



Theoretical journal
of the Socialist
Party of Australia

Australian Marxist Review

- ★ *Good planets are hard to find*
- ★ *Aggression against nature*
- ★ *International communist movement*
- ★ *Unions at the crossroad*
- ★ *Australia's Asia-Pacific policy*
- ★ *14th Congress Communist Party of India*
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Editorial Board Members:

Peter Symon (Editor)

Hannah Middleton (Executive Editor)

Spiro Anthony

Steve Mavrantonis

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GOOD PLANETS ARE HARD TO FIND

Resolution adopted
by Central Committee Executive
Socialist Party of Australia
July 13 to 16, 1989

“At every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature — but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.”

Frederick Engels

Introduction

Nature's resources are the basis of life for all that lives upon the earth. They are essential for human survival. In caring for nature, humans care for themselves and for future generations.

Humankind's place **within** nature, as part of the natural world, is recognised by Marxist-Leninists. Homo sapiens have language, the ability to think abstractly and to learn the laws of development. However, this does not mean that human beings are the masters of nature, above or separate from it; they are not qualitatively different from nature.

Linked with this is the understanding that human actions are subject to the constraints imposed by the laws of the natural world. Only by acting in accordance with these laws, aware of the interconnectedness of all our actions and their future repercussions and with a sense of responsibility for present and future generations, can human action be effective and environmentally sensitive.

Humans have always impacted and changed the natural world through their productive activities from the burning off practiced by Aboriginal hunter-gatherers in Australia to grazing herds, ploughing and irrigation. However, changing nature does not necessarily mean damaging or destroying the environment.

Consciousness of human impact on the environment is also not new. Hunter-gathering societies, the longest lasting form of human socio-economic organisation (about one million years), had a range of practices that protected certain flora and fauna (not taking all fruit or vegetable foods from a certain location, not killing young and/or pregnant animals and so on) and beliefs which included a sense of responsibility for nature (such as Australian Aboriginal increase ceremonies).

With the development of productive forces, the creation of surpluses and the emergence of private property and classes, an ideology of exploitation and mastery developed which began to be reflected in attitudes towards nature.

The dependence of humans on nature seemed to be reduced, the scale of human impact on nature increased and nature became externalised, a separation between humankind and nature grew in people's ideas and nature began to be a thing to be used.

The uncontrolled exploitation of the environment and the plundering of natural resources intensified under feudalism and reached its peak under capitalism. Marx wrote: **"All progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil..."**

Capitalist society and the environment

Today developed capitalist countries are using all the achievements of science and technology to "master" nature. A consumer and predatory attitude to natural resources is characteristic of capitalism and, with the scientific and technological revolution, not only leads to their exhaustion but also brings with it a train of negative and, in some cases, possibly irreversible consequences for the environment.

The ecological crisis arises from social and philosophical attitudes rather than from technology which is a creation of human endeavour.

The socio-economic system that directs the whole course of scientific and technological progress to the making of profit and the exploitation of humankind and nature is mainly to blame for the ecological crisis.

For the capitalist it is really a matter of indifference whether what is produced is useful or harmful for individuals or society. They will be produced if

a market exists or can be created for them and if they yield an adequate profit. The environmental damage their production may cause is equally a matter of indifference.

Engels wrote of capitalism that:

“... in relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the immediate, the most tangible result; and then surprise is expressed that the more remote effects directed to this end turn out to be quite different, are mostly quite the opposite in character.”

Capitalist governments pursuing policies of economic deregulation, “small government” and reliance on “market forces” are in fact handing over to the monopolies many of the functions and controls previously carried out by the state and elected governments.

Deregulation is being extended into many areas of production and development, leaving the monopolies to increasingly “self-regulate” their own activities.

Governments cutting budgets are spending less on infrastructure and the enforcement of laws and regulations governing the environment. This is resulting in failure to maintain and develop environmentally sound/safe sewerage treatment, water supplies, transport systems, energy sources, etc.

There is an organic link between imperialism and the emergence and aggravation of the environmental crisis. The drive of capitalism for profits, whatever the human or natural costs, the unplanned, uncontrolled and usually irresponsible development of productive forces for the same purpose, the skewing of research and development of technology, the manipulation of prices and markets, loan and aid programs to ensure transnational domination and other features are evidence of this organic link between imperialism and the acute environmental problems.

In the capitalist countries, there has been and still is a concept of “development” based on the notion that human progress and human happiness can be measured by the production and consumption of more commodities, by greater industrialisation, by increases in the gross domestic product or similar economic indicators.

Within this concept of development, nature is seen as a commodity, a resource to be exploited by and for the purposes of humankind, above all for the profits of capitalist enterprises. Associated with this have been ideas of “mastering” or “overcoming” nature and of humankind as something above and separate from (qualitatively different from) nature.

Socialist society and the environment

Socialist society is interested both in the harmonious development of nature and human society and also in the acceleration of scientific and technological development.

It is important that the use of natural resources is organised in a way which prevents their destruction, minimises their diminution and avoids the negative consequences of productive activity. The scientific and technological revolution should progress in such a way as not to damage the environment.

This involves the full recycling of industrial waste and the creation of new, waste free production processes. All of this is within the power of socialist society.

Moreover, as techniques and technology advance, socialist society will have at its disposal an ever-increasing range of means whereby its interaction with nature can be improved.

This is not to suggest that the socialist community of nations has not made mistakes which have damaged the environment. However, socialism arose from capitalist society in which predatory attitudes towards nature predominate. Ideas of mastering nature have not yet been completely eliminated in socialism.

In addition, the drive to meet the people's needs and to defend socialism in the Soviet Union, the urgent needs of reconstruction in the European socialist states after the devastation of World War II, the desperate need to build the economies and defend countries like Cuba and Vietnam have meant insufficient attention has been paid to environmental protection questions.

The errors which have been made sprang from the drive to meet people's needs, from ignorance and from organisational stagnation. They are not inherent within the socialist system as they are in the capitalist system.

A planned economy which has eliminated the profit motive is a prerequisite for finding and implementing solutions to environmental problems. However, five and ten year planning periods may have hindered recognition of these same problems since they frequently take a long period of time to develop.

Marx wrote: **"Under socialism, people can regulate their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature, and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature."**

The dimensions of the crisis

The biosphere we inhabit is only one, but each country has striven for survival or prosperity with little or no knowledge of or concern about the others. However, the scale of our intervention in nature is increasing the physical effects of our decisions spill across national borders. The growth in economic interaction between nations amplifies the wider consequences of national decisions. Economics and ecology bind us in ever-tightening networks.

Unless the factors causing by global climatic change, pollution, degradation of soil, air and water, destruction of forests, a food crisis and uncontrolled population growth are brought under control and the trends reversed, global catastrophe threatens.

We are approaching the end of the planetary ecosystem's integrity. On another level, environmental degradation has already caused and is causing immense human suffering and death while shrinking resources can lead to conflict with potential threats to peace and security.

It is necessary to realise that capitalism and colonialism have caused both poverty and prosperity and that both contribute to environmental stress.

Many parts of the world are caught in a vicious downward spiral: Poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources to survive from day to day, and their impoverishment of their environment further impoverishes them, making their survival even more difficult and uncertain.

The links between environmental stress and developmental disaster are glaringly evident in, for example, sub-Saharan Africa. Per capita food production, declining since the 1960s, plummeted during the drought of the 1980s, and at the height of the food emergency some 35 million people were exposed to risk. Human overuse of land and prolonged drought threaten to turn the grasslands of Africa's Sahel region into desert. No other region more tragically suffers the vicious cycle of poverty leading to environmental degradation which leads in turn to even greater poverty.

The prosperity attained in some parts of the world is often precarious since it has often been built on farming and industrial practices that bring profit and progress only over the short term. Much of the improvement in the past has been based on the use of increasing amounts of raw materials, energy, chemicals and synthetics and on the creation of pollution that is not adequately allowed for in the costs of production processes.

Thus today's environmental challenges arise both from the lack of development in some countries and from the unintended and/or uncontrolled consequences of some forms of economic growth in others.

The main threats

A) The greatest threat to the Earth's environment and to human and planetary survival is the possibility of nuclear war, increased constantly by the arms build-up and its spread to outer space. The International Physicians for the Prevention of War stated:

“The leading environmental pollutants are the burgeoning nuclear arsenals with genocidal stockpiles. We therefore must combine educating people on the primacy of the anti-nuclear struggle in protecting against the greatest hurt that may be inflicted on the environment.”

The nuclear industry — mining, refining, enrichment, building and operating power plants, atmospheric and underground testing of weapons — has been a vast polluter. Chernobyl and Five Mile Island are glaring examples of this.

The arms race, nuclear and conventional, adds significantly to world wide pollution. This includes the processes of obtaining and refining the raw mate-

rials and manufacturing and testing the armaments. In the capitalist states, measures to improve the environment are greatly hampered by militarisation of the economy and science and huge military spending. So-called local wars gravely damage the environment in large areas. The use and effects of Agent Orange in the Vietnam war is one example.

The production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons results in many cases in radioactive contamination of the environment, the cumulative effect of which is catastrophic. Examples include the continuing effects of the atomic weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; leaks from French underground nuclear testing at Mururoa in the Pacific, affecting both the human population of the region and the marine environment; dangerous levels of radioactivity around naval bases in Britain, with the incidence of leukemia and other cancers three to five times higher than the national average in people aged 15 to 25 near the Scottish bases of Holy Loch and Faslane.

The concentration of vast economic and human resources on the arms build-up could, as arms reductions proceed, be diverted to the development of alternative technologies, reforestation and other projects required to start dealing with the current environmental crisis. By stubbornly refusing to take the path of disarmament, imperialism remains the main source of wars and the threat of wars.

B) The “greenhouse effect” springs directly from increased resource use. The burning of fossil fuels and the cutting and burning of forests release carbon dioxide (CO₂). The accumulation in the atmosphere of CO₂ and certain other gases traps solar radiation near the Earth’s surface, causing global warming.

An alternative hypothesis that the earth is in fact cooling down is argued by some scientists and is gaining credence in a number of countries.

C) Another threat arises from the depletion of the atmospheric ozone layer by gases released during the production of foam and the use of refrigerants and aerosols. A substantial loss of such ozone could have catastrophic effects of human and livestock health and on some life forms at the base of the marine food chain.

D) A variety of pollutants are killing trees, lakes and oceans and poisoning the atmosphere, close to and sometimes thousands of miles from points of emission. Chemical pollutants are also entering the food chain in various ways. Human death and suffering from mercury in fish, the disaster at Bhopal, oil spillages at sea and similar accidents are becoming more common.

The acidification of the environment threatens large areas of Europe and North America. Central Europe is currently receiving more than one gram of sulphur on every square metre of ground each year. The loss of forests could bring in its wake disastrous erosion, siltation, floods and local climatic change.

Methods used to dispose of toxic wastes, such as those from chemical industries, involve unacceptable risks. Radioactive wastes from the nuclear industry remain hazardous for centuries. Many who bear these risks do not

benefit in any way from the activities that produce the wastes.

E) Land degradation. Desertification — the process whereby productive arid and semi-arid land is rendered economically unproductive — and large scale deforestation are major threats. Desertification involves complex interactions between humans, land and climate. The pressures of subsistence food production, commercial (cash) crops and meat production in arid and semi-arid areas all contribute to this process.

Each year another six million hectares are degraded to desert-like conditions. Over three decades, this would amount to an area roughly as large as Saudi Arabia. More than 11 million hectares of tropical forests are destroyed per year and this, over 30 years, would amount to an area about the size of India. Apart from the direct and often dramatic impact within the immediate area, nearby regions are affected by the spreading of sands or by changes in water regimes and increased risks of soil erosion and siltation.

Soil loss is a worldwide hazard from Ethiopia, where a billion tonnes of top-soil washes down from the highlands each year, to China, where the grain area has shrunk by nine per cent, to the US, where 15 million hectares of land is being taken out of production, to Australia, where half the arable land is degraded. Over \$700 million worth of production is lost each year in Australia as a direct result of soil erosion — and the problem is growing.

The risk of increasing salinity associated with these processes is seen in the degradation of the Murray-Darling river system which has led to losses in production of about \$200 million annually.

The loss of forests and other wild lands extinguishes species of plants and animals and drastically reduces the genetic diversity of the world's ecosystems. This process robs present and future generations of genetic material with which to improve crop varieties, to make them less vulnerable to weather stress, pest attacks and disease. The loss of species and sub-species, many not yet studied by science, deprives us of important potential sources of medicines and industrial chemicals. It removes forever creatures of beauty and parts of our cultural heritage; it diminishes the biosphere.

(F) Deforestation. Denuding land of trees causes a two-fold problem: the destruction of land hit by erosion and flooding, and the loss of a vital instrument for climate control — trees.

The scale and results of deforestation are enormous. Satellites have revealed that 8 million hectares of the Amazon Basin were denuded of forest in 1987 alone. The devastating floods in Bangladesh last year were partly the result of forest being stripped away from the foothills of the Himalayas.

G) Urban pollution. Many cities and towns have high levels of pollution arising from a range of causes including motor vehicle exhausts, chemical wastes released into the atmosphere or not properly treated and/or disposed of. Air, food and water are all affected. Asthma and other respiratory diseases, allergies, cancers and other diseases are increasing as a result of the general rise in urban pollution.

What should our attitude to development be?

In some parts of the world, particularly since the mid-1950s, growth and development have vastly improved living standards and the quality of life. Many of the products and technologies that have gone into this improvement are raw material- and energy-intensive and entail a substantial amount of pollution. The consequent impact on the environment is greater than ever before in human history.

Over the past century, the use of fossil fuels has grown nearly 30-fold and industrial production has increased more than 50-fold. The bulk of this increase, about three-quarters in the case of fossil fuels and a little over four-fifths in the case of industrial production, has taken place since 1950. The annual increase in industrial production today is perhaps as large as the total production in Europe around the end of the 1930s. Into every year we now squeeze the decades of industrial growth — and environmental disruption — that formed the basis of the pre-war European economy.

The impact of growth and rising income levels can be seen in the distribution of world consumption of a variety of resource-intensive products. The more affluent industrialised countries use most of the world's metals and fossil fuels. Even in the case of food products, a sharp difference exists, particularly in the products that are more resource-intensive.

For example, the developed countries (26 per cent of population) consume 99 grams per day per capita of protein compared to a consumption of 58 grams per day per capita in the developing countries (74 per cent of the population).

The developed world's per capita share of paper consumption is 123 kg per year compared to 8 kg per year in the developing countries. The developed world consumes 455 kg per year per capita of steel compared with 43 kg per year per capita in the developing countries.

The 26 per cent of the world's population in developed countries consume 5.8 mtce* per year per capita of commercial energy compared to 0.5 mtce per year per capita used by the 74 per cent of the world's population in the developing countries.

(*mtce million tonnes of coal equivalent)

With the increase in population and the rise in incomes, per capita consumption of energy and materials will go up in the developing countries, as it has to if essential needs are to be met. Greater attention to resource efficiency can moderate the increase but, on balance, environmental problems linked to resource use will intensify in global terms.

Environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked. Development cannot subsist upon a deteriorating environmental resource base; the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental destruction.

Environmental stresses are linked to each other. For example, deforesta-

tion, by increasing run-off, accelerates soil erosion and siltation of rivers and lakes. Air pollution and acidification play their part in killing forests and lakes. Such links mean that several different problems must be tackled simultaneously. And success in one area, such as forest protection, can improve chances of success in another area, such as soil conservation.

Environmental stresses and patterns of economic development are linked to each other. Thus agricultural policies may lie at the root of land, water and forest degradation. Energy policies are associated with the global "greenhouse effect", with acidification and with deforestation for fuel in many developing nations.

Environmental and economic problems are linked to many social and political factors. The basic causal role of imperialism has already been mentioned and the distribution of power and influence lies at the heart of most environmental and development challenges.

We should reject the extreme and alarmist views which argue simplistically that growth must be stopped, that people must consume less. Not only would such policies trap third world peoples in poverty and adversely affect the working class in developed countries, they also display a lack of confidence in the future. They largely ignore the potential development of improved and alternative technologies (fusion power, for example) which are less resource-intensive and less polluting.

The Socialist Party of Australia should instead support the concept of "sustainable development".

Sustainable development

The priorities of sustainable development must be threefold: environmental protection, meeting the essential needs of the world's poor, and peace and security.

Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future. Far from requiring the cessation of economic growth, it recognises that the problems of poverty and under-development cannot be solved unless we have a new era of growth in which developing countries play a large role and reap large benefits.

Sustainable development involves more than growth. It requires a change in the content of growth to make it less material-and energy-intensive and more equitable in its impact. It involves meeting people's needs for employment, food, water, energy, housing, sanitation and so on.

Sustainable development is based on the notion of the harmony of the environment and humankind's need. Its concept of growth requires a change to less material-and energy-intensive forms of production. It requires more equitable forms of growth which will meet the needs of all people for employment, food, water, energy, housing, sanitation and so on. It involves dealing with the problems posed by the increasing world population.

Sustainable development requires that models of development which

threaten the environment be changed and alternative production systems and technologies be found. Local technological development must be encouraged to reduce reliance (through research funding and technology transfers) on transnational corporations. Greater attention must be paid to indigenous knowledge and skills rather than the present exclusive reliance on the technology of industrialised societies. This is not a call for a return to the stone age but a recognition of the necessity to find and develop production processes and technologies which do not cause unacceptable environmental consequences and are also appropriate for local circumstances and effective in meeting people's needs.

The Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future*, the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, established by the United Nations in December 1983) points out:

“The technologies of industrial countries are not always suited or easily adaptable to the socio-economic and environmental conditions of developing countries. To compound the problem, the bulk of world research and development addresses few of the pressing issues facing these countries, such as arid land agriculture or the control of tropical diseases. Not enough is being done to adapt recent innovations in materials technology, energy conservation, information technology and biotechnology to the needs of developing countries. These goals must be covered by enhancing research, design, development and extension capabilities in the Third World.

“In all countries, the process of generating alternative technologies, upgrading traditional ones, and selecting and adapting imported technologies should be informed by environmental resource concerns. Most technological research by commercial organisations is devoted to product and process innovations that have market value. Technologies are needed that produce ‘social goods’, such as improved air quality or increased product life, or that resolve problems normally outside the cost calculus of individual enterprises, such as the external costs of pollution or waste disposal.”

Sustainable development also requires fundamental reforms in education and training to change the way people think about environmental problems and to develop new consumption standards.

Economic growth always brings risk of environmental damage as it puts increased pressure on environmental resources. But policy makers guided by the concept of sustainable development will necessarily work to assure that growing economies remain firmly attached to their ecological roots and that these roots are protected and nurtured so that they may support growth over the long term.

To return to and stress an earlier point: problems of resource depletion and environmental stress arise directly or indirectly from disparities in economic and political power inherent in the capitalist system and in colonialism and neo-colonialism. An industry may get away with unacceptable levels of air

and water pollution because the people who bear the brunt of it are poor and unable to complain effectively. A forest may be destroyed by excessive felling because the people living there have no alternatives or because timber contractors generally have more influence than forest dwellers.

Ecological interactions do not respect the boundaries of individual ownership and political jurisdiction. Traditional social systems (hunter gatherers, pastoralists and early agricultural societies) recognised some aspects of this interdependence and enforced community control over agricultural practices and traditional rights relating to water, forests and land. This enforcement of the “common interest” did not necessarily impede growth and expansion though it may have limited the acceptance and diffusion of technical innovations.

As a system approaches ecological limits, inequalities sharpen. Thus when a watershed deteriorates, poor farmers suffer more because they cannot afford the same anti-erosion measures as richer farmers. When urban air quality deteriorates, the poor in their more vulnerable areas suffer more health damage than the rich who usually live in more pristine neighbourhoods. When mineral resources become depleted, latecomers to industrialisation lose the benefits of low cost supplies. Globally, wealthier nations are better placed financially and technologically to cope with the effects of possible climatic change.

Here the concept of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) is crucial. The United Nations in its Declaration on the NIEO adopted on May 1, 1974 stated:

“We, the Members of the United Nations ... solemnly proclaim our united determination to work urgently for the establishment of a new international economic order based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and co-operation among all states, irrespective of their economic and social systems which shall correct inequalities and redress existing injustices, make it possible to eliminate the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries and ensure steadily accelerating economic and social development and peace and justice for present and future generations ...”

Sustainable development and the implementation of the NIEO require policies that challenge the power of the monopolies, that replace policies of deregulation with policies of regulation, of tight controls on the operations of monopolies and planned development. This means a reversal of policies of small government and privatisation, and increased funding and the expansion of the public sector. Only then can the necessary planning, regulation and processes be established to make progress towards sustainable development.

The politics of sustainable development

The achievement of sustainable development requires significant political changes. This becomes clear if we pose a number of questions:

a) Can the much vaunted “choice” (which gives us 12 or more brands of deter-

gent and almost as many different tins of pet food) and the planned obsolescence of capitalism persist under a policy of sustainable development?

b) Will capitalist companies willingly introduce the necessary waste-free or environmentally safe technologies and production processes? And if they are introduced, won't corporations try to force consumers to pay for them through higher prices and job losses?

The Government of Southern California recently adopted an air-pollution control plan. This includes such features as:

- ★ 40 per cent of all cars, 70 per cent of trucks and all buses must run on methanol or other "clean" fuels by 1998. By 2008, the plans calls for vehicle makers to be selling cars which run only on electricity or other alternative fuels;
- ★ large bakeries might have to install special equipment to reduce emissions of gases given off during the baking of bread;
- ★ dry cleaners would have stricter emission standards and may have to buy expensive new pollution control equipment;
- ★ breweries would have to install carbon filters on top of their brew kettles to capture escaping gases and reduce their emissions by half.

Already Californian-based companies are responding with talk of sacking workers and closing plants (to move them elsewhere where less stringent or no environmental protection laws exist) and/or raising their prices to compensate for the costs of new equipment.

c) Will capitalism make production choices appropriate for sustainable development, rather than geared to maximum profits, without compulsion?

d) Will capitalism willingly pay for clean-ups and compensation? It has not at Maralinga.

Above all, despite all the reforms and improvements which can be achieved through political pressure and education, the struggle for sustainable development is in essence a struggle to restrain and restrict capitalist corporations, to compel disarmament, to compel an end to environmentally damaging production processes and to compel an end to imperialism's exploitation and distortion of Third World economies.

Sustainable development thus becomes a significant element in the struggle for a new democratic economic system (NDES).

Antagonisms between workers and environmentalists must be overcome. The question is not one of "jobs versus environment" but "jobs *and* the environment".

Trade unions, workers in the timber industry, defence industry and elsewhere should be won over to alternative policies that guarantee jobs that are consistent with sustainable development. Alliances need to be built between small farmers, workers, environmentalists, peace activists and other groups.

The SPA Program (adopted at the Sixth Congress in 1988) says (page 38):

“The environmental struggle raises consciousness about humanity’s relationship with nature, stresses social responsibility and the need for democratisation of decision making about environmental issues....

“It is important to build the connections between working class organisations and environmental activists from other classes and strata.

“It is necessary to deal with the crucial issue of the relationship between employment and protection of the environment by raising the necessity for democratic social, economic and environmental planning.

“Public ownership of industry and resources, their democratic control and comprehensive planned development which must necessarily take into account environmental factors is the basis for the satisfaction of the justified demands of workers and environmentalists and the future needs of all humanity.”

Program of Action

The environmental crisis has reached global proportions such that all nations, irrespective of social systems, must address the problem. The Socialist Party of Australia calls for collective national and international efforts and puts forward proposals which reflect the interests of the working class and all humanity. The Socialist Party of Australia will:

1. Contribute to the efforts to publicise the degree and urgency of the global environmental threat, using *The Guardian*, Party bulletins, Socialist Alliance election speeches and leaflets, etc. This propaganda will include points about the role of imperialism, the concept of sustainable development and the need for a new international economic order whenever appropriate. We will publicise the 1992 United Nations conference on the environment.

2. Put a major effort into linking the peace-disarmament and environmental issues, both in terms of their root causes and the economic aspects. An example of this is the campaign against the proposed naval base at Jervis Bay (NSW) which is being fought by peace groups, environmental organisations and the local Aboriginal communities. We will promote the idea of disarmament providing the money for an international fund for the necessary programs of earth-atmosphere repair and regeneration.

The project/information kit on environmental issues to be produced by the World Peace Council will be obtained and widely used, together with our own material, for this purpose.

3. Encourage and participate in a campaign in Australia for a cut (in the area of five to ten per cent) in defence spending with the funds released to be allocated to specific environmental and earth/air regeneration projects.

4. Oppose military aid from Australia to the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and argue for its replacement by aid intended to help reforestation and other projects based on the concept of sustainable development.

5. Prepare a study course for use throughout the Party. In addition, more familiarity with information from environmental groups on Australian issues, especially local problems, is essential so that Party organisations can campaign effectively.

6. Become more aware of and where possible initiate and take a lead in identifying and campaigning on local environmental issues as well as working with other groups on these questions. The SPA has participated in the movements against the proposed BHP mill at Rooty Hill (in Sydney's western suburbs), in the campaign about the waste dump at "Toxic Hill" (in Logan City, Queensland) and against a third runway at Sydney's airport. However, far more needs to be done.

Party campaigns can arise on the factory floor, through trade unions, at community level or any combination of these. The range of issues is large and includes pollution from factories in the form of toxic emissions, leaks or spillages and/or dumping (from radioactive pollution from uranium mining in Kakadu and contamination at Maralinga to the recent ICI accident in Sydney); asbestos or other harmful substances in schools and other public buildings; carcinogenic and other harmful additives in food; logging of rain and other Australian forests; mining projects (such as the Rhone-Polenc plant proposed for Pinjarra in WA and the McGee plant at Muchea); pollution of beaches by sewerage; and so on.

Destruction of the environment is a crime which threatens humanity. Companies which pollute or otherwise damage the environment should compensate the victims, those whose health has suffered as a result of pollution, and pay the full cost of cleaning up the damage they have caused. They should also be subject to massive fines and/or jail sentences for breaches of environmental protection laws. In addition, companies should be forced to install pollution control equipment and environmentally safe technology and prohibited from passing on the cost of these measures to the consumers through higher prices.

Demands must also be made on State and Federal governments to bring in legislation to protect the environment, with stringent fines and jail sentences for transgressors, and to compel companies to cease or change environmentally damaging production processes. In West Germany, for example, new laws give companies in some areas 12 months in which to make the packaging for their products recyclable.

Aggression against nature equals war on humankind

by John S Baker

"I hope our joint efforts to end the epoch of wars and confrontation and regional conflicts, to end the aggression against Nature ... will justify our aspirations. This is our common goal and we shall be able to achieve it only by working together."

**Mikhail Gorbachev
address to UN General Assembly, 7/12/1988**

In the *Australian Marxist Review* for March 1989, Alan Miller examines "the dialectical relationship between the struggle for peace and the class struggle for socialism" and posed it as a pivotal question... "the basic contradiction of a class divided world ... the contradiction between human destruction and human survival". Pauline Mitchell, in *The Guardian*, points to the "relationship between the environment and arms spending and what militarism is doing to the environment" but warns against "letting the public fall into the trap of believing that the environment is the main problem".

However, Mikhail Gorbachev's address to the United Nations General Assembly on December 7 last makes it essential that such issues be viewed in their real, immediate and rapidly changing inter-relationships.

The Gorbachev address emphasised the imminent threat to humankind's survival from a range of ecological consequences; mainly from those of industrial society. Problems now very acute because there hadn't been class and eco-based struggles against them. The extending pollution of Nature's life-sustaining atmosphere, water, soil, forests, oceans and food is now a fact of monopoly capital's despoliation of the global environment. EXXON, not Alaskan fishermen, is responsible for the destruction of marine life and some of the world's most beautiful habitat.

Reductions in armaments and armies had a high priority, an inter-twining influence on Gorbachev's perspectives of humankind's survival. "To end the epoch of wars, confrontations and regional conflicts, to end the aggression against Nature ... this is our common goal." Peace and disarmament was the way, but ending the "aggression against Nature" was the means? In the middle section of his address, Premier Gorbachev articulated the theme further:

"International economic security is inconceivable in isolation from disarmament, but also from the awareness of the global threat to the environment. There is no time to waste... I give special emphasis to the opportunities opened up for restoring the environment in the process of disarmament — first of all the nuclear. Let us think about establishing an emergency environmental aid centre within the UN... To co-operate in the establishment of an international space laboratory or manned orbiting station that would deal exclusively with monitoring the state of the environment."

Is this a huge reformist leap out of class struggle onto a non-class "greenies bandwagon"? Was it only some verbal gymnastics a la Maggie Thatcher at the Conservative Party Conference — "It's we conservatives who are not merely friends of the earth, we are the guardians and trustees for generations to come."

Gorbachev may appear to be taking a step back from Marx and Lenin's more aggressive positions on "taming Nature", but maybe it's one step back to take three or more forward. On the other hand, Gorbachev may have been making a profound acknowledgment of the interdependence of the forces of Nature and the need for a more peaceful, non-destructive industrial and agricultural exploitation of the Earth's resources. An extending state of non-aggression by humans to the ecology and biosphere: Even a kind of Nuremberg code for application to those who would continue to aggress Nature.

Shortly after the Gorbachev address, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Petrovsky appealed to the UN member-states to reduce armies and armaments and direct the money save into an international fund for reparation of the world environment. Swords into ploughshares in real earnest: "We have no time to wait for the full ripening of political conditions and removal of differences. All the more so now that it is no longer man but Nature which is dictating a program of action," stressed Petrovsky.

The credibility of the Soviet appeals have to be viewed more against the deep concerns of many North Americans over the weather crisis compared with views in Australia. Here, such appeals are heard by the disinformed and

theorists of the "greenhouse warming only" promoters. The escapist theories of warming next century or the century after, as promoted in the Villach Statement, not the discernible cooling of North America and the rest of the hemisphere now, atrophy much Australian thought and action on the weather crisis.

Ice Age

The apparent imminence of the next Ice Age cycle, accelerated by deforestation and general degradation of the environment, heightens North Americans' awareness of the global weather crisis.

This heightened awareness has been embodied in the Climate Emergency draft bills in California and featured in the Federal Bill for an Emergency Climate Stabilization/Earth Regeneration Act, 1988, now on its way round Congress groups and committees. A section of the preambles to the draft Federal Bill reads:

"The purpose of this law to establish a process whereby the Congress and the President of the United States shall co-operate in a national and international program to...

(a) reduce heat, drought, subsequent famine, forest fires and tornadoes and decrease the freezing extremes, snow build up...

(b) promote earth regeneration, including reforestation, soil remineralization ... and stopping deforestation, and

(c) strive for climate stabilization by reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide and thereby holding off the warming/cooling extremes, i.e. the transition into another glacial (ice age)."

The preamble to the Californian draft bill had the warning: "There are only a few years remaining in which to effectively contend with the climate cycle, as natural forces shatter and redirect all social conflicts."

Class conflicts and class struggles? Recall the Green Bans struggles, the techno/white collar bans, the bans on anything French over nuclear tests in Mururoa, the bans on pig-iron for Japan? The class struggle manifestations of deep social conflicts! But deeper than the eco/industrial conflicts of the NSW South Coast forests threatened with wood-chipping?

Do the drafters of the US bills envisage a redirection of their class conflicts? Presumably! Some of the drafters are activists in their trade union, democratic and environmental protection movements. In their draft Federal Congress bill, they included in the "Problems and Solutions" clause the following explanation:

"Human technological activity (*controlled and owned mainly, of course, by the world's transnational corporations — JB*) is accelerating the rate of carbon dioxide build up in the atmosphere. The net result is a shift of global climate towards extreme and variable weather conditions ... transition past the point of no return into a glacial period. We are confronted with the dual problem of converting those human actions, which are now increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide, and, at the same time, working to stabilize the earth's

natural glacial/interglacial cycle through human efforts.”

Changing contours

The bill drafters are armed with perceptions of UN member-states, with modern technology, scientific planning and world manpower resources first halting and then reversing the main and previously over-riding cycle of Ice Ages. These perceptions take us beyond the assumptions on which scientific socialism was built out of working class revolutions. Could humankind embark on such a program? Implicitly, many environmentalists have already embarked on such programs. Their verbal defence, however, is frequently contracted to the beauties of pristine wildernesses and the preservation of endangered species. But the contours of the struggles are changing and with them the descriptions. So, too, the heights at which the conflicts and debates are being conducted.

In a conference, for example, held in the United Nations on *Earth Regeneration and the Environment* only two days after Premier Gorbachev's address, scientists, environmentalists and arms-control activists, including some of those involved in the drafting of the Climate Emergency Bills, considered, among others, two papers from the Earth Regeneration Society (ERS) of Berkeley.

One from Professor Kenneth Watt (University of California, Davis) dealt with the US corporations' vast disinformation campaign aimed at imposing "warming only" theories and preventing research and public discussion on cooling trends. Watt shattered again the theories of warming and one-way traffic of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

The other paper from ERS Chairman, Alden Bryant, dealt with feasible "*Climate Stabilisation Global Goals*" and what precisely could be done to turn around the advance to Ice Age by reforestation, remineralizing present and past forest lands and remineralizing grain and vegetable fields.

The perceptions of climate cooling along with the need and ability to effect a turnaround have stemmed from the diverse group of Californian specialists, unionists and general environmentalists making a 31-day tour of the Soviet Union about four years ago. They toured as guests of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. They conferred with Soviet counterparts in Tashkent, across in Kharbarovsk and in Moscow and Leningrad.

Dr Kasakov, Secretary of the US-USSR Bilateral Agreement for Protection of the Environment (1972), and committees of the USSR Academy of Sciences conferred on their common concerns. Professor Victor Kovda of the USSR Academy of Sciences later wrote to the ERS:

"As a soil scientist, I am much involved in both ecological studies and problems concerning current climate trends. I am fully informed concerning the existing prognosis of global warming.

"Observations by Soviet soil scientists have compelled us to believe that, on the contrary, it is cooling that has taken place over the last 15 to 20 years.

"The signs of permafrost shifting southward, some shortening of the grow-

ing season and the increased severity of winters, as well as the freezing of the northern seas, are the valid arguments for us.”

(Later again writing:) “I am very much impressed with your own and your colleagues” intention to suggest the ‘Problem of Earth Regeneration’ as the global super-problem to the governments and scientific circles, as a vital subject of peaceful national co-operation in the interests of humanity of the XX1st century...

“... global reafforestation of mountainous regions and tropics, regular rehumidification of arable soils, control of soil erosion, remineralization of acid soils and reasonable fertilisation of all arable soils will very much improve the planetarian balance of CO₂ in the atmosphere.”

Global cooling

Professor Kovda’s perceptions of a global cooling and some planetary confrontation with Ice Age conditions move along with those of many North American, West German, Austrian, Danish and Eastern European weather scientists. And, very importantly, they receive statistical confirmation from the temperature records of the US Weather Office and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, New York, and from Canadian weather systems. Some of these having been misused previously to make claims for “global warming” now or due.

Professor Bernard Schultz of the Nebraska Academy of Scientists — up in the front-line of Ice Age advance — warns typically:

“By the year 2010, an Ice Age will engulf the Northern Hemisphere, resulting in Canada’s inability to grow grain and the Soviet Union’s inability to feed itself. The mean annual temperature of the Northern Hemisphere has continued to fall; dropping each year since 1947. Even now, in parts of Alberta, once rich in wheat, we do not have the necessary frost-free days in the growing season for a harvest...”

A senior editor of the *National Geographic Magazine* wrote in the January 1987 issue: “The ice-age, which has never really left the planet for two million years, is re-asserting itself. The warm time (Inter-Glacial Period), which has lasted less than 12,000 years, is over...The next return to Ice Age has begun.”

Disinformation

In 1974, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) commissioned two weather impact studies (cf *The Weather Conspiracy — The Coming of the New Ice Age*, Ballantine 27209). Ironically, when presented to the US presidency and National Security Council, the reports seem to have been used as a starting point for a huge mass media disinformation campaign and containment of science programs.

Four scientists, close to the US Energy Office and the concerned corporations in chemicals, chemical-fertilisers, pesticides and coal, gas and oil ran the disinformation programs for ten years; a small thaw beginning in 1986. However, the resistance within the media and collaborating scientists in countries like Australia to the facts of global cooling is strong and the falsifica-

tion of facts and statistics is reinforced by some of the Federal and State Labor Government Ministers.

◀ A slow dissemination of information on the Ice Age cycles is understandable. It began, according to Dr Irving Kaplan of San Diego, California, only “in 1955 with Cesare Emiliani, a biologist, who brought forward what we would consider the modern contribution to deep climate research. Emiliani predicted the onset of Ice Ages. He discussed the Ice Ages of the past and from them was able to predict what was happening now. All of those in this field stressed the cooling aspects going down into the next Ice Age.” (Interview with ERS, January 1984)

Then studies of Ice Age lakes in Sweden and surveys of glaciers in seven countries — USSR, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Canada, Sweden and the US — although of only one per cent of the earth’s glaciers, threw more light on the progression to Ice Ages. A report by Dr Fred Wood (Office of Technology Assessment, US Congress) found that the observed glaciers behaved predictably in a general cooling trend.

More recently, New York newspapers reported on a large extension of the Antarctic’s Ross Sea ice-platform and at least a 100 foot build up of ice on the Admiral Byrd bases, America I and II, from 1927 to 1988. The great Thibetan ice-platform and the world’s main accumulation of ice — Antarctica — have had no significant study as influences in the Ice Age cycle.

Assumptions about Europe are that the last Ice Age extended ice coverage down from the Arctic to the glacial system of Austria/Switzerland. Only a few regions of the Northern Hemisphere’s temperate zone and sub-tropical latitudes remained free of permanent ice.

There has been little speculation on what Ice Age conditions were in the Southern Hemisphere and Australasia. Interestingly, the Museum of Anthropology in Cuernavaca, Mexico, displays a chart of the migrations of Tasmanians and Australian Aborigines across the South Pacific ice to Chile and then up to Central America, where they merged with the predecessors of the Olmec/Toltec peoples who were thought to have migrated from Asia across the North Pacific ice

Is there a road back?

Humankind and the nations of the world are viewed as in situations of great danger because of destruction of Nature’s life-supporting systems and, perhaps, an imminent plunge into a next Ice Age.

If a new, cyclical Ice Age is soon to confront humankind, should it be accepted without major resistance or should it be combated? After all, there have been about 37 cycles of Ice Age and interglacials recognised by scientists — 100,000 years of ice and an intervening 12,000 years when the Temperate and Torrid Zones were warm and conducive to societal development.

However, short-term profit in combatting an Ice Age onset may be very small, perhaps lead the corporations of the world today to utter bankruptcy. Is there a logical response in economics, politics and class struggle to an Ice

Age? What, after all, would be the dialectics of these conflicts for mankind? Mikhail Gorbachev did not, understandably, spell out the fine detail of such conflict and Soviet climatologists seem shorter on specifics than Americans.

American-European-Japanese corporate elites could well decide there is not a fair level of profit in turning back an oncoming Ice Age. They may decide such a program carries within it all the seeds of a final elimination of privately-owned capital. For them, it may be as anti-capital-accumulation as dismantling the nuclear war industry and abandoning permanent war economies.

They may plump for havens for themselves as for their main tax liabilities. Cavern-societies, deep in the earth, where survival for the few after a nuclear war, were considered feasible, even for hundreds and thousands of years. One US conference on survival considered recommendations on using a stock of older survivors for regular ground-level tests of the environment for radiation levels.

Survival

However, Gorbachev, as the bearer of the humanistic traditions of Marxism and the optimism of his class, predictably plumps for survival along with the elimination of armed conflict and aggression against Nature.

The wide stream of liberal-democratic thought and action within American society may find the dialectics of Gorbachev's scenario irresistible; part of their own defence against President Bush, Quayle and the corporate power-elites. A first test may not be far ahead.

Gorbachev and the UN General Assembly may soon face the first, great backlash of the global cooling — the continued decline in grain crops, rising populations and still extending famines in the Third World.

US grain crops have continued their fall into 1988, Canadian crops have declined correspondingly, there is a reported 30 per cent fall in the volume of Soviet grain crops and reports of similar declines in China. Northern Hemisphere grain reserves have been greatly reduced.

This is the scenario of the 1974 CIA weather studies and the strategies adopted by some leading scientists, the intelligence community and the US Energy Department in 1976; strategies that included the disinformation campaign on weather that blanketed much of the media of the Western world and still operates effectively in Australia on climate debate.

Dialectics of Nature and peace

The Gorbachev dialectics of Nature and peace require some recognition of the broad facts of Ice Age weather change. Simply: the component of CO₂ in the atmosphere is considered to have been a key to change or indicator of change in global weather in the past and for the future.

CO₂ parts per million (readings taken only since 1958) in the earth's atmosphere is thought to have fluctuated round 270 ppm for several centuries. This level seems to have corresponded with an equability of climate, a kind of eco-sustaining homeostasis.

However, under the impact of more rapid deforestation and industrialisation from the beginning of this century, CO₂ ppm appear to have risen more rapidly to the present level of about 347 ppm. This level is thought to be the watershed or level beyond which there is an irreversible descent into Ice Age. (cf John Hamaker's *Survival of Civilization* and Larry Ephron's more recent *Coming Ice Age* for extended perspectives.)

However, the class antagonisms for middle strata and working class people in North America over environmental degradation appear to be much less acute than for those being arrested down in the southern forests of New South Wales, in the Amazon Valley and in Sarawak. Also Australian seamen and waterside workers are the first to apply bans to timber cargoes from the rain forests of Malaysia.

The remaining forests — the lungs of the planet — face unholy alliances determined to cut down our oxygen supply. The alliance in Australia extends across right and leftist Labor parliamentarians, Federal and State, anti-environmentalist officials in the ACTU, the ALP machine in NSW, Harris-Daishowa (mainly of Japan) and their fellow-polluters in the ranks of the transnational corporations (TNCs). The forest peoples and environmentalists in Brazil and Sarawak face, with the exception of a supportive Brazilian forest workers' union, a similar array of forces.

The chemical, chemical-fertiliser, pesticide TNCs are close to each earth-degeneration site. Their mineral-deficient fertilisers allow them to impose on almost all agriculture and silviculture a regime of crop-decline in yield, nutritional value and resistance to pests. The consequential pesticides poison soil-stocks and inject pollutants into the food chains. These then attract food additives and pharmaceuticals. Dependence on these leads frequently into hard drugs addiction and dependence.

The TNCs of the chemical/chemical-fertiliser regime have their peak capital formations in the houses of Morgan-Rockefeller, which own and control most of the nuclear and permanent war economy industries, but more importantly, the hardware and software of the information-communications industries which exist largely on disinformation.

The bizarre dilemma contained in the chemical-fertiliser/pesticide regimes is exposed in the Ice Age processes. The planet moves out of one of its Ice Ages through the glaciers grinding the rocks into fine, talcum-like power, which is then blown and washed out onto the edges of the ice-platforms, where this rock-meal nourishes plant and, finally, forest growth.

Rock-meal

Not the over-simplified, three-element chemical fertilisers, these rock-meals have from 25 to 90 elements as a general rule. These nourish the meadows, forests, rivers, lakes and estuaries for thousands of years until once again their erosion brings forest degeneration and the constricting of the lungs of the planet.

Ironically though, the rock-meal, even with poor technology, is produced

and landed in fields and forests at about one-third of the prices for chemical fertilisers. Pesticides become irrelevant, crop yields rise and food quality improves greatly. The food chains begin to be cleansed and the drug industries lose their grip on Nature and humankind.

So the TNCs bitterly contest every advance in the dialectics of Nature and peace. The new videos on earth regeneration through rock-meal use, which have to be distributed privately, show the extraordinary successes of its use in farming communities in Victoria and South Australia.

The ERS programs move, essentially, within the same dialectics of Nature, humankind and peace as those in Gorbachev's General Assembly address. Its manpower mobilisation strategies extend well beyond those of President Roosevelt's WPA projects in 1932. They envisage the mobilisation, training and deployment of 20 million workers of many different skills. This is envisaged as the force required for a remineralizing, reforestation and cleaning up of the polluted lands of the United States.

A similar program for Australia would result in a 50 per cent reduction in unemployed persons. The ERA job program, first adopted by Californian union locals, was then referred by the Peralta Teachers' Federation to the National Convention of the AFL/CIO where it was adopted.

CO/2 budgets

Science groups have been pressing on governments plans for protection of the ozone layer and gradual elimination of toxic gases. The ERS has been preparing what it calls *CO/2 Budgets* for regions of California. This would place overall statutory requirements on a district or region **not** to pollute and to guarantee non-polluting processes before industrial or agricultural activities begin. Hungary has announced its intention to develop a CO/2 Budget for the whole of the state.

However, consideration of the interdependent and inter-penetrating forces for peace, arms control and non-aggression towards Nature have hardly moved outside the walls of the United Nations.

Peace activists and environmentalists meeting together in the Central Coast of New South Wales recently resolved their positions in this way:

"Having considered the interdependence of global peace, arms control and the halting of pollution and degradation of the global environment, the meeting endorses the concept of peace and arms control and earth/atmosphere regeneration movements uniting on the initiatives now under discussion in the United Nations General Assembly, in the US Federal Congress and the USSR Supreme Soviet.

"The meeting proposes to organisations within the peace and disarmament movements and in the environmental protection movements that they explore the possibilities of common action for peace and arms control and earth/atmosphere regeneration."

Developments in the International Communist Movement

Resolution adopted
by the Central Committee
of the Socialist Party of Australia
June 4, 1989

The international communist movement and, in particular, the existing socialist states are in a period of transition. Far-reaching changes are taking place in politics, the economy and social life. For some decades, problems were allowed to accumulate and were not attended to, thereby aggravating the problems, slowing the expected growth and dynamism of socialism.

In some respects, the capitalist states were permitted to seize the initiative and to hypocritically make unfavourable comparisons between the socialist and capitalist systems.

The imperialist powers, who still dream of destroying socialism, have waged and are waging a never-ending campaign to destabilise every socialist country, to undermine them economically and politically and to pressure them militarily. They never cease to belittle socialism and attempt to revise the ideology of Marxism-Leninism so as to divert communist parties into blind alleys of opportunism and pragmatism.

Recognition of this state of affairs came with the April 1985 meeting of the CC CPSU which took a decision to accelerate the development of Soviet soc-

ity and commenced to put an end to the period of economic, social, political and ideological stagnation in the Soviet Union.

The slogans of “perestroika” and “glasnost” have come to express the policies of the CPSU for renewal of socialism in all respects in that country.

Some other socialist countries which also suffered bureaucracy, complacency, lack of involvement of the people and a failure to develop the economy and political life have also taken up the task of renewal.

Recognising the internationalism of communists, the SPA takes great interest in these developments and expresses the hope that the policies of renovation and renewal will be quickly successful.

While acknowledging that the task of social transformation in each country is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the communists in that country, the achievements and example of the existing socialist countries either assists or retards the work of communists in the remaining capitalist countries.

At the present time, when new policies and approaches are being worked out, it is necessary to reaffirm some fundamental generalities and principles of socialism.

1. MARXISM-LENINISM

The ideological foundation of the international communist movement has always been the scientific theories developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin in particular. “Marxism is the system of Marx’s views and teachings ... whose totality constitutes modern materialism and modern scientific socialism, as the theory and programme of the working-class movement in all the civilised countries of the world.” (Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol 21 p. 50)

In philosophy, this is dialectical materialism. Historical materialism is its application to human society.

In economics, Marxism called for an investigation into the relations of production in each society, in its inception, development, and decline.

The motive force of the forward march in all class societies is seen as the struggle between the differing interests of the classes to be found in society. “... in any given society, the strivings of some of its members conflict with the strivings of others, that social life is full of contradictions, and that history reveals a struggle between nations and societies, as well as within nations and societies.” There is “an alternation of periods of revolution and reaction, peace and war, stagnation and rapid progress or decline. Marxism has provided the guidance, i.e., the theory of the class struggle, for the discovery of the laws governing this seeming maze and chaos”. (*Ibid* p.57)

The objective and consequences of the class struggle is socialism. “Marx deduces the inevitability of the transformation of capitalist society into socialist society...The intellectual and moral motive force and the physical executor of this transformation is the proletariat... The proletariat’s struggle against the bourgeoisie ... inevitably becomes a political struggle directed towards the conquest of political power by the proletariat... The socialisation

of production cannot but lead to the means of production becoming the property of society..." (*Ibid* p. 71)

Many changes have taken place since Lenin wrote these words, but the changes have not made them any less true.

It is necessary to recall these general principles, not to ignore or revise them, not to regard them as being out of date and no longer relevant, but to apply them to the realities and tasks of the present time.

There are those who, while correctly pointing to changes which have to be confronted, declare that the fundamentals of Marxism are no longer valid or are dogmatic. However, Marxism, by its very essence and fundamental dialectical approach, is anti-dogmatic. It needs to be applied as a guide to action and not as something which provides ready made answers for the specific tasks of the times. It provides the general principles, not the specific answers.

It is apparent that not only has there been a stagnation of economic life but also stagnation and neglect of the study and mastery of Marxism. This has affected the socialist countries and many communist parties around the world. It has allowed various distortions of Marxism to grow as well as outright expressions of bourgeois and non-class concepts. While these ideas cannot be eliminated by arbitrary declarations or injunctions, never-the-less, they have to be vigorously disputed and countered by the valid arguments and theories of Marxists. A failure to do so will encourage anti-communist and anti-socialist ideas to spread further.

2. SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

The act of socialist revolution is in itself a great democratic act in so far that the struggle against capital and its replacement can only be achieved by the action of the masses of the working people. Such an act may or may not involve a popular vote or plebiscite. It certainly does mean strikes, mass street demonstrations, perhaps military action in which the organisations of the working people are pitted against the organisations of the capitalist ruling class which is at the point of being deposed.

In the case of the Russian revolution, popular organisations of power sprang up — the Soviets or Councils of workers, peasants and soldiers.

In the pre-revolutionary period, the communists are the banner-bearers of democracy against the oppression and exploitation by the ruling class.

Following the victory of the socialist revolution, communists must be the banner-bearers of **socialist democracy**.

The extension of socialist democracy is a major aim of the changes going on in the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries. The objective is the ever greater involvement of the people in the running of the country and in its economic and political life. The institutions by which this is done vary from one country to another.

Socialist democracy is not anarchy. It is based on and preserves the power

of the working class which has become the ruling class. Socialist democracy is class democracy, in the same way that bourgeois democracy is a system of government which has, as its fundamental purpose, the maintenance of the capitalist system. Any process that challenges that fundamental concept of socialist democracy is counter-revolutionary in essence, no matter how many slogans about "democracy" are flown.

At present, the rulers of the capitalist class are waging a virulent campaign against the socialist countries on this score.

It is clear that their aim is the restoration of capitalism and they support all those elements in the socialist countries whose confusion or weakness will help them achieve their objectives.

The existence of choice in the form of multiple parties or multiple candidates does not, in itself, make things more democratic. It may assist the development of socialist democracy and the working out of correct policies in the course of debate.

In capitalist society, such choice only covers up the actual dictatorship of monopoly capital over the economic and political life of the country.

The working class has its own political party — the communist or socialist parties in the various countries which have led the people in the struggle for and the building of socialism.

Some parties have fulfilled their responsibilities less than adequately, have made serious mistakes, have lagged behind the needs of the times and have undermined their own authority and the confidence of the people in them.

Nonetheless, no other political party exists which is so committed to socialism. In overcoming shortcomings, the communist parties will re-establish their authority and the confidence of the people in them.

That is why the opponents of socialism launch their heaviest attacks against the communist parties, attempt to discredit them in every way and cause divisions. Opponents of socialism always contest the leadership role of communists and attempt to exclude them from any positions of authority claiming that they are authoritarian or, in the case of governments, are nothing more than servants of the "apparatus" or the "bureaucracy".

The role of the communist parties is an essential part of socialist democracy. The renovation of the parties, their concern and struggle for the interests of the working people, their commitment to socialist democracy and their ability to give proper leadership in the economy, in education, science, culture and much else will put them at the head of the people whose needs socialism was brought into existence to fulfill.

3. WORKING CLASS POWER

The barrier to the fulfillment of the demands of the working people for peace, a better life, democracy and social progress in general was, and is, the concentration of power in the hands of the capitalist ruling class.

This barrier has to be removed and is only possible by way of a bitter and

often long fought struggle. This was true at the time of the Russian revolution which removed the Czarist autocracy and the parliamentary representatives of the bourgeoisie who continued the essential policies of the Czarist regime.

It is true today in Nicaragua, where progress was blocked by the Samoza dictatorship, the pawn of the US imperialism. It is true in South Africa where the apartheidists have closed off any avenue for democratic advance.

There is no historical example which shows that any other course is available to the people.

Even in the area of limited reforms which can be achieved within the system of capitalism, there is always a hard struggle against conservative forces whose economic or political interests pit them against any change.

Victory in these struggles and the establishment of working class political power removes these road blocks.

Of course, this is not some crude struggle in which contestants do no more than match one another on a battlefield. It includes argument, debate, comparison of programs, contests in the economy and in parliamentary institutions. It takes cultural forms, consideration of the values of the working class and those of the ruling class, and so on.

However, underlining all these forms is the struggle for power. "Power is the essence of politics," said Lenin.

Overhanging the people of the world as a whole is the danger of nuclear catastrophe and the emerging ecological and environmental threat to human existence.

The nuclear danger arises from the imperialist states who not only possess nuclear weapons but refuse to come to mutual agreements between the nations to demolish them. The governments which are refusing disarmament agreements are those which represent the imperialist powers.

Similarly, it is the unplanned and mindless exploitation of the earth's resources, lack of concern for the consequences of development and the chase after maximum profits by the private enterprise monopolies which are mainly responsible for today's environmental problems and are already demonstrating their reluctance to take urgent measures to reverse the situation.

It is the socialist states which for many years have been the consistent and persistent advocates for complete nuclear disarmament.

It is socialism which, by economic and social planning and its concern for the interests and well-being of the people, is best able to adopt the policies necessary to save the environment of the world.

Those who have responsibility for leadership in the struggle for peace and socialism must take into account all the circumstances, including the inevitable counter measures by the threatened and desperate ruling class of the imperialist states.

But the people of many nations who are suffering poverty, illiteracy, homelessness, illness and who lack any hope for the future cannot be asked to give up their struggle for a better future.

Not only would such a call not be heeded, but a cessation of struggle would not help to overcome the problems facing the oppressed and exploited and would also put back the solution of the problems of peace and the environment which confront the people of all nations.

The struggle for reform and revolution must go on. The winning of working class power and the building of socialism by all nations remains a valid and necessary objective.

4. FUNDAMENTALS OF A SOCIALIST ECONOMY

The main contradiction within the capitalist system is that between the social nature of production and the private ownership of the means of production and of the commodities produced.

Socialism resolves this contradiction by converting private ownership to public ownership of the means of production and of the product. It means that the factories, resources, banks, etc. are nationalised. This is the main form of ownership in socialist society.

However, other forms also exist. They are collective, co-operative and in certain limited areas, private. Small scale private ownership continues in the area of the services and in the manufacture and distribution of products. These forms of ownership may continue to exist for many years after the commencement of the construction of socialism because it is impossible to immediately handle every aspect of the economy in the form of public ownership. Furthermore, some individuals contribute to the economy better through co-operative or privately owned enterprises.

Nonetheless, the key industries and those that contribute most to the economy are publicly owned. It was the neglect or to early elimination of co-operative and private enterprise forms that has led to recent proposals to widen the forms of production relations in several socialist countries.

However, the existence of private enterprise forms inevitably creates a profiteering and individualistic mentality and this needs to be countered in the ideological work of the party.

Socialism also introduces overall planning of the economy and eliminates the anarchy of capitalism in which planning is limited to within a particular enterprise.

In some of the socialist countries, central economic planning was taken to extreme lengths. This was probably necessary and justified in the initial stages of socialist construction. However, it created a massive bureaucracy, slowed down decision making processes and stifled local responsibility and initiative.

Attempts are now being made to encourage local initiative and decision making by extending the rights of enterprise managements and collectives of

workers.

Central planning will more strictly limit itself to working out the general guidelines of the national economy.

Cost accounting is also necessary in a socialist economy. This simply means that the costs of production have to be properly assessed (i.e. wages, cost of raw materials, power used, capital equipment, etc) and incorporated in the price of the product when it is marketed. Every enterprise has to become economically viable and self-sufficient. If this is not achieved, the enterprise will either have to be subsidised by the state or will be bankrupted. In the past, the state endlessly subsidised technical backwardness and inefficiency in some of the socialist countries.

Every economy is an extremely complex and ever-changing entity. It is affected by the level of technology available, the fluctuating cost of raw materials, the skill of the workforce, the transport and marketing of the products, the influence of the world economic situation, currency exchange rates, international prices and many other factors. It is affected by supply and demand.

The modification of central planning and the extension of some co-operative and private enterprises has led some to rely more on "market forces" as a means of regulating the economy.

However, market forces are blind and unpredictable. They introduce spontaneity and even anarchy into the economy.

The consequences of reliance on "market forces" lead to inflation of prices, introduces a considerable gap between the incomes of "entrepreneurs" and workers, and may destabilise the economy and social life.

It is necessary for the planning authorities and those who are responsible for control of the economic levers by which the economy is regulated, to maintain a firm control over the key aspects of the economy.

The consequences of deregulation and handing the economy over to control by the "market forces" is clearly seen in present day capitalist societies, many of which are experiencing extreme instability and fluctuations in major aspects of their economies.

5. REFORM OF SOCIALISM

No society stands still. Like every other aspect of the world around us, it is in constant motion and change. In socialist societies too, contradictions arise which have to be resolved. Generally speaking, these contradictions are of a non-antagonistic kind.

Change takes place either by way of reform or by revolution. Reform within a society means gradual change which preserves the main framework of the social system, that is, in the case of socialist society, public ownership of the means of production and working class political power.

It is a process of **reform** which is at present going on in socialist societies. It will and must continue as new problems and tasks arise in the future.

Contradictions between different social and national groups arise in socialist countries as well as in capitalist states. A conflict and struggle takes place, but in socialist societies this has more chance of being resolved in the interests of society as a whole, rather than by extreme, antagonistic conflict.

The concept of “revolution” in socialist society, if used in its accepted sense, can only mean transformation of the fundamentals of socialism from public ownership of the means of production and working class power and a reversion to private enterprise and capitalist class power. A “revolution” in socialist society would, therefore, be a “counter-revolution”.

6. PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

The concept of the unity of the workers of all countries was immortalised by the words of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* — “Workers of the world, unite”. It implied the common class position and class interests of the workers of all countries, irrespective of their national origin, colour of skin, language or other differences.

It was given organisational form by the formation of the “Internationals” and more recently by the regional and world meetings of communist parties. It has also been embodied in the international organisations of trade unions, women, youth, students and other social groupings.

There have been many solidarity actions throughout the history of the working class movement in which workers have acted to assist their fellow workers in other countries who were in struggle.

The workers of many countries extended solidarity to the peoples of the Soviet Union in the early days of the revolution and throughout its whole existence.

Similarly, there were the “Hands off China” movements during the period of the Japanese invasion and following the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949.

For their part, the workers and communists of the socialist states have extended fraternal assistance to the people of many countries in their struggles. They have given enormous economic assistance to many countries, helping them improve their living standards and break free from the economic enslavement of imperialism.

Proletarian internationalism is one of the cornerstones of a communist outlook.

In the present historical period, when the world is still faced with the danger of war and when many nations suffer the super-exploitation of the transnational corporations, when the possibility of economic advance is stifled by unbearable debts and interest payments and the struggle for national and social liberation is far from over — proletarian internationalism remains an indispensable commitment for all communists.

In addition to the actions by workers in solidarity with those of other countries, the solidarity among communist parties is of world importance. Unfortu-

nately, there has been a weakening of this commitment by some communist parties which have failed to adhere to class principles and have, in some instances, been influenced by over-riding concern for national interests which have taken the form of nationalism.

The very growth of the communist movement, the increase in the number of socialist countries, the complexity of issues and the diversity of nations, all of which have some differing characteristics, has inevitably meant differing tasks and approaches to these tasks.

What was always a fact is now recognised. There is no single model of socialism and no single path to its achievement.

However, the generalities of Marxism-Leninism and the fundamental characteristics of socialism remain common for all. There cannot be a variety of theories of dialectical and historical materialism or a variety of theories concerning classes and class struggle, even though the practical application of these theories will vary according to conditions, time and place. This is not to say that fundamental theories are not also capable of development, but there is nothing to show that the fundamentals of Marxist thinking should now be relegated.

It is desirable to reaffirm the necessity for all contingents of the communist movement to act in the spirit of solidarity with each other and to work and act in such a way as to strengthen the unity of the communist movement and not weaken it.

For this purpose, it is necessary for the parties of the international communist movement to meet, to discuss and agree upon the fundamentals of our movement and as extensive a program of action as is possible.

Without such a meeting, for which the overwhelming majority of parties have for a number of years indicated their support, there is a danger of fragmentation. More importantly, the international communist movement will be unable to give collective leadership to the peoples of the world at this most critical juncture in world history when the destiny and future survival of humankind is being determined.

For its part, the Socialist Party of Australia reaffirms its solidarity with the communist parties of other countries, irrespective of the existence of differing points of view on some questions.

In each of the countries, it is the communists who have been the most militant, the most courageous and self-sacrificing fighters on behalf of the working people. Furthermore, the communists' struggle for a world in peace, for security and well-being remains the real hope that these objectives will be achieved and that every nation will pass from the age of barbarism into the age of civilisation as prophesised by Frederick Engels.

Unions at the crossroad

by Dennis White

Never in the history of the Australian trade union movement has there been a period which could conceivably result in the demise of trade unionism.

The ACTU Congress to be held during September 1989 in Sydney will be a decisive factor in determining whether the path to such a demise will be followed. In this context, the Congress will be a historic one.

The period since 1983 has witnessed a number of dramatic political and industrial events. The election of the Australian Labor Party to Federal Government in that year raised the hopes and expectations of the party's supporters, the vast majority of them working class.

After eight years of a conservative Federal Government elected from the crushing defeat of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1975, Australian workers and other affected strata of society turned their hopes once again to social democracy.

The Hawke-led Labor Government of 1983 soon signalled to the Australian people that economic "tough times" were ahead. Within weeks of winning office, the government declared that the budget deficit inherited from the conservatives was far worse than forecast and that programs of reform and a turnaround from traditional norms of conservative fiscal policy would therefore be some time coming.

Accord strategy

The only factor that would deliver any significant changes for the working class, according to the government and the ACTU, would be implementation of the Accord strategy on prices and incomes negotiated between the ALP and the ACTU in 1982.

A number of leading “left-wing” trade union officials were not only vigorous supporters of such a strategy but also played a leading role in the Accord’s formulation and have since been recognised as chief among the trade union architects in the negotiations.

The Prices and Incomes Accord was an integral plank of ALP electoral policy and vigorously supported by the ACTU during the period leading up to the 1983 election.

At that time, many in the trade unions viewed it as a purely electoral strategy that would have no significant bearing on events once the ALP was elected to office.

The essence of this Accord strategy between the government and the ACTU was to persuade trade unions to accept the need for capital investment in the Australian manufacturing industry and, with this, to accept the concept of “wage moderation” in order to keep industry costs low, create employment opportunities and, through increased profits, to create a base for the re-investment of the higher profits back in those industries, thus developing their efficiency and productive base.

The government’s commitment to the strategy would be the implementation of measures to curtail price increases and the pursuit of social wage objectives in the areas of health, family allowances, job creation and so forth.

Trade union commitment to such a strategy meant a radical turnaround on a number of fundamental economic questions. This position represented an acceptance of the argument that wage increases were the cause of price increases and job loss. It meant accepting the idea that processes of co-operation between antagonistic forces could achieve a positive result.

This was the beginning of what is now an entrenched era of class collaboration and retreat.

Severe consequences

The consequences of the Accord are still very much alive today in the constant emphasis placed by all parties on wage restraint, in the negation of struggle as a legitimate means of activity by the organised working class, and in the isolation and abandonment by the labour movement of those sections which were forced to fight and suffered severe consequences as a result.

All this reflects the damage done by the Accord processes and can best be summed up as an “ideological massacre” of the masses. Even before the Accord, the Australian labour movement was dominated by reformist thinking. However, the movement did recognise the necessity for trade union struggle and rejected the idea that wages were responsible for price rises. It also rejected the argument that it was necessary to restrain wages to increase profits and hence investments. These fundamental political and economic positions were overthrown by the Accord.

The list of industrial casualties during the course of the six years indicates the degree of damage done. Food preservers, meat workers, builders’

labourers, Queensland power workers, Dollar Sweets workers, plumbers, Williamstown Dockyard workers, air traffic controllers, Robe River workers and more recently Cockatoo Island workers have all tasted the fruits of these processes in action.

Coupled with these notable “attacks” are the host of indirect attacks which have resulted in the disarming of workers organisation. One example is the “compliance commitments” which unions are required to give as they line up for each round of wage reductions and erosions of working conditions.

These processes have effectively resulted in the trade union movement submitting itself to the “mercy” of the Industrial Relations Commission with its guidelines and provisions which are designed to thwart trade union struggle.

The “rewards” for workers and their unions since the implementation of these processes have been reductions in real wages, intimidatory penal clauses and deregistration and, according to recent Bureau of Statistics figures, rapidly declining union membership, now at an all time low of 42 per cent on a national average.

ACTU Congresses

ACTU Congresses during this period have borne witness to vigorous support, justification for and defence of such policies by the ACTU leadership and other “influential” trade union officials from both the left and right of the political spectrum.

This support is based on arguments that it is politically, economically and industrially necessary to maintain the ALP in political office as the conservative opposition is an untenable alternative. It also rests on the premise that such “economic strategies” are necessary, along with the sacrifices by workers, for the national economy.

The Congresses have overwhelmingly endorsed such policies. Any opposition has been scattered and relatively unorganised. The only exception to this trend was at the 1987 ACTU Congress when organised opposition to the Identity Card recommendation came very close to succeeding and created a split in the Executive.

Such a situation had not been witnessed at an ACTU Congress for many years and indicates a potential that has not been utilised to the extent necessary to present a serious challenge.

The generally poor position is a reflection of the left’s lack of influence, along with its present political divisions, not only in the trade unions but on the broader political scene.

Compounding this is the significant section of the broadly perceived “left” in the union movement who have not only supported these processes, but have at times been active in their formulation and implementation.

Decision making at the top

A further negative feature since 1985 has been the changing nature of the

decision making processes of the ACTU.

Executive decision making, with little or no consultation or participation by the rank and file, has become ingrained. Top level negotiating committees, with no avenue for accountability, have become normal procedure for dealing with issues that have serious consequences for workers.

Consultation is restricted to the convening of "Special Federal Unions Conferences". Many of these have been held over recent years, made up of no more than two Federal officials from each affiliated union. A number of such leading Federal officials also partly constitute the ACTU Executive.

These conferences are usually convened to endorse agreements already reached by ACTU negotiating committees. Participants are, in essence, presented with a *fait accompli*.

Not once at a Special Federal Unions Conference has a proposition been made that Federal unions take a recommendation to their rank and file for consideration before it is ratified. The process is of decisions being made at the top and the membership being informed after the event.

In the present National Wage Case hearing, still to be finalised despite commencing in February this year, award restructuring is the linchpin of ACTU strategy.

It is not the intention of this article to analyse the ramifications of this strategy, except to say that the processes associated with its implementation are crucial in what lies ahead for the trade union movement.

Structural efficiency principle

The most serious danger currently faced by workers is the relationship within the wage fixing principles between the implementation of award restructuring and the commitment unions are required to give to the structural efficiency principle of the guidelines.

This principle was introduced into the guidelines by the National Wage Full Bench prior to the development of the restructuring strategy and after the 4.1 second tier wage case decision of 1987-88.

At present, every indication suggests that this principle, planned as integral to award restructuring implementation, will remain as the "prime mover" for further erosions of working conditions for a long time to come, unless it is challenged.

The essence of structural efficiency in fact changes the whole nature of award restructuring to the broader and much more dangerous agenda of industry restructuring.

The structural efficiency principle provides employers with the opportunity, under the imprimatur of the Industrial Relations Commission, to attack traditional award conditions such as hours of work, penalty rates, shift work allowances and the like.

The Commission has already made decisions affecting these conditions

within the framework of this principle. This process has already given rise to the sort of arrangements being experienced in Queensland with "voluntary employment agreements" and enterprise bargaining.

Strategy of challenge

If such dangers to workers' existing working arrangements and union organisations exist, then we must ask: "what strategy will be presented to the forthcoming ACTU Congress to challenge such dangers"?

Present indications are that not only will no such strategy of challenge be presented by the ACTU leaders, but that instead they will restate the necessity for the union movement to accept such changes.

This assumption is based on the ACTU's track record since the early 1980s and is reinforced by a statement by ACTU Secretary Kely in an interview in the big business *Financial Review* in April this year in which he stated: "The most important thing, if we can cement award restructuring and we lay the basis for a change in this country, we will have started to create a framework for a cultural change in our society, in terms of the workforce."

The "cultural change" referred to is of workers accepting without question the agenda being prepared for them. This changing culture necessitates that the language of class struggle, militancy and political alternatives be written out of their vocabulary.

This will be the "official line" pushed at the forthcoming Congress and, as with past Congresses, those who move to challenge it will be berated as "traitors to the movement".

Left alternative

The question of a challenge and the manner in which it is mounted needs to be seriously addressed by the "genuine left" in the unions if any impact is going to be made.

As a necessary prerequisite for this, a minimum agreed upon position must be resolved and then strengthened. Positions adopted by both the South Australian United Trades and Labor Council and the Victorian Trades Hall Council supporting the re-introduction of wage indexation based on movements of the Consumer Price Index present an excellent basis for such an agreed position and have, in fact, laid the necessary foundations for such work to commence.

Developed with this should be a vigorous campaign around restructuring with an agenda that is in the interest of workers. The agenda should include issues of increased wages for increased skills, no trade-offs of working conditions and no loss of jobs. Integral in any such program must be the unfettered right of unions to pursue their objectives with industrial action with the full support and protection of the peak councils.

Union amalgamations

A further key ACTU strategy, closely linked to award restructuring, is union

amalgamations. The ACTU aims to reduce the number of unions from 320 to 20 or less. In principle, one cannot but support the need for change in this position. However, not all amalgamations are in the workers' best interest.

Some recent and planned amalgamations have no real common base as their members work in different industries which have no connection. These amalgamations often have a political basis and purpose. In the process, the right wing of the labour movement is attempting to strengthen and centralise its power.

Decisions made at the September ACTU Congress will have a significant bearing on future developments of this nature.

The possibility of the Labor Government losing office to the conservatives at the next election only adds to these dangers more dramatically. If this happens, one of the legacies of this present government will have been laying the foundations for the savage attacks that will be launched.

Left unity

It is therefore imperative for the left to unite around agreed upon programs, leaving differences aside, with the aim of countering and preventing this course of events taking a firm hold.

The current position of an ineffective left within the industrial arena and the successful attacks inflicted on workers as a consequence is a reflection of trends in the broader political arena.

The left has a responsibility and obligation to meet this crisis in the interests of workers as a first priority and to present the working class and their allies with a viable political alternative. The forthcoming ACTU Congress is an important event for the development of such activity.

Australian policy in the Asia-Pacific region

by Hannah Middleton

Defence doctrines, foreign affairs policies and overseas trade are closely inter-related policies for any government. Their fundamental purpose should be to ensure the sovereignty, security and economic and social well-being of a country and its people.

This is not a new idea. Addressing the Pacific Armies Management Seminar in Sydney on March 28, 1989, the Governor-General of Australia, Bill Hayden, said:

“In today’s world ... notions of what we mean by the word **security** necessarily are changing and broadening, too.

“It certainly means **military** security — the capacity to identify and to meet perceived threats to a nation’s stability either from external sources or from within.

“But beyond that, I think there are many other elements involved in concepts of security. They include, for example, economic questions, social and cultural issues, and the general political dimensions involved in a nation’s security. And they are matters, I think, that are especially relevant when considering the overall security of small and/or emerging states.

“The pressures of growing populations, resource development or under-development, trading imbalances, the need to build a viable economic infrastructure, the social and political tensions that can arise among people of different cultural backgrounds living together through the chances of history — these are all matters, I believe, that have a direct bearing upon the total security aspects of a nation.”

Peter Jones, research assistant in the office of Senator Jo Vallentine, wrote:

“National security requires the preservation of a nation’s independence, its right to chose its own way of life and institutions, and the protection of its own population’s lives, freedoms and opportunities for development. It implies protection of territorial integrity. But it also involves relationships with other nations; a nation cannot be secure in isolation.

“National security must include economic security. This includes guaranteed supplies of food and energy, having a strong economy, an assurance of equitable trading relationships and a stable relationship with one’s neighbours.” (Peace Dossier 22, April 1989, page 1)

The Asia-Pacific region

The Asia-Pacific region is assuming major importance in today’s world and Australia, as the most powerful country in the South Pacific, is in a position to exercise some influence on the direction of events.

The region generates more than one-third of the world’s trade and is likely, in the next decade, to create more than half of the world’s economic output.

Dr Kim Duk Choong, Professor of Economic at Sogang University in South Korea, pointed out (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26/5/89) that within ten years, China, Japan and South Korea together would produce more than the US, the EC and East Europe.

Current turmoil within the region arises as a result of confrontation between the two world systems. The US maintains dominance in the region by its huge military presence, massive economic penetration and the threatened use of force. It is prepared to use force to maintain its increasingly important economic and military interests in the region, without regard for the rights of other countries.

US investments and trade in the region are a growing source of profits for the transnational corporations (TNCs) and banks, and a growing source of suffering for the mass of people of the region.

The interests of the US sometimes conflict with the regional investment and trade interests of other advanced capitalist countries like Japan, but they share a common purpose in hindering the region’s free and independent development.

Many developing countries of the region are trapped in international economic relations which keep them in a state of dependence and poverty, while allowing foreign capital to bleed them of their wealth. They are recipients of aid packages which often benefit the donor more than the recipient.

Many of the ex-colonial states in the region have economies which depend on the revenue from only a handful of agricultural or mineral commodities. Most countries of the region are subject to the crises of foreign debt payments, currency instability, volatile commodity prices and trade imbalances.

A web of regional alliances is used to fan conflicts which weaken and divide

the unity of the region's states and progressive forces. These conflicts are often prolonged by the exacerbation of political, racial, religious and other differences.

The consequences of ceaseless conflict and an atmosphere of militarism are borne by all countries. Impoverishment, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment and disease can all be attributed to this situation. States which pursue reactionary foreign policies also repress their own peoples' movements for a better way of life. States struggling for their independence live under the threat of destabilisation and interference in their internal affairs.

Asia-Pacific is the only region to experience all the consequences of the nuclear age, beginning with the Hiroshima massacre and carrying through to nuclear weapon and missile testing, waste dumping, the deployment of nuclear weapons and the forced removal of peoples to make room for military bases.

The Asian-Pacific region is spanned by a network of military bases, almost all established by the US. They are all vital elements in military plans for resorting to the utmost use of force, including the use of nuclear weapons.

The largest military complexes have been established as close as possible to the socialist countries of the Asian mainland. They are supplemented by other military bases which underpin massive air and naval forces permanently deployed throughout the region. Other countries host spying and communications bases.

How does Australia measure up?

After World War II, Australia became tied into the nuclear weapons systems of the United States, hosting communications and spying bases, allowing nuclear capable warships and aircraft to use Australian territory and in the main slavishly following the dictates of the Pentagon's global policies.

Although few Australian officials are themselves aware of the depth of Australia's complicity in nuclear war preparations, any government which begins to show signs of independence runs the risk of the US organising its removal from office.

Australia, along with other countries of Asia and the Pacific, has been drawn into alliances which, despite the rhetoric in which they are packaged, are aimed against the forces of social progress in the region. The alliances form part of the undermining of national sovereignty and independence which affects so many countries of the region.

Out of eight major military pacts which the US constructed world-wide since 1945, five were in the Asia-Pacific region. The Five Power Defence Agreements, the ANZAC agreement, the UKUSA intelligence-sharing agreement and a host of bilateral military treaties remain obstacles to peaceful development in the region.

The Labor Government's position

The Hawke Government's response to the changing situation in the Asia-

Pacific region remains rooted in the past, expressed above all in maintenance of the traditional commitment to the US alliance. At a conference at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre of the Australian National University in December last year, Australia's Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley, stated:

"The direct importance of our military alliance with the US is not always appreciated... Our perspectives align with those of the NATO countries. Australia is a member of the western community of nations."

The Defence Department under "Bomber" Beazley (also known as "Dr Strangelove") operates within the guidelines of the 1987 Defence White Paper which developed the concept of forward defence or "defence-in-depth".

This is an aggressive military strategy which envisages a role for Australia's military forces far beyond our borders and includes equipment and personnel adequate for intervention and police-style actions in the Pacific region. Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea are examples.

Put bluntly, under Prime Minister Hawke and Defence Minister Beazley, the Australian Government has accepted a policeman's role in the Pacific, acting as a surrogate cop for the United States.

The US is concentrating on confronting the Soviet Union in the North Pacific and has delegated some of its regional responsibility in the South Pacific to Australia.

Beazley responded by expanding our inter-operability with US forces; weakening controls on arms exports to help pay for the defence program; encouraging the development of the local arms industry; extending the agreements on US bases in Australia; developing Australian surveillance systems to spy on the region (particularly the new base at Geraldton in WA).

He also initiated overseeing the largest and most expensive peace time military equipment build-up, including (maritime) submarines, frigates, Seahawk helicopters, improved systems on the P3C planes and mine counter measures; (surveillance) over the horizon radars and airborne early warning systems; (land) a new vehicle fleet, field guns, small arms, radios, field equipment and Blackhawk helicopters; (air) F/A 18 planes, PC9 trainer, mid-life upgrading and weapons for the F111s and air to air refuelling.

"Units of the Operational Deployment Force (*the Townsville-based Australian equivalent of the Pentagon's Rapid Deployment Force — HM*) form the core of Australian ability to intervene militarily in other countries. The White Paper says the ODF will be supplemented with an armoured personnel carrier squadron and a parachute battalion. The latter is 'to secure a point of entry for the ODF'. The ODF will also benefit from new attack helicopters for battlefield use which are to be placed under Army control." (*Australia — the new Pacific policeman* by Peter Booker, New Age Publishers, 1987. page 18)

Militarisation of the north

The Defence Minister has also overseen a move north by the Australian Defence Forces. More patrol boats have been moved to Cairns and Darwin

and a patrol boat base is to be established at Port Hedland. Half the fleet will be deployed from the east to the west coast by the late 1990s. The army's Second Cavalry Regiment will move to Darwin in 1991. A chain of northern airfields, including Curtin near Derby and Tindal near Katherine, are complete except for one on Cape York on which construction is expected to start within the next two years.

Beazley argues that in order to achieve national security, Australia must develop capabilities which enable us to intervene within the region if necessary. Defence is not about self-defence but about ensuring the political stability of our area of direct military interest.

This area stretches "over 7,000 kilometres from the Cocos Islands to New Zealand and the islands of the South West Pacific, and over 5,000 kilometres from the archipelago and island chain in the north to the Southern Ocean. It constitutes about ten per cent of the earth's surface.

"Australia's area of broader strategic interests extends beyond the area of direct military interest to include South-East Asia, Indochina, the eastern Indian Ocean and the South-West Pacific." (Peter Jones, *op cit*, page 3)

No threat to Australia

The offensive "force projection" stance of forward defence has been developed despite the fact that Australia faces no military threat. This is not a pious hope but the official government (both Liberal and Labor) estimation.

The Defence White Paper says; "No regional country now has the capability — nor the motivation — to sustain high level intensive military operations against Australia."

Lieutenant General L O'Donnell, Chief of the General Staff of the Australian Army, said in his address to the 13th Pacific Armies Management Seminar (PAMS) in Sydney in March this year that: "There is no direct threat to Australia or dispute with another country that could conceivably develop into one."

The "threat" is not one of invasion to our borders and resources but of "instability" arising from independence and liberation movements which have the potential to threaten US economic and political interests.

"The move into greater Pacific involvement is essentially a recognition that more newly-independent countries are emerging, and that they may not necessarily be as submissive in their foreign policies as they were in the past. Without careful planning, the US and its allies could lose some of their dominant influence in the region." (Peter Booker, *op. cit.*, page 17)

This "careful planning" includes preparations for military intervention as well as other traditional imperialist methods such as economic pressure and blackmail, support for reaction, encouragement and backing for counter-revolution and so on.

"Future uncertainty"

Beazley has argued that the possibility exists that some of our regional

neighbours (Indonesia, India and China are hinted at) may, possibly within five to ten years, develop their naval military power and threaten Australia. This, he suggests, is made more likely by a possible decline in the US military presence in the region.

Lieutenant General O'Donnell developed this theme in his speech to the PAMS seminar:

"... future regional strategic activity seems likely to be seen less in terms of East-West issues. Leaders like Mr Le Kuan Yew fear that a withdrawal by the US from East Asia could precipitate a struggle between the great powers of Asia for dominance in the region. They apprehend that South-East Asia may again become what it was before the European ascendance — the prize of great powers from north and west Asia."

He goes on to discuss the developing economic and military strength of China, India and Japan and comments:

"None of this is directly threatening to Australia, but it does create future uncertainty. Each of these three major powers has the capability to intervene militarily in the region if it sees fit, and they are steadily improving this capability."

To meet this alleged "future uncertainty", Beazley announced a number of initiatives "to help protect and extend the strategic interests we share with our island neighbours". These included an expansion of the \$61 million Pacific Patrol Boat program, a new security commitment to PNG and increased emphasis on maritime surveillance in the South-West Pacific by the deployment of RAAF long-range maritime patrol aircraft and a doubling of visits by RAN warships.

The Defence Minister also stated that Australia intended to give its defence relations with the South Pacific states "the same priority" it already gives to the longer established relations with South-East Asian countries.

The anti-submarine capacity of the proposed ANZAC frigates is also intended to counter this extremely vague and even less likely future "threat".

However, Australia is about to get long-range, heavily armed submarines — and the government insists they are no threat to our neighbours.

Apparently the Australian submarines are friendly and should not provoke any other country to increase its defence forces. However, submarines commissioned by other Pacific countries will become a threat and can be used to justify increasing our defence forces.

"Self-reliance"

Added to the defence-in-depth strategy, Beazley makes much of the concept of "self-reliance".

Self-reliance is the Australian Government's response to increasing US pressure on allies such as Australia, Japan and New Zealand to "share the burden" — the demand that they pay a greater part of the cost burden of the

weaponry,, military equipment and forces deemed to be necessary to “protect the Western alliance”.

In his speech referred to earlier, the Australian Army’s Chief of the General Staff of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General L O’Donnell, said:

“Self reliant defence of Australia is clearly consistent with American concepts of burden sharing by allies. It is in the US interest also for Australia to reflect Western strategic interest in our region, in addition to our major contribution to global stability, through the joint facilities in Australia.”

The concept of self-reliance is also being used to create a new “justification” for the ANZUS Treaty. ANZUS was the protective umbrella, the guarantee that “big brother” would come to our aid in times of trouble, lulling successive generations of Australians to sleep, secure in the knowledge that the “yellow peril” or the Russians could not get them. US bases making Australia a link in the Pentagon’s nuclear first strike chain and a nuclear target were a small price to pay for this, we were told.

Now Beazley says this is not and never was so. “What we seek from the alliance,” he said in a press interview on April 30, 1989, “is much more practical day-to-day assistance in building up a self-reliant capability, intelligence, access to the best type of equipment, access to training opportunities.

“Unfortunately, over the years, debate over the alliance in this country has become sloppy, and there has been a tendency to mix ultimate guarantees with immediate benefit.”

The Hawke Government also seems willing to put pressure on New Zealand to “encourage” it to reconsider its ban on nuclear warship visits and to come back into the ANZUS fold. Hawke and Beazley seem as concerned as the Pentagon that the “New Zealand disease” might spread.

Former US Navy Secretary John Lehman wrote that US sanctions against New Zealand were necessary in order to “make it clear not only to New Zealand but also to all other countries tempted to such action that policies such as those of Mr Lange must bring about the loss of special privileges in economic and cultural relations with the United States”.

A recent report on regional security in the South Pacific prepared by Republicans in the US House of Representatives displays a degree of arrogance as well as an implied threat to New Zealand’s military forces as a result of the government’s nuclear-free policy. The report says;

“Without the support and sense of mission that comes from regular operations together with foreign forces such as those of the United States, it will be difficult for New Zealand personnel to maintain their morale and sense of mission.

“Compounding this problem further is the attempt of peace activists and others to de-legitimise national security functions; the Government has seemingly done little to counter this trend.”

It needs to be stressed that the development of an offensive “defence”

posture by Australia is in stark contrast to the growing international trend towards arms control and arms reduction, including the historic INF agreement, towards relaxation of tension, confidence building, the peaceful solution of regional conflicts and so on.

The threat behind “exercises”

Intense effort is devoted to propaganda convincing Australian people that their country is threatened and that they need to ally with the US to stave off this threat. Not only is this propaganda false, the truth is Australia's nuclear war connections bring closer the danger of global nuclear conflict which could well destroy all life on earth.

In the most recent example, Australia is hosting Kangaroo 89, a huge US/Australian joint military exercise costing \$230 million and involving over 28,000 Australian air, navy and land forces.

Between June and September 1989, Kangaroo 89 will involve civilian and local government bodies across the north of Australia (from the Kimberleys to Cape York) in pretending to “defend” Australia against an invasion by the mythical nation Kamaria (played by US troops).

The exercise is being staged at a time when the Federal Government's own defence paper states that Australia is without direct threat of invasion. A recent *Sydney Morning Herald* poll showed that most Australians also believe there is no threat to our security.

Kangaroo 89 is designed to stimulate fear of invasion among the Australian people in order to encourage acceptance of increasing Australian militarism, an increasing US military presence in Australia and continued dependence on the US alliance.

Nuclear war at sea

In the Pacific region, the Pentagon has launched an aggressive and provocative new nuclear maritime strategy and the Atlantic Council, a conservative NATO lobby group, has suggested that the restricted use of nuclear weapons at sea carries neither the moral stigma nor the threat of further escalation that applies to their use on land. Today the US Navy is building up to a 600 ship fleet, centred around 15 aircraft carriers and 100 attack submarines.

Dr William Arkin, Director of the National Security Program at the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington, has commented: “Our hair-trigger nuclear weapons systems and provocative naval activities demand that we take serious steps to reduce the likelihood of a confrontation. In fact, we are doing just the opposite.”

Since the early 1980s, the United States Navy has developed a new “Maritime Strategy” for destroying the retaliatory power of Soviet submarines.

In the event of severe international tension or in the opening stages of a conflict, even a non-nuclear one, the United States Navy would use nuclear weapons to decimate the Soviet fleet in its home waters, close to the USSR.

Some naval detachments would destroy Soviet SLBM submarines across the oceans, and others would attack Soviet port facilities with a range of new nuclear weapons.

The other half of the maritime strategy has been called “horizontal escalation”. It is now the Navy’s stated policy that, if a battle breaks out in Europe or the Middle East, US ships will automatically engage the Soviet Navy in other parts of the world.

“Regardless of how or where a war with the Soviet Union might erupt,” then Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Thomas Hayward testified in 1983, “our Navy will have a global fight on its hands from the early moments of hostility.”

Since this kind of escalation is an explicit and integral component of the “horizontal escalation” strategy, it makes a mockery of claims that nuclear war at sea could be “limited”.

Intercept Foundation’s Information Dossier 5 (September 1988) points out:

“By permitting (even encouraging) port calls by battleships and other nuclear armed US naval units, Australia is seen to support the United States Navy’s new maritime strategy — an aggressive and dangerous strategy which demonstrably increases the risk of nuclear war by lowering the threshold of nuclear weapons use in any conflict.”

“This policy ... has nothing to do with deterrence. It is about developing the capacity for a first strike attack. While the Australian government pays lip service to the principles of deterrence, its support for the militarisation of the Pacific through the increased deployment of naval nuclear weapons by the US is in fact support for a first strike strategy.” (Information Dossier 6)

In the case of nuclear ship visits, Intercept comments: “Ally or not, the United States expects the Australian government to accept what the US would never condone: the entry of unknown weapons onto its territory, under the control of a foreign government.” (Information Dossier 6)

Aid

Australia’s aid program is aimed primarily at South-East Asia and the South Pacific. Facing domestic pressures, the Hawke Government has been cutting back on aid, despite the fact that 85 per cent of it flows back to Australia.

Japan is becoming the main regional aid donor, seeing the political, financial and commercial benefits it can bring, apart from any humanitarian considerations. Japan’s aid program in the West Pacific is now about five times that of the United States.

Aid and political influence are often closely linked; aid generates business opportunities which can benefit Japanese companies.

However, according to the World Bank, developed country protectionism reduces developing countries’ national income by twice the amount of available aid funds.

Trading relations

In recent years, tension has been growing between the countries of the region and the major economic centres of imperialism — the US, the EC and Japan.

The creation of a unified EC market by 1992 has raised concerns about increased restrictions on access to European markets. Punitive tariffs are used by the US against certain countries and its subsidies to farmers have hurt Australian trade. Japan and South Korea also make it extremely difficult for other countries to penetrate their markets.

The US Government has spent more than \$US1.7 billion on export subsidies under the Export Enhancement Program (EEP) since it was introduced in 1985. It has been used mainly to underwrite exports by up to \$US60 a tonne to markets targeted by European Community subsidies, but its price-depressing impact has affected Australian exports and contributed to a 30 per cent drop in Australian wheat production over the past four years. The program has been used to subsidise sales to Australia's two largest markets, the Soviet Union and China, where Australian Wheat Board sales have been cut by 91 per cent and 21 per cent over the past four years.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) has found that US sugar quotas break international trading relations. Australian sugar exports to the US fell from 211,000 tonnes in 1982-83 — the year quotas were introduced — to 53,000 tonnes in 1988.

The Labor Government faces a contradiction between its politico-military loyalty to the United States and the fact that US trading policies are severely damaging areas of Australia's primary production.

This has been expressed on some recent occasions by members of the National Farmers Federation suggesting that the US access to its bases on Australian soil should be restricted (or even that the agreements under which the bases exist should be terminated) while US protection measures continue to hurt Australian wheat farmers.

While maintaining its military alliance with the United States, the Hawke Government is, at the same time, trying to strengthen its economic position in Japan, China and South-East Asian countries.

The Australian Government is well aware of Japan's importance to Australia as a trading partner: the bilateral trading relationship was worth \$19.2 billion in 1987-88 and Japanese markets for Australian coal and beef are significant. Japan is also the third biggest investor in Australia (after the USA and Britain).

Australia is currently working to develop regional trading relations and our Pacific neighbours are likely to become major trading partners. This process could lead to greater stability, confidence and shared interests in the region.

However, these moves are substantially limited by the fact that the development of mutually beneficial trading relations with the socialist coun-

tries of the region, with the exception of China, is rarely if ever mentioned.

On January 31, Mr Hawke proposed a "more formal inter-governmental vehicle for regional co-operation" modelled on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The proposal, as originally conceived, did not include the US because of fears that it would dominate the group. Later, however, the inclusion of the United States, Canada and China became part of the proposal.

The proposed forum was intended to bring the major Asian and Pacific industrial countries into a grouping which would discuss obstacles to trade within the region and identify the broad economic interests which each country had in common and advance opportunities for mutual co-operation.

Hawke stressed that he was not suggesting the creation of a Pacific trading bloc, but later conceded that it could form the basis for such a Pacific Rim bloc if the current round of GATT negotiations fail to free up world trade.

By mid-April, the US Congress has before it a resolution calling for the creation of a Pacific Basin forum which had Republican and Democrat backing.

US Senator Alan Cranston said the forum, embracing the US, Japan, China, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and "others", would encourage free trade and look at development and security issues. "Security" was a new element in the debate.

In June, new Liberal leader Peacock fluttered onto the bandwagon managing to argue simultaneously for freeing up world trade and the formation of an Asian-Pacific trading bloc.

Most recently, the formal response of the ASEAN states — Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Brunei — to Hawke's proposal was lukewarm. The six countries appeared to have reservations, particularly about the influence that Japan and the United States would exert in such a grouping, but agreed to attend a ministerial level meeting on the proposal planned for November.

"Part of the Western strategic community"

Lieutenant General O'Donnell sums up Australia's defence policy by saying "it provides for the **self reliant** defence of Australia, but in the context of our ongoing alliance relationship with the US ... We are neither neutralist, nor non-aligned, but positively a part of the Western strategic community".

Peter Booker comments: "The Defence White Paper is part of a long-term process of the Hawke Government accommodating itself to US military plans." (op. cit., page 9)

Australia's foreign and defence policy under the Hawke Labor Government supports the maintenance of US bases on Australian soil and visits to our ports by nuclear capable vessels. It is based around an aggressive and interventionist military strategy developed to counter growing regional independence and anti-nuclear movements which threaten Western, particularly US, economic and political interests.

14th Congress Communist Party of India

by Steve Gibson
SPA fraternal delegate

The 14th Congress of the Communist Party of India was held in Calcutta, West Bengal, from March 6 to 12, 1989.

There were approximately 1,000 delegates and fraternal delegates from 42 parties were in attendance. Included in this number was a delegation from the Communist Party of China, the first such delegation in 30 years.

In his opening speech, CPI General Secretary Comrade C Rajeswara Rao drew attention to the improving international climate characterised by a change from confrontation to dialogue, thanks to the consistent efforts of the Soviet Union's leadership supported by other socialist countries.

India's role since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru in striving for world peace and in support of people fighting against imperialist domination and for national liberation was stressed.

Comrade Rao said: "It is a matter of satisfaction that the Rajiv Gandhi Government has been pursuing our country's progressive foreign policy."

He went on to describe the internal situation as critical, with the miseries of the masses becoming unbearable. This state of affairs highlights the anti-democratic economic and domestic policies of the Rajiv Gandhi Government, he said.

Reference was made to the challenge of dealing with all types of religious, fundamentalist, communal, casteist, disruptive and separatist forces now raising their ugly heads and fanning fratricidal conflicts among the people. These dark forces of reaction are being supported by imperialism, especially US imperialism, in an effort to isolate India from its neighbours and to change its progressive foreign policy.

The CPI, said Comrade Rao, seeks to replace the present Congress (I) Government by an alternative government of left, democratic and secular forces in order to find democratic solutions to the people's problems.

It was mentioned that 72 CPI comrades had so far lost their lives in fighting the Khalistani terrorists in Punjab. At a later period in the Congress, a mother who had recently lost two sons and a daughter-in-law at the hands of the Khalistani terrorists was introduced to the delegates along with her orphaned granddaughter.

A welcoming speech by National Council member and Reception Committee Secretary Comrade Nanda Gopal Bhattacharya was presented to Congress in his absence due to illness. It was an inspiring speech in which the revolutionary traditions of Calcutta and West Bengal were outlined.

The process of normalisation of relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China (CPC) was heartily welcomed and applauded as a move with the potential to greatly strengthen the international communist movement. West Bengal communists regard the presence of a CPC delegation at the first Congress to be held in Calcutta for 41 years as an event of great significance to the communist movement of India as a whole.

Warm tribute was paid to the Party members of West Bengal without whose efforts the Congress could not have been staged. Each comrade donated three days wages and instances were many where comrades came forward to donate one month's wages, one month's pension and a part of the provident fund. A marvellous example indeed!

Some interesting information was contained in a short welcome address by Reception Committee Chairman Comrade Biswanath Mukherjee who said that the 1964 split in the Party left the CPI very much in the minority in West Bengal compared with the CPI (Marxist).

A gradual rebuilding has been going on since then and, in the course of time, a breaking of the political isolation in which the Party found itself became possible.

The CPI now belongs to the left front which has governed West Bengal for 12 years. It was pointed out, however, that much effort is still required to strengthen the Party in the region, organisationally and financially.

The enormous challenge of undertaking to stage a Congress under such circumstances is obvious and great credit is reflected on the comrades for staging it so successfully.

Congress documents

The draft political resolution contained six sections, namely: international situation, national political situation, Punjab developments and activities, the economic situation, agrarian situation, conclusion and tasks.

The section headed "*National Political Situation*" dealt with several examples of united actions in opposition to Congress (I) anti-democratic proposals and actions. Among these were defeat of the government's intention to introduce a defamation bill and forced shelving of a bill to amend the industrial disputes act.

The action of having State Governors remove non-Congress (I) Governments in Mizoram and Nagaland and measures to strengthen central power over regional administrations is seen as undemocratic. Also the compulsory registration of political parties encompassed in an electoral reform bill is seen as opening the door to interference in the functioning of political parties.

The anti-people and anti-democratic policies of the Congress (I) Government have led to a number of large opposition protest actions, including a one million strong rally in December 1988 in Delhi, widespread strike actions in March 1988, and a series of rural mass actions in September 1988. Also a long march organised by youth and students under the slogan "*Save India — Change India*".

Against communalism

The struggle against communalism was a dominant theme in the Congress deliberations. The political statement comes out strongly against this dangerous and divisive phenomenon, at the same time explaining the extremely complex problem which exists.

Under the heading of unity in diversity, the Party points out the necessity to take into account the fight for the development of the language and culture of the smaller nationalities together with establishment of their political rights and identities.

The upholding of the aspirations of each nationality and ethnic group to develop its own linguistic-cultural identity and the fight against discrimination directed at nationalities and at policies which aggravate regional imbalances goes hand in hand with the fight against regional chauvinism preaching hatred of nationalities of other regions.

Of course these problems are acute in Indian society today with many examples of the tragic consequences of communal violence. The Punjab region where Sikh extremist terrorists are practising murder, torture and mass property destruction in the name of protecting their religious and cultural identity is perhaps the most publicised example, but there are many, many more.

Various Hindu front organisations, the Muslim League and others, are busy fanning communalism. There is support amongst the more extreme Hindu organisations for the establishment of a Hindu Raj with consequent suppres-

sion of minority rights.

As if this were not complicated enough, the old established system of castes within the Hindu community is still alive and well so that there is suppression and discrimination even within the Hindu community itself.

The Indian comrades are tackling the incredibly difficult task of promoting an all India outlook amongst the people in conditions of such diversity and division. At the same time, the abuse by the Congress (I) Government of some of its overriding powers has resulted in the Party calling for a reduction in the concentration of powers at the centre.

The left front governed State of West Bengal and the left-democratic front State of Kerala are the special targets of the Central Government which seeks to reduce support for them by any means available, particularly financial discrimination.

The CPI calls on these two governments to do more in fighting corruption, reducing bureaucratic practices and removing public grievances and at the same time enacting progressive legislation. The dreadful situation prevailing in the Punjab can be resolved only by a political solution according to the document. The Congress (I) Central Government is severely criticised for its failure to follow a consistent political line in dealing with the Punjab crisis, preferring to treat it purely as a law and order issue.

There is in existence a "*Punjab Accord*" which the Party feels has the potential for resolving the problem. Its efforts have been concentrating on attempts to unite the people in demanding that the Central Government press on with measures to resolve the Punjab problem in the spirit of the Punjab Accord.

Economic situation

The "economic situation" is dominated by the official policy of the Rajiv Gandhi Government in favour of liberalisation of the economy "designed to boost profits, dividends, assets and export incomes of the big business sector and the monopoly houses".

The government wins support for its policies of decontrol and deregulation from business quarters as well as its actions in providing more and more incentives and concessions to the private sector. The Rajiv Gandhi Government, rather than raising more foreign loans, is now pursuing a line of inviting direct foreign investment.

Mention is made of the continuing unfavourable balance of trade, failure to control public expenditure and to hold the price line in respect of essential commodities and an inadequate public distribution system. These factors are reflected in a rising — to double figures — inflation rate.

Foreign exchange reserves are declining due to high import payments for edible and fuel oils, metals, petrochemicals, steel and wheat, lower net receipts of foreign aid and high IMF loan repayments. Almost 30 per cent of India's total foreign exchange earnings go in loan repayments and interest charges.

Large scale closures of industrial enterprises due to liberalised import policies and domestic economic factors constitute a growing concern. Small scale and traditional industries are the main sufferers in this regard.

A new textile policy moving production from composite textile mills and hand weavers to power looms is having a disastrous effect on hundreds of thousands of weavers. Over 135 mills are lying idle. Artificial fibres are taking over from cotton in the interests of higher profits for manufacturers, thereby spelling ruin for many cotton farmers.

Under pressure of public opinion, the government has agreed to appoint a committee to review all aspects of the textile policy. The chairman of the committee has warned that it will be socially and politically disastrous to sacrifice the interests of cotton growers and textile workers.

The CPI document points out that the textile sector's crisis is not likely to be solved within the framework of the existing socio-economic system. The government's pro-monopoly and anti-nationalisation policies make the likelihood of the review committee doing anything substantial appear even more remote.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a problem of massive proportions with the 30 to 40 million registered unemployed being regarded as the tip of the iceberg. Employment is falling in the private sector and there is a failure to fill vacancies in the public sector.

The ranks of the unemployed, under-employed and unorganised, immigrant, bonded and child labour are swelling the millions of slum dwellers and other pauperised people.

Huge ecological problems have so far been neglected. Vast areas are subject to flooding and drought due, in the main, to a failure to implement flood control and irrigation measures.

Positive aspects

On the positive side of an overwhelmingly negative ledger is the stabilising influence of increasingly wide and comprehensive economic co-operation between India and the Soviet Union. Over the years this has played a decisive role in building a powerful public sector, laying the foundations of an independent national economy, strengthening India's defence system and developing mutually beneficial trading relations.

The document points out that while Soviet aid and co-operation insulate the Indian economy against some of the hazards of trade imbalance, technological dependence and multinational corporation domination, it cannot overcome the basic malaise of the capitalist path of development, the exploitative nature of a private sector oriented government policy or the negative role of a section of pro-Western bureaucracy which, in the words of the document, "tries to sabotage the implementation of the agreements reached with the socialist world".

The Gandhi Government justifies its policies of shedding labour, cutting costs, inducting new technology from foreign sources, closing plants, promoting joint ventures, privatising and encouraging contract systems, using the plea that these are *perestroika* methods based on what is happening in the socialist countries.

The document describes the dishonesty of such propaganda and contrasts the effects of *perestroika* in the planned socialist economies with similar measures undertaken in a market economy geared primarily to capitalism.

Agrarian matters

Major emphasis is given in the political statement to agrarian matters reflecting, it would seem, concern with issues directly affecting a major CPI support base.

The plight of rural workers and small peasants is terrible. Although there have been a number of land reform measures adopted under pressure from the militant peasant movement, ownership of agricultural land remains predominantly with large landholders. Existing ownership ceiling laws are ignored in many cases.

Concentration of land ownership results in concentration of ownership of water and other productive agricultural assets, retarding the stable and steady development of agricultural production and the alleviation of poverty, unemployment and backwardness.

Inequality in land and agricultural assets ownership provides also a ready breeding ground for casteism, communalism, religious fundamentalism, separatism and secessionism.

Wages of agricultural labourers are abysmal with various poverty alleviation measures having failed to even scratch the surface of the problem. Agricultural workers are all below the official poverty line of Rs 6,400 per annum (\$650) with average incomes ranging from Rs 960 to Rs 1,680 (\$80 to \$160) per annum.

The Party is committed to seeing that the benefits of poverty alleviation measures reach the rural poor, at the same time educating the masses to understand that the long term and ultimate solution to their problems lies with the replacement of a system which breeds poverty at one pole and wealth at the other.

Women's Charter

A detailed explanation of the Party's activities since the 13th Congress is provided in a document entitled *Draft Review Report on National and International Developments and our Party's Activities Since XIII Party Congress (Patna, 1986)*.

This document also carries a report of the work of the Party women's organisations. It is stated that three main methods of work are adopted to bring about achievement of women's demands for an end to exploitative practices based on sex as well as educating them in class values. These

methods are: (i) agitation (ii) running constructive work centres (iii) taking up cases of women victims of social oppression.

Women in India are subject to every form of oppression and discrimination imaginable.

The Party organisation at a conference passed a *Charter of Demands for Women* which included the major demands based on their daily needs.

Vigorous actions have been launched to procure some improvements in facilities for women and families. Some instances are given of successful actions to achieve local gains.

In addition, agitation by the whole Party spearheaded by the women's organisations has assisted in a gradual community awareness and action campaign against atrocities such as bride burning, dowry deaths, gang rape (often by police) and other shocking but apparently commonplace crimes, the majority of which in the past have gone unpunished.

Tasks of the Party

The final section of the political resolution headed "*Conclusion and Tasks*" is included here in full:

"The present crisis cannot be overcome within the existing socio-economic framework. It is urgently necessary to shift the country and its policies to the left. What is required, above all, is replacement of the present bourgeois government of the Congress (I) at the centre by an alternative left, democratic and secular government which has a clear cut program.

"The components of such a program should include the following:

- (1) "Exposure of and fight against imperialist manoeuvres threatening peace and national security and unity; strengthening friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries;
- (2) "For reversal of Rajiv Gandhi Government's economic policies and for self-reliant economy; step up indigenous research and development for import substitution;
- (3) "An all-India land struggle aimed at distribution of all surplus land held illegally and government lands to the landless poor, implementation of land reforms;
- (4) "Struggle for wages and other demands of agricultural workers and against social oppression of Harijans, tribals and backward classes and unorganised industrial workers;
- (5) "Help the small and middle peasants to secure their demands and subsidies for inputs and services through co-operatives;
- (6) "A countrywide campaign for remunerative prices for the farmers, agricultural inputs at reasonable prices, cancellation of loans of poor peasants, completion and construction of irrigation projects in drought and flood-prone areas;

- (7) "Strengthening the all-India movement for expanding of the public sector and against its privatisation, and for reopening of closed factories and opening new factories to absorb the surplus and retrenched workers;
- (8) "A national solidarity campaign with the forces of the Punjab who are combatting the terrorists, opposing secessionist demands and upholding national unity, ensure the security of the Sikh minority in all states;
- (9) "A consistent and determined struggle against all types of communal and fundamentalist forces, particularly aggressive forces of Hindu communalism typified by the RSS, BJP, VHP and Shiv Sena, as well as the Jamaat-e-Islami, Adam Sena, etc; strict separation of state and politics from religion;
- (10) "For full development of all nationalities and ethnic groups, equality of all languages, protection and encouragement to all languages of minorities;
- (11) "Support the campaigns of students and youth against unemployment and the new elitist education policy of the Congress (I) Government, for educational opportunities to all without discrimination, for free education up to secondary level, for a comprehensive youth policy guaranteeing the rights to education and employment and free and universal access to sports and culture;
- (12) "Strengthen and expand the campaign of the women's organisations against dowry deaths, sati and atrocities on women and for women's democratic rights, viz, adequate training and employment, education, health, child care and adequate representation in all educational bodies;
- (13) "Demand raising of all people above the poverty line by AD 2000 and fight for the demands like pensions, guaranteed employment schemes, house sites, minimum wages and subsidised food supplies;
- (14) "For state trading in food grains so as to sustain a comprehensive public distribution system supplying all essential commodities and putting an end to the continuous rise in their prices;
- (15) "Fight for restructuring of centre-state relations to give more powers and resources to the states;
- (16) "Defence and expansion of democratic and trade union rights and civil liberties, against all curbs and encroachments;
- (17) "Against import of foreign investment and technology which harm the interests of the small scale sector and of indigenous industries;
- (18) "Scrap the new textile policy and evolve a comprehensive textile policy safeguarding the interests of the hand loom weavers, mill workers, decentralised power loom sector workers, and consumers;
- (19) "Against the eviction of slum dwellers without their alternative rehabilitation and for a proper democratic housing policy;
- (20) "For effective measures to protect the environment and health of the people from ecological hazards; for scientific use of the land and water

resources and conservation of forests; counter the opposition to nuclear plants on the plea of environmental safety and health hazards;

(21) "Implementation of specific measures to detect and eliminate black money and tax evasion, which are the main source of corruption in high places;

"Only through multifarious mass movements on the people's issues can a left and democratic alternative to the Congress (I) emerge. The party's task is to stand at the lead of the aforesaid struggle and movements and to act as the mobiliser of the broad masses to bring about a decisive shift in the political life of the country. It must carry on a political-ideological campaign among the masses to popularise the principles of scientific socialism and to combat all forms of obscurantism, social evils, feudal customs etc.

"In order to undertake these tasks effectively, the Communist Party of India will have to strengthen the mass organisations of the workers, peasants, agricultural labourers and other democratic sections of the society. It is only by building and expanding the organisation of the party with deep roots among the toiling people and engaged in struggle, the Communist Party of India will succeed in bringing about unity of the left and draw all other democratic sections and classes of our people for replacement of the present government at the centre by a government of left and democratic unity. In the course of this process, the party must utilise the opportunities offered by the next general elections to parliament to change the balance of political forces in the country in favour of the masses."