

analysis

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Reflections on Violence

By GEORGES SOREL

I The July 4 anti-war demonstration was an enormous success. In a complex dialectical manner it has created a tremendous number of pacifists. People who were previously for violence have publicly expressed their conversion to pacifism. Sir Henry Bolte, whose lust for the life of Ronald Ryan was all consuming, now finds himself horrified by a broken window. John Gorton who enjoys violence on TV just as much as he has been pleased to practice it on the Vietnamese, is shocked by a punch-up. John Lynch, whose fear of suicide in others kept him awake at night, is now revolted by a cut finger. With thousands of their pro-flogging, pro-war, pro-hanging supporters, these Liberal leaders have suddenly been transformed from warmongers into pacifists. Violence has suddenly become the ultimate sin.

II What Gorton & Co. object to is not violence. They use it themselves. They object to students and workers breaking their monopoly of violence. They are selective pacifists. They are pacifists in regard to revolution but not in regard to war or counter-revolution. Their moral prattle is blatantly mendacious as Petty's B-52 cartoon so pointedly revealed.

III A favourite Marcussian argument is that we are repressed not by violence so much as by tolerance. This is not without its truth. The time students are given on television can lead them to believe that they have a part to play in the consensus of society: that of tame wildmen, of zoological curiosities. The proposal to give the vote to eighteen year olds is another excellent example of the ruling class extending democracy in order to maintain its power. What we are being offered is 'freedom without power'. Which is not freedom at all.

IV As much as our rulers would like to tie us down with drugs, levelless sex and inhuman culture they are still forced to use violence. Even in the U.S. where the informal controls are strongest, the Bull Connors flourish. In the backblocks of capitalism like Australia repressive violence is an automatic reflex of a ruling class which is so incompetent that it is rapidly being replaced by Americans. So while priests and advertising agents have a role to play as carriers of propaganda for apoliticalism (i.e. counter-revolution), the policeman remains the frontline and the backstop of capitalist power.

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V. Every action which opposes the government without threatening its power to rule is proof of the 'truly democratic' nature of our society. Only when the government's power to rule is challenged does the true nature of power and democracy become apparent.

VI. The theoretical foundation of representative government is to be found in John Locke's concept of 'tacit consent'. This states that if you do not actively prevent the Government acting against your wishes you give tacit consent to the Government's action. In the absence of your active refusal to consent the Government has the right to conscript you into policies to which you object. The corollary of this is that active resistance and opposition is necessary in order to remove oneself from the power of government. The very theory of bourgeois democracy justifies violence of those who oppose the government. If they do not want to accept its dictates, Locke says, they have to violently resist it.

VII. The July 4 demonstration raises two questions regarding the validity of violence as a political weapon. One - is it valid in a democracy where there are other means of changing political opinion. Two - was it desirable at this time and in this way. The first question is strategic and has in part been answered. The second is tactical and is probably more immediately contentious.

VIII. The other means of changing political opinion are elections. Here everyone has an equal say. But do they? Does the illiterate Gurindji tribesman have the same say as Sir Frank Packer? Of course not. This comparison reveals the essential point of elections. They are merely the final step in a complex process of opinion formation and expression. The class that controls the means of communication, the means of education, that dominates the entire culture with its acquisitiveness is in a far stronger position than those who are asserting principles of selflessness. The advantage of the Liberal Party at election time comes not from the number of editorials that support it, not from the excess of funds that pour into its coffers, but from the very quality of life in capitalist society where no one can escape from the influence of bourgeois culture.

IX. A lot of people have declared themselves in favour of the violence on July 4. Such abstract approval is anarchistic and devoid of sense. The validity of any act depends not upon the act itself but upon its effects. The means can only be justified if the ends are achieved. If violence is intended to end oppression but instead produces fascism then the violence is wrong. Success is the only criterion. The question of success or failure has not yet arisen. It is too soon. There has been no follow-up. Therefore it is too early to decide for or against this particular piece of violence.

X. The validity of this violence will depend upon the consequences. If it runs into a dead-end organizationally and theoretically then it will have been bad. If it is the starting point of a new level of mass struggle then it will have been justified. Therefore it is not possible to be for or against it at this time, in a tactical sense.

XI. The strategic arguments for violence as outlined above do not justify assassinating every state official down to the man who reads the gasometer. Every act has to be justified in itself and not from abstract principles:

although its complete justification cannot be achieved without recourse to such principles.

XII. The least satisfactory justification of violence is that it makes the participants more militant. THIS SIMPLY IS NOT TRUE. The consequence of a broken collar-bone is discretion. If it were otherwise murder by the police would be the greatest force for radicalisation. It is true that when pacific demonstrations are attacked by police then the response is a heightening of political consciousness. But to expect that when the demonstrations are violent that this raises anyone's level is nonsense. It treats the masses with contempt, as something to be fooled and manipulated. A blind man can distinguish between police brutality and revolutionary violence. And it is the desire of revolutionaries that he should be able to so distinguish.

XIII If the physical act of violence does not raise the theoretical level, what does. The answer is a combination of theory and practice. It is true that endless discussion will never lead to action. But it is also true that action alone will never generate more than spontaneity. Consciousness can only come from the development of a theory from the practice previously undertaken. A spontaneous awareness of the state has automatically followed from the July 4 demonstration. What can only come from a previously articulated theoretical position is a theoretical understanding of why the state acts the way it does and why it must always do so. The fact of violence has made the theory of violence an issue. It will remain inchoate unless a full theoretical explanation is provided. These notes can be no more than a starting point. The classic writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao on the nature of the state must be included in any worthwhile analysis.

XIV. Another dangerous a priori justification of the July 4 action is that because we were attacked for it by our enemies it must therefore be a good thing. This is no justification; rather it is the avoidance of a justification. To be praised by our enemies is always a sure sign of error on our part, but the reverse does not follow automatically. To be attacked by an enemy is only a good thing if we are victorious. Two examples may illustrate this. If a detachment of NLF troops are attacked by the Yanks and are wiped out by them this is not a good thing. If an article against the war in Vietnam is full of factual errors which are attacked and exposed this is not a good thing. Something can be bad for the enemy and bad for us at the same time, though in different ways. The parrotlike repetition of formulas will not make our tasks any easier. There is often too much "universal Marxist-Leninist truth" for the scant amount of "concrete Australia reality" offered.

XV. Consequences have already flowed from the July 4 action. One is a revolution in the counter-revolution, namely the charges under the Riot Act. This is a real indication that the state recognises the nature of the challenge being made, and is acting quickly to suppress it at birth. Initially they have some advantages. They have a well organised police force. We have no Defence Corps. They have the machinery of 'Justice'. We have our contempt for bourgeois law. This means that we must act quickly to take necessary preventative measures. We must adopt proper revolutionary procedures in regard to meetings, decisions and the use of non-de-plumes. This must not become conspiratorial or theatrical. But the State is threatening us with jail. We must take its threats seriously and protect ourselves. Moreover, we must realise that the kind of action undertaken on July 4 will not succeed again. At the first sign of anything more than righteous indignation the full

force of the law will be brought down - on heads. A series of technological innovations will have to be made in the practice of demonstrations.

XVI Because of the over reaction of the state we should not over-estimate the nature of the July 4 action. It was violent but it was not aimed at undermining state power. It was not sabotage. It was not a political strike. The rantings of Rylah should not blind us to the gap that separates the July 4 demonstration, which was typical of demonstrations elsewhere in the world, from a real challenge to the state as presented by a political strike. We are just catching up in one area, that of demonstrations. We have a very very long way to go. It is one o'clock, not five-minutes-to-midnight.

XVII While taking account of these new repressive manifestations in order to overcome them, we must recognise that the means of victory, both tactical and strategic, are at hand. We can only progress to the next stage politically in working alliance with the working-class. We can only defeat the recent manoeuvres of the state in working alliance with the working-class. Up to now our contact has been artificial. Now workers and students face the courts on a joint issue. The campaign against the riot charges can lead to a real bond between workers and students. If this bond is established and continues to develop, the question "Was the July 4 action correct?" can be answered in the affirmative since its consequences will have proved it to be so.

XVIII. The action of Tiechmann is only to be expected. He was after all only giving a repeat performance of Tom Uren's activity during the Sydney anti-Ky demonstration. When six thousand were marching on Kirribilli House, Uren used a police transhailer to tell the people to go home. About 5000 did so. Tiechmann used a police transhailer in a vain attempt to organise a March on the Presbyterian Assembly Hall: a handful followed. "If all the minor personages in history appear twice, the first is as tragedy, the second is as farce." Moreover, Tiechmann's attitude at the demonstration is in line with his stated attitude towards US imperialism. In the March-April issue of PACIFIC he writes that he is one of those who want to put America on the right track before she loses her influence. Is this influence the 7th Fleet? The United Fruit Company? Or simply the Readers Digest? His whole theory of armed neutrality is based on the premise that Australia has an enemy in Asia. This re-enforces the fear of Asia that is the foundation stone of Liberal victories. So attractive is this theory that Santamaria has adopted it - giving it nuclear teeth.

XIX. The maxim is "Bourgeois democracy is a fraud". NOT "Democracy is a bourgeois fraud". The first is Marx, the second is Hitler.

From Petrograd to Saigon

By GORAN THERBORN

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The staggering blows that the National Liberation Front has now dealt the American military expedition in Vietnam have changed history. When some half a million American troops with enormous technological superiority are no longer capable of keeping even the US Embassy in Saigon safe, the most rabid spokesmen of imperialism have temporarily lapsed into a stunned silence. The incredible heroism of the Vietnamese militants has awed the world. They have proved, once and for all, that revolutionary peoples, not imperialism, are invincible. Socialists everywhere owe them an immense homage.

It is now a truism that Vietnam dominates the whole international political situation, and that solidarity with the Vietnamese Revolution is today the duty that solidarity with the October Revolution was in 1917. Every Marxist knows this instinctively. What we now need is some initial theoretical analysis of the significance of the Vietnamese War for the world socialist movement. Le Duan, Secretary-General of the North Vietnamese Communist Party, has recently reminded us, in an important article commemorating the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, that : "The Vietnamese Revolution is part of the world revolution and its success cannot be dissociated from that of the world revolution"¹ What is the exact nature of the relationship between the two? This brief contribution is intended only as a first step to the elucidation of the problem.

A social conflict is not just a clash of two or more forces on a flat plane. It has a complex, multi-dimensional structure, which determines its prospects and limits. Some exponents of bourgeois political science have recently advanced the concept of the international political system, but they have mostly confined themselves to such formalistic categories as bipolarity, multipolarity, antagonism, complementarity, or co-operation. Marxist analysis naturally replaces this empty labyrinth with a concrete historical theory, centred on the dialectical concept of contradiction.

¹ Le Duan, 'Forward under the Magnificent Red Banner of the October Revolution.'

To understand the meaning and consequences of the Vietnamese War to-day, a comparison of it and the classical phase of the Cold War, above all in Europe, is essential. This is the fundamental context in which it emerges with all its explosive force. For American imperialism is fighting the Vietnamese Revolution today with the identical ideological banner - Anti Communism - under which it trampled on the Greek Revolution 20 years ago. Yet the outcome and impact of the conflict has been totally different. Why?

1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE COLD WAR

No properly constituted theory of the Cold War exists. But its essential political character is clear. The Cold War was a fundamentally unequal conflict, that was presented and experienced on both sides as being equal. The Soviet Union was put forward as a direct alternative model of society to that of the Western capitalist countries. The conflict was seen, both within the Communist movement and within capitalism, as a struggle as to which was the better society, compared at a single moment of time. Posed like this, the conflict was inevitably detrimental to the advance of socialism everywhere. For Russia in no way represented an equivalent economic base to that of Western Europe or the United States, it was still a society marked by poverty and scarcity, aggravated by the tremendous losses and devastations of the Second World War, and engaged in the inhuman imperatives of isolated primitive accumulation. (This condition naturally determined its relationship to the countries of Eastern Europe.) The affluent and advanced West was never deeply challenged from within by this social mode. Russia was manifestly authoritarian and violent, whereas Western capitalist societies had in most cases a long bourgeois-democratic tradition. But politically, violence and bureaucracy was pitted, without historical mediations, against the bland parliamentarianism of the West, in a world where socialism was an encircled enclave within the world imperialist economy. This was the meaning and genesis of the Cold War. The specific form taken by the contradiction between socialism and capitalism thus determined an internal neutralization of the contradictions within capitalism. The working-class was by and large mobilized in the anti-Communist crusade, because of its fear of the Soviet model, symbolized by a regime of shortages and repression. Both economic and political "competition" between the blocs was, under these circumstances, to the advantage of the West. Neither, in the form they took, threatened bourgeois rationality. While the USSR, anyway a vastly poorer society, was shattered by the German invasion, the USA - already much the wealthiest society in the world - emerged not merely unscathed but actually economically assisted by the war. It was thus able to pour a profusion of dollars into Western Europe (while the USSR was securing reparations from Eastern Europe), and get it on the path of a successful capitalist restoration and reconstruction, greatly strengthened by the armaments boom of the fifties. Saturated with Cold War ideology, the working-class in the West was by and large enlisted in the cause of the Truman Doctrine and Nato, the defenders of both freedom (parliament) and prosperity (free enterprise) from the evils of international communism. The Communists in Italy, France, Finland and elsewhere retrenched themselves in isolated enclaves, and waited for the international situation to change. The non-Communist Left was crushed or compromised. The Cold War, fought out as a competitive conflict between the USSR and the USA in Europe, resulted in the massive political and ideological consolidation of capitalism in the West. An unequal conflict fought as equal redoubles the inequality. The Cold War was a long penalization of socialism.

The contemporary conflict between imperialism and national liberation, of which the war in Vietnam is the principal aspect today, is totally different in structure. It is a conflict between unequal forces presented and lived as unequal. There is no question of any comparison between the desperately deprived and rebellious workers and peasants of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the wealthy capitalist societies of the West which sends its praetorians to obliterate them. The very essence of the struggle between them is their incommensurability. This, indeed, is the meaning of the military form of the conflict. The Cold War was a struggle on the same plane between two forces at different levels. The protracted war of a guerrilla army against an imperialist military expedition is the armed expression of a conflict where the inequality of the parties is matched by a struggle on disparate planes - each party fighting on different terrain. All of Mao's writings on guerrilla warfare are concerned with this fundamental strategic asymmetry. The rule is, of course, that normally there is only a one-way connection between the two planes. Successfully fought and led, the guerrilla army can erode and eventually disintegrate the social, political and military position of its cumbersome conventional enemy, while the latter, unavailingly unleashes its technological fury on the population - before being decisively defeated.

But this strategic asymmetry reflects a deeper historical relationship. The struggle in Vietnam today and Cuba yesterday is for liberation from imperialist exploitation and oppression. Given the global structure of capitalism, this means not merely secession from, but a frontal attack on, capitalism as a system and the bourgeois rationality that integrates it. Two social models are now in a quite new relationship with each other. Socialist liberation in Vietnam does not 'compete' with US capitalism, it focuses a diamond light on the internal structure of the rich capitalist societies which compels their negation of the freedom and development of other societies. Thus whereas the 'competitive' contradiction between socialism and capitalism during the Cold War blocked the contradictions within capitalism, the Vietnamese conflict has detonated the contradictions within US capitalism itself. For there is now no question of comparing a scarcity political model with the affluent societies of the West - the ideological device which successfully mystified a generation of the Western proletariat. On the contrary, the ideologies of imperialism and racism with which the USA is fighting the war in Vietnam have recoiled on it. The war in Asia has triggered a war in the ghettos. For the young in the West, the examples of dedication and heroism are now drawn from the movements of liberation in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Socialism here is no longer a dull, harsh austerity threatening the consumers of the West, but a heroic fight by exploited and starving peoples for a human existence, denied them by imperialism and its lackeys. It is no longer an alien social model, but an immediate ideological inspiration - a source of emulation. The Vietnamese Revolution has thus done what no other economic or political force in the world has achieved for 30 years - it has

2 It might be added that the abandonment of the comparison of socialist accumulation with capitalist affluence has been accompanied, in China, Cuba and North Vietnam, with a new theoretical and political insistence on economic egalitarianism (criticised in the USSR during the thirties). The Cultural Revolution, the 'simultaneous construction of socialism and communism' in Cuba, and the war-time practice of the DRV share this preoccupation.

has shattered the cemented unity of American society and at last reactivated its internal contradictions. The potential shift in the international class struggle that this represents is enormous, and may still not be perceived by those whose political horizons have become habituated to a world in which the citadel of imperialism was itself an undivided monolith. The emergence of a militant, revolutionary Left in the USA - no matter how quantitatively limited as yet - is a tremendous change in world politics. The most lucid spokesmen of imperialism are aware of this today, and they fear more than anything else the impact of the Vietnamese War at home.

The Vietnamese War, then, shows that an unequal struggle waged as unequal equalizes the inequality. All the political and ideological consequences in the world at large are reversed. Imperialism today is on the defensive. The social peace installed by the Cold War is disintegrating in the vortex of the Vietnamese War. The tranquil conscience of 1949 has become the brutalized demoralization of 1968. The mass defection of hitherto conventionally anti-Communist American intelligentsia from the Johnson administration and its war is the most evident sign today of this extraordinary transformation.

3. THE NATURE OF THE AGGRESSOR: USA

The nature of the two parties to the conflict must now be considered. The Spanish War of 1936-39 is often invoked by militants in the West, when they prosecute the campaign against the Vietnamese War. This is an argument designed to appeal to liberal opponents of the war, en route to radicalization. There is every justification for this, of course, if the focus of the argument is the precedent of Guernica - mass bombing of civilians as a deliberate instrument of terror. The US atrocities in Vietnam may obviously be compared to those of fascism. Jean-Paul Sartre has provided an explanation of the nature of the genocide they institute. But the argument is in other respects misleading. In particular, it implies that the USA in Vietnam today only plays the role of Germany or Italy. This is manifestly not so. Franco had a considerable social base in Spain, and was not a mere creature of Hitler or Mussolini. He was the leader of a broad counter-revolutionary coalition, although he was aided by them. Thieu and Ky, of course, are puppets with no social basis whatever: the Americans are the sole reason for their existence. The war in Vietnam today is not a civil war, it is an imperialist war: Americans against Vietnamese. The ARVEN troops are mere looters in the inter-ludes.

It is thus incorrect in a number of important ways to speak of America's role in Vietnam as fascist. Polemical insistence here is actually counter-productive: if anything, it minimises the implications of the US aggression. For fascism was an abnormal form of capitalist society. It was the response of the crisis-threatened German and Italian bourgeoisies to economic chaos and political disorder. These were second-echelon capitalist countries, in the last analysis, and fascist ideology even conceived them as the "proletarian" nations of Europe in their day. The irrationality of fascism followed from its genesis. It is thus important to emphasize that the United States is not a fascist country, like Germany or Italy. Nor is it a declining colonial power like France, when it waged its ruthless war against the Algerian Revolution in the fifties. It is the richest capitalist society in history, the leader of the "Free World" and a functioning democracy. Yet in Vietnam it is committing many of the same crimes as fascism. Why? Because that is the inner logic of imperialism as a social system. The very bourgeois democracy that adorned capitalism during the Cold War today stands indicted with it. The Vietnamese War is not the exceptional product of an exceptional regime:

it is the natural product of the normal regime of the centre of the world capitalist system. The truth of US society has been blown open by the Vietnamese mortars that circle Saigon. It is there for all to see, above all the Americans.

4. THE NATURE OF THE RESISTANCE: NLF & DRV

The crimes committed in Vietnam today are not committed by a Nazi Germany or a colonial France. They are committed by the "Land of the Free", the world's premier bourgeois democracy. They thus lead, without any confusion or side-issue, straight to the political core of the system that perpetrates them: capitalism. The Vietnamese War has produced a parallel unprecedented focussing of the essential conflicts on the other side. The Cold War did not pass uninterrupted into the Vietnamese conflict, of course. There was a considerable intermediary phase, during which détente developed in Europe. Destalinization and polycentrism greatly modified the Communist world. Abroad, "neutralism" had become the official doctrine of many ex-colonial countries within the capitalist system, while sentimentalism about under-development often replaced aggressive Cold War liberalism. In the West, some important internal anomalies began to be rediscovered by the Left. The myths of social equality and the abolition of poverty were exploded; structural unemployment and urban neglect re-emerged as major political issues. In this context, identification with the cause of the oppressed peoples of the three continents became increasingly frequent among the young on the Left - but often still in the form of a well-meaning anti-colonialism dissociated from any understanding of the concrete dynamics of class struggle, in the age of imperialism. An important example of this new phenomenon was the anti-nuclear movement (CND) in Britain. We know that CND never theoretically and strategically assumed the challenge it constituted to the "whole contemporary teleology of British Society".⁴ It rebelled against the ideological positions of both East and West, but it never developed any other articulated theory ideology at all. It was quite natural that the anti-nuclear and neutralist movements should never have done so, because such a theory would have undermined the whole ideological rationale of the movements, showing the inevitability of the Cold War, given the irreconcilability of capitalism and socialism and the current structure of that conflict. But in the absence of such a theory, the movements soon collapsed, leaving a very modest inheritance indeed. The Cuban Revolution, with its decisive option for Marxism and Leninism, had already rendered this tendency obsolete.

Today, the Vietnamese Revolution has radically changed the co-ordinates of the situation. For just as it is the world's major bourgeois democracy which is waging an imperialist war in Vietnam, so the Vietnamese Revolution is organized and led - superbly - by communist revolutionaries. The Vietnamese

3 Discussing possible exits from the Vietnamese War, Mary McCarthy writes, sarcastically of the electoral solution: "In national election years, you are free to choose between Johnson and Goldwater or Johnson and Romney or Reagan, which is the same as choosing between a Chevrolet and a Ford - there is a marginal difference in styling. Just as in American hotel rooms you can decide whether or not to turn on the air conditioner (that is your business), but you cannot open the window." (Vietnam) The importance of such statements - they have become a general cry in the last year - is not the novelty of the thought but the evolution of the author. Before the Vietnamese War, Mary McCarthy was a prominent representative of the conventionally anti-Communist intelligentsia. To-day, she writes publicly that the Communist societies have more promising futures than the United States.

4 Perry Anderson. "The Left in the Fifties", New Left Review 29.

Revolution is not inspired by any cloudy 'Third World' doctrines, but by the ideas of Marx and Lenin. There is thus no room for any ambiguity on the central issue. Opposition to the American War in Vietnam sooner or later logically implies support for a socialist revolution led by Marxists and supported by a Communist State. Increasingly, even one-time Cold War liberals in the USA have admitted this logic and publicly affirmed their support for the NLF. The political lesson, of course, is that only such a Marxist-Leninist ideology and organization today can prevail over the juggernaut of American imperialism: resistance movements all over the world will remember this from now on. But within the West, the lesson is no less salutary. The most sacred beliefs of the Cold War are being widely rejected by the young. The anti-nuclear movement was an opposition against a conflictual relationship between the capitalist and socialist Big Powers, stressing what united them, the threat of nuclear annihilation. The Vietnam movement, on the other hand, is based on opposition against an imperialist war waged by the leading capitalist state against a socialist country and a movement sustained by Communists. It necessarily produces solidarity with the latter. The rupture with bourgeois society is much sharper and deeper than with the anti-nuclear movement, no longer just drop-out but active support of the enemy. It is an index of the changed situation that the Vietnam movement has to fight, not so much systematic ideologies (as did the anti-nuclear movement), as anti-scientific and ad hoc 'explanations' of the war in terms of the ignorance, errors and misjudgments of the Johnson administration. Against this, there is no reason why a theory of imperialism and a theory of advanced capitalism should not at last emerge on the Left. It is evident that it can only come from within Marxism. The dialectic of the war has transferred the ideology of the guerrillas into the culture of the metropolis.

5. THE NEW DIALECTIC: FROM PETROGRAD TO SAIGON

The International contradiction between socialism and capitalism has thus been radically redefined by the Vietnamese Revolution. After a long and inescapable detour, it has been restored to a direct and unequivocal confrontation. This is the decisive meaning of this unequal war. Its reverberations have already shaken the world. A generation is now being formed in the homelands of imperialism which has experienced the truth of their own 'democratic' and 'affluent' societies. It is no accident that all over the advanced capitalist world - in the USA, Japan, Germany, Sweden, France, Italy and England - the new social force which has been the vanguard of the struggle against American imperialism is the student, high-school and youth population. For it is precisely their age which divides them from the myths of the by-gone era of the Cold War. They no longer constitute a selected elite with a secure future status in the ruling class, but a young generation massed together in crowded and bureaucratic institutions adapted to the needs of private industry, and the politico-military apparatus. For traditional cultural reasons, they are the social group that is most influenced by international issues, and they have been most affected by the de-Westernization of their conception of the world. In all capitalist countries their numbers have grown enormously in the last decade. Set apart from the established society, in conflict with bourgeois morality and bureaucratic routines, deriving - and rapidly departing - from the spirit and methods of left-wing liberalism (the anti-nuclear campaign, the campaign against apartheid and, in the USA, the Civil Rights movement) the students have constituted the vanguard of the Vietnam movement. In doing so, they have opened a new phase in international socialist solidarity. For many decades, this essential duty was conceived as an unconditional support for the 'workers' fatherland' - a constituted socialist state, which commanded the loyalty, and often the actions, of revolutionaries abroad. The adverse effects of this form of solidarity are now

indisputable. During Stalin's life, the relationship of socialist state to socialist opposition (abroad) was paramount - one of complete loyalty of the latter to the former. During Khrushchev's tenure in office, the stress of peaceful coexistence was a state relationship between socialist and capitalist powers - one of economic competition and diplomatic negotiation. Today, however, the Vietnamese⁵ have not imposed or requested any determinate form of solidarity whatever. They have welcomed the solidarity movements, but have not organized or guided them. The Vietnam movement in the West have often spontaneously developed from below, without any a priori directions. In the process, they have - especially in the USA, Japan and Germany, the 'vanguard' countries - discovered the violence and coercion of Western societies behind the veils of consumer affluence and parliamentary institutions. Imperialism is not a peripheral phenomenon: it is inseparable from contemporary capitalism.

The Vietnamese War has sent a searchlight to the core of the West. The result has been a simultaneous multiplication and radicalization of the resistance to it. The cause of Republican Spain and the Popular Fronts rallied even liberals to anti-fascism; but it did not often make socialists of them. The Vietnamese have welcomed any form of opposition to the American aggression, no matter what its political character. But the course of the war itself, the example of the Vietnamese struggle, has shifted the whole axis of the Vietnam movements in the West towards revolutionary socialism, among its main driving force - students and young people. There has been no compatibility between this and the broadening of opposition to the war, as the great US mobilizations in Washington and New York have shown. On the contrary, the one has had a crucial impact on the other, by radicalizing a whole spectrum of intermediate opinion. The fundamental job of mobilizing the working-class of the USA, England, Germany and other countries - only marginally affected outside Japan - has, of course, yet to be done. It is obviously the strategic priority of the Vietnam movement. But the longer the war goes on, the more difficult it will be for anachronistic Cold War anti-communism to mystify the Western working-class. Already, large sectors of the negro population of the USA have thrown off this degrading opiate. The future is now once again open, as the whole moral and ideological bases of Western imperialist society are increasingly widely questioned. The deepest fear of American capitalism is not of the Vietnamese peasants, but of the drugged and gagged American population. Its morale has never been lower than today, for the war is raging on its own territory.

The crisis of the world-wide capitalist system, which first matured in backward and peripheral Russia, is now penetrating the United States. The Vietnamese War will probably become its first serious, direct military and political defeat. This will mean peace and independence to the Vietnamese, at least. But the general political crisis of a starving world fettered by capitalist relations of production will not disappear. The internal contradictions and conflicts of the rich capitalist countries will doubtless be aggravated. Other revolutions will follow. The end of the Vietnamese War will not be the end of imperialism, but it may herald the beginning of the end. For something unprecedented has happened. The socialist revolution in a poor Asian country has liberated the dialectic in its oppressor. Internationalism has passed into the facts.

5 These very incomplete reflections do not discuss, of course, the impact of the Vietnamese Revolution within the Communist world. Reasons of space dictated omission of this important subject, but all socialists should read Le Duan's report, referred to earlier. Russian and Chinese aid, of course, is vital to both NLF and DRV.

Universities and Student Rebels

by Albert Langer

1. - - UNIVERSITIES

The role of Universities under capitalism is to train cadres for the bourgeoisie. Just as socialist Universities are to "serve the people", capitalist Universities are to serve capitalism. Australian Universities produce the doctors, lawyers, engineers, writers and administrators who are required to keep capitalism running. They are certainly not "communities of scholars" and they never have been or will be. They are "degree factories" and they aim to graduate qualified managers for Australian capitalism.

As Australian capitalism is being taken over by the stronger, more concentrated capitalism of the United States our education system is being gradually brought under increasing U.S. hegemony so that it will form a well-integrated component of American rule. American foundations provide scholarships for "promising" students. Through these they hope to recruit their "friends" in Australia. American foundations give substantial grants to Australian Universities. As a result they exert pressure on educational policy and already direct representatives of U.S. companies in Australia are being incorporated in the governing bodies of our Universities. The process of American take-over in Australia is following similar lines to that in other countries where the United States has provided "aid" and "assistance". Part from the cultural pressure exerted through the spread of American textbooks, the exchange of "scholars" and so on, direct pressure is causing the government to reorganize education along more "americanized" lines. But America does not want an initiating colony and so a definite trend is developing to cut back on education expenditure and to concentrate on technical colleges at the expense of universities. This also allows greater control over students and lessens the risk of radical thought developing.

At the same time as harsher quotas are being imposed for entrance, the general level of fees is being pushed upwards and the availability of scholarships is diminishing. Tuition fees comprise only a small proportion of the cost of University education and they could be totally abolished by an additional Government subsidy of only \$10 million a year. However they play an important role in determining the class composition of the student body. They help ensure that the bulk of students arrive with the same outlook as the University itself - bourgeois.

Capitalism is a system of crisis and contradiction. These crises and contradictions are reflected in all capitalist institutions including the Universities. There is an inherent contradiction in training cadres for a decadent system whose rottenness is becoming more and more apparent to the potential capitalist cadres themselves.

On the one hand university graduates are supposed to be cadres. This implies a certain amount of independent thinking, initiative and creativeness. On the other hand they must be cadres for the bourgeoisie and no other class. This requires servility, conformism and the ability to ignore the glaring contradictions of bourgeois society. These objectives are difficult to reconcile. Below University level the problem is not so serious. Schools do not have to produce cadres, they have to produce wage slaves. The whole education system is geared towards giving children the minimum knowledge to live and work in industrialized capitalist society. For the rest, every effort is made to destroy students' initiative, to discipline them, to rob them of their self-confidence, and make them accept the system of exploitation and rule by the boss. Some teachers try to raise the students consciousness but in isolation they cannot seriously damage the system.

At University however the whole process, must, to a certain extent, be reversed. Without a degree of "academic freedom" it is impossible to train useful cadres for the bourgeoisie. This freedom is a chink in the capitalist armour, an opportunity to spread socialist ideas, to challenge the system, to encourage rebellion. Naturally every attempt is made to restrict this "freedom". Apart from disciplinary measures great attention is devoted to reminding students that their sole job is to study and graduate. Courses are crammed with superfluous material that has to be regurgitated at annual examinations. Students are told that if they do not dutifully learn this stuff and pass their exams they will not succeed, they will not get their degrees, they will not gain "secure positions" in society. Conformism is the best path to a meal ticket.

But the main weapon is to separate theory from practice. Capitalist theories of "liberal democracy", "equal opportunity" and so on differ too sharply from capitalist practice of exploitation and

and oppression. Students must be discouraged from "following the argument to its logical conclusion" - the logical conclusion is revolution. It is not enough to say that the world has no problems. What is necessary is to say that the University stands outside the world, to disguise its class nature and pretend that ideas have nothing to do with action. At worst, a little reformism, pacifism etc may be allowed or encouraged but at all costs any move to turn from words to deeds must be diverted.

The whole atmosphere of a University is pervaded with the concept of "academic integrity" and "absolute truth" (standing above classes and above the real world). Ideas are collections of words to be juggled, not guides to action. Practical activity is something below the level of a "true intellectual".

The thought of students learning from life, learning from the people is regarded with horror. Students are religiously taught that knowledge comes only from books and that people outside the University are ignorant buffoons, (in fact it is the lecturers and professors who are ignorant buffoons and most students know it). The attitude of contempt for manual labour and for ordinary workers even affects some "left-wing" circles and does a great deal of damage.

However, these attempts at diversion are meeting with less and less success. An increasing number of students are realising, at least at a basic level, that their courses are largely irrelevant to life, that their exams are not all important, that there is a world outside the University, that there is a great deal wrong with it, and ~~zbt~~ that they should join the fight to change it. Students are starting to see through the hypocrisy of phoney academic arguments. They are rejecting the myths of capitalism and are struggling against it.

2 - STUDENT REBELS

Australian students are playing a vanguard role in the movement against US aggression in Vietnam and are actively participating, together with young workers and high school students, in various other struggles. The capitalist press is giving great space to propaganda that young people and particularly students are dead beats, drug addicts, sex maniacs and so on. On the other hand they also say that the youth are really alright - that they are no more rebellious than the last generation and they will eventually settle down to "normal" lives. These two tactics show that capitalism recognizes the rebellion of youth and students and is afraid of it. "To be attacked by the enemy is not a bad thing but a good thing".

The rebels are still a minority among students but they are a much stronger group than previously and they are steadily growing in size, influence and maturity. In the long run they represent the future and they represent the majority. It is therefore important to understand the causes of student rebellion, its nature, direction, strengths and weaknesses. Student movements have played an important part in revolution throughout history and are doing so at present in Western Europe and North America as well as Asia, Africa and Latin America. There can be no doubt that Australian students will play a similar role.

There are many factors which lead students to become rebels but chief among these is the fact that at University you have thrown together a large number of idealistic young people who are temporarily free from the pressures to conform imposed by employers, families and so on. They are given the opportunity to think but are told to confine their thinking to the questions on the syllabus. In the world around them they see exploitation, injustice, racism and war. It is not surprising that in this situation many start to think for themselves and turn from thought to dissent to rebellion. "The young people are the most active and vital force in society. They are the most eager to learn and the least conservative in their thinking." Although most of the rebels are of non-working class origin they can see the contradictions of capitalism and they take the side of the oppressed. Many rebels are only able to attend University because of Commonwealth scholarships, teaching studentships and great sacrifices by their families. They have direct experience of the struggle for survival under capitalism.

The Vietnam war and China's Cultural Revolution have had very important influences on the student movement. Vietnam in particular has been decisive in first arousing most of the rebels to any degree of political consciousness. Vietnam is the focal point of the principal contradiction in the world today - that between imperialism and the national liberation movement. It is in Vietnam that the brutal and oppressive nature of capitalism is most clearly shown and consequently Vietnam has become the symbol for all that students find rotten in Western society.

Student revulsion against the war in Vietnam has not been limited to empty calls for "peace" and "negotiations" but has led to a real and growing solidarity with the people of Vietnam and to sympathy with revolutionary movements throughout the world. It has given the rebels a mass base amongst the general body of students whose direct experience has led them to acknowledge that the rebel's analysis of the war is correct.

The struggle against American aggression in Vietnam has become merged with the general struggle for a change in the social system. In the course of this struggle police truncheons, "Defence Forces Protection Acts", University disciplinary measures and so on have taught the students more about the Marxist theory of the state than any amount of seminars. Similarly the constant Soviet cries for peaceful coexistence and the CPA's loyalist urging of moderation and respectability has taught students about the nature of revisionism. It is now almost accepted without question that the Soviet Union is ruled by a privileged elite that puts its own interests before world revolution and that the CPA is more interested in unity with ALP leaders than in promoting mass struggles. The Cultural Revolution has shown that bureaucracy need not inevitably engulf socialism, and that the working people can hold and keep state power in their hands and that it IS right to rebel." Through the Cultural Revolution Marxist-Leninist ideas have been spread more widely among students and their faith in the masses and confidence in the future has been raised.

However student rebellion is often a reflection of personal "alienation" and frustration rather than a conscious commitment to the working class struggle. As a result, it can be diverted into channels harmless to capitalism. Non-conformity in dress, sexual mores, and speech and behaviour as well as rejection of parents and so on are all forms of rebellion but they express nothing more than the individuals personal sense of frustration. They do not strike at the system which frustrates the lives of millions of people in far more direct and brutal ways than those suffered by the "alienated intellectual". Students ideas often seem to "drop from the skies" rather than being based on social practice. This means that while their

rebellion may be on a relatively advanced level - support for socialism and opposition to imperialism rather than economic struggles, it often lacks a firm basis or a clear cut class stand. To put it bluntly students often talk a lot of idealist bullshit.

A major problem in the student movement is the tendency towards cynicism. Students can see the decadence of capitalist society and want to see it end but their attitude is often cynical rejection of the whole human race rather than affirmation of socialist values and faith in the strength of the masses. This cynicism results primarily from students isolation from the working class movement and their attitudes of superiority to it. It leads to the rebels banding themselves together in a tight left bloc with almost all their social and political contacts taking place within the bloc. Once they leave University and lose contact with their fellows rebels many students become passive. The left bloc soon despairs of trying to overthrow capitalism by shouting at it and banging its head against it and as a result many more drop out.

In addition many students have a contempt for theory while those who have read some marxist works often merely spout nonsense about the dialectic before Hegel "on alienation and the young Marx" they refuse to accept the unity of theory and practice and they regard Marxist-Leninist theory as a merely a toy to play with. The following quotation from Chairman Mao is as true for Australian students in 1968 as it was for Chinese intellectuals in 1939. It provides an excellent summary of the weaknesses of the student movement.

" The intellectuals often tend to be subjective and individualistic, impractical in their thinking and irresolute in action until they have thrown themselves heart and soul into mass revolutionary struggles, or made up their minds to serve the interests of the masses and become one with them. Hence although the mass of revolutionary intellectuals in China can play a vanguard role or serve as a link with the masses, not all of them will remain revolutionaries to the end. Some will drop out of the revolutionary ranks at critical moments and become passive, while a few may even become enemies of the revolution. The intellectuals can overcome their shortcomings only in mass struggles over a long period."

This quotation not only states the weaknesses but also points the way out. The students are taking the road of "mass struggles over a long period". In the course of these struggles, students are gaining confidence and maturity, they are turning to Marxist ideas, Communist ideas for an explanation of the world and a guide to changing it. They are learning to integrate themselves with the mass of working people who are the chief agency of social changes, they are breaking out of their left blocs and they are raising the theoretical level of their rebellion.

In short, they are turning from rebellion to revolution.

Editorial

Analysis is the theoretical journal of the Monash Labor Club. This first issue was edited by the executive in order to get the ball rolling. The views expressed within are not necessarily official Labor Club policy and indeed we hope that the journal will become a forum for thrashing out different political lines.

We hope to bring out a second edition by the end of this term and there will certainly be one by the beginning of third term. Applications for the position of editor, together with comments, letters to the Editor and contributions are now invited. Frequency of publication and editorial policy will be related to circumstances but basic policy is to produce the magazine whenever sufficient useful material becomes available and to direct it at an audience consisting mainly of the Labor Club membership and other left wing students - rather than a small group of "theoreticians" or the large mass of non political students.

Our aim in producing the magazine is to try and raise the theoretical level of Labor Club members and ensure that experience we have gained in the course of agitational work is summed up and used to increase our political effectiveness.

One thing we will not do is carry the sort of agitational material that normally appears in Print. We hope to publish serious articles on problems facing the Australian left in general and student activists in particular. We will also reprint interesting articles from other publications. Our slogan is the unity of theory and practice - not their separation.

We are hoping that Analysis will be "not just a magazine but a way of life" or at any rate that a more mature perspective will be introduced into the club through members participating in, and not just reading, this journal. To this end we intend to hold seminars following publication of each issue, so that members can discuss the articles.

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