonstrated by the tone of the reports in the papers which treated it as little more than a political freak show, a chance to poke fun at the remnants of the once-feared CPA.

Nevertheless, the recent cataclysms of Czechoslovakia and East Germany hung heavily over the proceedings in Sydney. There was a perceptible sense of embarrassment from many speakers at the prospect of remaining attached to the name (although not necessarily the policies) of the Communist Party at a time when that name had all too obviously become a byword among the mass of people in the 'socialist' countries for corruption, tyranny and despotism. Although it may not be an image which would be readily understood in Prague or Sofia, the mood was perhaps best captured by the Victorian delegate who implored congress to "catch the wave and not be dumped by history".

In Australian terms, catching the wave means, in stark terms, winding down the CPA and encouraging the membership to involve themselves in the New Left Party process. The National Committee motion recommending this course of action was passed by a majority of almost three to one. Effectively disbanding the party to which many had committed so much of their lives cannot have been a decision taken lightly. However, the atmosphere was, perhaps surprisingly, less one of a wake for the CP than one of rejuvenation and even relief at being able to direct all energies into the NLP.
One of the most noticeable, and impressive, aspects of this was that it was not the older members who resisted the inevitable. Instead, they seemed almost more impatient than most to put the CP out of its misery. One Sydney delegate and long-time member declared that, regardless of any decisions that congress might make, the CPA "has been winding down for years" and that members should "not allow it to drag on and on, growing less and less relevant".

The grim extent of that irrelevancy was made only too plain by the membership figures detailed in reports from each state. Delegates from Western Australia, Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria all made the point without sentiment that while CP membership had declined to utterly feeble proportions, the advent of the NLP had already reinvigorated activity on the Left, involving far more people, including many ex-CP members. To an outsider like myself, this evidence of the true state of party activity added more than a touch of the ridiculous to the arguments of the party's 'left' opposition that the CP could still retain a useful role in Australian politics.

By contrast, the honesty of most delegates as to the party's standing was startling and refreshing, and it was impossible not to be struck by the similarity in tone with the frank admissions wrung from party officials in Eastern Europe. There was little talk of 'errors' in the past, or other familiar euphemisms.

One South Australian delegate confessed that now, at last, she felt free to speak her mind "without fear of being branded a revisionist". "We can pray all we like that the CP is going to be a viable organisation in building socialism in Australia," said another, "but it's just not true." The CP is "finished" and "no longer acceptable". Such was the candour that it was tempting to recall the new mood in the GDR following Honecker's downfall.

Fortunately the recent history of the CPA is more mundane, but nevertheless it has reached the same point of no return as its East German counterpart. "We all have doubts about the NLP," as one West Australian delegate put it, "but there can be no doubts about the CP." The most eloquent of the supporters of the National Committee agreed that the CPA "no longer embodies that breadth and depth of wisdom to be effective politically. Maybe the NLP won't have it either," she said, "but it has 100% more chance."

It was perhaps this prospect of getting involved in the NLP which encouraged so many delegates to speak so openly. Far from closing off options for political action, the end of the CPA in fact was perceived to be a beginning. The spirit of openness and goodwill in the NLP process so far was noted by many.

It should be said that not all delegates agreed with this assessment. However, their arguments relied almost exclusively on doubts about the future of the NLP, rather than confidence in that of the CPA. The most curious aspect of the debate was the almost complete absence of ideological, as opposed to tactical, argument from the 'left' opposition. Where were the passionate renunciations of the bourgeois liberals who were betraying the Australian working class? That there were none, even as the party voted to end its own existence, is itself surely another indication of the devastating effect of the bankruptcy of traditional ruling communist parties in Eastern Europe. Even the word 'marxism', in the past a bone of contention within the CPA, barely rated a mention.

In retrospect, the winding up of the CPA as we enter the 1990s will seem not only natural, but inevitable. For many, such a moment is already long overdue. One Sydney delegate spoke for them and for the majority of congress when he concluded that "we should be proud to say that an era is ending and we're looking forward to the future". If that future is to hold the prospect of a left party which will command respect among Australian people, there could be no better way to start than the rejection of self-delusion which was the most lasting impression of this decisive, if not quite last, congress of the CPA.

Mike Ticher
There’s no boundary between art and politics for Cath Phillips any more than between life, action and sexuality. She was born a lesbian, she says, and it’s a fair guess she was born militant too, or pretty soon learnt to be. "Some lesbians like to be called gay ladies; I like to be called a dyke. I’m gung-ho about reclaiming language."

The 34-year-old Kiwi shocked her family by taking up art, tried acting but didn’t like being directed and came out as a lesbian in ‘seventies Darwin ("probably not the best place to do it but I survived"). She’s moved on - via a two-day jail sentence when her work was censored - to lead Sydney’s Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras which has the city up and dancing this month.

As the first woman president of the Mardi Gras committee she’s survived criticism and hostility from parts of the gay community which she considers her home. Elections had been an informal affair until Phillips and her team organised a well-run campaign which displaced half the sitting committee. Phillips is unperturbed. "I think a public forum is much more effective than private debate", she says. "If you publicly state what you’re going to do, then don’t do it, people won’t vote for you again. The profile of women needed to be raised and people were feeling disenfranchised, which troubled me." Her platform offered increased accountability and more representation for women who now hold six of the committee’s 14 places. "We had to settle our differences and work together which we’ve been doing very well."

No one could doubt her commitment. Frustrated by the attitude that an artist’s sexuality is irrelevant ("that’s just another closet") and by audiences who looked at her pictures of semi-naked women entwined and wondered aloud "how did that boy get tits?", Phillips has made her work increasingly explicit over the years.

While acknowledging possible tension between lesbians and gay men she sees more common ground with them than with heterosexual women who she finds likely to downplay lesbianism or other differences. "Lesbians have had problems with gay men: sexism, taking up physical space. But gay men are often willing to recognise that kind of oppression because of their own," she reflects. Money remains a problem - "men have 95% of this country’s disposable wealth, and dykes aren’t going to have much of the 5% that’s left" - with many lesbians feeling excluded from events priced at $30 or $40 for the relatively affluent (and almost always childless) gay male partygoer.

"It’s hard to keep ticket costs below $15 to $18 and still make it a fabulous event, but we’re working on it."

This year’s Mardi Gras includes more than 70 events, shows, dances and exhibitions between February 1 and 25, but its high point is the spectacular parade on February 17. The parade is the focal point of Mardi Gras, the bit that makes the Festival of Light’s Rev Fred Nile reach for the Bex powders and provides a moral rallying point for some Queensland politicians - perhaps the only group compared with which the ex-government could be called ‘straight’. It started in 1979 as a protest after the Stonewall riots in New York, but grew to be Australia’s major annual gay celebration, with a budget this year of a million dollars, all raised by the gay community. (Phillips points out it’s financially the most successful dance-party organised, since it can rely on exploiting the labour of its supporters - the familiar left/alternative story.) It’s grown from borrowed garages and warehouse squats to its own studios with seven permanent full-time staff plus casuals.

There are still poofter-bashing phone calls, but veterans of that first angry march would hardly recognise the scene now, dazzling with floats, masks, costumes, lights. The police, who “arrested everyone” the first year now drop in to see what the crew is building, and bring their children to the parade. In fact, says Phillips, it was the police who suggested holding a party after the parade to give the crowd, high on jubilation, somewhere to disperse to. And it’s more than just a good time: two dances alone last year raised $100,000 towards a gay community centre.

When the party’s over, tinsel swept up, lingering revelers carried home by their friends, Phillips has her life to get on with. Domestically, with her lover of 11 years - a doctor - plus Ripley, the Rhodesian Ridgeback dog ("a dead ringer for Sigourney Weaver in Alien, but she’s the biggest wimp in the world"), and six cats. Then there’s her work, shelved for the Mardi Gras, shadowed by imprisonment.

"Sexuality is more than about genitals, it’s about life experience. Art reflects your experience and if you divorce your experience from your work it suffers from the lack. If we ended up in an ideal society maybe it wouldn’t matter, but we’re not and it does," she says, pondering the future.

One thing is sure: she’s not going to keep her head down and paint landscapes.

Janet Wright.
On Your Bike!

Being as this is the bit of your illustrious organ which is supposed to be devoted to trivia, it seemed like a good idea to start the new decade (and mark ALR’s transition to monthly appearances) on a serious note. For that reason I would like to discuss mountain bikes - or the ATB (all terrain bike, as they’re also known).

This is not unrelated to wondering which lucky pig [ALR subscriber, as he or she is also known] is the winner of the machine offered in last month’s issue. (The competition is still open, so send in your sub form now! - eds.) Before that, but related nevertheless because mountain bikes crop up in them all the time, let’s pause for a moment over the phenomenon of ‘the list’.

At the end of each year and at the beginning or end of each decade, the print media go mad with lists. For some reason people like lists - many can’t enter a supermarket without one for instance, while others take pains to compile lists and then leave them on the kitchen table before going to the supermarket.

Ships develop lists, though these aren’t the most desirable kind, apparently. Gallant knights even used to enter the lists for some reason; in any event, many millions of human beings have been fascinated by lists for a very long time. And the fact is that most publications (including this one, it has to be said) simply cannot let a year end without listing its faults, fads, favourite books, failures and foibles. The past couple of months have been one great global list as not only have 1989 but also the ‘eighties and the ‘nineties been rendered down into supposedly fascinating ... lists.

Lists drive me mad. First of all, I can’t resist them - I realised this in a dreadful flash some years ago while pouring over several pages of lavishly illustrated food experts’ lists of marmalades - from favourites to yuckiest, complete with value-for-money jar weight analysis and wine buff-style descriptions of each mixture. Second, I know from happy hours of compiling lists that they’re a stunningly lazy and egotistical way to fill pages - which is why they’re irresistible to the media.

Mountain bikes have featured prominently in lists of late, either as a significant object of the consumerist ‘eighties (a type of list which is usually accompanied by others such as ‘the best books of the decade’, which basically means the compiler is going to drop in Gabriel Garcia Marquez); or a yuppie accessory to be sneered upon by those who ride ‘real’ bikes (another sort of list usually accompanied by a similar condemnation of the Filofax and laptop PC).

It is at this point that I’d like to make a defence of the mountain bike. The mountain bike, like the Filofax and the laptop PC, is immensely practical, aesthetically pleasing and good fun - although it’s these last two factors that really draw the ire of their lugubrious critics. Yet, let us consider the alternatives, which presumably these critics espouse themselves.

“Ha, when was the last time you rode up a mountain?” is the standard snipe at a mountain biker. To which one can mildly reply: “More recently than when you last rode in the Tour de France, sweetpea,” to the smug owner of the anorexic, neck-cracking, full-crouch racing machine.

This person probably also hates your Filofax and, instead, lofts lugs around a desk diary (or some weeny pocket type with recipes for chocolate and banana surprise in full colour, or many useful illustrations of how to tie knots) and elderly address book, both constantly shedding mouldy pages and scraps of scribbled-on paper. But ideologically sound ... apparently.

But, to return to the mountain bike. Why is it seen as an ‘eighties fad? One fact of the past decade has been the deterioration of the streets of the world’s cities. Racing and ordinary road bikes are made for smooth, untroubled surfaces. Instead we now have potholes, rust and corrugations, broken hydrant covers, lopsided gratings, broken glass, tin cans, dead cats and toppled ‘racing’ cyclists - and the wide tyres and sturdy construction of the average ATB are in their element.

Then again, the ATB’s despised wide flat handlebars with thumb-touch gears on each side mean better balance, better vision, better control. Haven’t you ever wondered why a cyclist should want to assume a semi-foetal position while riding? Is it perhaps because having your knees almost knocking under your chin while your hands - only centimetres apart - wrestle with the capricious machine, is the best way of disguising terror?

Whatever, it would be difficult to argue that a racing bike is better suited to city riding than a mountain bike. An ordinary old street bike, while having a certain amount of poverty-chic, is - like poverty itself - dreary and ultimately undesirable. That’s that for the street bike.

The laptop PC - filthy yuppie tool, running dog stinking lackey of the oppressor, etc, etc will have to wait for some future date for a defence. Let’s say for now that, like the ATB, they’re also fun and practical. And they’re sexy, too.

Diana Simmonds
proved to be contractionary but, if anything, have been stimulatory.

Two factors seem to explain this. First, the under-consumptionist argument saw wages mainly as an income for workers, rather than as a cost to business. With lower labour costs, Australian industry will become more internationally competitive. And it will be encouraged to hire more labour which, by taking people off the dole queues, will maintain the overall spending power of Australian workers. Ergo, the 1.6 million extra jobs since March 1983, and the drop in unemployment from 10% to 6%.

Second, real wage cuts mean that the primary bread-winner’s pay packet has lost purchasing power. But many households have sought to cushion this pay cut by sending a second earner - typically the wife - into the workforce. Since 1984, the proportion of married women in the paid workforce has increased from 42% to 51%. It has helped that the big employment expansions of the ‘eighties have occurred in the services sector such as health, office cleaning and finance sector administration.

Although this surge in female employment has meant that household incomes have continued to rise, there is no free lunch here. More women are working in order to pay the mortgage, not because female career opportunities have suddenly opened up. Even working part time, many wives and mothers find themselves with the ‘double burden’ of paid employment and unpaid housework, leaving them with even less time for leisure or rest.

It is this new constituency of the working mother - particularly in the mortgage belt - which Andrew Peacock has targeted with his bribe of child and child care tax rebates. This represents a U-turn from John Howard’s preference for the traditional Aussie family of a bread-winning husband and a wife in the kitchen which formed the basis for previous Liberal policies in favour of income splitting.

And it can be seen as at least an indirect result of the original Accord policy to hold down wage claims and to keep a rein on inflation while kick-starting the economy with increased government spending. This strategy fell apart when the revved-up economy sucked in more imports and produced a foreign debt blow-out.

But the basic aim - to restore business profits so as to finance business investment and to underpin job growth - has been achieved to an extent that no one would have predicted. In fact, under the Accord, the ACTU has deliberately facilitated the biggest redistribution of national income from wages to profits in at least a generation. When I pointed this out on the front page of the Australian Financial Review late last year, Prime Minister Hawke waved the AFR at the Canberra Press Gallery as support for the government’s stance against the pilots’ 30% pay claim. Virtually at the same time, the Left was using it to berate Bill Kelty at an ACTU special unions conference.

In short, the ACTU has implicitly accepted the federal Treasury’s ‘seventies arguments about the ‘real wage overhang’ and has put job growth ahead of higher incomes for those in employment. In crude terms, Australia’s trade union leadership has endorsed the ‘seventies adage that one person’s pay rise is another person’s job.

In return, the new ‘can-do’ breed of Treasury economists has dropped the department’s John Stone-influenced obsession with ‘deregulating’ the labour market, and has accepted the legitimate role of organised labour in an incomes policy.

Who has pulled off this unholy alliance? Answer: Paul Keating, who now will be looking for an Accord-style counter to Andrew Peacock’s tax bribe to the working mothers’ vote before the election.

Michael Stutchbury, economics editor of the Australian Financial Review.
UNHOLY

Opposition

The revolt of women in the Church used to be a scandal. Now, it's become part of the episcopal road-show. But in the process a new way of looking at Christianity, hierarchy and dogma has emerged. Patricia Brennan reflects on this revolution.

It is difficult to believe that the first wave of feminism is twenty years old. Its emphasis on child-bearing as the sole cause of women's oppression has proven too simplistic in the more thorough feminist analysis of the 'eighties.

The anti-male and anti-childbearing rhetoric of the 'seventies had a very particular effect on the debate over women's role in the Church. Its seeming advocacy that the liberation of women required their rejection of the most basic nurturant relationships was seen as essentially unchristian and this enabled the conservative forces in the church to stifle consciousness raising before it had begun.

It left women who were Christian and feminist in a difficult position since failure to move the debate into areas of substance left them outside a women's movement which had little interest in religion and in a church that felt self-righteously removed from a movement that was essentially secular.

Feminist theologians have since then made a major contribution to the debate. The work of people like Mary Daly exposed the profound contribution of patriarchal religion to mysogyny. Other feminist theologians like Rosemary Radford Reuther and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza support her feminist critique but disagree with her view that Christianity is unredeemably patriarchal. Their work points to a counterculture within the tradition itself that critiqued patriarchy and was a forerunner to the current reforms.

Change in the status of women is tied up with their location as mothers and sexual partners, and it is not surprising that the church acted swiftly in its condemnation of any attempt by women to change their power relative to men. After all, the church has given divine legitimation to woman's secondary role in creation. One of the bible's first injunctions to woman was that her desire should be towards her husband and that she would bring forth her children in sorrow.

This was brought home to me recently when I was helping a friend inspect a house for sale. What was memorable about the house was its holy pictures, concentrated in large numbers in the bedroom, as is their wont. A pallid Mother of God gazed down on an apricot satin queen-sized bed, from a strategic location above the matching heart-shaped pillows. Here was the unmistakable art of the religious female, the domestic keeper of the faith.
The bedroom is the locus classicus for the female’s role in orthodox Christianity. Prepared as she is for the role of an attenuated femme fatale through holy matrimony, she makes her bed beneath the ideal of a virginal mother; the former role hard to attain, the latter state impossible.

How does one set about reforming Christianity when the majority of its adherents have been prepared to accept this as normal?

Each particular historically-induced faction of the Church has given its own expression to women’s location under the patriarchs. Generally speaking, being religious, for women, has meant being obedient to the religious presuppositions of men. One only discovers this by a closer look at the records.

By the third century, when the Church Fathers had begun to formulate the basics of the faith and the early
church councils to debate them, women were already being defined as deficient human beings. Mind you, on a hierarchical scale ending at God the Father, blacks, homosexuals and working-class laymen have done only slightly better.

By the tenth century, celibacy as a holy way of life was in full swing, and there was the choice for women either to marry the Church and have neither intercourse nor children, or to marry a man and, as Zorba the Greek said, take on the whole catastrophe.

The closure of nunneries during the Reformation meant that women under a new Protestant patriarchy had no longer any official means of fulfilling a vocation independent of the immediate control of men. And from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, little shone through the darkness for women.

It seems all too obvious in retrospect that women needed contraception before they could get their hands on the light switch - which meant gaining access to education.

In the 1890s and again in the 1960s when feminist consciousness touched into the Church, it became obvious as women researched their own buried histories, that Catholic religious had a degree of intellectual and theological autonomy undreamed of by their Protestant sisters, albeit at the price of their sexuality. Of course it was largely unrealised in the lives of most nuns who suffered under a device common to those ideologies, religious or otherwise, which make a virtue of obedience. But at least they had some models that they could choose to follow.

One such was Teresa of Avila, a Catholic abbess in the sixteenth century, who earned a place in the annals of feminism by her independence and passion for reform. The papal nuncio of her area described her as "a disobedient, contumacious woman who promulgates pernicious doctrine under the pretence of devotion; leaves her cloister against the orders of her superiors and the duress of the Council of Trent; is ambitious and teaches theology as though she were a doctor of the Church, in contempt of the teachings of St Paul who commanded women not to teach" - a reference any modern feminist would be proud to earn!

As a missionary doctor in Africa in the early 'seventies, remote from my own culture, my latent feminism embarked on a collision course with the mission's conservative theology on women.

Women themselves comprised two-thirds of missionary 'manpower', but had no say in administration. I became painfully aware that there were no Teresas of Avila in our hall of fame.

Now, twenty years later, where are Australian women in the feminist invasion of the Church that is keeping twentieth century bishops awake at night? Some would say that, compared with our European and American sisters, we've hardly begun.

In 1972, Anna Ross, in her Essays on Sexual Equality, said that all causes, social and biological, combine to make it unlikely that women will ever collectively rebel against men. Despite significant inroads, when it comes to the Australian Church, her thesis still stands. Yet paradoxically the Church has always been a place where aspiration to spiritual ideals has called individuals to unholy opposition to the dominant ideas again and again.

There are three reform groups that have sprung up on the edges of the Church in the last decade and they recently combined in a Feminist Theology conference: the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW - largely Anglican), Women and the Australian Church (WATAC - largely Catholic), and Women-Church (feminists who have an interest in spirituality but have no necessary association with the Church). All three groups had formative earlier association with the feminist reformers of the Australian Council of Churches Women's Commission of the early 'seventies.

MOW has had most press in its public pursuit of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church, and its choice to concentrate on the issue of ordination has forced the Church to be accountable in public. However, it also leaves open to the risk of being co-opted as more of its members actually enter holy orders, and is thus hoist with its own petard. It remains to be seen whether it cultivates a kind of feminine clericalism that joins the men rather than sustaining a widespread reform of the patriarchal language and structures. It is a national organisation open to men as well as women, and produces a quarterly magazine.

WATAC, initiated by the Religious Superiors of the Catholic Church in Australia, has successfully engaged the support of women, religious and lay alike, in raising consciousness to the secondary location of women in the Church's teaching and practice. Its mandate has been to educate at a grassroots level with low visibility, a profile that suits the patriarchal Catholic bishops.

It will be interesting to see in what direction Catholic women will move in the interests of structural reform.
Women-Church takes its name from a similar collective in the United States, and was born of the theology of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Reuther.

The name was not coined as a church for women, but is a linguistic device to remind women that the word ‘church’ has not generally involved the feminine. Centred in Sydney, the main emphasis is on the support of women who are committed to a feminist spirituality at monthly meetings and by the production of a quarterly magazine. They are consciously collective in their ethos, and have been para-institutional in style rather than directly taking on Church structures.

All three organisations have common members, and the teaching problems common to reform.

Sensitive to rule by men, there is often an anxiety in identifying leadership from their own ranks. Effective reform needs to hold in tension the charismatic initiative of the woman or man of vision, and the democratic principle of group decision making. Often there has been a failure to stay on the front foot in strategy. I have been closely involved in MOW public action during the last five years, and am aware that, more than ever, imaginative ways have to be found of keeping the need for change before the Church. The print media is overloaded with the cliched demonstrations of protesting women. What was once a provocative encounter with bishops on the streets of Sydney at the time of synods has now become a bit part in the episcopal road show. They miss us if we are not there to guarantee them an otherwise unlikely place on the evening news. What they have failed is where women have gone. While the institution of the Anglican Church in this country has gingerly admitted about a hundred female deacons to its ranks, and the Catholic Church is full of nervous and painfully uninformed bishops trying to hold what they see as secular feminism at bay, women’s experience of tackling the Church has created a generation of new theologians who are writing and thinking.

Just as when the Uniting Church ordained its women in 1976, not only was status given to a ministry that already existed, but a small yet significant number of women began to articulate a critique of Australian Christianity that has heralded a new role for women, whether the men in the Church want them to do it or not ...

There has been much talk of what is relative and what is absolute in Christian teaching, and whether the entry of women into the sanctuary is tampering in an irremedial fashion with the timeless truths of the Faith. The easy answer to that is ‘yes’, at least one would hope so.

Women’s real experience of living under doctrines that limit them has led to the discovery that the author and finisher of their faith was not only Jesus. Historical criticism has opened up the reality that Christianity is located solidly in history, word by word, event by event, Church council by Church council. As such, it is not only open to reform, but is an ongoing process of formation. To some, this relativising of faith spells its own end. And it does so for a certain kind of faith. For those unable to bear such an end, a variety of friendly fundamentalist churches wait with open doors to welcome the pilgrims on an intellectually painless journey to the kingdom of heaven. But for others, there is no such painless journey. If to be religious is to take the serious questions most seriously, then the limitations to our own understanding become obvious. That the maturation of women has posed such a challenge to Christian doctrine isition is a measure of its limitations. That the same doctrine assumed the maturity of men just confirms its chauvinism. The fact that it is still there to be challenged is, to some minds, testimony to its authenticity.

Along with Judaism and Islam, Christianity is centrally scriptural and, as such, language is the pivotal point of understanding, especially language about God which has a strong hold on the psyche of the believer. The greatest outcry against Christian feminists has been triggered by their moves to change patriarchal language. We’ve had lots of laughs on the way at the ridiculous ends that language as ideology serves. Like the hatted and gloved lady who rose to her feet at a public meeting to decry the extremes of feminist language, and said she regarded it as the greatest privilege to be called a son of God. Or the opening prayer of the Anglican Young Wives group that read, "Lord, strengthen me in the inner man".

Whatever the cause, recent national statistics show that young adult women are increasingly absent from the Church. What the census can’t show is that church attendance need not reflect interest in a spiritual dimension to life; nor predict the capacity of people’s belief systems to evolve in surprising directions. The debate over women’s ordination has shown there is far more scepticism in this country over the credibility of the Church than Christianity as such, and a lively curiosity in those dissident Christians who won’t abandon the Church.

Feminist consciousness even articulated at its most cliched level, has had its impact on what it means to be an Australian. At its best it is surfacing in the Australian novels of the Kate Grenvilles and the Helen Garners. The Australian feminist theologians articulate what it means to be female, religious and Australian, there will be a change in the way theology is done and the way the Church views motherhood and female sexuality.

In the meantime, the debate about women’s ministry grinds on in a context where, in the USA alone, there are now over 2,000 women priests and two elected women bishops in the Episcopal Church, and New Zealand has its first woman bishop about to be consecrated. However long it takes, Australia will see women priests in not only the Anglican but, short of a major lay reformation that throws African church activist, and ABC broadcaster.
The post-war world has collapsed and, with it, the ideological trenches between East and West. US State Department official Francis Fukuyama, in an influential article, has even suggested that it marks the "end of history", with liberal capitalism outlasting its rivals from Left and far Right. Is the socialist tradition beyond recovery? Or is it the whole political firmament which is in flux? P.P. McGuinness and Brian Aarons debate.

The Grand March Routed

Padraic P. McGuinness argues that the death of traditional socialism also puts pressure on the Right to take an interest in the problems of capitalism.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the maintenance of communist regimes in other countries only by means of force and repression not only signal the end of communism but also the end of socialism as it is currently generally understood.

It has to be remembered that socialism arose as a response to the early stages of capitalism, both as a romantic rejection of the insecurities and disruptions of capitalism, along with its blatant poverty (though it has to be remembered that the poverty of feudal times was much worse), and as a Utopian alternative. Socialism was a phenomenon of early capitalism; and as capitalism has been civilised and liberal democracy and the rule of law have, however imperfectly, asserted their sway, socialism as a creed has become increasingly irrelevant.

As a set of values it need not have become irrelevant. For originally the values of socialism were the same as those
of liberal democracy, in both ethical and political terms - liberty, equality, etc. The error began to creep in when it was postulated that in no meaningful way could these values ever be achieved while private property and inequalities of income and wealth persisted, and that therefore capitalism was incompatible with the values of socialism. But Utopia rapidly gave way to Dystopia, and the evidence of all the bloody social experiments of this century is that the original values of socialism are incompatible with the means, including the abolition of capitalism, proposed to realise these.

Here is where socialists betrayed their original values. They could have reappraised the means to their realisation (which, as Camus, for example, pointed out in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, can never be more than ideals towards which to strive, always failing and always persisting). Instead, they allowed obsession with slogans, with misconceptions, with features of capitalism which were no more imperfect than those of socialism in practice but which did not require oppression and interference with individual liberty for their existence, and with power to replace the original values. Socialism as a kind of ideal construct became the end, not the means - and either the malpractices of those countries calling themselves socialist were denied, or they were dismissed as irrelevant to the end of socialism.

Ideology came in here - not in the phoney marxist sense, by which all other people's beliefs except one's own are dismissed as ideology, but in the sense of banners behind which to march. There developed, especially among the educated middle class, a desire to join what Milan Kundera calls the Grand March. He writes, in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*:

> When the crimes of the country called the Soviet Union became too scandalous, a leftist had two choices: either to spit on his former life and stop marching or (more or less sheepishly) to reclassify the Soviet Union as an obstacle to the Grand March and march on.

Have I not said that what makes a leftist a leftist is the kitsch of the Grand March? The identity of kitsch comes not from a political strategy but from images, metaphor and vocabulary. It is therefore possible to break the habit and march against the interests of a communist country. What is impossible however is to substitute one world for others. It is possible to threaten the Vietnamese army with one's fist. It is impossible to shout 'Down with Communism!'. 'Down with Communism!' is a slogan belonging to the enemies of the Grand March, and anyone worried about losing face must remain faithful to the purity of his own kitsch.

There has been much debate concerning the end of history, as proposed in a now-famous article by Francis Fukuyama in the US journal *The National Interest*. This is
really no more than a fairly superficial revival of the ideas of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, in which history is the story of the struggle of the Mind towards freedom. Hegel himself identified this with the ideas of the French Revolution - that is, with the basic notions of liberal democracy. The end of history comes when the other contenders for the human mind, authoritarianism, oriental despotism and, as it turned out, socialism, are finally abandoned in its favour. This is of course the end of history only in a very special sense and, as Marx pointed out when he described all previous history as the history of class struggles, the end of this kind of history is really the beginning of fully human history.

So what we are really talking about is not the end of history but the end of socialism. The socialists instead of recognising this are loath to abandon the Grand March, so are casting about for new or refurbished causes for the banners behind which they march.

There have been a series of such causes - the anti-Vietnam War movement, the anti-Apartheid movement, the anti-nuclear weapons movement, the anti-nuclear power movement, the Nuclear Winter scare and, most recently, the environmentalist movement. None of these has been without merit, but there have been many attempts to incorporate them into the Grand March rather than treat them on their merits.

As with economic issues, there has been a confusion of ends with means, and a refusal on the part of the exponents of leftist kitsch to distinguish between the banners and the actual values which socialism once espoused. To me it appears clear enough that if one is genuinely committed to environmental issues, for example, it is both stupid and dangerous to rule out from the very beginning analytical approaches or policy measures which might help to tackle the problems, just because those are not in accord with the kitsch.

There are socialists who do attempt to move from kitsch to real issues. One such in the field of economics is Alec Nove, whose book *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* is a serious treatment of the issues of economic efficiency, the operation of markets, and so on. He is a socialist in that he feels that certain industries and problems require a governmental approach rather than an individual capital or entrepreneurial approach. In this he may be right - it really is a matter for careful consideration rather than doctrinal presumptions. But at the same time he recognises that market mechanisms are a necessary constraint on the authoritarian tendencies of socialism, as well as the evolution of privilege (what economists refer to as 'rent-seeking' - the use of monopoly or licences as a source of income at the expense of the rest of the community).

Thus, to someone like Nove, it may appear desirable that, for example, Telecom in Australia should be owned by the government (not at all, by the way, the same as collective ownership). But there remains the problem of ensuring that Telecom operates efficiently, without waste of resources and so as not to delay the introduction and dissemination of new technology; and the problem of ensuring that the management and employees of Telecom do not act in such a way as to extract monopoly rents from the rest of the community as they do at present. The best solution to these problems so far appears to be free entry for competitors, and a regulatory authority which enforces competition law rather than its own judgments as to what is good or desirable.

Given this, the question of whether Telecom remains in state ownership or not ceases to be terribly important. There may well be, as Nove would argue for both Telecom and railways, a case for state ownership as the most effective way of ensuring the proper use of networks and joint production facilities. But there is not a case for enforcing state monopoly.

But for adherents of the Grand March this kind of thinking is totally unacceptable since it means that one of the banners they like to march behind ceases to become a banner. And they would rather their kitsch than any genuine analysis of social benefit. However, throughout the world the Grand March is faltering. Not only as a result of the collapse of Eastern European communism, but also as those who, despite calling themselves socialists, still adhere to the original values of liberal democracy reconsider their positions.

In Europe, socialism, except among tiny groups of mainly middle-class intellectuals, has been replaced by social democracy, in the sense of the management in the public interest of a market economy in which the public sector does not play a dominating role. This is not especially different from liberalism, which does not require 'laissez-faire capitalism', but rather an economy in which the rule of law takes precedence over arbitrary interventionism, handing out of licences, and monopoly. The enforcement of pro-competition law is thus not so much regulation as the insistence that business, unions, and other economic institutions play fair.
The European social charter, which is causing so much pain to Mrs Thatcher, is a social-democratic document which makes sense on the Continent mainly because those countries have never had to deal with the worst excesses of unionism, especially public sector unionism, on British lines. In most respects it is perfectly compatible with competitive liberal democratic regimes, and represents the kind of advance which both sides of Continental politics are now largely agreed upon.

With the end of communist history and the triumph of social democracy both Left and Right are in intellectual crisis. For many years, since the Russian Revolution, clear-sighted intellectuals of various political loyalties have seen the dangers of communist dictatorship (Rosa Luxemburg was one). Many of those on the Right have used this to argue that not only is socialism and communism unlikely to lead to an acceptable political system but also to argue that authoritarian regimes of almost any other kind ought to be tolerated.

In the aftermath of World War Two and the development of the Cold War anti-communism became an obsession and, in the hands of the stupid and evil Right, justified virtually any abuse or crime committed in the name of anti-communism. In this context, it has to be remembered that, despite years of allegations by the Left about the origins of the Cold War, the USSR has officially admitted that it was indeed begun and continued by Stalin. The glaring evils of communism were such that quite a few relatively civilised people on the Right allowed themselves to believe that guarding against the ‘present danger’ was their most important priority. They may well have been correct.

But now, when it is clear that the Cold War is over, the Right is going through a crisis of identity just like the Left. Some, like Norman Podhoretz in the US, have declared that now they will withdraw from political activity and return to purely literary and intellectual pursuits. But many others, like the socialists who have abandoned the Grand March, are looking for an alternative. It is no longer enough to argue that “anything is better than communism”, nor can the smug assertions that liberal capitalism is superior to socialism in economic performance, living standards, freedom, etc, cut any more ice. We all know that now. But surely there is plenty wrong with our society which needs improvement?

So the crisis for the Right is that it no longer has an excuse for ignoring - as many on the Right did - the reality of serious social problems. Nor is it able to take comfort in the bipolarity of world politics. So we come back to social democracy, in the sense of a liberal capitalist democracy in which government provides certain guarantees. This is Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ - it is the end both of socialism and of hardline anti-socialism, when the activities of the state in the polity and the economy will be judged on their technical efficacy, not on ideological grounds.

This does not leave us with either a peaceful or a boring world. Domestically, it does mean that the central issues of politics will still involve controversy and conflict as to the best way to achieve a given end, and as to what are desirable social goals. Internationally, of course, we are still left with a world faced with enormous environmental and economic problems, the apparently insoluble problems of Africa, the soluble but still immense problem of AIDS, widespread poverty, debt, and bad government - and a hangover of a proliferating nuclear arsenal, dictatorships in powerful countries like China and many lesser states, and perhaps most importantly the Islamic world. This has led one acute observer to interpret the Cold War as a momentary historical interlude in the confrontation between Christian Europe (and the New World) and Islam.

There is, of course, also the question of the stability of Eastern Europe, and indeed the survival of the USSR as an empire. Despite Gorbachev’s immense efforts, there is no sign that perestroika is delivering or will deliver in the foreseeable future. The truth is that Russia has no historical experience with democracy or market capitalism. The Bolshevik coup d’état and Lenin’s refusal to accept the democratic verdict of the people against the Bolsheviks in the elections to the Constituent Assembly of November 12, 1917 ensured that Russia remained a bureaucratic dictatorship. The nomenklatura, the privileged class of the USSR, are the direct descendants of the Tsarist imperial bureaucracy.

These privileged groups are not going to give up their privileges out of altruism or a belief that the whole economy must operate more efficiently. They are hanging on grimly. They may yet effect a counter-coup against Gorbachev and the modernisers. And the army has yet to make its voice heard. For how long will the armed forces tolerate the disintegration of the Russian empire?

One of the features of the Soviet economy which has never been fully understood is the rest of the world until the outpouring of at least uncensored writings by Soviet journalists, economists, historians and others is just how huge and appalling the scale of poverty in the USSR is, nor the fact that the only thing which made socialism in that country work at all was terror. The existence of a huge class of serfs, the ‘limitchiks’ who, because they lacked residence and lacked the most elementary rights over their working conditions, were not free, but were simply entrapped in a system of serfdom. The nomenklatura, the privileged class of the USSR, are the direct descendants of the Tsarist imperial bureaucracy.

For them, socialism was indeed the road to serfdom. Happily we have reached the end of that road in Eastern Europe at least. But socialism has left that region with one legacy which capitalism in the West has virtually abolished - a large, poverty-stricken and rebellious working class. Already there is muttering in the mines, shipyards and factories of Poland and the USSR against the intellectuals who have led the way to perestroika but who can offer them little or nothing in the way of immediate improvements in their living standards.

The final irony of the death of socialism is that the capitalist countries are going to have to provide comfort and succour to its heirs.

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The current revolution in Eastern Europe - and there's no other word for it - has been labelled by many Western commentators and politicians as "the death of communism". Some have taken the argument further to claim that the very idea of socialism has been proved unworkable by the failure of Soviet-style centrally-planned economies. Others predict that, as political democracy develops in Eastern Europe, there will inevitably be a return to private enterprise and the free market because, they claim, the fully free market and real political democracy are inextricably linked.

American intellectual Francis Fukuyama, currently deputy director of the US State Department's policy planning staff, has gone so far as to proclaim "the end of history". In a 10,000-word essay published last year, he argues that the decline of communism in Eastern Europe heralds the final victory of liberal capitalism, defined as a combination of the free market and political democracy.

This means, he says, "the end of history" in the sense that the ideological struggle on the world stage is now over, because liberal capitalism's two major competitors, fascism and communism, are now both dead. With the triumph of "the ideals of the American and French revolutions", fundamental ideological struggle will now be replaced by "economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands".

All these claims and assertions, not to mention the tumultuous events which have given rise to them, raise very real questions which cannot be lightly dismissed nor simply answered, though some responses are obvious.

For example, the democratic left should welcome the events in Eastern Europe as the collapse and dismantling of stalinism, a model of 'socialism' both morally wrong and in the end unworkable. We can point out that the demise of bureaucratic-centralist socialism does not at all prove socialism and the left cannot be written off as a temporary hiccup exist while capitalist corporations based in the rich countries continue to exploit their cheap labour and plunder their resources.

However, we should not delude ourselves that these general points answer the questions adequately, even for the left let alone for the broader mass of people whose voluntary democratic support is essential for any project of radical social change. The current crisis of communism and socialism cannot be written off as a temporary hiccup in the left's forward march. The crisis demands some radical rethinking if socialism and the left are to have any hope of resuming their appeal and momentum of earlier years.

So is communism dead? Does socialism have a future? Or is liberal capitalism and/or social democracy the best that humanity can do - is it "the end of history"?

Insofar as communism historically has become inextricably linked with stalinism then it is dying as a general political concept which can motivate millions of people - at least in the developed capitalist democracies, and now in Eastern Europe. It may be a great pity that a word and an ideal that should have meant something very different is now strongly associated with repression, bureaucracy and now with economic failure but that is the plain historical fact. Communist parties everywhere, not just those in power, contributed to this through their uncritical and misguided support for stalinism.

"Democratic socialism" much better describes the political system and values which progressive communist parties East and West now stand for, and it is a term many of them now use. Several are changing their names or joining in new political formations as a clear public statement of their rejection of stalinism.

However, it is premature for the right wing to write off the whole communist movement, given the important role which many CPs still play and the reforming processes at work within the movement.

If the communist movement as such is dying then "the good should not be interred with the bones", although various rightwing propagandists find it convenient to let only "the evil live on after it". This is not the place for a detailed historical analysis but the communist movement has much to be proud of despite its serious mistakes and the crimes committed in its name. Many communist parties have played major roles in their own countries and virtually all CPs can genuinely claim credit for their influence and role in a broad range of working-class,
progressive and democratic movements, especially during the turbulent 1930s and 1940s.

And if communism is to be weighed in the balance of history against capitalism and social democracy, then it will certainly not be the only one found wanting. Many times communists took principled and historically justified stances when other political forces did not, notably in recognising the threat of fascism and mobilising broad movements against it.

In retrospect, the Prague Spring of 1968 was probably the last real chance for the communist movement to renew its program and its mass appeal. When Brezhnev sent in the tanks to crush "socialism with a human face", he not only wrote the death warrant for the credibility and standing of communism in Eastern Europe but also for the communist movement as a cohesive, dynamic and attractive force. (This must surely be a prime example of the unintended consequences of historical actions.)

Has history now ended? That is clearly absurd, even in the narrow sense that Fukuyama suggests.

In the first place, the liberal capitalism which he says has triumphed is not the same liberal capitalism born out of the American and French revolutions. It is a capitalism which has also been greatly modified by and forced to adapt to the reforming demands of labour and popular movements, strongly influenced by socialist and social-democratic ideas. Part of capitalism’s adaptation has been to use government intervention and regulation to iron out and relieve the worst economic and social excesses of the market, measures initially associated with ‘socialism’ and still seen as such by hardline conservatives.

Initially, liberal capitalism did not recognise the need for social and economic justice nor care much about the basic human rights of the lower orders. The labour movement and socialist parties became such powerful social forces precisely because they reflected the needs and interests of working people dissatisfied with what the ideals of liberal democracy delivered to them. Hence the term social democracy used by many working-class parties as a statement that liberal and formal democracy was not enough.

Fukuyama and others like him also conveniently forget that the operations of the free market through last century and into this were marked by the inbuilt boom-bust
mechanisms and glaring social injustices so well analysed by Marx. Or that it was the powerful 'liberal' capitalist states which colonised and pillaged Africa, Asia and Latin America whose people were not seen as deserving "the ideals of the French and American revolutions". Little wonder that many national liberation movements this century turned to marxism, socialism and communism for their inspiration.

In fact, views such as Fukuyama's (and many Western social democrats) are remarkably Western-centred, with little feel or care about the plight of the developing countries, unequal trade, corporate plunder and Western-assisted repression of movements for liberation, democracy and social justice.

Socialism, social-democracy, communism and even fascism were all, therefore, ideas and movements which germinated and took root in the soil of liberal capitalism (though often a capitalism with small or large feudal remnants), which therefore presumably was hardly the perfect system. Should there ever be a return to a pure form of free-market capitalism, all the same economic imbalances and social injustices (which still abound in even the most developed capitalist societies) would return in full measure, and with them similar movements for radical change.

Moreover, even were it true that liberal capitalism had vanquished socialism, it would be against all historical experience to conclude that no further major development of human society will take place. (And it would be grim news indeed as to the limitations of the human race.)

Forgetting all the other problems of the free market, the huge ecological problems confronting the planet are now demanding major changes in economic and social behaviour. In particular, free market forces will go on destroying if left to their own devices; preserving the planet and developing a sustainable society will require a degree of democratic social planning and human co-operation quite alien to the philosophy of liberal capitalism. (Which is not to say that socialism so far has a good environmental record.)

Yet while it is certainly not the end of history, it is the end of an important period of history. That period opened with the Russian Revolution of 1917 which led to the founding of the communist movement worldwide, and is now ending with the collapse of stalinism in Eastern Europe. The end of this period has placed a big question mark over socialism and has renewed ages-old debates about what sorts of future society can now be regarded as both desirable and feasible.

At least three major questions arise: is socialism compatible with political democracy; can the market and private enterprise play a role in a socialist economy; and is there a viable form of socialism superior to, say, Swedish social democracy.

Until socialists can genuinely answer these and other real questions to the satisfaction of working people in the developed countries, they can only expect that liberal capitalism and social democracy will be the main political alternatives taken seriously by the mass of people in the West.

If there is any major lesson of the stalinist experience, it is the fundamental importance of democracy, not only as a value in itself but as essential for socialism to develop effectively, even in purely economic terms. This is a point which several Western CPs have stressed for more than 20 years now and have committed themselves to in their own countries. Now stagnation, crisis and popular protests have forced it on the ruling CPs of Eastern Europe, and allowed new reforming leaderships to take over from the old hardliners within the parties themselves.

There is no logical reason at all why a socialist society should not be at least as democratic as the most advanced capitalist democracy. That does, of course, mean that socialists have to accept the possibility that people will choose to "go back to capitalism" in a free vote. (Poland for one appears to be heading in that direction already.) Only stalinists and rightwing propagandists are united in asserting that socialism can only exist with a strong authoritarian hand on the reins of government.

Potentially, socialism can expand democracy beyond the limits of capitalism through extending democratic and participatory notions into the workplace and the wider economy.

Similarly, there is no reason why a socialist economy should not have a market and even private enterprise. It is a question of degree and of what the dominant forces in the economy are. The role of such a market would be to establish consumer demand and tastes; to allow new products to be developed and their popularity tested; and to allow competition between enterprises producing consumer goods.

Limits on the size of enterprises and property which can be privately owned (and for that matter on the size and power of individual public enterprises); emphasis on cooperatives of workers, managers and producers to run enterprises of all sizes; and laws and regulations protecting workers and consumers, and guaranteeing minimum standards is what would distinguish this from the capitalist free market.

Where to now for history? Who knows!! The lesson of all history is that it's foolish to expect anything except the unexpected. In any given situation various possibilities are latent.

For what it's worth, my own feeling, and bias, is that the real progressive possibility latent in the late 20th Century lies in the creative merging of the socialist, social-democratic and liberal democratic traditions, together with the new ideas of the green, feminist and multi-cultural movements, to provide the ideological basis for a social system beyond all which have so far been tried. Given all that's happened, it may or may not be called socialism but it would be fully in accord with all the best ideals that socialism strove for.

BRIAN AARONS is a member of the National Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Australia.
FEATURES

WIN A PIECE OF THE BERLIN WALL!

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East Germany has emerged as the focal point of the upheavals which have altered the face of Europe in the last few weeks. Here are all the dilemmas facing Eastern Europe at present. Will the communists really give up power? Are there stable alternative governments? Can anyone win public support to drastically reform economies while causing economic pain? Pierre Vicary was recently in East Berlin. There he spoke to opposition Neues Forum spokesperson Mike Hamburger, and disillusioned communist Werner Goldstein.

A Sense of Anger

Mike Hamburger is a dramaturg (literary adviser) at East Germany's chief theatre, the Deutsches Theatre, in East Berlin. He is a senior spokesperson for the major opposition group Neues Forum.

When I talk to the Communists they say that the changes which are taking place in the GDR at present are a consequence of Mr Gorbachev and because the rank and file of the party insisted upon them. When I talk to church people they say that the umbrella organisations they were allowed to form in the stalinist period are what have made these changes possible. Who's telling the truth?

I don't think there's a contradiction. Opposition movements for many years have had to use the church as a cover because there was no possibility of meeting or bringing out publications outside the church. Only since Gorbachev's reforms and the changes in the rest of Eastern Europe have these people been able to come out of the church and resume their activities in the public sphere.

What was it the churches were able to provide on a day-to-day basis?

Firstly, they were able to provide places for people to meet, either in churches or on church property. Normally, people were not allowed to assemble in private rooms to discuss things. An assembly of more than ten people had
to give notice to the police. Technically, of course, this applied even to weddings and birthday parties. The police could use this law against any political discussions, to disturb them, arrest people and discriminate against them. But church premises were off-limits to this sort of harassment, by a kind of understanding between the churches and the state. The fact that the church offered this freedom of assembly was of great importance.

The churches were also able to have documents published — that is to say, copied on xerox machines and distributed. Outside the church, all publications had to have a licence from a state institution and, of course, no opposition group would ever get such a licence. But the church is allowed to bring out samizdat publications, on the first page of which is written ‘only for use within the church’. And this was made use of by opposition groups, even those who were not really church people or even Christians, but who had no other possibility of making their views known. The churches have allowed these people to work within the church framework — though not always very willingly, I must say, because it changed the relations between the church and the state. There was a certain amount of conflict between the grassroots in the church and the bishops and top church officials.

You use the word ‘churches’ in a general sense. Was there a difference between Protestants and Catholics?

It was almost all Protestant. The Catholic church, as far as I know, has not offered facilities to opposition groups.

Was the church just an instrument through which these activities could take place, or were the priests and pastors at the grassroots level actively involved in politics?

I think both factors were involved. Some vicars and church people themselves were active in the opposition, and are now well-known figures and speakers for the opposition movements. And there were people who were not church people at all, who were atheists or even Marxists. They were perhaps not overjoyed to have to make use of the facilities of the church because they had no religious impetus, but they had no alternative.

When the opposition used those facilities, did you take any of the religiosity away with you? Was there a Christian component to what later happened?

Yes. When these movements went out of the church, of course the church people remained in the movements. So all these opposition groups do have a considerable sector of church people in their founding groups and among their members — although the membership by and large is not Christian, as is true of our population generally.

Is that also the case in Neues Forum?

Yes, we have people who came out of the churches. In our founding group we have some Catholics and some Lutherans, but the philosophy of Neues Forum is not a Christian one. It is a philosophy of humanism, liberalism, tolerance and reason. It has some of the liberal ethics of the Enlightenment. And some of those moral attitudes are connected in certain ways with the moral teachings of the church. But there is no direct religious impetus in Neues Forum any more.

What are those moral points of contact?

Things like a feeling for human dignity, for the values of human life, questions of what we live for, values like helping your neighbour, a sense of responsibility for yourself and also for society as a whole. In short, the whole catalogue of humanist values.

Can we widen the discussion a bit and talk about the roundtable talks between the opposition and the government which began in early December. What are the opposition groups hoping to achieve from them? Are you now entrenching the gains you’ve made on the streets?

That’s difficult to say, because the roundtable discussions originated from the current crisis situation. The talks have been dictated largely by the immediate needs of the country: the need to calm the people down, to restrain them from violence. In the longer view the roundtable talks are a means for the opposition groups to watch over the government and prevent abuses of power taking place in future.

You talk about violence. How much of a problem is it, and how angry are the people of East Germany? Is the motivation for their anger the ongoing corruption revelations?
The people are very angry. They realise they have been working hard for forty years, and they have been deprived of the fruits of their work. They have been cheated, and they've been lied to. They have taken shortages and economic difficulties, and, compared with West Germany, a relative degree of poverty upon themselves in the belief and the hope that this is an aid to socialism, that they are building up a new society which will be an alternative to capitalist society. They realise now that they have been absolutely cheated.

Their anger grew with the various revelations of corruption and extravagance. People heard that files were being destroyed in the military and security forces, and in industry - files which would have been evidence of more corruption, and of how the security police had been watching over the people. In order to stop the destruction of those records, people wanted to storm those institutions. Mostly, this urge has been restrained by the opposition groups. But the people are quite right. Their rage was perfectly understandable. I don’t know if a people has ever been deceived to such an extent. They've become more and more aware of the huge riches which have been amassed by a very few people at the top of the government and the party.

For instance, hard currency has always been in short supply here. We haven’t been able to buy much medical equipment and medicines, and electronic equipment which we badly needed. Theatres, to take an example from my own field, haven’t been able to play as many Western authors as we would have liked - not so much my theatre, but certainly the smaller theatres - because we couldn’t get the hard currency. And now we find out that our top officials have been tossing hard currency away on personal aeroplanes, huge houses and castles, and also, it seems, large Swiss bank accounts. People are understandably enraged about that.

But did people really not know? Surely Wandlitz, the party’s massive estate outside Berlin, was an open secret?

People realised that there was a certain degree of luxury, but they assumed this was only within certain limits. They had no idea of the dimensions of the corruption.

Can we talk a bit about the long-term desires of the German people? It seems patently clear to me that in the GDR, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, you’ve got to move quickly towards a market economy, that a centrally planned economy doesn’t work. But it also seems to me that you don’t want to take over all of the aspects of capitalism. You want somehow to fuse the market economy with some of the better aspects of the societies you’ve been trying to build. Is that the case? Can you define it more precisely than that?

I’m sure that’s the case, but it’s very difficult to be precise, because it means practically inventing a new theory of economics. What people would of course like is a greater degree of prosperity, and a greater degree of flexibility between different economic forms and modes. But what they do not want is the dropouts you have in Western society, the bottom one-third of the population which lives under very poor conditions. We don’t want the old and the poor to drop out of society. We don’t want unemployment. We don’t want exploitation of Third World countries. And we don’t want the forced growth that is part of capitalism, which by its inner laws is forced to expand all the time, and consequently to create greater and greater exploitation of natural resources, and in the last event also of the people themselves. Whether or not there is a viable alternative we don’t know. No-one really knows. What we’re doing at the moment is evolve concepts which would lead in this direction.

But you certainly don’t want to re-invent the wheel. You’ll move towards some form of a market economy?

Yes, I think that’s inevitable. The question is whether you can have a market economy which will work within some kind of framework of planning. We have to say goodbye to the kind of administrative planned economy which the socialist countries have had hitherto. That is clear.

I was in Leipzig recently, and the calls for German reunification seemed much stronger than they were a few months ago. Is it viable, and if so, under what conditions?

I think these calls for reunification are based upon an illusion. The truth, I think, is that people have lost all
confidence in finding a force in this country that will lead it out of its present chaos. People don't believe that anything can be salvaged from the old socialist regime. They see a vacuum out there, and so the easiest and most obvious solution is to go into the embrace of the rich brother next door. That is an illusion, because reunification, even if it does happen, will certainly not happen tomorrow. Reunification will not solve the problems of today or of the next few years. As regards reunification on a long-term basis, I think that is the will of a large part of the population. Quite how many is very difficult to assess. But there are both interior and exterior constraints. There will obviously be a change in Central Europe as regards military pacts and so on - those are the exterior conditions. And the internal conditions are, I think, that the countries move towards each other in a process of confederation, and then decide whether or not to unite in a number of years' time. This won't happen immediately.

And by then, perhaps, the choice may not be whether one should rejoin the two Germanies but whether one simply calls oneself a European?

That may be the solution. Europe can also profit from what the socialist, or former socialist, countries have to bring, in terms of ideals and values. I don't think that's been lost. Obviously it's been lost as an ideal of stalinist socialism, but it's still a force within the people. And I think that can help in a small way to give an accent in the direction of humanism to a future Europe - of concern for socially weaker people, and so on.

The Communist Party is obviously still in complete disarray. If the party does disintegrate, is the opposition ready to take over the running of this country? If there were free elections in May as is planned, would you be ready?

No. The opposition groups have only been in existence for a matter of weeks and months, and they are not in a position to take over political power in this country. They may be in a position to become part of a coalition government, or to become part of a strong and important opposition within parliament, but they're not able to take power. They don't have the political experience. They don't have the personalities. They haven't ever gone through a process of political democracy. Democracy is just starting. Nobody knows how it works in a country like this. These are things we have to learn.

No opposition group is going to be able to take a lead in the government. What may happen is that the opposition groups join together in a kind of left coalition. From these groups certain personalities may emerge who have political stature, and who can take an important part in a new parliament. But the groups on the whole are not even political parties, and don't have the structures or organisation to really take over power at present.

Neither did Solidarity, and yet they find themselves in government.

Yes. But as I see it from here, they're not capable of exerting that responsibility. They're trying to govern, but one notices their lack of experience, and also particularly their lack of a positive program. I don't think they're a very good example for us to follow.

The Communist party is obviously in disarray, you're not ready to govern, and the communists' supposed coalition partners, who have at least some experience, are seriously compromised. Is there not a serious power vacuum in this country?

There is indeed a serious power vacuum, and it can only be filled by taking the most honest and credible per-
sonalities from all groups together, and try to form some kind of coalition government from them. Something like that will have to happen. We have no serious parties at present. What we can have by the time elections come in a few months time is a dozen really credible, upright personalities who can exercise some kind of leadership.

The Communist Party is, as you say, in a process of disintegration and will certainly not have a vanguard role in the future. It will just be one among many parties. But from the middle echelons of the party and from the rank and file there will be a good number of honest individuals who will gain political credibility.

People like Gregor Gysi, the new secretary, who is now trying to build up a new party platform. Another man I’m thinking of is the mayor of Dresden, Wolfgang Berghofer, who along with Gysi and Modrow is part of the new leadership in what’s left of the party. There are a number of personalities who even the population at large would still believe in.

But, returning to the Polish analogy, the Communist Party at the moment is such a dirty word that one wonders whether, if they went to the polls in May, they’d get more than 10% or 15% of the vote?

Ten or fifteen percent; they’d get a few positions from that! But it’s very difficult to speculate. The party’s future is still in turmoil. Until that’s sorted out it’s very difficult to predict what a new democratically elected government would look like.

Preaching Water, Drinking Wine

Werner Goldstein is a senior editor on the foreign desk of Neues Deutschland, the official Socialist Unity Party (SED) newspaper, and is a member of the reform wing of the SED. He has worked on Neues Deutschland for some forty years, since his return to the country from Britain after World War Two. He is angry and disillusioned, but still believes socialism worth striving for.

We’re living in a situation in which East Germany has moved very quickly towards change. Some argue that the churches were the main catalyst for that change. Do you think that’s correct?

I think there is some truth in that. The church assembled people who had different views and gave them the chance to voice opinions which they would otherwise not have been able to voice. And the church made itself felt on the government in various ways. In that respect it really was a catalyst for change, though not, I think, the main one.

What was it about the churches that made people go there? What could they provide that the state organs and other officials couldn’t?

In the GDR the church is very much an independent force; there has always been a separation between state and church. The church was a secure place to voice opinions, and the churches also had their own media. There was a possibility to spread divergent views. That was really the start of the movement in this country.

So it’s not a surprise to you when we talk to opposition groups and many of them are priests and Protestant church people, or have close ties with the church?

No, I’m not at all surprised because, for many years, the party leadership, as well as the party at the regional level, has tried to talk with and work together with the church. The party has tried to exchange views and find common ground if possible.

You concede that the church was a catalyst for change in the GDR, but not the main catalyst. In your view, what was the main catalyst for change?

The main catalyst, I believe - and many of my comrades in the Socialist Unity Party believe - has been the Soviet Union: the rise of Gorbachev, and of perestroika and glasnost in the media there.

So was perhaps Gorbachev’s visit to Berlin for the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the GDR the final catalyst that began the move for change?

We put a lot of hopes in that visit. We were a bit disappointed in that Honecker didn’t really respond. But we were sure that Gorbachev made a big impression, though it took another couple of days or more to be sure that the consequences were in the right direction.

You’re implying that even before Gorbachev came to East Berlin there were already divisions inside the East German Communist Party between reformers and conservatives. At the time I must say it was rather difficult to find those reformers.

You have to understand that while the leadership, the
24 members of the executive committee, was quite monolithic, the party organisations were a different matter. Rank-and-file party members, many of them staunch friends of the Soviet Union, were keenly aware of Gorbachev's attempts to escape from stalinist ways of thinking and from the whole stalinist period. And I would think a majority of the party membership felt it was the right thing to do also for the GDR, where there are similar political and economic contradictions well known to many people.

Do you believe that the SED is saveable? Will there still be an SED in the form that we know it? Or must the East German Communist Party do something similar to what the Hungarian Communist Party did?

I think it's saveable. If I didn't think so I would have put down my party card already. We still have a big membership, perhaps 1.5 million members, although many hundreds of thousands have left the party ... I hope that with our new leadership new ideas can spread and also a new sense of confidence.

But the party, surely, is very angry and disappointed with the behaviour of the former leadership which appears in retrospect to have been a bunch of gangsters.

Yes, of course, their loss of confidence has been almost fatal for the party. That's a fact. And everybody is very disappointed - although some of us who have had to work pretty closely with the people who are now infamous are less surprised than others. The former leadership disgraced themselves. They isolated themselves from the mass of the people and the mass of the party membership, and they didn't know about the realities of life in the GDR anymore.

You're a senior politician, how much did you know about what was really going on? I'm sure you knew about the party's estate at Wandlitz. Did you know about the corruption? Did you know about the Swiss bank accounts? Were they things you knew and couldn't print or were they simply things you didn't know?

Wandlitz was of course familiar to people like us who accompanied members of the politburo on various foreign visits, and we were critical of what was going on. But we didn't see the depth of corruption, naturally. We couldn't comprehend the extent. And, by the way, there's nothing proven yet about the Swiss bank accounts; it's just a rumour. I personally don't think there were Swiss bank accounts.

So you concede a level of corruption, but you don't concede the level of corruption that's now being intimated in some of the domestic and foreign press?

Yes, I concede there was a lot of corruption - a whole system of corruption, really. It was not only in the top ranks. It went pretty far down, and it became a sort of system going right down through the various levels of the party. But not all of what is being claimed now about the corruption or its dimensions is proven truth.

And yet similar allegations have been made in other countries where the stalinist leadership has been done away with. Zhivkov in Bulgaria is under investigation, and the case of Ceausescu in Rumania is beyond doubt. Is there something in socialism that leads top officials to lose contact with the rank and file and to become corrupt?

I personally think it's not the system of socialism itself which is the problem. Rather, the problem is the stalinist system of administering and commandeering socialism. The problem is not in the essence of socialism, because socialism is, in my view, identical with democracy.

You're obviously a strong believer in socialism as a world view. How much has your view of socialism been shaken by the events of the last few weeks? Or is it simply confirmation for you of the death of stalinism?

I'm maybe not the typical case because I'm almost 70 years old now. I became a member of the Communist Party during the last war. I was a refugee from Nazi Germany in Britain, and I became a member of the German Communist Party there when it was still illegal. And of course I had my dreams about socialism and communism back at that time. But coming back to Germany in 1947 after the war I had to face up to the realities of a beaten Germany, of a people who were not pro-Nazi but who had no other real beliefs. We had to face reality and create our socialism with people who were actually opposed to socialism for many years, and some of whom were perhaps actually anti-communists.
Two Dramatic Months

In recent weeks East Germany has emerged as the focal point for the massive drama being played out in Eastern Europe. The curtain lifted on the first and most startling act of the drama in October, following Gorbachev’s visit to the GDR’s 40th anniversary celebrations.

Huge demonstrations in Berlin and Leipzig threw the government into chaos. Reliable reports have suggested that general secretary Erich Honecker was planning to send in armed troops, Beijing-style, when he was sacked by his party. His rather unconvincing replacement, Egon Krenz, lasted just three weeks, though his place in the history books became secure when he opened the border with West Germany on November 9, thus effectively bringing down the Berlin Wall.

In early December the legacy of the Honecker era became clearer. There were allegations of huge fortunes in Swiss bank accounts, massive trade in foreign currency, and luxuries hitherto undreamt of by most East German citizens. These revelations, like those of the parlous state of the economy, shocked many party members and almost 600,000 resigned in the period from mid-November to mid-December.

The Socialist Unity Party (SED) has since tried desperately to regain some degree of legitimacy. The party congress in mid-December modified the party’s name and reworked its platform in a more Western socialist direction.

The new General Secretary, Dr Gregor Gysi, had previously been ostracised by Honecker; and the new leadership troika of Gysi, Dresden mayor Wolfgang Berghofer and Prime Minister Hans Modrow were all relatively untainted by the Honecker era. But the SED’s electoral prospects in a free poll are not considered rosy. Elections are planned for May 6, although many opposition figures continue to argue that they are not being given a fair chance to win. In mid-January the SED's coalition partners threatened to resign, and Neues Forum threatened to walk out of roundtable meetings when it was reported that a new security apparatus was being created by the SED, supposedly to counter neo-Nazi agitation. Yet neo-Nazi groups are not new to the GDR. Mr Berghofer and other reformers, impatient with the slow pace of reform, resigned in mid-January to join the rejuvenated Social Democratic Party. The SED now looks on the verge of cracking up.

But people changed over time and we had high hopes that we could build socialism in this country. And for those reasons people like myself are now deeply disappointed, naturally. But our belief in socialism can’t be destroyed. It is shaken, I will definitely admit that. But I still am a believer in socialism. I hope very much that we can retain the good things in our country and find a way to true socialism in this country, in the same way that I hope that in the Soviet Union, for instance, they will find their way to proper socialism.

What has to change in this country for you to get back the confidence you’ve lost?

The first thing is the democratisation of the party. People can really talk openly now, and they do talk openly. They should be able to elect true leaders and genuine people who are for the people, that’s another thing. Something which is much more complicated is to try to put the economy in order. And the economy is very badly shaken, it’s in crisis. We have to do everything to support and strengthen the new government in order that they can stabilise the economy. That’s now a point of the first order.

Do you think the Communist Party can stay in power? Or have they lost the right to run this country?

I personally think they haven’t lost the right to govern. They want the best for the people, and they have a plan to stabilise the economy and to see to it that people’s living standards rise again and that things return to normal. In that sense the party has a right to govern. Whether they can find the majority necessary in order to govern is a different question which can only be decided at the next election.

And what’s your gut feeling? Do you think the party has retained enough support from the working class to keep power?

It’s very difficult to say. Very largely it depends on how things go in the next two or three months, with the economy being the main battlefield for campaigning around for the next government. If the party succeeds in stabilising the economy there’s a good chance that we might attract enough people - not all of them of course, and not as many as we always pretended there would be. But there could be a chance that we could obtain a majority or be able to form a coalition in order to retain political power in a democratic way.

You’ve explained that you’re angry with what’s happened in the past, but my general feeling is that the people as a whole are very angry, and they feel betrayed by their leadership.

Yes, that’s definitely the case. People are disappointed. They feel betrayed because some of these leaders have preached water for the people and they themselves have drunk wine, as the saying goes. But at the same time I would like to point out that this anger is also a result of agitation by forces interested in getting the communists
out of power. And not all that is being shouted in the streets in the demonstrations is actually in the interests of the people.

Can we talk about the question of German unity? In Leipzig slogans demanding immediate unity with West Germany are fairly easy to find. Is that an issue that’s coming to the boil in this country?

Of course I’ve noticed that the shouting about unification has become much louder lately, and it’s been strengthened by the same slogans being spread from the West. At the same time you will find that quite a lot of people in those demonstrations - I don’t want to try to quantify how many, it’s difficult to say - are saying ‘no’ to reunification, not for all time, but at least for the near future. Perhaps they envisage a single Germany again in 10 years or so.

There has got to be time to find ways of coming together again, with different economies, different cultural developments, and with the political changes here that are taking place at present. I think I heard right when I heard them also shouting in Leipzig that ‘we don’t want to return to the old Reich’. People are afraid of the chauvinistic, nationalistic developments appearing in West Germany, and of course we have certain elements here as well.

One of the slogans said you can be in favour of German unity without necessarily being a rightwinger.

Of course one could be a rightwinger too! The wave of chauvinism is very strong and it’s getting stronger still.
This question of reunification is being speeded up dramatically. But we’ve got to allow time to develop to the point where it’s achievable, in the interests of Europe as a whole.

Because, in fact, a speeded-up move for reunification could get in the way of the reform process in East Germany, couldn’t it?

I don’t really see a contradiction between the two. But, of course, at present we need to quieten down the situation in order to concentrate on work and production. That’s the main thing really; we have to stabilise the economy and get back to a normal political and civil life. And after that there might come a time to think of the reunification process.

I get the feeling that the people are expecting very fast change, and very quick solutions. Isn’t there going to be a problem where the wishes of the people and the realities of the political situation are going to come very clearly into conflict?

I think you’re correct. People are impatient and afraid of losing more material comfort, of suffering greater cuts in their living standards. But our position as a newspaper, if we get the chance, will be to explain to people that we have to be patient, we have to work hard with our hands and our brains until we normalise the situation.

Talking in a slightly wider context, I get the feeling that the people of Eastern Europe want proper markets, and proper market mechanisms. They want to do away with the state-run economy, so in that sense they’re thinking in capitalist terms, but not necessarily in the social sense - they want to retain the social net that socialism has provided. Would you concur in general with that analysis?

I think people don’t want the social consequences of capitalism in our country. I’m just talking about the social consequences here, because the values we have created in this country are predominantly in the social field - in short, a certain material security which capitalism can’t and doesn’t give to all the people. It’s our belief that we can attain a good life for the whole of the people, and we believe that we can use elements of market mechanisms in our economy to that end. The first steps have been taken already. For instance in Karl Marx Stadt, where there is a motor industry, there’s a 50-50 partnership with Volkswagen of West Germany. We have the capacities and the know-how to make a good car, and I think it will be a success. And that can be an example for many other such undertakings.

Can we go back to marxist ideology, and to Marx and Engels. Were they just wrong? Were they right for their time? How relevant are the views of Marx and Engels for the 1990s?

In general I would say that they were not only right for their time; what they explored and tried to discover was the essence of capitalism. That was a very important step towards socialism and that’s why it became important for us as well. They never said anything exactly in detail about socialism, but a lot was deduced in our countries just by taking extracts out of their teachings - and it has been proven those predictions haven’t been right. There were too many assumptions and not enough real proof. But we still believe in Marx and Engels. And also to some degree in Lenin.

Yet marxist ideology was based on the assumption that countries that became socialist would already be in an advanced capitalist stage. Nearly all the countries that have moved to socialism, however, have either been feudal societies or societies in early stages of capitalism. So in that sense the marxist model was never really applied.

Yes, you’re quite right. Marx actually knew Britain best. It was the most advanced industrial capitalist country at that time. Marx and Engels believed Britain could become socialist quickly and successfully because of its high levels of productivity and social organisation. And we know what difficulties the Soviet Union had as the first country of socialism - besides having to fight a terrible war, or two wars actually. But East Germany used to be quite a developed capitalist country before the war. We have the qualified people to do the job. We have the standard of education needed in order to achieve much higher levels of productivity. What we lack just now - what we have lost, really - is the capital needed in order to invest in production, in science and in high technology. But we have most of the elements necessary in order to successfully build up socialism. If we can win the whole of the people for the job.

PIERRE VICARY is ABC Radio’s correspondent in Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

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Subscription: $15 for three issues, from Box 76, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, NSW 2006.
TOM FITZGERALD'S Nation is now journalistic history. But was its moment just a fleeting one? Adam Farrar spoke to Nation veteran Sylvia Lawson.

A Nation SACRED and PROFANE

It's not much more than a year since my mother Anally threw out her - almost complete - set of back issues of Nation. With that rather regrettable side effect of the horrors of moving house, I might have lost my last easy access to a journal which, for 14 years, from 1958 until it was absorbed into the Nation Review in 1972 - shaped much of the intellectual, political and artistic culture of Australia.

The collection edited by Ken Inglis, Nation - the Life of an Independent Journal of Opinion, has made good that loss. The journal that I dimly remember in its failing years is restored, in full vigour, in this collection; with articles selected from five three-year periods presented as they would have been in any of Nation's fortnightly editions. Each period is introduced or, more importantly, located by Inglis. What this means is that it is the journal, not simply an archive of articles, which is represented for review almost two decades after the event.

Still, after all that time, why represent any journal? For more than half a generation - and a crucial generation which, through the 'sixties, built the springboard that we baby-boomers leaped off - Nation was an independent voice of criticism. More than that, it established a standard of journalistic writing which certainly hadn't existed and has been maintained only in patches since. It established the nationalistic cultural revival which we now take for granted. And it carved out a serious, sometimes left, sometimes liberal, critical voice which was genuinely influential.

Since Nation, Australia has languished for a long time without much by way of independent journalism. And perhaps it's this independent critical voice in (or near) the mainstream of journalism which we look to in a collection like this to remind us. Certainly, it was hard won and hard preserved. Tom Fitzgerald financed it by mortgaging his home. And it was maintained on inadequate, and sometimes no, wages; by the dedication (and brilliance) of George Munster and other editorial workers like Marie de Lepervanche and Sylvia Lawson.

Of the editorial workers, Sylvia Lawson is the only one still prominent as a writer and journalist. (George Munster died some years ago and the royalties from the book go to the George Munster Award for Freelance Journalism.) But it was Sylvia who expressed reservations about the current 'recovery' of Nation when I talked to her recently - a conversation not so much about the Nation, but of what understanding it might mean for a re-establishment of such an articulate, independent critical voice.

Potentially I think it's got value as a model. But that can only be made actual insofar as new generations of people look at both its value and its limitations. And I don't think that's begun to happen yet, because the attention that's been paid to this retrieval, to this book (which I think in its own terms is actually excellent) has been very disappointing ... well, nostalgic, sort of solemn - as though it was a quasi-sacred thing. The notion of sacredness has in fact been spoken of by Hugh Stretton. He talked in his Wallace Worth lecture about "Tom Fitzgerald's Nation of holy memory". I don't know how Tom feels, but I hate that - the notion that something's beyond criticism, that it's such an unattainable and splendid and remote thing that it's inimitable. That's absolutely dreadful. I'm completely opposed to the nostalgia that has dominated the reviewing of the Inglis collection. One can respect history, including the history which involves oneself, without nostalgia. And that is to say one can respect it more or less critically. One can take a distance from the object. I hope the principal makers of Nation would - I like to think they'd agree with this.

Some of the sense that it is inimitable no doubt comes from the extraordinary personal imprint of Nation's makers.

I think a lot had to do with George's drive and intellect and Tom's very high journalistic competence and his enterprise in going...
out looking for people. The crucial thing was the giving of space. The making available of space and writers came out of the woodwork. And then Tom's sense of writing, which was quite extraordinary, his sense that this thing had to be very well written. I don't think he would have theorised it this way, but the way I'd theorise it retrospectively is that, without thinking of it in quite these terms, he did see good writing as of the essence of good thinking. These processes are not finally to be seen as separate.

If we are - as I am - looking for something from this 'retrieval' which can show us how to go forward, then the force of personality (or even vision) is not enough. It may well be possible to revive a longing for writerly excellence - or at least part of which is a commitment to serious understanding of the issues of the day. Of course, Tom Fitzgerald launched Nation into a desert of journalistic writing and criticism. But is that quite our case today? Sylvia points to a change which today may have limited any sense that there is even a need for such journalism.

Actually, since Ken Inglis' 'retrieval' book appeared, I've been struck by the number of younger people in different quarters or in publishing who have absolutely never heard of the publication, and who haven't particularly noticed the force of this retrieval. In other words, I'm struck (as one often is in other connections) by the fragmentation of the cultural, journalistic, publishing landscape. There is an argument that says there is no centre; there is therefore no place for a generalist publication outside the taken-for-granted mainstream.

The line is that the scene is so fractured, so irretrievably fragmented, that one can only have the scattering of voices across, say, the plethora of visual arts publications, the more or less literary centred ones, the long running and more diverse periodicals like Meanjin, and then, interestingly enough, a number of monthlies now. The argument is that you can only have this fragmentation; that you can't imagine, let alone produce, a kind of centre. You have a cacophony of voices. But the funny thing is the cacophony at times still seems the same as a silence, because there still don't seem to be places outside the special little islands of journalism where all kinds of voices can be heard other than the obvious liberal ones.

It seems to me that there are signs that the situation Sylvia describes is breaking down. Journals like Meanjin are running more generalist essays; Australian Society has changed from a social welfare journal to much more of a generalist publication; ALR, too, is reaching towards that centre - or, as Sylvia puts it, "a space near the centre ... in the agora, in the market place ... where a whole lot of cultural and political and social concerns converge". So perhaps Inglis' reminder of what Nation could do is timely. But as a reminder - not necessarily as a model. This is precisely Sylvia's point about 'the sacred'.

I think any journal, any journalism, maps its place. A Nation for the 'nineties would not have those blind spots which Tom Fitzgerald himself has spoken about in radio interviews - blind spots in relation to feminism and in relation to Aborigines. Obviously today you're looking at a society which is very deeply marked by feminism and by Aboriginal politics, by the politics of ethnicity. I think what people could start from now, surely, is an informed left position in which politics have ramifications.
well and truly into the fields of culture. The cultural map has altered absolutely drastically. The left politics of '68 made interdisciplinary some kind of intellectual necessity in an enormous range of institutions across the western world. And all that means that cultural comment in every area just cannot be conducted in the ways it used to be, or under the headings, it seems to me, that Nation was able to use.

But if the couple of decades since Nation have been marked by new political priorities and by the shattering of cultural boundaries, surely a new critically aware, left, journalistic must be even more deeply marked (even if we don't yet know how) by the complete redrawing of the political map in Europe last year. Sylvia has already begun to argue (in Australian Society's last issue) that this creates a journalistic imperative.

We cannot carry on regardless. We must not carry on regardless because we're living in a time now in the West of a massive appropriation. That is, important and influential sections of western opinion are now trying to convince themselves and everyone else that we have, in some sense, 'won' - 'they' have come to 'us', as it were. This is outrageous nonsense and we've got to resist it. Particularly if the most important part of the game, as I take it to be, is helping Gorbachev - who's got to win against conservatism in the Soviet Union and against recalcitrant and meanness in the West. There's a lot of writing to be done. I mean 'helping Gorbachev' both literally and symbolically.

What it means, basically and primarily, is the continued insistence on the validity of the socialist ideal, even though bureaucratic, governmental, communism has crumbled. One should, I think, try to see the crumbling of the bureaucratic communist tyrannies as clearing ways towards socialism - towards social democracy even, if you want to put it that way. That is to say, toward the building and rebuilding of societies founded on notions of social justice - which nevertheless, and by the same token, allow for opposition and contestation on institutional and governmental levels. You can't have one party states. You can't have those tyrannies. You've got to have some kind of active debate and contention on the level of politics, on the level of the economy and on the cultural - which is to say the communicative level.

If this is right, then journals like Nation and their successors are a vital part of the process. And just as Sylvia's (and others') writing in Nation changed the way Australians thought of cultural production in the 'sixties and 'seventies, any successor to Nation will have to challenge the latest cultural complacency.

One thing that's a bit depressing, and has been for several years, is the way that culture seems to swamp politics in the interests of a whole number of writers - some people writing for Art and Text, some people writing for Editions - you feel as though the political dimension isn't exactly missing, but is nine-tenths submerged. There is a disjunction between political and cultural discussion - books get reviewed all over the place as though books, as though writing, had no political aspect. I would hope we'd got to an end of the conservatism in Australian literary discussion (which became worse through the later 'eighties) in which literature equals the fiction of the refined sensibility and the development of the self; and that equals writing.

A lot of the liveliest writing in Australia is in the genre of the essay much more than in those dominant kinds of fiction. That's a provocative statement. But maybe we could in this journal both practice and attend to writing across a number of genres, and hopefully release young potential writers from the sense that in order to write they have to be producing conventional fiction.

In this journal we're trying to imagine, satire and wit would have to constitute a dimension. I would not try to have a journal in which solemnity was totally conflated with seriousness. In fact, I think I'd try to have a journal that wasn't solemn at all. I see no reason for solemnity. I do see every possible reason for seriousness. But they're quite different. The exemplar which springs to mind is Archibald's Bulletin - one of the funniest publications that ever happened in English and also one of the most serious at times - between, say, 1886 and 1900. One dreams, for the future (particularly with some of the aspects of production being at least a bit cheaper, with the desk top facilities and so on) of a publication which, like the Bulletin of 100 years ago, could be independent and still pay people - both the editorial and technical labour and the people who write. Well, I can only say that I hope it's not impossible.

Ken Inglis' recovery of Nation reminds us that it wasn't impossible a couple of decades ago ...


ADAM FARRAR writes on social policy and social issues.
A Picture of SINCERITY

Lyndell Fairleigh spoke to Mr Movies, Bill Collins, about feminism, nostalgia ... and sincerity.

When Bill Collins speaks to you he is sincere. "I'll tell you what I really think and feel", he says, though he adds he may later change his mind. He distinguishes himself from the critics who follow fashionable theories or film orthodoxies and often dismiss popular films simply "because they refuse to be sucked in".

Bill Collins has let himself be sucked in, though that doesn't necessarily make him a sucker. He is personally involved. "One of the things I like about so many of the films of the '30s and '40s is that the characters often have goals or ideals. Sometimes they have obsessions. They were striving for something. And one was often made to feel that the striving was worth the effort, unless they were striving for something like power which, in itself, corrupts you. I love stories of people who are prepared to fight for what they believe. It's inspiring."

As though on a personal journey, he wants "to find the good things in movies and explore those". In a way, it began during the war years when he was growing up, although Bill is well aware that he could be "rationalising now from an adult point of view". Films "were like a trip into another world". They "weren't simply escapism, but a way of seeing the world". Films didn't only inspire him but gave him insights into character and behaviour.

And inspiring audiences is the ideal he has since set himself. "I am trying to make film more interesting, to encourage people to read more and enjoy music more. I am trying to teach them a lot of things and I use film to do it."

This passionate popularising marks Bill Collins' style and separates him from other well-known Australian critics or film commentators. It also opens him to criticism, even ridicule. He is the epitome of sincerity when he leans towards the camera to tell us about a particularly significant or interesting scene, an incident that occurred during shooting, the sad details of an actor's life. Both the trivial and the significant are dealt with in the same manner. It simultaneously strikes you as quite authentic and too good to be true. You are tempted to ask if he hasn't simply found the right formula, an image which sells? Here again, sincerity is at issue and to doubt it would, I suspect, be to doubt Bill Collins in every facet of his life.

Cynicism is more in our national character, of course. Talking about negative audience responses, for example, Bill says that: "Some don't like the hype, others don't like what they see as plugs for stores carrying records or books. I'm just trying to stop people writing to ask me where they buy soundtrack records. There may be nowhere else to go. If you look at it as a plug then you're too cynical."

While cynicism may secure safety with critical distance, does Bill Collins' sincerity indicate a lack of distance? Always looking for the good in films, never seeming to have a bad word to say about any of them, could suggest he has little more to say. But passing judgments on films is not the role he wishes to take, not as the host of The Golden Years of Hollywood. What's important for Bill Collins is whether you like the film and get anything out of it. Speaking of the extraordinary continued appeal of The Sound of Music, he says: "It must have something, it speaks to people. Analysing it is a critic's delight. But don't dismiss it if it's not for you."

He feels complimented when you ask if he is deliberately presenting a variety of films from the period so that viewers can decide for themselves. "I'm trying to say that you never know when it's going to be good. Keep your mind open to new stimuli. If you slavishly follow what critics say, you'll end up with a very narrow conception of film and what it can do for you. What it can offer you."

His most critical role lies in his choice of films. The double on Saturday night, for instance, or a season like The Andy Hardy films that ran over a month of Sundays at midday. Recently, The Golden Years featured Otto Preminger's Laura, a well-known, first-rate 'film noir' and fertile ground
for a radical feminist reading with *A Woman’s Face*, a conservative and sentimental film starring Joan Crawford which was extremely popular at the time. Despite these formal differences, how much a woman’s social identity is constructed by, and around, her appearance is at issue in both films.

Has his choice on this occasion been influenced by feminist criticism? He points out that *When Ladies Meet*, a lively comedy drama by female scriptwriter Rachel Carruthers, was screened the following week. Collins believes it could be read as an expose of how men manipulate women and women’s images of men. "I have an American publication about women and the theatre. That was a great piece of resource material for that film. When I went back to *When Ladies Meet*, it was like seeing it for the first time. I have a huge personal library. I find looking at criticism interesting sometimes, especially criticism from the time the films were made."

Once again, there’s the hint of a journey of personal discovery, somewhat at odds with the popular image of a man confined to the values of the ‘thirties and ‘forties. Bill Collins is indeed so identified with *The Golden Years of Hollywood* that it comes as a surprise to hear him denounce nostalgia as an impediment to intelligent viewing. An audience which wants to see old favourites repeated endlessly is his bane. "If there’s anything that really turns me off, it’s ‘Oh, I love all those old movies you show, Bill. They bring back memories of when I was a little girl.’ It’s very disappointing when a film like *The African Queen* is among the top rating movies of the year and some that haven’t been on television for years, and are very good films, get lower ratings. And when I ask people why they didn’t watch them they say: ‘I’ve never seen that one, so I didn’t think it would be any good.’ That’s one of the greatest barriers to growth. They won’t trust me to present something that might be particularly interesting to them. They feel secure in what they know they’ve enjoyed before."

But not all the audience wants to holiday in Brighton every year. For some of us, *The Golden Years* is an opportunity to view a variety of films from an era of filmmaking we enjoy, to compare technologies and themes, to get a sense of what was popular and the significance of diversions and experiments. For a woman in her thirties, like me, they provide access to another world, and not simply the world of film itself. Not because they reflect the reality of the times, but because they are constructed within it.

"Realism has nothing to do with it. Theatre is not real, in the sense that it’s not happening in an alleyway or a bedroom. It’s happening on a stage in a three-walled room or a stylised set. And the same thing applies to film. The reality is in the imagination and the heart more than in the fact of the thing itself."

And that’s what sets the films of the ‘thirties and ‘forties apart for Bill Collins. "I don’t watch movies of the ‘forties for nostalgia, I watch them because I happen to like the way they’re made. I love the clarity of the dialogue. You can hear every word, even if the characters are low-life or semi-articulate. In the theatre, a playwright writes dialogue to be heard. We don’t want to listen to a lot of mumbling."

So don’t ask Bill Collins what his favourite movies are, because he might "get sassy and say all the wrong things - just to be different. I love to present films of the ‘thirties and ‘forties, but I also love showing British films and I would dearly love to show some of the French and Italian classics. David Stratton and I have joked about swapping shows for a week. I love the movies on SBS. I like presenting newer films, controversial films, films that have something to say, if that doesn’t sound too shallow, about sex or racial relations or man’s inhumanity to man. My image is notonly to do with movies made fifty years ago, because I have been reviewing new releases for years, so I don’t like being straitjacketed as someone only into older movies. I’m for film, period. I love the medium."

Perhaps he’s not even making a personal journey through the world of films, though he’d probably prefer that reading of himself. Next time you talk to him he may see things differently.

*LYNDELL FAIRLEIGH* is a freelance journalist.
MARKETING
our MERV


Cricket lovers, hasn't the Australian Cricket Board pulled the right rein with this sizzling hot summer of cricket?

Getting the Pakistanis and the Sri Lankans out here to weave their magic against A.B.'s Ashes winning crowd was a stroke of pure entrepreneurial genius.

The gate crews have been turning the public away in droves from day one.

The icing on the cake was the lightning fast trip from the new old traditional rivals, the New Zealanders.

A note of caution, my very good friends. This may have been the last summer that cricket sold itself.

As we head into the 'nineties, we have to look much more closely at how to promote the caper now that soccer has booted off a summer season and now that the heat is on with the bases loaded at the top of the sixth in the baseball brouhaha across the nation, screaming for the leisure dollar.

Cricket must learn from other codes and comps or, like the dinosaur, become too heavy and too stupid to survive.

Look how the Rugby League kicked on since linking up with the great Tina Turner who pointed out in one brief moment the raw, wild, untamed, sex appeal running round the paddock in shorts week-in, week-out in the toughest football competition in the world. Never have blokes, buttocks or balls looked better than when Tina told us ... well ... as nearly as I could discern, the subtext of the spray was you would be an idiot to yourself if you didn't do everything in your power to bag one of the guys and take him home to your place and get him nude real quick regardless of whether you were male or female.

Of course, cricket couldn't walk this racey road as the innate conservative nature of the game screams 'WHOA', before the pants are dropped and the lewd, bang-a-gong, get-it-on, sensuality of the players is revealed.

The bottom line is the nation has had a gutful of souvenir medals, baggy green caps, Greg Chappell slip slop hats, signed bats, record breaking balls, team photos and souvenir dol-lies from the '56 tour of the sub-continent.

To be honest, like you, I have a shed full of that rubbish at home. It's a joke. It's a farce! Something that should have been consigned to the ash cans of history.

Now the brains trust that has whipped Merv into a superstar has shown the way forward with a style of individual promotion that will blast cricket out of the doldrums of the current age and into the twentyfirst century.

The breathtaking breakthrough made by the Hughes handlers is that the big bloke isn't in the squad for his cricketing skill, but for his ability to play the character parts.

Merv plays the naive and innocent boofhead from up country who can't wait to ram his tongue into any hole as soon as the furniture is disturbed.

I, for one, can't wait until he graduates from the National Institute of Dramatic Art and can stroll out through the gate and take the new ball from the Punt Road end, as Hamlet with a skull tucked down the front of the trousers, or go out hoping to score a lightning fast fifty as Little John out of Robin Hood with a stump as his staff; or field at mid-on playing the heavy, the method acting way, with all the clout of Chuck Norris or Syl-
vester Stallone. In this part he doesn’t plant the lips on the mates, but plants the knuckle sandwich on the opposition.

The Merv Hughes think-tank hit pay dirt with the shoe ads, the aerobics books, the Merv Hughes bedtime hits, the smoke social appearances and the kiddies’ ‘get work’ endorsements.

With that fluff paying the rent how about a series of audio cassettes to play in the car on the way to the game called ‘Musings with Merv’.

On these, Merv spills his guts on the big issues that confront the nation like: vegetarianism - how it can work for you; home slaughtering - the pros and cons; Princess Di and panty hose - do they have a future?; etc, etc.

You see, with Merv the sky is the limit because the nexus between results on the paddock and cashflow off it has been broken forever. It will end where all great promotions end, with a TV show on a top of the heap Channel Ten simply called ‘Merv’.

But, having said that, let’s open the whole Pandora’s Box of possibilities. I would kill for an album of songs by Stumpy Boon called ‘The Songs of a Short Leg’.

Stumps wouldn’t have to open the larynx himself; but he and his advisers could select them. Chestnuts like ‘Jump in My Car’, ‘The Real Thing’, ‘Funky Town’ (the Pseudo Echo arrangement), and ‘New York Mining Disaster’ would all be sung by the original bands under the baton of the maestro of the willow, one S Boon. Plus on green vinyl with a red label, a bonus single of Stumps having a go at a personal favorite like ‘Running Bear’ and on the flip side ‘Has Anyone Seen Old Sid Around?’.

These would be the certified tunes that Boonie sang to himself while fielding in close.

There would be a simple film clip with Boonie mouthing a few lyrics while he tonced six after six at the Gabba.

Now, I might be wide of the slips cordon, but I would love to see how Swampy Marsh passed time camped in the gully day after day.

Marshie’s recent dig in a beer commercial has ‘rag’ written all over it; and I would love to think that he had a volume of verse tucked away in the top drawer just itching to see the light of day.

You know the sort of gear: a personal selection of thoughts that kept him going through a summer in Britain last year.

The great thing here is, if Marshie hasn’t done it, it wouldn’t take long to rope in from the boundary anyone of half dozen cricket writers to do it for him. Names like Blowers, Johnners, Benners, and Lawrers all can write, or at least that is what the blatherings have been telling us for years; and ghosting is perfectly respectable for a busy bloke with a ton on his mind.

The bottom line, my very good friends, is that there is a goldmine out there just waiting for someone to get out there and shift the overburden, and get on with it.

H.G. NELSON is the alter-ego of Greg Pickhaver. H.G, along with Roy Slaven, presents This Sporting Life, Saturday afternoons from 2-6pm, on ABC radio’s JJJ-FM.
The death of Andrei Sakharov, at the age of 68, is a major loss to science, to his native country, and to humanity at large.

Sakharov was first and foremost a scientist, committed to the fundamental values of free inquiry and freedom of publication. In his book, *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom*, published in English in 1968 after the manuscript was smuggled out of the USSR, the author stresses that intellectual freedom is essential to human society. This is the only protection against the "infection of people by mass myths which, in the hands of treacherous hypocrites and demagogues, can be transformed into bloody dictatorships".

The relevance of these remarks to current events in Eastern Europe, the USSR and China needs no emphasis. As Dr Silviu Brucan, a loyal communist for many years and now one of the leaders of the National Salvation Front in Romania, observed in an interview with a French journalist, authoritarian repression of ideas allowed Marxism to degenerate into a myth which became the justification for the rule of a psychopathic dictator, as it had previously done under Stalin. Dr Brucan went on to deplore the fact that so few Romanians had been able and willing to voice their dissent in public.

The same was true in the USSR, although there was more dissent than in Romania, and the struggle for intellectual freedom threw up a number of outstanding individuals like Sakharov.

Of course, most scientists subscribe to the same values as Sakharov, but few have had the courage and the persistence to stand up for these values in public. His political activities as one of the leaders of the dissident movement have somewhat obscured his contributions to scientific knowledge on the one hand, and to the freedom of scientists from political dictation, on the other.

Sakharov's contributions to physics were numerous, but they fall essentially into three areas. His early work on the Soviet H-bomb led him to study the possibilities of using nuclear fusion as a source of energy and he was one of the first people to suggest that a doughnut-shaped magnetic field or 'torus' could be used to contain the hot plasma produced by the fusion of hydrogen into helium.

The torus, or Tokamak, remains the dominant design in fusion experiments around the world. Secondly, Sakharov wrote a number of papers on the elementary particles of matter, and was again one of the first people to sug-
suggest that atomic particles like the proton and the electron were built up out of even smaller particles, the 'quarks'. This, too, has become the dominant view of particle physicists. Thirdly, Sakharov made some important speculations in cosmology in which he argued that, if the universe were expanding (as Einstein was the first to suggest), then it was likely that matter was distributed throughout the universe in a non-uniform manner. This speculation has been one of the main driving forces behind recent discoveries in astrophysics, including the observation of quasars and pulsars.

It was precisely because Sakharov enjoyed such enormous prestige as a scientist that he was able to attract such worldwide support and attention both within the scientific community and outside it. Like Einstein before him, he recognised this and accepted the responsibility for making a public stand against tyranny, repression and the threat of nuclear war. On his 60th birthday, a celebration was organised in New York by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, attended by thousands of scientists and public figures. In a message on this occasion, Sakharov thanked them for their support and urged them to make efforts on behalf of lesser-known scientists and intellectuals who were not protected by their international fame.

Sakharov's support for scientific freedom was dramatically manifested by his opposition to Khrushchev in the 1960s. Although Khrushchev emphasised the role of the 'scientific-technological revolution' in the development of the USSR, he had no genuine respect for science or free inquiry. This was reflected in his enthusiastic support for the charlatan Lysenko who had also been patronised by Stalin as a great genius of biological science. Although Lysenko promised to do great things for Soviet agriculture, he failed to deliver, but was able to get rid of his critics who lost their official positions and, in some cases, died in jail. Khrushchev wanted the Soviet Academy of Sciences to elect Lysenko to membership. Sakharov led the opposition within the Academy, even though Khrushchev threatened to dissolve it if Lysenko was not elected. A major crisis was averted only when Khrushchev was deposed.

A number of people have tried to find special reasons for Sakharov's courage and persistence. One favourite theory was that Sakharov was of Jewish origin, like many of the dissident writers and scientists who suffered for their resistance to repression under the Soviet regime. In fact, Sakharov was a product of the Russian intelligentsia which had opposed Czarist oppression before the revolution, and which Stalin attempted to wipe out. His grandfather had been active in the campaign to abolish capital punishment under the Czarist regime.

In the end, we have no answer except to recognise the outstanding individual qualities of the man and to salute him as a heroic figure. His overriding concern, as he wrote in his book, was the "independence and worth of the human personality". And that should go for all of us.

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AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S BOOK REVIEW

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ALR: FEBRUARY 1990
This is a towering biography — but then it is only fitting, given the stature of its subject who was one of the most distinguished characters to stride across the stage of the twentieth century.


Broken human being — transformed American Dream — that anyone, even orator, linguist and political figure, distinguished characters to stride. This is a towering biography — but then it is only fitting, given the stature of its subject who was one of the most distinguished characters to stride across the stage of the twentieth century.

Scholar, athlete, singer, actor, orator, linguist and political figure, Paul Robeson had many of the attributes of a Renaissance man. At the height of his popularity in the 'forties, he appeared to symbolise the Great American Dream — that anyone, even a black, can succeed if talented enough. But, by the 'sixties, he was a broken human being — transformed from public hero to public enemy by the dark side of that dream — fanatical patriotism and anti-communism.

Duberman’s biography charts the development of Robeson’s — and America’s — tragedy in rich detail. The son of a slave, he first achieved public prominence at Rutgers University when he became their first All-American football player. By the time he arrived in New York in 1919, he was “already one of ‘Harlem’s Darlings’, the personification of the richly talented, unapologetically ambitious New Negro”.

Robeson trained as a lawyer but never practised. Instead, he embarked on a career as a concert artist, stage actor, recording and film star. He became a major figure in interpreting Negro spirituals and the plays of Eugene O’Neill (beginning with All God’s Chillun).

His growing public acclaim did not, of course, mean that he was immune from the ugly racism of the United States. He was still refused entry to various theatres, clubs and hotels. At his request, his 1933 contract with Paramount for The Emperor Jones stipulated that he not be asked to shoot footage south of the Mason-Dixon line. Even in England, which he found so unprejudiced compared with the United States, he was refused service at the Savoy Grill.

In the ‘twenties, Duberman argues, Robeson took the characteristic position of the Harlem Renaissance intellectual — that racial advancement would come through individual artistic achievement rather than political action.

His experience with the theatre and, more particularly, the film industry, eventually paid off to that illusion. Most of his roles — with the exception of Othello and a few stage roles — depicted blacks as inferior, simple-minded “niggers”.

While his singing was generally admired, such roles attracted a lot of criticism from the black press. A major embarrassment was the 1934 Korda Brothers film, Sanders of the Rivers, which turned out to be a glorification of British imperialism. (Jomo Kenyatta also appeared in the film — cast as a minor chiefain!)

As for many of his generation, the ‘thirties transformed Robeson’s politics though, in his case, it involved a burgeoning awareness of both race and class issues. He discovered Africa and the Soviet Union simultaneously.

As Duberman describes it:

In the early ‘thirties, Robeson tilted towards a strong racial identification congenial to the theory of cultural pluralism. But by the end of the ‘thirties, after his experience in Spain and his exposure to the Soviet Union, he would tilt more towards identification with the superseding claims of revolutionary internationalism. Much later, in the ‘fifties, after his cosmopolitan hope had been trampled by the climate of the Cold War, he would renew and re-emphasise his own black cultural roots. But even then he could never be simply categorised as a ‘black nationalist’. All of Robeson’s shifts were subtle, none sudden or complete.

By the end of the ‘thirties, he was lending his active support to a variety of public causes in England— Republican Spain, the Unemployed Workers’ Movement, benefits for the Daily Worker and Welsh nationalism — despite advice that it would harm his career. Increasingly, he became identified with the Soviet cause.

He never joined the American Communist Party though, at the height of McCarthyism, he offered to as a gesture of solidarity. As Duberman observes, “Robeson’s political identification was primarily with the Soviet Union in its original revolutionary purity, not with its secondary manifestation, the American Communist Party”.

But, in one of those revealing ironies of American politics, as he increasingly championed the Allied war effort, the FBI stepped up their surveillance of him, concluding in 1943 that he was “undoubtedly 100 per cent communist”. The FBI’s campaign against him reached its apogee in the hysterical anti-communism of post-war America.

As early as 1946, he was hauled up before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). However, it was his misquoted speech to the Paris World Peace Congress in 1949 which gave the forces of reaction the opportunity for an all-out attack. Seizing on his supposed declaration that it would be unthinkable for American Negroes to go to war against the Soviet Union, the white press denounced him as a traitor. Many black leaders quickly dissociated themselves from him, a number later testifying their patriotism to special sessions of the HUAC.

In the same year, rednecks and police launched their infamous attack of Robeson’s Peeksskill, N Y, concert, injuring one hundred and fifty people. Robeson was banned from appearing on the NBC network and his opportunities to work and speak dried up. Then, in 1950, the US government seized his passport.

It took Robeson eight years and countless court cases to regain his passport but by then his health and
spirit was broken. The appearances before the HUAC, the constant surveillance, the continuing rebuffs and the Cold War climate, triggered an emotional collapse in 1955 - the first bout of what was later diagnosed as "bi-polar disorder" - mania followed by depression.

Sadly, this period of enforced inactivity coincided with an upsurge of black activism, beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott. As he recovered, he tried to intervene in the struggle, urging support for Martin Luther King, but his presence was largely ignored, adding to his sense of isolation. By then, too, many of his former friends and supporters - both black and white - had deserted him.

In 1960, he visited Australia where he had to endure red-baiting again - this time at the hands of the Brisbane and Sydney press. As he toured the country, he became increasingly outraged at the condition of Australia's own black population. Watching a film about Aborigines with Faith Bandler, "the tears started to stream down his face, but when the film showed thirsty children waiting for water, his sorrow turned to anger". He vowed to come back to campaign for the Aboriginal cause.

Robeson returned to Europe deeply depressed and a few months later attempted suicide. Admitted to a psychiatric hospital and "agitated with many ideas of persecution", he was subjected to fifty-four shock treatments. Subsequent drug treatment in the United States, may have resulted in organic brain damage.

Whatever the case, Robeson was never the same again. As black America erupted in an unprecedented burst of militancy, he spent his days as an invalid, with few contacts with the outside world (though he did meet and like Malcolm X.) In 1974, the FBI concluded that no further investigations were warranted. He died a year later, still loved and admired but largely forgotten by mainstream America.

Duberman's massive biography explores all facets of Robeson's remarkable career and personality, integrating the artistic, personal and political dimensions into an impressive whole. It draws largely on the Robeson Family Archive though this had one major drawback. The materials represent Essie Cardozo Goode, Paul's wife, far more than they do Paul.

While Essie was an invertebrate diarist, correspondent and hoarder, Paul hardly ever committed himself to paper. Duberman has tried to overcome these limitations - and largely succeeds - by conducting hundreds of interviews and a judicious reading of Essie's various 'texts'.

Duberman paints a complex portrait, managing to probe beneath the charming, genial exterior to the deep-seated anger in Robeson which became more profound as history brought its many disappointments. And he deals at great length with Robeson's problematic relationship with Essie, whom he could never quite leave on a permanent basis, especially not for a white woman. Throughout his life, Robeson was involved with many other women - mostly white - and all strong and intelligent like Essie.

This magnificent biography - one of the classics of our time - should assist in restoring Robeson to his rightful place in American history and in the hearts of people everywhere. It is part of America's tragedy that Robeson is largely unknown in his own country today - or among the postwar generation worldwide. However, unless the book is issued in paperback (it's over $50 in hardback), it will be largely restricted to an audience of ageing lefties who have their Robeson discs tucked at the back of their record cabinets. Robeson - and Duberman - deserve a better fate, particularly now that the history of socialism is undergoing such intense scrutiny. Without ever resorting to hagiography, Duberman shows that Robeson is one hero of the old socialist world who deserves a place in the new.

CARMEL SHUTE is an industrial officer with the Public Sector Union (ABC Sub Branch).
From the attractive cover design to the catchy title, it is immediately obvious that *Land of Promises*, an action research and policy study of the East Kimberley Impact Assessment Project, bids fair to deliver more than the ennui and tiresome prosiness often associated with such reports. This doubtless stems from the extensive efforts of its editors; from the illustrations, photographs and the particularly apposite quotations interspersed throughout the work; and from the multi-disciplinary backgrounds of the contributors to the project. It probably also stems from the fact that it is not a product of government departments which, in fact, failed to respond to Aboriginal organisations’ requests for such a report.

It is one of the largest interdisciplinary, non-government, non-developer studies of Aboriginal policy issues produced to date. These factors have given it an independence and flexibility uncommon in providing ‘baseline’ information of social impact assessment on indigenous peoples.

One problem, however, does emerge. *Land of Promises* makes the assertion that it does not seek to speak for Aboriginal people, but seeks rather to provide a means for them to be heard. At the same time, it admits that “a limitation of the Project’s approach was the absence of Aboriginal control of the Project, and the degree of Aboriginal participation”, caused by such things as the fragmented nature of Aboriginal representation and the autonomy of widely dispersed researchers. Ultimately, then, the report presents Aborigines of the East Kimberley region with what it sees as options and strategies based on outside views.

This problem aside, however, it is the unusual combination of options for strategies with data collection, along with its independence of government or developer bodies, which is one of the strongest features of the report. Another strong feature is that the issues and premises raised by the report, as well as the options and strategies outlined, have a significance and application for the Aboriginal people which extend beyond the somewhat limited confines of the East Kimberley region.

As a study designed to assist Aboriginal people to deal with economic and social changes arising from resource development in the diverse East Kimberley region, it becomes a microcosm for many of the issues affecting Aboriginal people throughout Australia and those making policy decisions on their behalf.

For example, *Land of Promises* establishes the basic premise that Aborigines and other Australians view the development of resources in radically different ways. Aborigines are conscious of “the relationship between inhabitants’ present needs and their responsibilities to future generations”. Their cultural creed (and it is a universal one, not confined merely to the Aborigines of the East Kimberley region) imposes on them a sense of ‘stewardship’ so that destructive or sudden changes are resented and feared because they interfere with a duty imposed by the spiritual authority of their ancestors.

Other Australians, meanwhile, have subscribed to the ‘development’ ideology. It is based on the assumption that increased production of material goods and services will increase well-being, that development is “good for everyone”. *Land of Promises* questions the validity of this latter assertion since benefits in a capital, technology and knowledge intensive world rarely flow to indigenous peoples. It also makes the point that the Aborigines’ “concept of responsibility for the land has much in common with contemporary principles of sustainable development”.

The Ord River Irrigation Area in the East Kimberley region is a potent example of the worst features of ‘development’ ideology. The story of its development is one of “grandiose visions, inadequate and ill-directed research, and decisions by politicians for short-term political advantage made without reference to the experience of the thousands of years in which the region has sustained a substantial human population”. My experience is that such examples of misdirection and mismanagement are not confined to the East Kimberley region alone.

This study of the East Kimberley region also provides us with a relatively recent example of the economic and social changes which have impacted on the Aboriginal people from resource development, for it is here in the last one hundred years that the Aborigines of the region have faced several intensive ‘waves’ of development which have transformed their lives. These waves include the short-lived gold rushes and the pastoral development of the 1880s and, more recently, the development of the Argyle Diamond Mine; and a rapid growth in tourism and in the non-Aboriginal population of the area. In each case the impact on the Aboriginal communities has been sudden, disruptive and, in many instances, devastating. The result has been a conflict over control of resources and development in the region and the Aboriginal people are fighting to be heard.

Central to the issue is land ownership. As the report points out: ‘The most profound effect of European occupation of the East Kimberley (and, we might add, elsewhere) has been the Aborigines’ loss of control over
land." Yet land is the source of Aboriginal identity. Its importance is best expressed in the emotive words of the Kija man, quoted in the report: "We bin born and raised here. When we lose that country we'll be nothing. When we got a country back we'll be right."

Thus restoration of control is basic to Aboriginal priorities and dominates their strategies for the future. But in the East Kimberley, as elsewhere in Australia, Australian law is limited by the fact that most land has been alienated through leases or sales. Yet there is a de facto recognition of Aboriginal rights inherent in the system itself. This is exemplified by such episodes as the introduction of reserves, the Aboriginal Land Rights Bill and agreements with mining companies. To resolve this dichotomy, the report advocates, among other things, that "the federal government should legislate for communal and inalienable land rights for... Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia and recognise... (their)... sovereign rights and prior ownership of Australia...". Compensation for lands lost and for social and cultural disruption must follow.

Land of Promises emphasises that Aboriginal communities have sound foundations for social well-being, and for political organisation and control in their social structure, based in an all-embracing kinship system, but they are "constrained by limited resources and by the fact that the institutional framework within which they have formal authority to act is determined and controlled by the same, often remote, non-Aboriginal sources of power". The key to the remedy is more Aboriginal participation in and control over their own affairs, using their own skills and incorporating activities compatible with Aboriginal concepts. Recommendations on the issue of law and order made by the Australian Law Reform Commission, that Aboriginal communities be given the power to make local by-laws, enforceable in local Aboriginal courts, are a positive step in this direction. Many others are cited in the report. But self-determination must be a slow, self-generating process which involves "proceeding from planning to action, to observation and evaluation, to reflection and then to further planning".

Land of Promises should be read by all thinking Australians. It contains much that will promote public debate, understanding, even controversy, since it calls for new directions in Aboriginal affairs. Consultation and ad hoc solutions are not enough. We have to rethink national policies and to recast the structure by which they are administered so that Aboriginal people need no longer see, not only the East Kimberley region, but Australia as "a land of promises - broken and forgotten".

JUSTICE EINFELD is a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia and recent past-President, Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Shrugging off ANZUS

No Longer an American Lake?

The changes in Europe have been so fast that they have already overtaken this book of essays put together by John Ravenhill of the University of Sydney and published only last October. With the whole basis of alliance politics in the East-West context being open to question, the irrelevance of ANZUS seems even more apparent than through the points made by a couple of the more critical contributors in No Longer an American Lake?

This is the saddest criticism that can be made because, while the book seeks to be balanced and give space to arguments for and against the ANZUS alliance, the final chapter on future directions fails to come to grips with the fundamental questions raised.

The real issue is that the symbolism of ANZUS is so deeply ingrained in Australia’s cultural framework that, despite all the changes referred to in the region, let alone the wider global changes in East-West relations, no politician dares to question its relevance or suggest that it should be allowed quietly to fade away into obscurity like the Manila Pact - or even formally dissolved.

Because this issue is not addressed, the editor fails to come up with any positive suggestions for future directions other than retreating into Cold War rhetoric and offering the vain hope that:

Washington should seek to increase the benefits of the ANZUS alliance to its partners and decrease the costs minimally, it should refrain from actions that would decrease the benefits or increase the costs.
John Ravenhill explains the political origins of ANZUS in the opening chapter, making it hard to understand the quite inadequate suggestions for the future of the alliance that he offers at the end of the book. Hopefully we shall see more such articles on the events that led to the Pacific Pact as we can shrug off the past and look more dispassionately at the historical events that led to the alliance politics of the post-war world.

If the Europeans can use the 1990s to consider the origins of NATO and the Warsaw Pact with a view to replacing them with Common Security and non-offensive defence strategies, then surely Australia can admit that the same changes can lead to a reconsideration of the relevance of ANZUS in the South Pacific?

Now we learn, too, that the United States is considering the withdrawal of up to a third of its forces in the Pacific. Surely the whole Dulles strategy of constructing a chain of alliances to box up China and the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War needs to be quietly eradicated and replaced with arrangements reflecting current realities.

The tragic refusal of so many Australian politicians and Foreign Affairs/Defence specialists to acknowledge that security issues in the Pacific are based on North-South concerns and not the East-West framework dictated from Moscow and Washington after 1945 is not reflected anywhere in this book. If Henry Albinski as a US specialist in Australia and New Zealand could be invited to contribute to Not an American Lake? then there should have been at least one chapter from an academic at the University of the South Pacific, and an indigenous New Zealand contribution instead of the chapter by Michael McKinley. This would have given the book more balance and might have produced more constructive suggestions than those offered.

Richard Higgott’s chapter on the ‘Ascendancy of the Economic Dimension in Australian-American Relations’ is an important contribution because it shows up the meaningless nature of a relationship between a large power and a small power. This topic was dealt with in a New Zealand publication last year - ANZUS in Crisis - Alliance Management in International Affairs, edited by Jacob Bercovitch. Higgott points out that the domestic considerations of Mid-West farmers will count for more in Washington than the whining noises of politicians in other nations.

He documents the changes in the post-war economy as it affects Australia in the Asia-Pacific and the global economy, concluding that “the magnitude of the US economic problems forms the context in which Australia will have to manage the bilateral relationship”.

Ironically, the chapter (originally drafted in June 1987) was written before the changes in the East-West situation offered the opportunity for the US economy to get its act together, leading TIME magazine to make Mikhail Gorbachev ‘Man of the Decade’ and business journals to write enthusiastically of the opportunities offered by a massive cut in military expenditure.

The danger now is that Australia will react to the changes in the Pacific by joining the prestige arms race in the region and taking the view that potentially unsettling situations in places like the South China Sea and Melanesia mean that Australia should view these developments as direct threats to our own security.

The reduction of the US and Soviet presence offers a major opportunity to reassess our whole attitude to national defence and security. The way forward lies through quietly burying ANZUS as a military alliance, developing a regional initiative for common security and naval arms control in the North Pacific to match the European talks, and switching over to a strategy of non-offensive defence.

Some of these ideas will be developed in a forthcoming book, Australia’s New Militarism - undermining our future security, to be published by Pluto Press in March 1990. This will complement Dr Joe Camiller’s more critical assessment of ANZUS (ANZUS: Australia’s Predicament in the Nuclear Age, Macmillan, 1987) and should set the direction for the last decade of the twentieth century as Australia finds its feet in the Pacific and finally throws off its dependence on ‘great and powerful friends’.

PETER D JONES is a research officer for Senator Jo Vallentine in Canberra and has been active in the movement for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific since 1976.

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*Our next issue: on sale at your newsagent by March 1.*
Easson's Future Not So Bright

Michael Easson's aspirations for national leadership of the Right within the ACTU have received a sharp blow. Worse, his totalitarian grip on the NSW Labor Council, of which he is secretary, may soon be broken by the appointment of a left full-time officer. This is part of the fallout from the leaking of a Labor document, the Left's document's cutting assessment of the NSW parliamentary ALP and the federal ALP.

The monolithic culture of Labor politics in Australia decrees that heretical views cannot be voiced publicly and hence cannot be debated.

Liquor Shake-up

Moves are afoot to put a well-deserved bomb under the Liquor Trades Union led by John (The Silent Senator) Morris.

A move last November to replace federal secretary Michael Boland with Tasmanian secretary Nick Sherry fell apart when Sherry grabbed for the red leather in the shape of a Senate seat.

The parachute to be offered to Boland was a seat on the Industrial Relations Commission. But Boland is still LTU federal secretary and the ACTU's nominees to the IRC turned out to be Greg Harrison and Victorian state MP Jim Simmonds.

The LTU shake-up-that-wasn't also involved installing Linda Rubinstein, the Victorian assistant secretary, as the federal assistant secretary. However, the Victorian LTU branch leadership has its own problems, after a strong challenge from a left rank-and-file group which captured the presidency. If the Sherry-Rubinstein deal fell through, the campaign to revive the LTU continues, with support from Bill Kelty, among others.

At present the union is a mess.

In WA it concluded a deal with McDonalds which actually cut junior workers' wages. In Queensland two officials were convicted of electoral fraud and the inquiry by Marshall Cooke QC will attempt to rake over any remaining muck. In NSW a Federal Court inquiry is pending into the 1988 ballot after anti-Morris forces appealed against the result. At the ACTU, the LTU is seen as the key union in the tourism and service industry.

For many women and young workers in the clubs and hotels, the LTU is their first taste of unionism, and it's often a sour one. Too often, membership is compulsory, dues are automatically deducted from wages and dead-head officials, duchessed by the bosses, are never around when you want them.

Giant Stirs

Something may be stirring in the heart of that sleeping giant of trade unionism, the AWU. Last December, federal secretary Errol Hodder came within 229 votes of being tossed by a reform group in a ballot which saw 21,000 votes cast. Hodder cannot be happy that his new federal president is rival Bill Ludwyck - though Ludwyck is no leftist.

NSW AWU secretary Ernie Ecob was also nearly dished. And while the SA branch, traditional bastion of the Left, was lost, the Victorian branch was won by a reform group. The amalgamation with the grouper-infested Ironworkers Association now looks shaky.

A New 'international'? The latest line in proletarian internationalism is to be found in a new booklet What Happened in Beijing, published by the, until recently, Moscow-line Socialist Party of Australia.

The booklet reprints copiously from official Chinese sources to 'prove' that virtually no-one actually died in Beijing last June - aside from the heroic martyrs of the PLA, of course.

Also included is a precis of the article in the September Independent Monthly which first pointed out that most of the deaths in June occurred, not in Tiananmen Square, but on the western side of Beijing. Except that, in the SPA's account of the article only the first part of the argument survives - leaving no mention of any deaths anywhere in Beijing.

Sloppy editing? Hardly. The purpose of the booklet becomes clearer from the introduction where homage is given to the roles of the CPC and the Chinese government in June "in the spirit of working class international solidarity". What price a new 'International' formed from the hard-line remnants of the communist world - China, Albania, North Korea, and the surviving stalinist sects, including, it seems, the SPA.
Hello Patients,

Dr Hartman here again to wish you a happy new year and also to issue you with a warning.

My warning is simply this. As you move into another busy year of work and political life, beware of meeting psychosis. Put simply, meeting psychosis is a condition where the patient is only able to relate comfortably to another human being in the context of a meeting.

In a meeting, sitting in a circle with agenda in hand, the meeting psychotic is confident, outgoing, even dominant. But outside the meeting, the psychotic can't even look another person in the eye. They fail utterly at all levels of human communication. In short, they are social cripples or, as we prefer to say these days, they are socially challenged.

In the final stages of this characteristic leftwing disorder, you'll find the meeting psychotic constantly calling meetings at work. And when the meeting time arrives, all the workmates will be on the phone, or making a cup of tea, or writing an urgent report. Indeed, they'll be doing anything they can think of in a desperate attempt to avoid yet another meeting.

But what is the psychotic doing? The psychotic is happily putting chairs in a circle, whistling in joyous anticipation. Anyone caught smilling at the beginning of a meeting could be showing early symptoms.

Actually, I had a very sad case in my clinic just the other day. This patient was a senior Commonwealth public servant who attended one too many management training workshops. This psychotic had reached the stage of constantly calling meetings in his family and home environment. Each evening he insisted that his spouse and small children turn off the telly and sit in a circle in the loungeroom. He then covered the walls in huge sheets of white butcher's paper, armed himself with a big black felt-tipped pen and then forced them to discuss "their version" of how the housework should be done in three years' time.

Then they had to 'set goals' and 'develop strategies' to achieve their vision. He even insisted that his toddler and elderly mother identify 'key performance indicators' to 'evaluate' the dinner. Clearly, this psychotic needed help.

If you identify with his symptoms always remember that we have special programs tailored to the needs of public servants at all my clinics. We guarantee no group work and no caring and sharing. Most exciting of all, we write the reports!!!

While we're on the subject of public servants, I've been getting an awful lot of letters lately from patients in the public sector who are traumatised by change. It appears that crowds of highly paid consultants have been called in to 'reorganise' most government departments, over and over again.

As a result, the public sector is changing. And it's changing so quickly it makes human communication in short, they are social cripples or, as we prefer to say these days, they are socially challenged.

As you can see, this middle manager needs help. He is currently a resident in my Canberra clinic.

But with patients like this to drag kicking and screaming into the 21st century, is it any wonder that staff turnover has reached such alarming proportions? My patients tell me that in some government departments people are signing on and off so fast that if you come back after lunch on your first day, you qualify for long service leave. In some parts of Canberra the managers are changing so quickly it makes government in Italy since World War Two look stable by comparison.

I had a middle manager in the other day who thought 'creative management' meant getting his secretary to put coloured paper in the photocopy machine. I'm sure you know the type. An ageing Catholic in a pin-striped suit who always arrives at work at 8.32 am. He always hangs his coat carefully on a coat hanger behind his office door, and then he puts on his favourite cardie. (If you live in Canberra you may have guessed he works for the Australian Tax Office.)

When this manager hears things like "the manager of the future will be a change agent", he just thinks they should bring back the Latin mass. When he is told that "the climate of the future is constant change", he just thinks the Luddites had a point.

In fact, this 'change resistant' manager hates all these fast-talking female consultants with their padded shoulders and their big fat contracts. He thinks the place for 'imaginative' and 'creative' people is in the arts, not the Australian public service. "That's why God created the Australia Council," he says. "Maybe all these 'change agents' should just go and get themselves jobs in the National Gallery."

As a resident in my Canberra clinic.

ALR: FEBRUARY 1990
A Vintage Silence?

It's finally been mentioned in the media (thanks to ALR contributor David McKnight, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald), but it's been an open secret for months: 1989 was the Australian wine industry's 'vintage of the decade'. The worst vintage of the decade, that is. But so close are the links between the nation's wine writers and the wine industry that the last people to find out were consumers.

One winemaker/industry figure/winent/wine judge who did actually break the silence was James Halliday, in an article in the British wine magazine Decanter. According to Halliday's article, tellingly entitled 'A sad silence descends over the vineyards', 1989 was 'a vintage to remember...for all the wrong reasons'. The main reason was a coincidence of climatic calamities in different parts of the country. In the Hunter Valley in NSW torrential rain before harvest resulted in a large crop of weak, diluted wines which will be best drunk early. In most parts of South Australia, by contrast, a heatwave before harvest will very likely result in over-alcoholic, blowsy reds to resemble the porty, sweetish Oz reds of yore.

Halliday's tale of woe, however, has one, perhaps dubious, ray of sunshine. He claims that the bright spot for winemakers was Victoria, and in particular what he glowingly refers to as 'Australia's Napa Valley', the Yarra Valley. However that selfsame Yarra Valley just happens to be the location of Halliday's very fashionable, and highly expensive, Coldstream Hills vineyards.

All the same, Halliday has not been loved by the wine industry/wine media duopoly for his frankness. And when questioned by the SMH, Australia's wine magazines played down the blight, arguing that technical know-how could nowadays override nature's whims.

But no amount of good winemaking can make up for diluted flavours and low alcohol - at least, not within the letter of Australia's winemaking laws. In France, and in particular in Burgundy, sugar is added ('chaptalisation') in the fermenting process to beef up weak wines by boosting their alcohol. But chaptalisation is illegal here - unlike a range of more dubious additives such as (in a recent rule change) oak shavings, which can be added to wines to simulate the taste of 'new oak casks' now so sought after by faddish wine drinkers.

So what should the poor old wine drinker on a limited budget do? Well, first of all, take advantage of the silver lining. Prices of 1989 Coonawarra, 5th Australia, and Hunter Valley wines in particular should be much lower than usual. The Hunter's Rothbury Estate, for instance, was flogging off its 1989 reds on mail order at cutthroat prices almost as soon as they were bottled (though without explaining why). If you like light, early drinking reds without lots of tannin this could be the way to go, although for whites it's a bit less attractive.

As far as South Australian wines go, avoid the 1989 Rhine Rieslings (high alcohol ruins their delicate, fruity character) and Shiraz (too porty). This is a problem for budget buyers, since they're the two best value varieties in Australia at present. Logic would suggest that the Chardonnays will be big and simple and perhaps almost sweet, which should suit those people who like the voguish hit-you-over-the-head style.

Straight Cabernet Sauvignons should probably be avoided young: blended reds might be a better bet, since the blending process can help create a balance from several different unbalanced grape flavours. Perhaps the simplest solution, however, is simply to avoid the 1989 reds from these areas altogether, and not to pay too much for whites, since they may not be worth it.

And Halliday's advice might not be without merit. The Yarra Valley is an exciting growth area for winemaking, even if a lot of the wines are grossly overpriced. Try one or two shortly after payday; Halliday's own Coldstream Hills is a good place to start. Western Australia's Margaret River and Mount Barker are still good areas for (pricey) reds and whites: Goudry Windy Hill and Leeuwin Estate are the frontrunners. And give a thought to Tasmania, where heatwaves are very rare indeed...

Home on the Grange

Another vinicultural event reported less than objectively by the wine press was the recent takeover of Lindemans by Penfolds, which now gives the latter a commanding (in wine terms) 30% of the market. Now, for wine drinkers this is certainly not all bad news. Wynns reds - notably their well-priced black label cabernet - have improved markedly since Wynns was taken over by Penfolds a few years ago, and Penfolds do have a reputation of preserving the character of their smaller subsidiaries.

All of this has been amply stated in the wine press. What hasn't is that Lindemans Hunter River whites and reds are generally much under-priced, and Penfolds' plan will undoubtedly be to market them heavily at a higher, more 'exclusive' price. (Such is the thinking of the well-to-do wine buyer that under-priced quality wines often find it hard to get a market.) This has to be bad news for the impecunious consumer. Perhaps now is the time to buy up a case of Lindemans Hunter River 'Chablis', 'White Burgundy' or Semillon (all actually the same grape) at around $8 a bottle on special. Hide them under the house for two or three years, and sample the delights of aged Hunter semillon while you can still afford it...
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