

INTERNATIONAL-2 ⁴⁰¹ (65)



cobblestones as
weapons in Paris

after the french elections
A.L.P. CONFERENCE
student power! worker power!
rivo gandini on 'c.p. crisis'
a revolutionary socialist
magazine : june..july 1968. 20c.

EDITORIAL NOTES

STUDENT POWER

WORKERS POWER

BLACK POWER

The student revolt that is shaking the world from Warsaw to Belgrade, from Rio to Paris has deep roots, roots which reach into the very foundations of modern industrial society.

Students today form an important section of the community. In France for example they represented 7.1% of the total working population in 1963-1964 as against 2.7% in 1945. That percentage is increasing rapidly. 57% of French youth between 15 and 25 are students of one sort or another. This also applies as a rule to working class youth. (1)

The growing demand for highly skilled workers and technicians for modern industry has resulted in an "education explosion" which has matched the explosion of knowledge over the past decade such as mankind has never before witnessed. This scientific revolution objectively makes a society of abundance possible in the foreseeable future.

It is the youth which is able to best grasp that fact. Growing up in a society in which the scientific revolution has itself questioned the "moral", religious and sexual ethos of western capitalist commercialism and stalinist victorism, the youth question not only the moral basis of the society, but the whole basis of that society. Indeed, in a sense they question the whole basis of a society of scarcity.

It is the students of the high schools, universities, technical and art colleges who are best placed to throw up the first challenge and build the first barricades against the system.

(1) A French CF spokesman (TRIBUNE, 19.6.67) speaks of students as being the "sons of the bourgeoisie". It is difficult to understand his logic. While there is an under-representation of the workers children in the universities, 37.4% of children of skilled workers over 17 years of age are in further education, 60.6% of office workers' children. In fact the children of the big bourgeoisie are in the minority -- most are sons of white collar workers or technicians and the "petty bourgeoisie." (see "les jeunes et la revolution" in SOUS LE DRAPEAU DU SOCIALISME NO. 42, November-December 1967.)

This is due to a number of factors.

First, students are traditionally devoted to the search for "truth" and expected to develop their critical faculties. The traditional "liberal" and "independent" university which has in fact always in the past couple of centuries been the servant of capitalism, is now the open and servile servant of the monopoly-capitalist State. Yet this subjection, which is manifested in many forms (the open political interference with the administration and the discipline of students, the overwhelming predominance of "business" interests on Senates, the defence and security contracts of the different universities, the presence of political police on the campus; and in the schools the absolute subjection of teachers and students to the will of a bureaucratic State machine), contradicts the need for an even greater freedom of thought for students and staff to explore the implications of the scientific revolution we are living through. This contradiction becomes even more marked when the student becomes the graduate and is directly subject to the dictatorship of the boss or bureaucrat in his work-place.

Second, students congregate in large numbers in a relatively small and usually homogeneous campus, in a factory-type atmosphere recreating in fact some of the classical characteristics that Marx gave to the proletariat. Discontent with poor working conditions can often spark movements for university reform which quickly take on other questions.

Third, students seldom have the responsibility of family and dependents that the worker has. That allows the student much greater freedom of action and mobility than the "old" working class.

VIETNAM, CUBA INSPIRE STUDENTS AND YOUTH

Fourth, the students who see the contradiction between the possibilities and reality of western capitalism often first revolt against the inhumanity of imperialist wars. Opposition to the war is transformed into solidarity with those who fight against imperialism -- and then a realisation that such wars will never cease until imperialism itself is overthrown in its citadels; until they themselves become revolutionaries.

But despite all these factors of undoubted importance, it seems that the major factor in the current youth and student rebellion is the alienation of the student from decision-making: he may to a certain extent say what he likes, but the student like other members of modern-day capitalist society (and stalinist society) has no say in deciding how society will develop. In this fact is rooted the very deeply felt need for control over their own

work and social environment.

The students who rediscover the best and most revolutionary traditions of the class and make them their own, often re-awakening those very traditions in the working class itself, do not divide themselves as a separate "class" from the working masses, but consciously recognise themselves as the vanguard of that mass able through the combination of factors outlined above to reawaken the apathetic and betrayed mass. The students provide the main base for the birth of a potent revolutionary vanguard party -- to such an extent in France today that the CP feels itself threatened and de Gaulle bans the revolutionary vanguard groups.

STUDENT POWER LINKS WITH WORKERS POWER

In different situations, the above factors combine in different ways. But they emerge with an identifiable common trend that is summed up in the slogan: student power. Student power is at transitional socialist slogan of enormous power because it challenges the very basis of power in a major capitalist institution -- the university and school. In that way, it challenges the State and capitalism itself. That is the full meaning of a transitional slogan -- it starts from an identifiable and deeply-felt need of the students and poses a demand which cannot be basically satisfied within the framework of capitalist society but must lead to a clash with the State. STUDENT POWER EXPRESSES IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL THE DEMAND OF SELF-MANAGEMENT OF THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY BY THE WORKING MASSES. IT IS THEREFORE LOGICAL THAT STUDENT POWER AFTER IT RESULTS IN A CLASH WITH THE STATE SHOULD BE JOINED WITH A SLOGAN OF WORKERS POWER; FOR ONLY WORKERS POWER CAN ENSURE THE STUDENTS POWER BECOMES A REALITY.

But workers power does not imply simple occupation of the factories, or halting the metro and garbage collection. It means actively running these facilities under self-management during the actual progress of the revolution itself.

Here again the students showed the way. The students ran the Sorbonne for several months through a series of elected committees -- and did for some time the same in the whole of the Latin Quarter. Even as we write, the high school students still occupy their schools and are running classes as discussion groups with their teachers in committee. Is it by accident that the Revolutionary Marxists are the strongest tendency in the high school students organisation in France? Rather it represents the degree to which Revolutionary Marxism is the wave of the future.

In England the students of the Hornsey Art College have been occupying the college for over a month, not only occupying the college but organising their own courses and discussions in committees with the tutors. The Hornsey students expressed their aims in this way: "We are demonstrating that it is entirely possible for a body of students to take over and properly organise in co-operation with our tutors a curriculum in which individual needs are no longer subordinated to predetermined system of training requiring a degree of specialisation which precludes the broad development of the students artistic and intellectual capabilities." For nearly a month now they have been running the college themselves. For the first time, their caf, has made a profit... other students are also now following their example.

STUDENT POWER IN AUSTRALIA

The student power movement in Australia lags behind that of Europe or the United States. Yet there are already important signs that such a movement will not be long developing in this country. The movement is most advanced at Monash University where the students have won the concession of a committee to include students to investigate more democratic ways to manage the university. This should be the basis for a campaign in all Australian universities for a similar concession.

But above all if any student power movement is to develop here (and the objective conditions certainly exist for it) what is urgently needed is a program of student power which clearly establishes the nature of the movement and a series of concrete demands to give such a slogan body.

Perhaps one of the major factors limiting the development of such a movement in Australian universities has been the lack of such a program and also lack of understanding of the real meaning and importance of student power as a transitional demand.

Nor is the demand for student power limited to universities. Art and tech. colleges as well as teachers colleges are run as glorified high schools without any student participation. The high schools themselves -- now with 17, 13 and even 19 year old students are still run in the same authoritarian fashion as before. The demand for more democracy in high schools is something that must be seriously taken up by student militants in the future.

But, we repeat, a first priority is the program of student power for all educational institutions in the country. That is something which must be seriously undertaken in the coming months.

The students cannot themselves change the society. They can best be the detonator of the working class and with the youth acting as

the vanguard of the working class.

WORKERS POWER

The students first find an echo among the young workers who in many ways have similar characteristics to the students themselves. Better-educated than their fathers and with a higher cultural level as a whole, they recognise more readily the possibilities of the world about them and rebel more easily against the stifling dictatorship of the boss and bureaucrat in their work-place. They also, while inheriting many of the best traditional attitudes of their class, are less ready to accept the traditional leaderships on faith and; above all in a revolutionary situation are more ready to rebel against their conservatism. The young worker, too, suffers severe discrimination in wages and conditions: in France for example at least 600,000 18 year olds earned less than 300 Francs a month -- or some about \$ 14 a week; 25% of them worked from 46 to 50 hours a week and 22% worked over 50 hours. They are often the first to suffer in unemployment: in one year in France the number of those unemployed between 18 and 24 years of age rose by 64%.

In France it was the young workers who took the lead and kept the factories out on strike against the will of the CP and social-democrat trade unions.

But the workers themselves, as a whole, have also a deeply-felt need for self-management. This may be more difficult to arouse than in the youth or in other "white collar" layers. It exists however as the French events have shown and the whole strategy of vanguard layers must be to awaken that aspiration and give it an organised form: most trade union "lefts" with few exceptions commit a sin of omission on this question in Australia today. They simply neglect a potentially powerful weapon; and concentrate on simply economic issues.

NEED FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The Australian Revolutionary Marxists held a national conference in the midst of the inspiring revolt of French workers and students. Although the gathering represented members in four States: it was nevertheless small by any standards; Yet we believe that the discussions and decisions taken there are of vital importance to all Australian left militants.

The major documents of the conference will be published shortly. We invite comment on them from all readers. (2)

The conference also ended with a call for the formation
(2) IN SOCIALISM IN AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD to be published shortly. See order form in this issue of INTERNATIONAL.

of a unitary revolutionary marxist organisation in Australia with full freedom of tendency and on the basis of a commonly agreed list of transitional socialist demands.

Such an organisation would not pretend to be a completely independent organisational alternative to either the ALF or even the CPA. Rather it would be an organisation of revolutionary socialists who would be in their large majority integrated in the mass political and union organisations of their class, striving there for formation of left-wing tendencies which could be mobilised around a number of transitional demands. Such militants would act within the organisations of the working class in a coordinated way to actively intervene in day-to-day struggles in presenting these transitional demands as the need arose.

We believe that this is the way to act because we do not believe that the mass revolutionary party can be built by the arithmetical addition to any existing formation even the size of the CPA. While the independent face of the revolutionary socialist party must be presented at all times to vanguard elements and advanced layers of the class (students and youth), and publications such as INTERNATIONAL be improved in quality and quantity, the major forces of the future revolutionary party will come from the supporters and members of the mass workers party -- the A. L. P. -- in times of crisis. The presence of revolutionary socialists integrated in that milieu as the most consistent proponents of socialist transitional demands and of the masses' interests; is the way forward.

But such revolutionary socialists integrated in the mass party and movement must be coordinated in a separate entity -- the revolutionary socialist party -- otherwise they are certain to sink into the prevailing reformist atmosphere. Such a party could within the space of a couple of years count its numbers in the hundreds and would be able to link with an emerging left-wing within the CPA; which it is to be hoped would take the majority of the present membership with it.

The construction of such a party -- the contrary to what some ill-informed critics of revolutionary marxists contend (3) -- is the major concern of the Australian Section of the Fourth International.

The ASFI invites all revolutionary socialists interested in construction of such a party to contact INTERNATIONAL with the aim of calling a founding conference later this year.
(3) See the articles appearing in the latest issue of DISCUSSION and the one before. Space does not allow us to go into any length in replying to our critics. We are submitting an article to DISCUSSION in reply for publication in their next issue. (DISCUSSION --editorial board 168 Day St., Sydney 2000, 25 cents a copy.)

BLACK POWER IN AUSTRALIA

Black power is at long last becoming a real issue in Australian politics and it is convenient to consider it here in the context of a discussion on student power.

The publication of Frank Hardy's book THE UNLUCKY AUSTRALIANS (4) this month is an event of some importance for the Australian Left. It should be required reading matter for all Australian militants. For it not only exposes the brutal exploitation of Australia's racial minority over the past decades and right now, giving a moving account of the occupation of Wave Hill cattle station by its Gurunji stockmen, but also the book draws wider conclusions for the Australian Left: white Australia cannot be free while it enslaves black Australia. The delegation of the whole issue of "White Australia" as an unimportant side-issue for the Australian Left is something which is radically questioned here.

But perhaps Hardy's main service is to lift a little the veil on Australian "nationalism" and "patriotism" (essentially a lily-white nationalism); a nationalism carefully fostered by the stalinists during the Fifties and a major hindrance to development of revolutionary politics in Australia.

Hardy himself is once more angry and rebellious -- something rare in Australian communist writers today.

The aborigines -- illiterate, 10% suffering from leprosy, without their culture being respected, the most neglected and oppressed minority perhaps on the earth today -- form more than 50% of the population of the "North". There the aborigines have the chance of starting a "black power" movement which could seriously contest the grip of the white minority there and take back their usurped lands -- lands which they have worked for the huge cattle monopolies such as Vestey's under conditions of serfdom if not near-slavery.

The "self-management" of the cattle stations of the North by the aborigines is now a real demand. That is something too which emerges from a reading of Hardy's book.

INTERNATIONAL will review Hardy's book in its next issue at some length and analyse as well the whole question of White Australia.

24 June 1968.

(4) THE UNLUCKY AUSTRALIANS by Frank Hardy. Available at all bookstalls in Australia.

AFTER THE FRENCH ELECTIONS

One month after ten million workers were out on strike and occupying their factories (with their dependents they represented an absolute majority of the French population) the Gaullists have been returned to power with a greatly increased majority while the CF and its "democratic" allies have polled one of their lowest votes ever. (1) How can this sudden apparent change in the feeling of the masses be explained?

Revolutionary upsurges such as that in France in May do not occur with the frequency of the seasons. They have a specific logic of their own. Because a revolution is not simply some minor disturbance of the status-quo, but goes rather to the very roots of society, it is a political phenomenon which cannot be contained in the straight-jacket of "normal" parliamentary political rules. A revolution represents the groundswell of the desire for a radical, basic change among the masses, and demands a level of consciousness which breaks all the ties, mystifications and inhibitions of capitalist society. In a revolutionary crisis, the strategy and tactics followed from day to day -- even from hour to hour -- are decisive, because without correct leadership the masses who have dared to challenge and hope beyond their wildest dreams quickly (except for its most advanced vanguard) begin to succumb to the multiple pressures of capitalist society -- fear of "chaos", fear of "bloodshed", fear for the security and safety of their families. The petty-bourgeoisified layers of the working class, the peasants, the "family man", all begin to have second thoughts if their own aspirations for a new society are not speedily given leadership and direction.

The hesitancy and fear of these layers encourages the counter-offensive of the out-and-out reactionary forces who choose the right moment to strike and show their strength.

In France precisely that has happened: the masses from mid-May stopped work in their millions in what was almost by definition not simply a strike for higher wages or against police brutality, or even simply for the removal of de Gaulle.

(1) Malcolm Salmon shows a remarkable ability to dodge the importance of figures. The CF which gained 19.98% of the vote this election as against 22.23% in 1967 a loss of 2.25% was only "marginally down". The Federation of the Left which fell from 19.68% to 17.34% (a loss of 2.34%) "dropped 3%". It was not mentioned that the PSU doubled its vote. (See TRIBUNE 26 June 1968.)

A strike of such magnitude and length can only be defined as a revolutionary strike in which the masses express a desire for the most radical change based on the self-management of the economy.

However when their traditional leaderships (the CF, Federation of the Left, the CGT, FO and CFDT to a certain extent) failed to recognise their aspirations and failed to provide a revolutionary leadership, then the mass of the strikers began to feel all the many pressures of capitalist society -- pressures which were equally exploited by both the regime and the traditional leaderships.

De Gaulle waited for the correct psychological moment to launch his counter-offensive. His threat of force as well as the promise of elections and the substantial (but illusory) wage rise provided the basis for the traditional leaderships to persuade the strikers to return so that the stalinist leaders with their "democratic" allies could pursue their "peaceful (ie. parliamentary) road to socialism".

But revolutions cannot be turned on and off like a tap. The ten million strikers were asked to "turn off" their revolutionary ardour and élan for a couple of weeks and go quietly about their daily tasks for the boss; and then "turn on" two or three weeks later when they went to the polls!

Unhappily, the masses and revolutionary situations cannot be manipulated to fit into the predestined plans of trade union and reformist bureaucrats who have "proclaimed" that they are following the "peaceful (ie. parliamentary) road to socialism." (2)

Revolutions demand such courage and sacrifice from the mass of the people that the revolution occurs only when the masses are willing to make such sacrifices due to pressures on them from society becoming unbearable and all the contradictions of neo-capitalism forcing them to revolt and aspire for a new life. Yet if they see that their traditional leadership is not with them in their struggle and if they see no way out in the form of a transitional program of demands; then quickly the very pressures from capitalist society that pushed them to revolt will push them to retreat.

IN JUNE THE MOVEMENT IS IN RETREAT.

In early June it was clear that the movement was in retreat -- the very acceptance of the elections by the CP was a retreat -- the workers were back working for the boss the students had been expelled from the Sorbonne.

(2) We have no room here to discuss the whole question of "peaceful roads to socialism". We shall deal with it at length in the next issue of INTERNATIONAL.

The retreat led to reaction among the masses -- better vote for "stability" than "chaos" despite the attempt of the CF to present itself as a "party of order and peace" (3)

Yet the elections have been only a passing and even irrelevant phase of the deep social conflict still racking France. None of the basic problems have been solved. Even more, the concessions won by the French workers are speedily evaporating with inflation and growing unemployment.

Meanwhile the French workers are departing for their summer holidays. No doubt their revolutionary struggle and elan will be renewed after the "rentree" of the workers in August and the students soon after. Despite everything, the revolutionary upsurge in France is not over. In August and September the workers and students will return refreshed from their vacance, not to work harder for the boss, but to resume their revolutionary struggle.

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNISTS AND THE FRENCH REVOLT

There is little doubt that the French revolt has had serious repercussions inside the Australian CP. Many members are disconcerted by the role of the French CP in the revolt and openly express their discontent.

Instead of answering the widespread curiosity aroused among Australian workers by the French general strike, the CP leaders appeared (with perhaps a few exceptions) to be mainly concerned with giving a "square-off" for the French CP. One cannot help but think that this was the explanation behind sending Malcolm Salmon to cover the French elections (not the revolt!) for TRIBUNE. Certainly his first dispatch from Paris (TRIBUNE 26 June) confirms that impression.

If TRIBUNE and Malcolm Salmon were genuinely concerned with presenting the truth on France, they would report opinions and analyses from all sides on the Left -- not only the French CP's views, but also the left opposition in the CP and those prominent FCF leaders expelled (Barjonet and Jean-Paul Vigier) as well as the Unified Socialist Party (FSU) (4) and the Revolutionary Marxists who played such a role in the revolt, not to mention the student leaders, Anarchists, Anarcho-Communists, CFDT leaders etc.

(3) "I affirm it was above all the calm and determined attitude of the FCF which saved our country from a bloody adventure". (Waldeck-Rochet quoted in TRIBUNE, 26 6 68.) (4) The FSU took the most advanced position in the elections-- it defended the student and worker revolt against attacks from stalinist and Gaullist alike. It campaigned around a program of self-management in industry and social life. Its success -- it doubled its vote -- reflects the swing (cont. next page)

Perhaps too Malcolm Salmon might report on the repression against student and revolutionary organisations and on those leaders still in prison.

Perhaps in this respect too he might allow the student and revolutionary leaders to present their side of the case against stalinist allegations (which he happily repeats) about "adventurist tactics by some of the student movement" being responsible for the French CP's electoral defeat.

Yet more by remiss Salmon's first dispatch allows us some insights into the real situation in France. He quotes a reply that Billoux, a French CF Politburo member, gave to student questioner at an electoral campaign meeting:

"If the situation was a revolutionary one, we would not be saying 'let us go to the polls'; but 'let us go on to take power as quickly as possible.' And we would rejoice if that were the situation.

"But, even though the workers were out on strike, a great many wanted to go no further.

"And the peasants, are you forgetting them? Could we have taken power with the forces we had? Yes. Perhaps for 24 hours. And after that, there would have been a bloodbath, a bloodbath directed against the working people."

A remarkable statement. What does Billoux say? First, if the situation was revolutionary they should have taken power. Second, they could have ("perhaps for 24 hours") Third, they didn't for fear of a "bloodbath". If we call such argumentation menshevik; those with any knowledge of the history of the Russian Revolution will see the point.

If the workers and students took power (and not just the CF in a bureaucratic way) then revolutionary agitation would have been able to still the guns of the army and police and even turn them around the other way. A truly revolutionary insurrection could have assured maintenance of power -- but even if there was a danger of it not doing so (and there is plenty of evidence to show it could have done so from May 13 to May 24) only reformist cretins could justify not attempting such a world-shaking event. True, there would have been an attempt at intervention from other capitalist countries; but their soldiers and airmen are workers' sons too.

(4) continued from previous page footnote: of a section of the working class and older students to the Left of the CF and other traditional formations. The FSU is a loose federation of tendencies which contains a right, bourgeois-reformist wing led by former Prime Minister Mendes-France. But the Party since last year's Congress has been led by the Left, in which a "trotskyist" wing including Pierre Naville (Trotsky's former secretary) is an important factor.

HOW CAN A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY BE FORMED IN FRANCE ?

If the CP has failed to provide a revolutionary leadership, the revolutionary marxist and socialist groups have also failed to build in the past few months that revolutionary marxist mass party which is an absolute necessity to carry the French revolt through to victory. While the different revolutionary groups helped spark the movement and develop it to the height it did reach despite ferocious stalinist opposition, they could not in the short time available forge their cadres into a unified revolutionary socialist party, equipped with a valid transitional program based on self-management of economic and social life by the workers and students.

The objective difficulties confronting such a task were enormous, although sectarianism and habits developed from a long period in isolation helped also.

The Revolutionary Marxist Tendency in France has been most conscious of this need -- that has been the theme of all its propaganda and analyses.

Such a Party will be built on the living movement -- uniting the Revolutionary Marxists, the left opposition in the CP, other "trotskyist" groups, the revolutionary student movements (such as the "March 22" Movement) and perhaps a merger of these groups with the PSU rid of its bourgeois-reformist wing around Mendes-France, as well as some Anarcho-Communist groups.

The revolutionary upsurge in France has suffered a retreat and partial defeat. But it is far from over. The next few months will be crucial, particularly after the holidays, and construction of the nucleus of a revolutionary marxist party must be of first priority.

In Australia, too, the time has come to seriously prepare for the construction of a nucleus of a revolutionary socialist Party.

DENIS FRANCIS-- 29 6 68.

STOP PRESS : JUST AS INTERNATIONAL WAS ABOUT TO BE PRINTED WE RECEIVED A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ARTICLES AND DOCUMENTS FROM PARIS CONTAINING DECLARATIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST TENDENCY, ANALYSES OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE. THESE WILL BE PRODUCED IN A SPECIAL ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL OUT IN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO. ORDER NOW... TAKE OUT A SUB. TO BE SURE...

THE SIEGE OF SAIGON.

The news from South Vietnam is now very scattered and piecemeal in the Australian press. It is however clear that Saigon itself is now under siege -- it is surrounded in its very suburbs by the National Liberation Front forces.

What NEWSWEEK (24.6.68) describes as "staggering setbacks" have increased over recent weeks. Saigon is now a nightmare city for the Americans. Gorton himself had the humiliating obligation to go outside Saigon to a US and then Australian base to even sleep safely during his recent visit to Saigon.

Westmoreland left a defeated General; his very headquarters subjected to almost nightly attacks. He gave a hint of the reasons for his dismissal when at his final Saigon press conference he said that the war could not be won, "not in a classical sense; because," -- and here he paused -- "of our national policy of not expanding the war." (NEWSWEEK 24.6.68). In the double-talk of the US military here is a virtual admission that he was sacked because of his desire to expand the war.

While the "peace talks" continue in Paris without sign of progress, it is on the battlefields of South Vietnam that the real decisions are being made. The withdrawal of US troops from the costily held Khe Sanh outpost is very significant. Equally the silence in the press on the progress of the war outside Saigon, in the countryside is more eloquent than words. For here the NLF is in command: NEWSWEEK states: "it is still a rare village in South Vietnam where the Saigon government commands the confidence and respect of its people."

Vietnam has been out of the headlines; what has happened in France has overshadowed it. Yet these two great revolutionary upheavals are intimately linked -- a victory in one corner of this globe inspires the masses elsewhere to challenge the system. In Australia the anti-Vietnam movement has passed through something of a hiatus, turning more around the issue of Conscription. The war in Vietnam is far from over -- but there is now little doubt that Imperialism has suffered a crushing defeat -- and perhaps is even preparing its withdrawal. That is no excuse for retreating to backyards or apathy. Now is the time to draw all the lessons of Vietnam and prepare the vanguard of students and youth to tackle the system on more radical and transitional demands -- while at all times maintaining the demand and militancy for immediate withdrawal from Vietnam.

DENIS FRANCIS 27.6. 68

THE N. S. W. LABOR
CONFERENCE -- the
"left" capitulates

Labor in New South Wales, per medium of its annual conference over the Queen's Birthday weekend, has held firmly to its right wing course. That the right wing controllers of the Party would conduct the conference towards this end was to be expected. That the "opposition", the so-called left wing, would permit it without a shot being fired, is the clearest evidence of political bankruptcy on the left.

Of course, it can be argued that the "left" wing did put up a fight, as, for example, in the challenge to the size of the delegations from the AWU and the FIA. But it would require no great argument to demonstrate that this was nothing more than a shallow gesture. After all, given reduced delegations from these two big unions -- even granted that such a reduction turned the scales against the right wing control of the conference -- where were the speeches, the declarations, the publications, the pressures for a policy more in keeping with a left wing viewpoint?

It has been apparent for years that the "left" wing leaders are numbers-conscious: "If you haven't got the numbers; what's the use?" So that having been beaten on the challenge to the two right wing union delegations (as occurred at the 1967 Conference also) and there was little remaining for the "left" leaders to do at the Conference.

But together with this early (and clearly to be expected) defeat the "left" leaders were busily engaged on their annual pilgrimage to the Party leaders for "small mercies": seeking the inclusion of more leftists on the right-wing dominated Central Executive. To this end, a limp anti-policy statement was issued to delegates at the outset of the conference: a plea for a more "balanced" executive. This document is monumental in its abject jettisoning of anything which could be regarded as "policy", let alone socialist policy, thus:

"We make an appeal to the Conference Delegates to help us chart a new course. We offer to the Conference a policy which we earnestly believe will rehabilitate the Party in this State, a requisite for electoral victories in the State and Federal Parliaments.

"POLICY--

"An efficient administration of Party affairs with emphasis on modern and up-to-date equipment and facilities.

"Approved links with branches and Unions.

"Initiate a drive for new members and concentrate in the factories and workplaces, universities, town and country areas.

"Establish a number of regional country organisers to assist in the building and strengthening of Party membership and organisation in the countryside.

"Establish the Committee system of government on the State Executive to meet the needs of the membership.

"Encourage the youth and women to build their respective organisations, both political and social.

"Unite the Party on sound democratic principles by giving a balanced representation to all points of view in the Labor Party.

"Give the Australian people the opportunity to support a truly nationally balanced and representative Labor Party.

"Restore rank and file confidence in the leadership of the N. S. W. Branch of the Australian Labor Party."

For this notable non-policy for all the pleadings, manoeuvrings, negotiations for "balance"; the so-called left wing leaders received a well-merited short shrift from the arrogant Party bureaucrats. The complete "Officers' Ticket" was once more swept into office, with one cynical flourish towards the Left; Sheetmetal Workers' Federal Secretary J Heffernan was scooped in to replace Painters Federal Secretary J Anderson who had had the temerity to nominate against the Officers' choice for Vice-President.

"HOW TO VOTE FOR A NEW LOOK, BALANCED LEADERSHIP"

The inherent shameful betrayal in the whole conference exercise is evidenced in the "how-to-vote" issued by the "left" leaders: certainly not a socialist ticket; admittedly not a left-wing ticket; not even a "true Labor" ticket. Instead, the conference was regaled with a "How to vote for a new look, balanced leadership" which would be "a bringing together of different

views --- a combination of various ideas to a common viewpoint."

To indicate what the "left" leaders regarded as "balance", their ticket proposed to reject well-known left wing identities and to carry such equilibrium-makers as Short (FIA), Murphy (Shop Assistants), Triggs (MEU) and Dolan (ETU).

Running the ticket was central to the "left" leaders' whole approach to the conference. Blindly ignoring the right wings regular annual rejection of all their please and platitudes, the left leaders once more set out to "hide their light 'neath a bushel".

The "Foreign Policy - Defence Report" issued by the Party bureaucrats was described by "left" speakers as the best document presented to an annual conference for many years. This was the remarkable document which could speak of "unhappy war-torn Vietnam" as a manifestation of Asia's problems; and then proceed to pontificate:

"Now that the United States and North Vietnam are engaged in talks, the next significant step must be to induce them to accept a ceasefire. . .

"The next stage towards a ceasefire would be, in accordance with Labor's policy, to

- recognise the National Liberation Front as a principal party to negotiations.
- transform operations in South Vietnam into holding operations thereby to avoid involvement of civilians in the war, cease the use of napalm and other objectionable materials of war, and provide sanctuary for anyone seeking it.

"Conference believes these actions would stimulate progress in the Peace Talks in Paris; would ensure that no other Australian troops would be sent to Vietnam, and would allow consideration to be given to the phased withdrawal of Australian troops."

"LEFT" BACKS OFFICIAL VIETNAM POLICY

Thus Australia's involvement as a counter-revolutionary aide to the U.S. in Vietnam is given the imprimatur of the "left" wing. Vietnamese and their NLF leadership, is ratified by the "left"; and becomes a further pressure on the NLF to cave-in; to yield; to give up its struggle -- all in the interests of a peace that holds no promise for the South Vietnamese people and their urgent need for a socialist-oriented society. A peace, furthermore, that the North Vietnamese are now under pressure in Paris to agree to by forsaking

their brothers in the South.

As to the remainder of the document, the best that can be said for it is that it goes on record with a series of pious platitudes on international issues; none of which will have the backing of so much as a decision to forward resolutions to any section of the world labor movement or even to the Gorton-McEwan Government.

A proposal calling for Australian withdrawal from ANZUS and SEATO, submitted as an amendment to the document, was rejected by right and "left" leaders. A call for "discontinuance of the uneconomic expenditure of millions a year on armaments, and diversion of this expenditure to much-needed public works" was simply ignored.

THE BALMAIN QUESTION

In its over-weening desire to remain "respectable" in the eyes of the right-wing bureaucracy; the "left" leaders zealously ensured that none of them would appear as champions of the two expelled Labor aldermen from Balmain. As in their attitude from the inception of the Balmain dispute (see SOCIALIST AND INDUSTRIAL LABOR, February 1968 issue); there was nothing to warrant the "extreme" action taken against the reactionary bureaucracy controlling the Party; and the two aldermen deserved expulsion for daring to flout a Party rule. That there was a local upsurge in Balmain carrying left wing overtones against big capitalist interests, meant nothing to leaders of the "left". So obsessed with winning positions in the Party apparatus (at any cost!) are they, that it has become impossible for them to recognise genuine mass movements or valid demands of the people and, within the extremely confined compass of their operation and thinking, to know what is required in a situation such as that in Balmain. Thus when the vote was taken on the question of readmittance of the two aldermen, the "left" leaders were conspicuous by their absence or abstinence, as they also were in the hour-and-a-half debate on the matter.

If the Labor Party is ever to look left in NSW, it will require as an essential factor, a left wing led by those capable and willing to declare its position within the Party, regardless of initial, or even a sequence of defeats by conference majorities. It will require a left wing, basing itself on a valid socialist perspective, preparing to engage in a persistent challenge to reaction from the right and to direct its call, over the heads of the right wing, to the rank and file of Labor inside and outside the Party. Anything less than this reduces the left wing to, at best, a stifled, inefficient prisoner of the right wing and destroys all genuine expression of left wing sentiment and all possibility of future achievement from a consistently established position.

ON TRIBUNE AND THE
N. S. W. A. L. P. CONFERENCE

[Editorial note : The letter we publish below was posted up on Port Kembla Wharf. A reader has sent a copy of that letter to us. It has not as yet been published by TRIBUNE.]

* * * * *

14th June 1968.

Editor,
TRIBUNE Sydney.

As a delegate from the Miners Federation to this year's Annual Conference of the New South Wales Branch of the A L. P. , I am puzzled why Tribune's report should be so inaccurate -- in particular why Tribune more than halved the number who voted for an independent foreign policy (about 150) and those who voted for immediate withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam (about 100).

I am also puzzled by Tribune's statement that these votes reflected divisions in the Left and Centre on foreign policy and defence.

In fact these low votes were due to the fact that the official leaders of the left at Conference -- including virtually all the officials of the militant unions -- either abstained from voting or mostly voted against these resolutions.

In addition Mr. Tom Uren M.P. previously regarded as an opponent of the war in Vietnam, spoke in favour of the American Alliance.

There was certainly no division in the Centre at Conference on these issues. Thanks to the timidity of the left they were solidly opposed to them. The only division was in the left between the official leaders and a number of militant delegates.

It is particularly unfortunate that the resolutions in question were overwhelmingly defeated because similar resolutions were carried at the Victorian ALP Conference. One would have thought that the leaders of the left in New South Wales would do all in their power to demonstrate support in New South Wales for the Victorian resolutions for an independent foreign policy and unilateral withdrawal of troops. The New South Wales leaders' actions were in direct contrast with the courageous and expressed at the Victorian Conference by Mr. Arthur Calwell; former leader of the Federal Opposition,

Incidentally, the New South Wales motion for unilateral withdrawal was not moved by R. Gould as your article stated. The mover was S. West from the South Coast Waterside Workers.

(signed) N. M. Allison
Unanderra.

"THE COMMUNIST PARTY CRISIS
-- a left criticism" by Denis Francis :

AN APPRECIATION AND A CRITICISM

by J. R. Gandini (*)

The "Communist Party Crisis" by Denis Francis contains much food for thought for members of the CPA and other radicals and left wingers. Observations from one "outside" can often disclose features of an organisation not readily seen by its members busy with its work. It is to be hoped that the article's rather harsh expressions about CPA members and sweeping generalisations about their standpoints, will not prevent Party members from objectively considering what its author has to say.

Certainly; the official Communist movement has hurled more than its share of abuse and slander against members of the 4th International in the past, so we can afford to be tolerant in this regard.

On page 1 Denis Francis makes an important observation on the inclination of most Party members to still follow the leadership's position almost automatically. This is a hangover from the days of the monolith -- although the fact that it is not peculiar to the communist movement demonstrates that it has other causes too.

It was noticeable at the 21st Congress that when national leaders took a firm stand for change -- against conservative opposition -- the bulk of the delegates unhesitatingly supported that stand, even where it overthrew long held "principles". This was clearly shown in the new Rules and Constitution. However, when the radical ideas came from sources already suspect there was a reluctance to even listen.

This over readiness to follow the leadership has dangers all round, including a too ready following of those leaders battling for the much needed changes in the Party. We need a membership which thinks independently and examines all viewpoints critically, irrespective of the position, prestige or eloquence of the advocate and which can arrive at conclusions based on scientific principles and methods.

(*) Cde Gandini is State Secretary of the West Australian State Committee of the Communist Party of Australia.

This aim might appear idealistic maybe, it will never be reached completely -- but we must strive for it. It does not in any way preclude a disciplined Party, but would strengthen it.

We should encourage a full interplay of the various left ideas and trends that now exist in Australia and the world -- an interplay inside the Party as well as in dialogue with other left groups. To do this effectively we must end hostility and suspicion towards the "Trotskyites", "Titoites", "Hillites", etc.

It is a non-scientific and un-Communist approach to brand an idea or standpoint with a label, which immediately condemns it, rather than examine it on its merits. This in now way excludes the Party or its leadership from having and fighting for a viewpoint, but such an ideological struggle within the Party should be conducted in such a way that this viewpoint has to win acceptance by its validity not because it comes from the leadership.

As Denis Francis points out, a great deal has been done in the CFA to establish a new atmosphere of free debate and creative thinking. There is some unevenness amongst various Party organisation, resistance from some members and the journal DISCUSSION appears more unfettered than TRIBUNE and AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW. (Appreciating that DISCUSSION has a different role than the other two.)

However, the process is well under way and it is hard to see it being reversed. In Perth the Party bookshop sells the publications of all the left trends in Australia, a great variety of international material, including the works of Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg; Bukharin and others. Soon it is hoped to hold a symposium on "Socialist Perspectives in Australia" -- sponsored by the CFA or someone else, with all left trends participating.

Denis Francis poses the important question of putting the record straight in regard to the past. A valid proposal, both because the correct lessons can then be learnt and also because Communists should stand by the truth. The argument that "those who went to confront the past will deflect the Party from its present work" is a narrow one when it is realised that "present work" is affected by doubts and suspicions about past work and if serious mistakes are only half analysed and corrected they are likely to continue in "present work".

The recent developments in Czechoslovakia bear this out...

History must be put right in regard to Trotsky sooner or later, and the official Soviet and Communist accounts are obviously not true. It can only be hoped that the Soviet Union and the CPSU will soon end the practice of issuing official histories to suit a particular...

political line -- a step which would considerably increase their stature, and that of the rest of the world communist movement. Whether such a change would show Trotsky to be a Messiah instead of the Devil I seriously doubt, but at least it would open the way for an objective analysis of his role in history.

This job is clearly beyond the scope of abilities of the CFA and the main thing for us is to see that we are objective in regard to our own history, although this; of course, has many ties with developments in the international communist movement. This is not to suggest that the CFA can play no part in historical analysis outside our own country but "a definitive document on the historical development of Stalinism -- first of all in the Soviet Union" does not appear to be a practical task for Australian communists.

However, when considering the past and the present too; it is vital we do not replace one dogmatic approach with another and Denis Francis appears to make this error. "Such an analysis... must be at the very least as radical as those of Deutscher and at the best a fully marxist one (i.e. in the spirit of Trotsky's analysis.)"

This attitude is also shown in lumping all Party trade union officials together and in generally characterising the work of the CFA as reformist and non-revolutionary. Certainly all signs of bureaucracy, smugness and corruption must be fought. The present world wide revolt of the youth (particularly students) and the gap that exists between them and the official Communist Parties, is a source of serious concern for us.

But to make an analysis about past errors or draw conclusions for action now in Australia on the basis of Trotsky's view about a "bureaucratic caste" or events in France or elsewhere could only lead us into new errors.

One feature of the work of the CFA of the last 20 years has been its sectarianism, its overestimation of developments in Australia and its advocacy of policies in advance of reality.

Specifically, on the question of the peace movement and the trade unionists in the Party, Brian Carey in DISCUSSION No. 3 1968, expresses the same views about Denis Francis' pamphlet that I hold.

Generally what I am trying to say is that the left movement in Australia needs to develop policies and actions that take account of the special conditions in this country (as in every country) and that will win support from Australians. This is not "opportunism" -- it means policies and actions directed against capitalism and its effects. But it means a uniting of socialism and the left with the bulk of the population, not its isolation into pure sects.

to
That is not/suggest that supporters of the 4th International want such isolation or even that their ideas lead there. Amongst militant students they appear less isolated than we do.

However, in working for a "new type of Communist Party" we need a creative Marxist approach, not dogma of Stalinist, Trotskyist or any other band. In considering socialist perspectives in Australia today we should not commence either from the certainty of the "left coalition" any more than from the certainty of "workers power". There is much more yet to be found out and determined than what all the left yet knows.

Such a thorough examination might disclose that the CPA has become less revolutionary or it may disclose that the ideas of the left are still too advanced and sectarian. It may show that the CPA is becoming the kind of Party needed or that an entirely different kind of Marxist party is required.

As already indicated, such an examination should include the views of all trends and their active participation, including the 4th International. There is nothing wrong with each trend fighting vigorously for their point of view in such dialogue.

However, I do believe that it will be all the more fruitful if approached with a fair degree of open mindedness by all trends and that it is more likely that any conclusions that may be reached will reflect new truths rather than the ascendancy of one trend or another.

Editor's note: INTERNATIONAL welcomes comment and criticism on any of the contents of this issue or other INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS. Our columns are open to any reader who wishes to do so, the only condition we make is that contributors should respect a reasonable limit to the length of articles given the very grave limitations of space that are obvious to all. Denis Francis has indicated he shall write a reply to Rivo Gandini's article above for the next issue.

HELP INTERNATIONAL TO BECOME A PRINTED MAGAZINE!

We have been very pleased at the response to the recent series of INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS. Almost one thousand copies of the FRENCH REVOLT - A MARXIST VIEW have been sold or otherwise distributed in Australia. The last INTERNATIONAL was produced in only 500 copies and was out of print almost immediately. We are producing 1,000 copies of this issue. HELP INTERNATIONAL TO BE PRINTED -- SEND YOUR DONATION NOW!

"Trotsky's Marxism" to be published by CFA.

The announced forthcoming publication by Australian Left Review of the debate in the columns of New Left Review between Krasno and Mandel marks an important turn in the "liberalism" of the CPA. It marks an important development which shows the impact that revolutionary marxist ideas are having inside the CPA. INTERNATIONAL welcomes the publication of this booklet by ALR and urges all our readers to buy it. Not that we are completely happy with arguments advanced in the defence of "trotskyism" and shall take up the issues raised in INTERNATIONAL and elsewhere. We shall try to buy a bulk order of the pamphlet and offer it at special rates to INTERNATIONAL subscribers.

Police raids and subversive literature

It seems that the best thing that can happen to a left magazine or publisher is to be marginally subversive, rouse the ire of the "patriotic" Establishment and be raided by the security police. Whatever the merits of the particular piece of literature concerned (and we do not object because it is "subversive", calls for "sabotage" etc. but rather because it deals with what is a very serious question in a frivolous way) the Left can't let Government get away with any form of intimidation or repression -- and so wisely throughout Australia we hear that many dozens of people are now preparing to authorise that particular leaflet, "Defiance" is the key word.

The new INTERNATIONAL

Apologies to subscribers for delay in publishing the documents of our May Conference in SOCIALISM IN AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD. The rush publication of French Revolt and this week of The Revolutionary Crisis in France meant an unavoidable delay. However it should be out mid-July. INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS are on sale at:

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