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INTERNATIONAL

For Workers Power Self-Management Socialism

A.L.P. Reconstruction

DEFEND UNION DOMINATION

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OF VICT

It is the policy aspect of the Whitlamite neo-liberals' operation to change the A.L.P. into an outfit completely satisfactory to the Australian and allied bourgeoisies, and the backward voter, which has received the most attention and resistance from the Left.

But the operation has an organisational aspect as well.

The organisational thrust of the operation is to bring about the "reconstruction" of the ALP organisation so that it becomes a parliamentary-oriented set-up, in which the power of the parliamentarians and the branches is increased and, on the other hand, the present overwhelming domination of the unions is drastically reduced or eliminated.

Such a reconstructed organisation, it is hoped, will enunciate more "constitutional" and "technocratic" policies, and be concerned automatically with solving "national problems".

Such a reorganisation will not only suit the Right wing and the bourgeoisie in the present, but will also strengthen them in any future crisis. For the Left wing not to resist the current attempt to eliminate or diminish union domination of the ALP structure, would be to display a disastrous historical ignorance and short-sightedness.

During World War I, in an historically critical time, the Right and "national" wing of the ALP sought to continue and increase the sacrifices of the working class in the interests of the horrendous imperialist war. This coincided with a definite radicalisation of the class which changed the composition and orientation of many union leaderships. The Left and "class" wing of the ALP, basing themselves on the unions, and thanks to the union predominance in the ALP, obstructed this project and in the ensuing split held the ALP.

In the future any significant radicalisation of the working class will change union leaderships, and under the present ALP organisational set-up, will give the left wing a majority.

For the Left-wing, union domination remains the surest guarantee that a radicalisation of the ALP's base will be translated into a Left-wing victory in the ALP. That's why it is in the interests of the Right wing and the ruling class to eliminate or drastically reduce that domination.

Not even the Victorians, backbone of the national Left-wing in the ALP, appear to realise this. The Left wing has not only to encourage the anti-capitalist self-activity and self-organisation of the working class. In the event of any worker upsurge, part of the resistance to it will come from the ALP Right wing. The Left-wing must now ensure that the ALP has such a structure, that in any such event, the workers and their organisations can take hold of the party and rout the Right wing.

Is the reconstruction democratic?

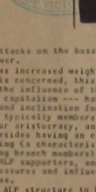
The Whitlamite project of increasing the weight of the parliamentarians and branch members in the organisation --- at the expense of the unions --- is presented as "democratising" the set-up. The claim is, of course, fantastic.

As for the right of parliamentarians to have a bigger weight in the structure --- these people are so many delegates and manifestations of the ALP, made necessary by the parliamentary system, and it is not they in themselves who receive the vote but the ALP itself, the movement and its policies. The vast bulk of Labor voters vote "Labor" --- no more, no less. To argue that delegates, the party's public face, etc., should have more power, rights and privileges than other members, who choose them and put them there, is the reverse of democratic. Further, without concerning ourselves with their well-known propensity to be ambitious and corruptible, parliamentarians are, in general, prone [illegible] believe they represent "the whole community" [illegible] are usually "responsibly" concerned with [illegible] "national interest", wedded to consti- [illegible] and are thus a bulwark against any attacks on the boss or moves towards workers' power.

As far as increased weight for branch membership is concerned, this would mean increasing the influence of those who--- favoured by capitalism --- have the time, education, and inclination for branch membership: most typically members of the professions, labour aristocracy, and small businessmen. Besides having an elitist turn to their thinking (a characteristic not confined to right wing branch members), they are not typical of ALP supporters, and are removed from the pressures and influence of the working class.

For the ALP structure to be democratic, its bodies should be dominated by representatives of the working class, who overwhelmingly compose its basic support. At present, for the most part, the ALP is under the control of the unions. Thus, in a bureaucratically mediated way, the organised working class dominates the ALP --- especially its policy-making and supreme conferences. Naturally this working class domination should be exercised more directly and democratically, and that is why we, who publish INTERNATIONAL, advocate, for instance, the reintroduction of the practice of allowing members of affiliated unions to vote in ALP pre-selection ballots.

Union domination is not only more democratic than domination by parliamentarians and inert branch types, but is also more likely to ensure that a radicalisation of the working class base will be reflected in ALP policies and orientation.



Union domination, thus, ensures a structure more representative of, closer to, and more responsive to, the bulk of ALP supporters than any Whitlamite "model" is likely to. Certainly this union domination is now a conservative brake on the ALP but that only reflects the state of the class; in any working class upsurge the domination by the unions will facilitate the victory of the Left-wing.

Reconstruction begins

"Reconstruction" of the ALP organisation in the two biggest Australian states is due early 1971 --- thanks to Whitlamite initiatives.

In Victoria a strong and determined Left confronts an equally determined Right, with the balance of power, however, held by a centrist and fake left bloc. This latter grouping is all the more significant if Jim Cairns attaches himself to it. These forces are to come together at the end of January to determine the future structure of the ALP in that state.

From indications we have, the drift of the thinking of the bonapartist group is towards a structure atop of which is a State Council meeting every two or three months, with an administrative-only executive; a consequence of this may well be greater autonomy and independence from party supervision for parliamentarians. The composition of the State council is to be 60% union representatives, 40% branch representatives --- which is a significant change from the 75-25 balance in the previous body. Also, the drift is towards a bigger say for branches in the pre-selection of parliamentary candidates.

The Right, while accepting much of this drift, desires more power for the branches, and will press for at least 50-50 union-branch representation on the State Council. Also they will press for automatic representation for leading parliamentarians.

There are three distinctive features of the Left's counter-proposals.

First, they are attempting to force an alliance with the centrists and fake lefts (among whom there are not insignificant union leaders) on holding the line at 60-40 union-branch representation on the supreme body of the ALP in Victoria.

Secondly, they are pressing, not for a State Council as the centre of a new structure, but for an annual decision-making conference which will elect a large "interpretative" executive and smaller "administrative" executive, both of which would meet frequently and "surveil" the parliamentarians.

Thirdly, and on this they lay big emphasis, they are proposing a real action-oriented decentralisation into 15 regional councils, meeting quarterly, to which all members in each region would be admitted, and which would have their own executives. The role of these councils would be to campaign for and implement policy, and to take action autonomously on local and regional questions... In addition, they propose the election of various policy committees at the annual conference whose function would not be confined to drawing up policy, but extend to the mobilisation of supporters in support of policy.

Also linked to these proposals is their determination that the ALP should encourage the unions to take industrial action on political questions.

On the first of these points, an alliance is likely to consummated. On the third point an alliance is unlikely, and that is something the Left will have to continue to develop and encourage "unofficially". It is a crucial point of course. For only if an ALP electoral victory is accompanied by an extra-parliamentary mobilisation of the masses, by an upsurge in the self-organisation and self-activity of the workers, will the real road to social change and socialism be opened up. The conjunction of a significant ALP electoral victory with an upsurge in workers' consciousness, self-organisation and self-activity, will ensure that if the parliamentarians fail to deliver the goods then the working class will have another, more efficacious, road open to them: the smashing of the resistance of the owners and the State by the network of workers' committees and councils, and the replacement of the old set-up by that structure.

And in N.S.W.

In N.S.W., the Right is firmly in control, but is committed to loosening their hold on the organisation as a result of earlier "deals" in connection with Federal intervention in Victoria. The efforts of the West Australian Left in slightly improving the composition of the Federal Executive, in combination with a defeat in the impending N.S.W. State elections, may lead to more concessions than the Right originally intended. Not that they have to worry, for opposing them is an extraordinarily pusillanimous "left wing" --- aptly labelled by the Victorians, "Her Majesty's Official Left".

The Right's proposals aim to confirm its control, though they guarantee a minority bloc in all party bodies to the "left" --- which, in reply, demands only a bigger minority.

The Right proposes to raise branch representation so that the union-branch balance is 60-40, and the "left" counters by suggesting an even bigger (absolutely and proportionately) branch representation.

The Right proposes to "parliamentarise" the organisation by having a policy-making conference every three years and indirect election of delegates to leading party bodies every three years also, thus freezing development inside the ALP for that period. The "left" only disagrees with the time period and suggests instead two years....

And so one could go on. The "left" plays the game. There is no talk from the Right about provisions for an extra-parliamentary role for the ALP, and nor is there from the "left".

On the two essential questions --- continued union domination and extra-parliamentarism --- Her Majesty's Official Left is closer to Whitlam than his base in New South Wales. It is no wonder that when a key member of the Victorian Left comes to Sydney to address an advertised meeting on the future of the ALP, no member of the official N.S.W. "left" attends that meeting.

A genuine left wing remains to be built in the ALP in NSW. It is not only necessary, but, as we have argued before, possible. The Victorians have given the lead.

H.G. December 1970

Note: This article develops themes already enunciated in previous issues of INTERNATIONAL and elsewhere, e.g.:

"The Assault on the Victorian A.L.P. Executive", INTERNATIONAL 16;
"Tactics and Revolutionary Strategy", INTERNATIONAL 15;
"The A.L.P. Steering Committee: A History of Betrayal", INTERNATIONAL 15 (August 1970);
"Easter 1970 Congress of the C.P.A.", INTERNATIONAL 17;
"Enter the Saviours", INTERNATIONAL 19 (December 1970);
"Entrism and Revolution", AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW 27;

READERS wishing to obtain copies of these [illegible] (10 cents a copy --- [illegible]) R.McLean, P.O.Box 13, Balmain, NSW

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Reflections on Lenin's Work - Part 3[1]

LENIN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM

Michel Pablo

How is Lenin to grapple with the test, crucial in his life as theoretician and political leader, of the conquest of power in Russia and the building of socialism?

For him it was question of passing from abstract concepts, from theoretical elaboration based on general schemes, to the concrete practice of an unknown, complex, moving reality in perpetual change.

All his creative genius and profound dialectical theoretical development are in fact demonstrated during this period reaching from 1917 to his death.

No Bolshevik leader other than Lenin during this period showed such a creative imagination, such a rapid adaptation, such a Marxist understanding of realities.

Afterwards, it is easy, though necessary, to point out Lenin's many limitations in this sphere. But these limitations are inevitable, no "genius" being capable, on his own and before a new experience historically matures, of being absolutely correct in all spheres, of grasping reality in all its complexity, of foreseeing all the dynamic developments of a given situation by extrapolating far into the future. Lenin was the foremost in having profound consciousness of the belatedness of thought in relation to reality and its dynamic evolution.

Whoever wants to criticise Lenin at all objectively from October 1917 to his death, must take account of the limitations that a given historical context sets up around any "genius" and must pose the following concrete question: What Marxist would have been able to go (or has gone) further than Lenin in this period, venturing in the immense virgin forest of the Russian Revolution, the first proletarian revolution, and in the historical context of the years 1917-1924?

Between 1917 and 1924, Lenin undertakes frequent and sudden turns which bewilder the dogmatic followers of "Bolshevism", of revolutionary-Marxism.

Within the framework of a persevering strategy, his tactics assume the appearance of a "baffling" empiricism face-to-face with a novel situation.

In this regard, L.Trotsky noted:

> "Neither October, nor Brest-Litovsk, nor the creation of a peasant regular army, nor the system of requisition of foodstuffs, nor the N.E.P., nor the State plan were, and could not have been, foreseen or predetermined by Marxism or by Bolshevism before October."(2)
>
> "All these facts and all these turns were the result of the autonomous, independent, critical (marked by the spirit of initiative) methods of Bolshevism in each different situation."(3)

Lenin made Napoleon's thought and method of action his own: "On becoming involved, we perceive."

> "In other words," as Trotsky quite rightly makes clear, "once involved in the struggle, not to be preoccupied beyond measure with models and precedents, to be engulfed in reality as it is and to seek there the forces necessary to victory and the roads leading to it. It was by following this line that Lenin, not once, but dozens of times was accused in his own party of quitting tradition and repudiating the 'old Bolshevism'."(4)

We will not examine the whole of Lenin's policy in the 1917-1924 period. Our objective is to centre ourselves more particularly on the way Lenin

envisaged the building of socialism in Russia, and the evolution of his thinking on this still very relevant question.

Lenin approaches this subject at the beginning of the Russian Revolution by proceeding to a codification of the authentic Marxist conception of the State and the Revolution which restores and enriches the teaching of Marx and Engels on these matters, pulverising the revisionist deviations from the original doctrine. He is to elaborate in this sphere, with a constant preoccupation and concern for the continuity of the doctrine and fidelity to the general schemas established by Marx and Engels, and without which he would have had only a possibility of immediately grasping the concrete historical conditions in which these schemas had to be applied in the Russia of 1917.

> "Proceeding solely from the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat", Trotsky will note much later(5), "Lenin could not, even in his major work on the question (STATE AND REVOLUTION), or in the programme of the Party, make all the deductions concerning the character of the State imposed by the backward condition and isolation of the country."

These conditions of the construction of socialism within the national framework of an isolated and backward country, brought about an empirical progression not only in the political sphere, but also in the economic.

Lenin grapples with the first stage of the revolution, a stage marked by the ravages of the imperialist war and the civil war, with the policy of "War Communism", which seems to adopt the main lines of "State and Revolution" by abolishing the market and monetary economy considered as incompatible with the construction of socialism.

From 'War Communism' to N.E.P.

At the end of 1919, Lenin, replying in "Pravda" (15/11/1919) "to a peasant", still rejects the idea of "free trade in bread" which, according to him would be equivalent to "going backward to the domination of the capitalists, to the power of money, to freedom of profit."

But in March 1921, at the time of the 10th Congress of the Bolshevik Party, it is Lenin who outlines the major complete change to a new economic policy, to the N.E.P.

At first he acts timidly, empirically so to speak, under the pressure of important social forces which threatened the solidity of the proletariat-peasantry alliance. He advocates replacement of the system of requisitions by a system of tax-in-kind which "above all is a matter of politics, because the basis of this question is the relations between the working class and the discontented peasants."(6)

At the time of the 10th Congress, he also admits the necessity "of a certain freedom of exchange between local agriculture and local industry."(7)

In a series of articles following his report to the 10th Congress of the Bolshevik Party, Lenin clarifies his thinking on the N.E.P. while developing in practice this already-indicated sharp turn.

Of them, I will mention his article "For the Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution", his celebrated writings on "Cooperation", on "The Role of Gold Today and After the Complete Victory of Socialism", on Better Less, But Better", and his speeches of 19th October, 1921, in Petrograd (published in "Pravda" of 21/10/21) and of 29th March, 1922, to the 11th Congress of the Bolshevik Party.

What emerges from all these articles and speeches, through dialectically articulated stages, is the most complete conception of the economic policy appropriate to the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. Lenin concedes the principle of such a stage preparatory to socialism, a stage which must unfold with an economy extensively incorporating the market and monetary forms, but regularised through the intervention of the State in the hands of the proletariat and the cooperative organisations of the peasants and other sectors of the working population. From the very first Lenin elaborates the concept of "State capitalism", which allows him to arrive at the concept of the NEP.

For Lenin, "State capitalism" is the State, politically in the hands of the proletariat, employing for a whole period forms of market and monetary economy. But the N.E.P., as controlled as it may be by "State capitalism", would remain an unbalanced, ineffectual undertaking, without the introduction of the supplementary principle of the "cooperative" road, making "actively", and not passively, the entire population"(8) participate in IT.

For Lenin, to participate "actively" in "cooperative operations" meant "to render (our) population 'civilised' to the point where it understands all the advantages of generalised rallying to the cooperative offers, and where they organise themselves accordingly"(9).

> "The regime of civilised cooperators, when the means of production belong to society and when the proletariat as a class has triumphed over the bourgeoisie, is the socialist regime", Lenin affirms as he nears the end of his life.(10)

He reached this mature conception through concrete experience of Russian reality and fully conscious that this task demanded "a whole historical epoch" during which it would be necessary to proceed to a thorough "cultural revolution" "civilising" the entire population, and more particularly the peasantry.(11)

It could be concluded, a posteriori, that the dynamics of this line would lead Lenin to the conception of self-management, for the cooperative association of "civilised" producers and citizens is a logical extension of the principle of voluntary and democratic association.

These economic and social preoccupations, which held all Lenin's attention towards the end of his life, are combined with the increasingly decided struggle he led against the mounting danger of bureaucracy. In this sphere also, it was always Lenin, more than any other Bolshevik leader, who was confirmed as being the most sensitive to the dangers of the bureaucratisation of the proletarian power, and the most determined to combat them.

Certainly his diagnosis of the roots of the evil, and the remedies he advocates, are tarnished with the same limitations that characterise his empirical pursuit of the economic policy of the epoch of transition.

He began, as Trotsky correctly notes, to explain the resurgences of bureaucracy through "the administrative inexperience of the masses and the difficulties born of the war" (12) and to advocate purely political measures in conformity with the "socialist State" according to the norms established by Marx and Engels, capable of rapidly reducing its functions to those of "census and control".

Towards the end of his life Lenin, conscious that "the State apparatus constitutes in great measure a survival of the past" (12) and that the leading bodies of the Party, Central Committee and Political Bureau, could pass under the control of a Stalin, advocates reorganisation of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. To this widened and renovated institution, composed of militants proved in every respect, and of irreproachable "morality", Lenin entrusted the crushing task of in some way controlling the whole Party.

As for the control of the masses themselves over the State and the economy, Lenin envisaged it as conducted by the Party and the unions on an equal footing.

In the light of the long experience endured by the U.S.S.R. and the other Workers' States, these conceptions now appear considerably limited.

cont. from page 2

L.Trotsky is to state in "Revolution Betrayed", that the main reason for bureaucratism must be sought in the low economic and cultural level of backward and isolated Russia at that time.

A "certain well-being" is necessary for the State to commence even slightly to "wither away", and this "well-being" can only be the result of a level of productive forces superior to that of the most advanced capitalism.

From this consideration flows the necessity of envisaging the construction of socialism --- properly defined --- on a highly developed economic and cultural international basis, and not within the national boundaries of any single state.

In the meantime, the struggle against bureaucratic deformations of workers' power demands in all spheres a balanced coherent conception of the way of envisaging the "construxtion of socialism", that is, of the economic and political problems of the transition epoch.

On the economic plane, the survival of forms of market and monetary economy must be combined dialectically with the regulating effects of democratic planning and the self-management of the economic units, of the social services, and political bodies at every level by the producers and consumers.

Violence could be done arbitrarily, administratively to the economic realities by the single political will of a bureaucratic power centralising to the utmost.

Trotsky and the Transitional Economy

On the eve of his death, L.Trotsky envisaged the possibility of the "re-establishment of a kind of N.E.P." in the Soviet Union, ravaged by the excesses of all kinds of bureaucratic arbitrariness. The ideas he put forward at that time are still veru significant and acutely relevant for all the Workers' States today. Referring to the consequences of the Finnish-Soviet war, he made the following points about the state and future perspectives of the Soviet economy:

> "The monstrous centralisation of all industry and of all trade, from summit to base, as well as the forced collectivisation of agriculture, *was determined not by the needs of socialism*, but by the avidity of the bureaucracy to have everything in its hands, without any exception. *This repugnant, and in no way justifiable, violence against the economy and man*, which revealed itself so clearly during the Moscow 'sabotage' trials, found its cruel punishment in the Finland snow-storms. It is quite possible, consequently, that under the influence of military defeats, the bureaucracy may be caused to beat a retreat on the economic plane.
>
> "*The re-establishment of a kind of N.E.P., that is, of a controlled market economy at a new and higher level may be expected*. Whether the bureaucracy succeeds in saving itself by these measures is another thing."(13) (our emphasis)

On the political plane, the "construction of socialism" during the transition period demands, besides the immediate introduction of democratic self-management in all spheres and at all levels, the political organisation of the class in a multi-party system... no "party", as democratic as it may be, having the right to impose its monopoly over the class.

The historic experience was not yet sufficiently matured in Lenin's time for him to already draw all these conclusions.

But reflecting on the whole global balance of his work, on his way of conceiving the method of revolutionary Marxism and applying it, it could not be doubted for a single instant that Lenin alive would have led, in a more resolute way than any other Bolshevik leader, the struggle against rising Stalinism, deepening the content the "construction of socialism" should have assumed in all spheres during the transition epoch.

Michel Pablo. October 1970

(1) See "International", Nos.12 and 13 for parts I and II
(2) "The New Course" (3) Ibid (4) Ibid
(5) In "Revolution Betrayed"
(6) (7) Report to the 10th Congress
(8) (9) (10) (11) "On Cooperation (4/1/1923)
(12) "How to Reorganise the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection?" (23/1/1923)
(13) Interview with L.Trotsky in "Post Despatch of 14/2/1940)

Leon Trotsky: Nationalised Industry and Workers' Management

> This article was written by Leon Trotsky in May or June 1938 after the Mexican Government, led by Cardenas, had expropriated the Anglo-American petroleum industry.
>
> In another article published in the American paper, "SOCIALIST APPEAL", on 25th June 1938, Trotsky called for critical support of these "anti-imperialist" measures as well as defence of the Cardenas government in case of imperialist aggression.
>
> The publication of this document is thus particularly welcome at a time when, in Peru, in Bolivia, "sui generis", "Nasserist" bonapartist regimes are involved in a process comparable to that which Trotsky analysed.
>
> --- "SOUS LE DRAPEAU DU SOCIALISME", December, 1970

In industrially backward countries, foreign capital plays a decisive role. Whence the relative weakness of the *national* bourgeoisie in relation to the *national* proletariat. This creates particular conditions of state power. The government beats about between foreign capital and indigenous capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This confers on the government a bonapartist character, *sui generis*, of a particular character. It is raised, so to speak, above the classes. In fact, it can rule either by making itself the instrument of foreign capital and maintaining the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by manoeuvring with the proletariat and by this aiming at the possibility of a certain freedom vis-a-vis the foreign capitalists. The present policy (of the Mexican government --- translator's note) follows the second alternative: its greatest conquests are the expropriation of the railways and the petroleum industries.

These measures are situated entirely within the domain of State capitalism. Nevertheless, in a semi-colonial country, State capitalism is under the heavy pressure of foreign private capital and its governments and cannot maintain itself without the active support of the workers. That is why, without allowing the real power to escape from its hands, it tries to place on the workers' organisations a considerable part of the responsibility for the advance of production in the nationalised branches of industry.

What should be the policy of the workers' party in this case? Obviously, it would be a disastrous mistake, a complete abdication to affirm that the road to socialism does not pass through the proletarian revolution, but through nationalisation, operated by the bourgeois state, of various branches of industry and their transference into the hands of the workers' organisations. But it is not a question of this. The bourgeois government itself has effectuated the nationalisation and has been constrained to ask for participation of the workers in the management of the nationalised industry. To be sure, the question may be avoided by mentioning the fact that unless the proletariat seizes power, the participation of unions in management of capitalist State undertakings cannot give socialist results. Nevertheless, such a negative policy on the part of the revolutionary wing would not be understood by the masses and would strengthen opportunist positions. For Marxists it is not a question of building socialism with the hands of the bourgeoisie, but of making use of situations presented in State capitalism and advancing the revolutionary movement of the workers.

Participation in bourgeois parliaments can no longer give important positive results; in certain conditions it can even lead to demoralisation of the workers' deputies. But that is not, for revolutionaries, an argument in favour of anti-parliamentarism.

It would be incorrect to dientify the policy of participation of the workers in the management of nationalised industry with participation of socialists in a bourgeois government (what we would call *ministerialism*). All members of the government are joined one to the other by ties of solidarity. A party represented in the government must answer for the whole policy of the government as a whole. Participation in the management of a certain branch of industry gives the complete possibility of a political opposition. In the case where the workers' representatives are in a minority in the direction, they have every possibility of making known and publicising their propositions that have been rejected by the majority, of bringing them to the knowledge of the workers, etc.

Participation of the unions in the management of nationalised industries can be compared to participation of socialists in the *municipalities*, where the socialists sometimes achieve a majority and find themselves obliged to manage an important municipal administration, whilst the bourgeoisie continues to dominate the State and while bourgeois property laws remain in force. The reformists, in the municipalities, passively adapt themselves to the bourgeois regime. The revolutionaries in this domain do all they can in the workers' interest and at the same time teach the workers, at each step, that a municipal policy is ineffectual without the conquest of state power.

True to say, the difference lies in that, in the domain of municipalities, the workers occupy certain positions through democratic elections, whilst in the domain of nationalised industry, the government itself invites them to take certain posts. But this difference has a purely formal character. In both cases the bourgeoisie is obliged to cede to the workers certain spheres of activity. The workers employ them in *their own interests*.

It would be levity of mind to shut the eyes to the dangers springing from a situation in which the unions play a leading role in nationalised industry. The basis of the danger is located in the connection of the top union leaders with the apparatus of State capitalism, the transformation of the mandated representatives of the proletariat into hostages of the bourgeois State. But great as this danger may be, it constitutes only part of a general danger, more exactly, of a general malady, namely, the bourgeois degeneration of the union apparatuses in the imperialist epoch, not only in the old metropolitan countries, but also in the colonial countries. The union leaders are, in the crushing majority of cases, *political* agents of the bourgeoisie and its State. In nationalised industry, they can and already have become direct *administrative* agents. Against that there is no other road than the struggle for the independence of the workers' movement in general, and in particular for formation inside the unions of solid revolutionary nuclei, able, while maintaining unity of the union movement, to fight for a class policy and for a revolutionary composition of the directing organisms.

A danger of another kind resides in the fact that the banks and other capitalist undertakings on which a branch of the nationalised industry depends from the economic point of view can and will make use of special methods of sabotage to place obstacles in the way of workers' management, to discredit it and lead it to disaster. The reformist leaders will try to avoid this danger by a servile adaptation to the necessities of their capitalist providers, particularly of the banks. Revolutionary leaders, on the other hand, will draw from the sabotage of the banks the conclusion that it is necessary to expropriate the banks and establish a *single national bank* that would be the accountable centre of the whole economy. To be sure, this question must be indissolubly tied to the question of the *conquest of power by the working class*.

The various capitalist undertakings, national and foreign, will inevitably conspire with the State institutions with a view to placing obstacles in the way of workers' management of nationalised industry. On the other hand, the workers' organisations which participate in the management of the various branches of the nationalised industry must unite to exchange experiences, must hold out economically, must act, by uniting their forces, on the government, on conditions of credit, etc. Obviously, a central bureau of the workers' management of the national branches of industry must be in close contact with the unions.

Summarising, it can be said that this new domain of work includes both the greatest possibilities and the greatest dangers. The dangers consist in the fact that, through the intermediary of controlled unions, State capitalism can hold the workers in check, can exploit them cruelly and paralyse their resistance. The revolutionary possibilities consist in the fact that, basing themselves on their positions in exceptionally important branches of industry, the workers can lead the attack against the bourgeois State. Which of these possibilities will prevail? And in what length of time? It is naturally impossible to make predictions. That depends entirely on the struggle of the various tendencies in the working class, the experience of the workers themselves, the world situation. In any case, to make use of this new form of activity in the interests of the working class and not of the workers' aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, one condition is necessary: the existence of a revolutionary party which studies carefully each form of workers' activity, criticises any deviation, wins influence in the unions and assures a revolutionary workers' representation in the nationalised industry

Singapore and Mr. Whitlam

Amongst the array of reactionary South-east Asian regimes that US imperialism (and its partners, including Australian junior imperialism) makes use of, Singapore is unique. In Singapore --- area 224 square miles, population 2 millions --- the enemy faced is not the armed peasantry, but the working class. Lee Kuan Yew and the Peoples Action Party, now running Singapore as a one-party State, used the organised working class as a major base in achieving independence from Britain, but since then has sought to contain and oppress it, effectively serving the interests of their ex-colonial masters.

Under the British, Singapore had existed as an entrepot port, and its economy has been accurately described as follows:

> "Its chief function was as a centre of British yrade in South-east Asia (and this was partly dependent on the tin and rubber specialisation of the Malayan mainland) and a base for Britain's Far Eastern adventures... from these functions there resulted a grossly warped economy characterised by a concentration in the service sector remarkable even by Third World standards."(1)

Getting Investments

Lee Kuan Yew saw the way out for Singapore to exist in heavy foreign investment to enable development of basic industries. To be effective, this investment had to be large so as to make an impact on the existing large pool of unemployed, as well as the large new layers of school leavers.

Most of the investment has come from traditional sources , i.e., Great Britain, as well as Japan, Australia (which has a small but growing investment in Singapore. In 1967/68, income receivable from Australian investments amounted to only $331,000, and new investment amounted to $188,000.(2) Attempts have been made to boost foreign investment by offering tax-free holidays for "pioneer industries", together with other benefits. British investors have been offered the special advantage of a guarantee against expropriation, their money being covered by Singapore's foreign exchange holdings in London.

However the Singapore government has sought other methods of making the country attractive to foreign investment. Soecifically, the government has resorted to a series of draconian measures to smash the strength of the working class, suitably dressing them up with ideas of class peace to secure the benefit of the working class through more jobs. The Employment Act of 1968 gives the clearest example of the new laws. The Act "spells out what management functions are and that these functions are not subject to negotiations". Promotion, transfer, recruitment, retrenchment: all these are now entirely at the whim of the employer; so, too, is "the assignment or allocation of duties or specific tasks to an employee"(3). The effect of this legislation was highlighted in a speech by the Minister for Labour on March 21st, 1970, when he said

> "When the new labour laws were passed in August 1968, the flow of investments was about$S 184 million. A year later, September 1969, this figure went up to $S 515 million"(4)

he went on

> "I am not saying that this was brought about solely through our labour laws, but they were an important factor in persuading investors to take risks in new enterprises."

As well as measures to shackle the organised working class movement, there have been direct attacks on political organisation.

Legislation such as the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, have been used to abolish juries, to enable the arrest and detention without trial of effective political opponents and popular unionists, to de-register militany trade unions, to close down opposition party branches and to ban opposition publications. Lee Kuan Yew, who came to power largely on the basis of working class power, is sufficiently intelligent to realise where his main enemy exists.

Nor are the students forgotten: similar provisions exist to ensure that student politics are carefully controlled; for example, it is illegal to sell or distribute student publications off campus. Threats of repatriation for foreign born students are often used as they were against workers during a waterfront strike.

Class Peace

There are signs that the Government's "open slather" policy for foreign capitalists is failing to provide the necessary number of jobs to save Singapore from its difficulties. Investment has tended to be of a capital-intensive nature, requiring a large investment but producing relatively few jobs.

> "Industries established between 1961 and 1967 provided (when in full operation) a total of 28,000 jobs as against the 10,000 jobs in industry needed annually."(5)

So much for the idea that class peace would solve the economic problems of Singapore's proletariat; the Government's policies are failing to meet the problem of labour-absorption posed by a dense and rapidly growing population.

The policy of money from anywhere and trade with anyone has led to the position where South Vietnam has become one of the largest trading partners. Singapore supplies the major part of the refined fuel used by the US and allied forces in South Vietnam. Equally well-known is the connection between Israeli military advisers and Singapore's small but well-equipped armed forces.

Vigilante Corps

For its size, Singapore has a relatively large and well-equipped army, much of the equipment coming from Israel. Military expenditure exceeds 10% of the Gross National Product; by 1979, the plan is to have between 30 and 35 battalions in reserve, ready for swift mobilisation (approximately 45,000 men). Together with the regular army and a small navy and air force, there is an extensive national service system which gives a good clue to the setup of the army: it is divided into three parts --- the People's Defence Corps, the Special Constabulary, and the Vigilante Corps. The first is suitably equipped with sixty MX-50 light tanks which are very well designed for city fighting. The other two are more concerned with law and order, i.e., control of worker demonstrations or civil emergency, rather than national defence.

Leaving aside the component of the defence system devoted to the "internal enemy", there remains an efficient well-sized striking force, perfectly fitted to serve the interests of the major imperialists powers (including Australia under the Five Powers Agreement concluded by the Gorton Government.)

That the Gorton Government finds the Lee Kuan Yew administration a congenial partner is natural, but what is of greater concern is the attitude of the ALP leadership. This leadership has been forced to move leftwards on the question of Vietnam by its rank-and-file supporters. Whitlam and Co have "moved" to the extent that they see Vietnam as a mistake, yet maintaining their traditional perspective of patching-up capitalism (and hence its mistakes) and have not altered basic ideas of defending "Australia" and, in the final analysis, Australian capitalism.

Gough Whitlam, in a pamphlet entitled "Beyond Vietnam --- Australia's Regional Responsibility", gives a clear picture of his perspectives:

> "The most potent factor of our time is the revolution of rising expectations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. <u>What gives this revolution menace</u> as well as meaning is the widening gap between the standards of the peoples of these areas and the standards of our own, the Christian, the Caucasian, the North Atlantic nations."(6)

That is, the capitalists are advised to relent a little and be a little intelligent, provide some aid. In this schema Singapore has an important place. Whitlam writes:

> "We should not give the impression that we are interested in Malaysia and Singapore only for our purposes. We have a clear obligation to see that cities like Penang and Malacca, which have been dependent to quite a large extent on the presence of Australian forces, do not appear to have been left in the lurch by Australia. We can make quite a significant contribution in the training of officers and N.C.O.'s and the provision of sophisticated defence equipment."(7)

From the above it can easily be seen that Whitlam proposes to bind a Labor Government in this country to support a government in Singapore notorious for its anti-working class legislation. Australia is to help in the training of officers and N.C.O.'s who will in all probability be used in smashing strikes, etc. All this exists in the ALP foreign policy without anything like opposition from the left. Unionists who have fought the penal clauses in Australia and who have taken part in various campaigns in this country, have not even shown a scrap of internationalism with respect to the ALP policy on an alliance with Lee Kuan Yew. The one slight exception is the "Steering Committee's" Foreign Policy statement at the 1969 NSW State ALP Conference, which stated that the Australian government was "ready to assume the role of junior policeman for the governments of Malaysia and Singapore, and in other countries of this region on behalf of corrupt and undemocratic governments, and their foreign monopoly backers". Unfortunately for political prisoners in Singapore (mainly trade union militants) there has been nothing since from the left in this country.

Secret Treaties

Another interesting feature of Whitlam's pamphlet is the following statement when talking of Gorton's bungling of a non-aggression pact between Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore:

> "An effective and meaningful non-aggression pact could only result from careful planning and groundwork, most of it done carefully and secretly by professional diplomats."(8)

This leaves the Labor movement in this country with a leader who publicly endorses and advocates secret treaties, a curse that has been painfully exposed in the past and also a contributing factor to Australian involvement in the Vietnam war. It also poses the question as to why Australian unionists and militants should oppose secret treaties in Vietnam while allowing their party --- the ALP --- to advocate secret diplomacy with the equally vicious and anti-working class governments of Singapore and Indonesia.

That Whitlam's policy towards these countries is ongoing and has not altered since the Labour Act of 1968 is demonstrated in his policy speech of October 1 1969, when, referring to Malaysia and Singapore, he stated, "We will concert our tactical planning with the planning of our neighbours, to create a capacity for rapid regional response in an emergency." As well, Whitlam advocated standardisation of equipment with New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Further, the Gorton government's gift of 10 Sabre jets to Malaysia was criticised as inadequate; on 22nd October 1969, Whitlam spoke of giving Mirages to Malaysia; for Vietnamisation we should read Malaysianisation and it means for the oppressed of those countries the same thing that Vietnamisation means to Vietnam.

If the Australian labor movement is to have a foreign policy that is recognisable as a working class policy, then it cannot possibly be based upon alliances with the Lee Kuan Yews of this world; it cannot be based upon secret diplomacy. This all requires that opposition to the current perspectives should be organised. A full critique of ALP foreign policy is required and must be argued out within the labor movement primarily on the basis of solidarity on common interests with the oppressed of South East Asia. The timid opening produced by the "left" Steering Committee in 1969 must be fully extended and the logic of trade union opposition to current ALP policies must be explained, if we are to avoid or, if necessary, effectively oppose, imperialist ventures in South-east Asia launched by an ALP government.

T.H.

(1) "Speeding up the Social Revolution", Keith Buchanan, Monthly Review, New York, October, 1969.
(2) Department of Trade
(3) Singapore's New Labour Laws (Ministry of Labour, Singapore, 1968) p10
(4) Speech to Singapore Electronic and Engineering Company Employees Union
(5) Goh Keng Swee, "Two Years of Economic Progress", Singapore, 1968, pp 15-16
(6) "Beyond Vietnam --- Australia's Regional Responsibility", E.G.Whitlam, Victorian Fabian Society, Melbourne, August 1968, p.22
(7) Op. cit., p.37
(8) Op. cit., p.10

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