



# Australian Marxist Review

Theoretical journal  
of the Socialist  
Party of Australia

- ★ *Social wage — “prices and incomes” policy*
- ★ *The Women’s movement*
- ★ *Nationalism and internationalism*
- ★ *Bourgeois Arts — a survey*
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# **Australian Marxist Review**

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prices and incomes:*

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# Social wage — social contract — prices and incomes.

What are these terms and policies all about?

**Here are three articles dealing with these important and widely discussed issues.**

## Defining the “social wage” concept

by P. Symon

**Three terms are being bandied about in the labour movement and in the mass media which have, by lack of definition and incorrect usage, become hopelessly confused.**

The terms are “social wage”, “social contract” and “prices and incomes” policy. They have become virtually interchangeable but mean quite different things. It is desirable that definitions should be arrived at and agreed upon.

In the first place, the term “social wage” is a misnomer and does not properly describe what it is supposed to cover. It would be better if the term were dropped and replaced by “social benefits”.

Social benefits are those benefits either paid in money or by way of services, subsidies or concessions met from government revenues either Federal, State or Municipal.

Age and disability pensions, child endowment payments, unmarried mother's pensions are examples of money payments. Subsidy of telephone rentals, travel concessions, free medical services, reduced Council rates for pensioners are examples of social benefits which are not advanced by way of a money payment to the recipient.

It is all these benefits, and there are many of them, which are sought to be covered by the term "social wage" or "non-wage income". But the use of the term "wage" is misleading and is one cause of confusion.

The term "wage" in common usage is understood to mean a payment received in the hand from an employer for work done in the production of a commodity or the provision of some service.

A wage is paid by an employer (who might also be a government) while a social benefit is provided by a government or its instrumentality and is not received as a result of employment and work.

In many cases social benefits are provided to all irrespective of whether the recipient has been a worker for wages or not. In some cases the scope of a benefit and the entitlement is limited by a means test.

Taxation has also become mixed up with the concepts of a "social wage", again incorrectly, and adding to confusion.

The ability of a government to pay social benefits, whether in the form of money payments or by way of services, will depend on the amount of its tax revenue and the priorities given to the government's various expenditures.

The source of tax revenue is important and may be borne more heavily by the working people than by big business and the rich and is, consequently, inequitable.

Taxation levels affect everyone's standard of living. If taxation levied out of worker's wages is high while the social benefits provided are low, the overall standard of living of the working people is reduced. Real purchasing power is reduced by high taxation.

But taxation is the income side for the government while social benefits are on the expenditure side.

Of course, these two sides are inter-related but they are not the same. If demands are to be advanced concerning taxation levels imposed upon the working people, they should be clearly formulated and not muddled by reference to a "social wage".

For many years the labour movement has been concerned about social benefits such as pensions and health benefits and about taxation levels. So it is not something new. Much more attention should be given to these aspects of living standards but it is not necessary to invent some new terms to achieve this aim.

A "social contract" or a "prices and incomes" policy refers to an agreement involving government, employers and workers covering certain aspects of the economy. Such an agreement could cover any number of things but is usually

limited to prices, wages, taxation and possibly some social benefits. These are the aspects included in the proposed agreement between the ACTU and a future ALP government.

A “social contract” is therefore entirely different to what is usually meant by a “social wage”.

A campaign concerning the “social wage” was first launched by the AMWSU. It was described as covering “health, housing, education, social welfare and other community services” and “comes on top of our ordinary wages. We pay tax because we have to and get a social wage in return.” (*Australia on the rack* p 2.)

These statements are only partly correct. Many wage workers do not get any “social wage” in return for taxes. It is misleading to say that the “social wage” comes on top of “our ordinary wage”.

More serious, however, is the fact that in the same publication the concept of “social wage” was very rapidly turned into a “social contract”.

Mr L Carmichael writing in *Australia on the rack* (pp 28 and 30) says:

“Preliminary talks are taking place on these matters between the ACTU and representatives of the future Labor government. The national leadership of the AMWSU is holding discussions with both.

“The object is to reach agreement between unions and the ALP about cooperative policy over incomes, taxes, the social wage and industry policy...

“Under the umbrella of overall government planning and intervention into the economy there should be *industry by industry agreements* between unions, government and employers ... An industrial bloodbath will certainly be on the agenda without such agreements. No one will benefit from that.”

The “social wage” is turned into a “social contract” and class struggle into class collaboration with agreements between governments, unions and employers.

Mr Bill Mountford, AMWSU Victorian Research Officer, is even more explicit. Writing on the content of an agreement, he says: “We cannot and will not be able to coerce private enterprise to invest their profits. They will continue to have to be induced, which places a crucial limit on the terms of any agreement. This means that the implementation of most aspects will have to provide for extensive tripartite negotiations, producing agreement with the corporate sector.”

And again:

“If the industry policy side of an agreement is seen to simply work for the interests of workers alone, it will be resented and resisted by other significant sections of the community.” By the employers perhaps?

Mr Mountford also comes to terms with the foreign investor:

“An agreement must come to grips with the fact that foreign investment will and should continue under a Labor Government. The terms on which it is allowed must therefore be realistic.” (Quotations from a paper by Bill Mountford, May 29, 1982.)

“Social contracts” and “prices and incomes” policies have been tried in other capitalist countries. They have always failed and will also fail in Australia even if the working people are conned to accept such an agreement for a time. “Social contracts” or a “prices and incomes” policy will inevitably fail on the rock of the economic realities of the capitalist system.

Such agreements only cover some aspects of the economy and their real aim is to control, limit, freeze or reduce wages paid to workers.

While prices are mentioned, it must be borne in mind that the Federal Constitution does not give power to the Federal Government to control prices. An investigation or assessment of prices does not amount to control. Manufacturers and others will remain free to increase them if they can. There is no mention of limiting company profits, only workers’ wages.

Here are some other important aspects of the economy which fall outside the concepts of a “prices and incomes” policy: interest rates, exchange rates, inflow and out flow of foreign capital, the decisions to introduce new technology or not, to start a new industry or not, to determine the extent of production and unemployment.

Unless all major aspects of the economy come under central government control, a “social contract” will be limited and will be inevitably turned against the interests of the working people as the employers continue their quest for maximum profits.

Politically, the advocates of such policies imagine that a situation of class peace, an abandonment of struggle by the working people, including struggle to protect those gains already won, will lead out of the crisis.

The essence of the “prices and incomes” policy is that price increases are caused by wage rises. Control wages and all will be well!, they think.

Mr Mountford, AMWSU Research Officer, puts it this way:

“As a result of the experience and struggles of the depression and the second world war governments have taken a steadily increasing responsibility for managing our economies. The essence of this is their ability to provide for continued economic growth, reasonably stable prices and low levels of unemployment. Because of the growth of trade union power, wages policy has taken on steadily more importance in their ability to do this. The position of trade unions today make it increasingly difficult to accelerate the rate of economic growth and maintain or even reduce the rate of inflation.”

Mr Mountford blames the trade union movement for the slow down in economic growth and trade union wages policy for the rate of inflation (meaning price increases).

Ironically Mr Mountford, one of the AMWSU Research Officers who researched and wrote *Australia on the rack*, provides figures and graphs in that publication which disprove these assertions.

As long ago as 1865, K Marx contested this same view. He wrote then that the

“prices of commodities are not ruled by the prices of labour”. (*Wages, Price and Profit*)

The campaign for a “prices and incomes” policy is aimed above all to persuade the workers and their trade unions to give up the wages struggle and to accept at least “constraint”.

Karl Marx had something to say about this too.

“If (the worker) resigned himself to accept the will, the dictates of the capitalist as a permanent economical law, he would share in all the miseries of the slave, without the security of the slave.”



# Behind the “prices and incomes” policy

by B Rooney

The AMWSU publication *Australia on the rack*, reports preliminary talks between the ACTU, a future ALP government and the AMWSU. “The object to reach agreement between unions and the ALP about co-operative policy over incomes the social wage and industry policy. By incomes we don’t only mean wages. We also mean the incomes of the fat cats and personal income from profits.” (*Australia on the rack* p 28)

Ralph Willis, Labor’s Federal shadow Treasurer sheds a little more light on what is in mind when he says, “Clearly, significant redistribution depends on the exercise of state power. But the ability of a Labor government to remain in office to implement these objectives will be dependent on the extent to which the trade unions are prepared to co-operate in an equitable ‘prices and incomes policy’. On the other hand though, if the redistributive policies are too ambitious by seeking to obtain mammoth changes overnight the likely result will be an investment strike, flight of capital overseas and other actions by the owners of capital which would defeat the objective of restoring full employment.” (*Ibid* p 28)

A ‘prices and incomes policy’ is, therefore, going to depend, in the final analysis, on what the multi-nationals and local monopolies consider to be ‘too ambitious’.

The new conditions presented by modern capitalist development are opening up new and menacing problems which will require all the strength of the trade unions and the political organisations of the working class to meet and solve. The vast new possibilities created by the advances of productive techniques are being restricted and distorted by the fetters of monopoly capitalism and have become a menacing spectre to threaten the lives and conditions of existence of millions of human beings. But to suggest that a ‘prices and incomes’ policy is going to solve some immediate problems let alone open up vast new possibilities for the workers under capitalism is an illusion.

What stands in the way of the fulfilment of these great potentialities of abundance for all which every expert now recognises as possible? The Catholic Church says that "... 'rigid' capitalism continues to remain unacceptable, namely, the position that defends the exclusive right to private ownership of the means of production as an untouchable 'dogma' of economic life". The principle of respect for work demands that this right should undergo a constructive revision both in theory and practice. (*Ibid* p 32)

Is it not obvious, therefore, that there could be no more fatal policy for the working people than to see in a 'prices and incomes' policy under capitalism the path forward to better conditions? It is precisely monopoly capitalism which is the main obstacle to the full use of the great possibilities within society for the benefits of the people. In practice capitalism converts them into the opposite, into instruments of the offensive against the standards, jobs and living conditions of the workers.

The "prices and incomes" policy is put forward as a magic formula. It is generally accepted that the working class will not accept a straight out wage cut or freeze. It is in these circumstances that the working class is propositioned by the Fraser Government for wage restraint. But what the government would really like to do is to restrain, freeze or cut wages. A "prices and incomes" policy has the same aim.

It is easy for the architects of the 'prices and incomes' policy to include both wages and profits as subject to limitation. But the two processes are basically different. Wages are paid currently, and can be cut or restricted currently. A wage increase is either won, limited or defeated. A definite ascertainable figure of earnings is paid each week. Profits are only declared yearly and the processes of assessment and tax juggling admit of infinite complications and avoidance as the firms which specialise in this business well know. The 'prices and incomes policy' is only a polite pseudonym. The reality is wage restraint.

In the short-term the trade union movement could be swayed for reasons of electoral considerations into nominally supporting what it well knows from hard experience to be unrealisable.

Does this mean that the only alternative to a 'prices and incomes policy' is the concentration of the entire strength of the working class movement on the daily battle for wages, conditions and trade-union rights and against the offensive of capitalism?

On the contrary! It is precisely the strength and experience gained in the daily battle that provides the basis for the wider battle against the class, against monopoly capitalism. What Marx showed a century ago remains true today. In modern conditions, with the ever closer integration of the big monopolies and the state machine, when economic and political questions are more than ever intertwined, the elementary daily battle of the trade unions is more than ever bound up with the main political battle of the working class against monopoly capitalism, to end monopoly capitalist rule and substitute it with socialism. The

essential task is for the political and economic power of the monopolies to be defeated.

Some of the architects of the 'prices and incomes policy' believe that they have found something new. One could be excused for thinking that they are offering a re-organised, rationalised and streamlined trade-unionism fitting neatly and harmoniously into the correspondingly rationalised structure of state monopoly capitalism, without strikes, co-operating together happily through joint boards at every level, in a paradise of 'economic planning' — without socialism.

Needless to say all these efforts will receive the enthusiastic praise of the monopoly class. However, these leaders are making one fatal error. They believe that they are moving forward from the traditional concepts of the role of trade unions in new conditions and are extending their role. On the contrary, they are moving backwards towards class collaboration, a concept cast off years ago.

# “Prices and Incomes” policies

by Anna Pha

*In early September the ACTU held a Special Federal Unions conference to consider a document prepared as the basis of an agreement between the trade unions and a future Labor government. Here are some main aspects of this document and an assessment.*

The ACTU Executive, at its August meeting, endorsed in principle a Statement of Accord on economic policy which is virtually a prices-incomes policy. This paper was drawn up by a working party of representatives of the ACTU and the ALP. Members of the working party were: B Hayden, R Willis, R Hawke (ALP); B Kely, C Fitzgibbon, J Marsh (ACTU).

The paper had the objective of a mutually agreeable economic policy on prices and incomes in Australia, for implementation by a Labor government. It is seen as offering:—

“by far the best prospect of enabling Australia to experience prolonged higher rates of *economic and employment growth*, and accompanying *growth in living standards*, without incurring the circumscribing penalty of higher inflation, by providing for *resolution of conflicting income claims at lower levels of inflation* than otherwise would be the case.” (Page 4) (Emphasis added.)

The emphasis is on agreement and co-operation between the parties, rather than imposition by the government or confrontation approaches. The policy covers prices, wages, non-wage incomes, taxation and government expenditure:—

**Prices:** Legislation to establish a pricing authority, and strengthening of Trade Practices Legislation to promote more effective competition. The role of the pricing authority would be to “assess” the validity of price rises sought

by corporations within its jurisdiction. The large corporations are seen as price setters, and hence would come under the jurisdiction of the pricing authority. There is no suggestion of any constitutional amendments to enable prices to be controlled.

**Wages:** Centralised wage fixation is seen as desirable for both equity and “industrial relations reasons”. The government would advocate to the Commission and industrial tribunals “a system of full cost of living adjustments”. That wage and salary earners “may share in increased real incomes or reduced hours of work, or an appropriate combination of both”. The unions will consult with the government on the amount of any claims for improved wages and conditions. “Both parties recognise that if the essential conditions of the centralised system are met, that there shall be no extra claims except where special and extraordinary circumstances exist.” (Page 9)

**Non-Wage Incomes:** are seen as being indirectly controlled, as there are no existing Federal powers to control such items as rent, dividends, capital gains, director’s fees, interest, or incomes of self-employed, doctors, etc. Such measures as easing of monetary policy, extension of a capital gains tax, “health insurance scheme to remove the ability of doctors to exploit patients”, are proposed. It is only if these indirect measures are unsuccessful, that the government will seek such constitutional changes which are necessary.

**Taxation:** A restructure of the tax scale to ease the burden on low and middle income earners, with regular reviews of the scale, in conjunction with the trade unions so that “the tax burden will not rise automatically with inflation.” The introduction of “tough new measures to smash the tax avoidance industry.”

“The government will *endeavour* to reduce the relative incidence of indirect taxation because of its repressive and inflationary nature.” (p 12 Emphasis added)

Any general rises in taxation will be discussed with the unions first.

Special levies may be used to fund community or welfare services.

Reference is also made to improvements on essential services and social infrastructure; this expenditure will be dependent on the success of the government in achieving a “non-inflationary expansion of the economy, which in turn will be substantially influenced by the extent to which this prices and incomes policy is successfully implemented.” (p 13)

### **The Package**

Overall, this prices and incomes policy represents a total package, proposing as essential features, “control” of prices to reasonable levels, wage restraint, maintenance of real wage levels, “control” of non-wage incomes, restructuring of the taxation system, consultation between unions and government, and if all goes well, some benefits in the area of the social wage.

How realistic is this?

From previous experience of the Prices Justification Tribunal, one can expect little success in price control. There is no suggestion of constitutional amendments in this area. It can be seriously questioned as to the likelihood of prices being controlled.

As for the maintenance of real wage levels, the government does not have the power to deliver the goods, except for its own employees, and that has not been specifically mentioned. It is in the hands of the Arbitration Commission, and wage tribunals. The Arbitration Commission is sensitive to political and economic pressures, and takes into account what it calls "national economic interests". According to Michelle Grattan (*The Age*: 23/8/82), R Hawke, the Labor spokesman on industrial relations, has "conceded that under the prices and incomes policy, there could be circumstances in which a Labor government would want workers to get less than full wage indexation".

There is no talk of amending the Conciliation and Arbitration Act.# This could remove the main obstacles to the Arbitration Commission granting full indexation. There is also no mention of the ACTU's Wages Policy that "automatic quarterly cost of living adjustments based on the published six-Capital cities CPI figure" is seen as the best way of achieving the objective of the maintenance of the level of real wages. (ACTU Wages Policy Decision, ACTU Congress 1981, p 2).

The document admits to the lack of control over non-wage incomes, and only suggests the possibility of constitutional amendments in this area. The lack of a guarantee of full quarterly indexation in line with CPI movements and proposals for "no claims" constitute wage restraints and will not ensure maintenance of real wage levels.

The only specific reference to health is made to the establishment of a health insurance scheme that would remove the ability of doctors to exploit patients, through means such as over-servicing or non-adherence to scheduled fees. It does not mention the ACTU policy for a "return to the Medibank system, funded by a compulsory income-related levy which gives priority to bulk billing". (ACTU Social Welfare Policy, ACTU Congress 1981, p 8)

On the question of unemployment, no specific measures are mentioned in the document.

It would appear that inflation is expected to be reduced by restraint in wage movements and "controls" over prices and profits.

The "social wage" element is not spelt out at all, and appears to be dependent on the success of the prices and incomes policy.

With no guarantees on the government's side, no firm commitment to specific policies in such areas as tariffs, budget deficits, employment programs — the ACTU appears to be signing a blank cheque.

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# It is surprising that amendments to the Act that would remove the anti-Union industrial legislation have not been included. They would win favour with the Unions, and cost nothing in monetary terms.

# Building the Partnership

by  
Marie Lean

Activists in the women's movement, regardless of their party political allegiances, find much on which they can agree. This was graphically shown during the Mid-decade Conferences in 1980, leading up to the United Nations Mid-term Conference in Copenhagen, where women across the political spectrum from the conservative parties, across the centre groups to the left, were agreed around basic questions of women's rights, standing together in opposition to the extreme, reactionary elements who opposed all proposals aimed at furthering the equal status of women in society. Many of these women's organisations work together on the various committees in the states for the equal rights and status of women. A number of them are committed also to the cause of peace and develop areas of co-operation with one another in this field too.

However, the movement for women's rights in Australia is over-whelmingly dominated by women of middle class origin and petty bourgeois ideas. Historically, better educated women have been the ones who have become involved in the issue of women's rights. Women's rights are seen, as expressed by middle class theorists in other fields, from a bourgeois view of individual rights. Their approach is humanist and pragmatic. Without the benefit of a scientific analysis of society, it is a simple matter to come to the conclusion that if men hold all the positions of power then it is men who are the enemies of women, preventing them from attaining equal rights. Many of the radical feminists are stridently anti-male, and it is not surprising that even the more conservative women adopt these attitudes to one degree or another.

The women's movement in the western world has grown enormously in recent years; but its growth has taken place in an atmosphere of hostility towards, and at the same time, almost total ignorance of, the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and the achievements of women in the socialist world. Indeed the innuendo and straight out lies of anti-Sovietism are alive and well in the women's movement as much as in other sectors of western life.

It was with these facts in mind that a group of Socialist Party women prepared to

take part in the Third Women and Labour Conference held in Adelaide, June 4-6, 1982. Preparations involved collective study and discussion of the SPA Women's Program and other Marxist-Leninist literature, as well as some of the opposing points of view.

This method of study, analysing our policies for the purpose of using the theory to examine and question the views of others, was of enormous benefit and enabled those involved to confidently tackle the arguments put forward by women much practised in academic argument. The same approach could be profitably used by other groups of comrades taking part in any conference of the broad movement, be it on trade union, peace or women's issues.

At the Women and Labour conference, the main concepts dominating proceedings were: that men have all the power and women must win over these positions of power for themselves; trade union leaderships are 'male-dominated bureaucracies'; and from the Marxist/Feminists, no women have achieved equality thus far, certainly not in the socialist world.

On the plus side, capitalism was seen to be proving incapable of solving the problems of women or society. These anti-capitalist sentiments did not extend to a view of a socialist future except when Socialist Party women spoke.

The Marxist/Feminists found references to the equality of women in socialist society a huge joke and referred to these countries as 'post-revolutionary' societies. They deplored the demise of the 'feminist' movement in the Soviet Union and called for its revival. They found themselves at odds with certain concepts of Marx and Engels, but were unable to put forward credible alternative theories.

Western feminists have difficulty in understanding why Soviet women have not put solution of their problems as women above the resolution of the problems of the whole society. The two, of course, are bound together in the solution of the problems of the working class as a whole.

Anti-Marxist ideas were backed up by various theoretical texts and expounded by a significant grouping of articulate academic women. They have flourished in an atmosphere almost devoid of alternative theories. There are few working class women present, nor will they be attracted to such conferences. However, it is important that Socialist Party women take part and publicise Marxist-Leninist theory and the achievements of women in socialist society.

Why are working class women not attracted to the women's movement in large numbers? Just as in the developing countries, solving the problem of the day-long trek just to supply the family with water has priority for women over learning to read and write; so working class women find the daily grind of doing two jobs, one in the paid workforce and one at home, more than fills their waking hours. Their paid work usually ensures the survival of the family and is not usually an interesting career.

Most working class women are not able to follow a career of their choice, but work to supplement the family income. They do not see the family as a milestone around their necks, preventing them from attaining equality, as do many feminists. They devote their energies to preserving the family intact, despite the pressures of capitalist society which undermine the family. They work at what work they can get which fits



in most closely with their domestic arrangements, the problems of child care, housework and shopping. Very often, because of this double load women endure, paid employment is seen as a burden to be escaped from whenever the financial commitments of the family allow it.

Despite the fact that so many married women are now in the workforce, our society does not see this as the norm, and women are made to feel guilty and accused of neglecting their families and taking men's jobs. They see their financial problems as personal problems and seek personal solutions. They do not see that their need to work is a result of the general exploitation of workers by the capitalist system, but rather as working for a better standard of living for their families. Consequently they do not demand from society proper child care facilities, maternity leave, assistance with shopping and housework, but try to find their own solutions. Besides, society tells them that these are unjust perks demanded by anti-family radicals for which other working taxpayers should not have to foot the bill.

The draft document, *Party Work Among Women*, recently discussed by SPA branches, states:

"It remains fundamental to the success of the movement for women's economic and social equality and liberation that the working class — men and women together — determine the direction of the struggle and become the decisive leadership of it." The key to success is to work to bring about this partnership.

Whilst it is true the full emancipation of women can only be brought about after the advent of socialism, this is often used as an excuse to put women's rights questions aside in the 'too hard basket'. There are many aspects of the struggle which need to be taken up by the organised working class movement with much greater vigour.

Trade unions shy off all-out campaigns for maternity leave because the subject is unpopular with the public. This lack of resolution also stems from an inadequate understanding of the exploitation of women. Maternity leave is not just 'icing on the cake' for women. Women were once generally required to stay at home and produce the next generation of workers for the system. Now, for a variety of reasons, including improved technology and contraception, they are often expected to also work for the boss as well as producing families, at the same time making their own child care and maternity leave arrangements at their own expense.

Women cannot begin to take an equal place in society until their dual contribution to society as mother and worker is recognised in law and in practice by full provision of maternity leave without loss of seniority and adequate child care. In our society, even among middle class women there must be few indeed who have been able to follow their chosen career without at some time having made decisions between opportunities and family; most do this all the time, taking the job which creates least hassles in regard to family commitments.

The women's movement in the capitalist countries has, again and again, become bogged down on the question of jobs requiring physical strength to perform. Ideas of "individual freedom" are also brought in to confuse the issue. The tendency in the West is to claim that women are physically equal to men and that biological differences should not exclude them from any job. It is also argued that if there are

laws limiting weights that women are allowed to lift it will exclude women from certain occupations and is consequently discriminatory.

Perhaps this issue is not confronted realistically out of fear of old arguments such as that women are emotionally unreliable and are inadequate for many occupations and positions of responsibility due to their biology. Another tendency among some feminists is to deny the nurturing qualities of women, presumably to sustain the argument of physical equality.

The question of weights is already a very real issue for the trade union and the wider issues involved need to be confronted by political organisations.

Women in socialist countries are not bogged down on this question. The Soviet Union has specific laws in its labour code excluding women from certain heavy jobs. None-the-less women and men have equal rights guaranteed by equal access to education, vocational training and opportunities in employment. At the same time there is "affirmative action" in the form of special labour and health protection measures.

(See Constitution of the USSR Article 35.)

There is a real need for research in this area. The answer cannot be oversimplified.

It has taken time for the conclusion to be drawn that the various anti-discrimination laws can in fact work against women and that what is required is affirmative action.

Affirmative action involves giving women specific opportunities to achieve, not promoting them beyond their present capabilities. This particularly applies to the working class movement and political parties. The ALP has made a decision to promote women by having one third conference delegates women and this move is applauded by many women. In the Socialist Party we should see this question differently. The status of women in the SPA already stands up well in comparison to other organisations. The position of women will be further advanced by giving them the opportunities to gain experience, to develop their work, to study, so that they can be elected as conference delegates and on to committees in their own right.

To promote women just because they are women, and not because of their overall political understanding, has great dangers, however, for the working class movement and could seriously weaken its effectiveness. Tokenism can lead to problems. It is all too easy to appoint or elect an organiser, adviser or other advocate for women and give her the job of sorting out all the "women's questions". The problem is often compounded by the anti-male attitudes of some women, and results in men shying off even acquiring a knowledge of women's issues. Women activists attend an abundance of women's conferences and meetings (from which men are often deliberately excluded) and build up an expertise on the subject which is denied to men. Women do need their own organisations and meetings, but sometimes these are used not so much to develop the abilities and confidence of women, as to alienate them against men.

Few workers have an effective knowledge of the processes of capitalist exploitation. Women are not seen to be exploited at all by some, much less to suffer a double exploitation. Many feel women are well off in our society. Workers do not necessarily

see themselves as being exploited by the much vaunted free enterprise system and therefore do not see that their family is exploited. Engels' explanation of the family as the basic economic unit of capitalist society is little understood. Workers see their families as their own private and personal affair. They have children and love them and do their best for them. They do not see their children as the future workers without which the system cannot function; they do not see their wives as a pool of cheap labour for the capitalist machine; they do not feel the system owes women maternity leave because it benefits from their producing future workers to be exploited by the system.

Workers join in struggle for a bigger share of the cake and more humane living conditions. Only when they have a more advanced understanding will they struggle for socialism, to own the cake. Only when they understand the greater exploitation of women by the system will they fight for equal rights for women. The deepening crisis of capitalism assists workers to understand the exploitation of the system. The growing unemployment angers workers who want to work. Likewise, the extraordinary interest rate hikes on home loans is bringing many workers to the brink of catastrophe, a situation they can clearly see is not of their own making. They are beginning to blame the system.

The next step is to understand what is wrong with the system. It is the role of the Socialist Party members to explain that. Women make up 50% of the population, and as a group they suffer more exploitation than men. In struggling against the capitalism system the areas of greatest exploitation should be tackled by the organised working class. However, those who are most exploited are often the least able and equipped to engage in struggle alone. They need allies among the more advanced members of the working class. If women are to understand their position in society and to gain their due, men must become their allies and partners in advocating women's rights. There can be no advance for mankind without the other half.

# Nationalism and internationalism

by Hannah Middleton

**The national question is taking on increasing political significance in Australia today. It is manifested in three distinct but inter-related forms: the struggle for Australian national independence and sovereignty, the transition of migrant communities into the Australian nation and into working class political movements, and in the national liberation movement of the two national minorities, the Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders.**

The struggle for Australian national independence and sovereignty is an integral and the most important element today in the growing anti-imperialist and anti-monopoly movement directed above all to the fight for disarmament and peace. It is expressed in such campaigns as opposition to the US alliance, specifically the ANZUS pact, and to US military bases on Australian soil.

The Fourth Congress of the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) emphasised that “not since before Federation of the Commonwealth in 1901 has Australia’s independence and sovereignty been so restricted and threatened as it is now by the inflow of foreign capital, the shackling American alliance, the network of US military bases and a government in Canberra which acts as a most subservient lackey doing the bidding of the US imperialists.

“A continuation of these policies can only have disastrous economic, political and military consequences for Australia by exploiting the labour of the workers and the rich natural resources of the country, distorting the development of the economy in the interests of the foreign investors, subverting Australia’s political institutions and posing a serious threat of war on our territory as the government follows the adventures of the US leaders.”

The task of welding together a mass anti-imperialist and anti-monopoly movement for peace, Australian independence and social progress demands, among other things, that our party considers carefully the position and potential of the migrant communities which form a significant proportion of the Australian nation and particularly the working class component of that nation.

Just three statistics illustrate the dimensions of this question: one in three Australians were not born in this country; over 50 per cent of all blue collar workers were born outside Australia; in the country today there are about 80,000 industrial workers of Greek origin.

Migrant communities are small parts of or, as Engels called them, “splinters” of foreign nations and nationalities. Coming to Australia, they have been or are being integrated into the country’s socio-economic system, predominantly into the urban working class.

This process at the level of the socio-economic basis of Australian society gives rise to the process of migrant assimilation into the Australian nation. However, their sense of national identity tends to change more slowly because the secondary process of assimilation, which occurs at the superstructural level, is slowed down by certain factors.

Amongst the migrant communities themselves these factors include language, the maintenance of cultural values and traditions, the process of chain migration, visits “home” and letters to and from the country of origin.

The development of migrant community support mechanisms (organisations, clubs and cafes, special assistance with health and housing problems, and so on) reinforce linguistic and cultural values and also act as a “defence” against the indifference, ignorance and/or chauvinism of many non-migrant Australians.

This combination of factors is tending in Australia to reinforce the contradiction that exists between socio-economic integration of migrants (which is underway as soon as the migrant man or woman starts work in a factory or other workplace) and their assimilation into the Australian nation.

Despite official claims that Australia is a “multi-cultural” society, this is true today at a superficial level only. In terms of actual social processes, as our Fourth Congress resolution pointed out, it remains true that “... many migrant workers are discriminated against, are not given proper award conditions or are employed in the lowest paid and most obnoxious jobs. Employers take advantage of their unfamiliarity with the labour movement, lack of knowledge of their rights and entitlements and language difficulties.”

The document *Migrants and working class unity*, adopted by the Third Congress of the SPA in October 1978, points out further that: “Discrimination exists against migrant groups in community life, through disadvantages in the educational systems, language and social handicaps in everyday life and restricted opportunities for cultural preservation and development. Racial prejudice and discrimination exist, often in veiled form.”

What is lacking is an appreciation that the culture of the Australian nation can

and should be a combination of the best of the progressive and democratic cultures of the peoples who now make up the nation.

The process by which the culture of the countries of origin of migrants and the culture of the Australian nation are *both* developed to their fullest is the democratic and effective basis for assimilation of migrants into the Australian nation and also for the development of an Australian culture that genuinely reflects the multi-cultural nature of the Australian nation.

Lenin warned that communists “must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interest”<sup>1</sup> and he also pointed out that the proletariat “welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege.”<sup>2</sup>

The racist and chauvinist attitudes and practices of capitalist Australia are a fertile ground for the growth of separatist, isolationist or “ghetto” attitudes among migrants and above all for the consolidation of bourgeois nationalism.

Bourgeois nationalism is an ideology, spawned by the capitalist mode of production, which the bourgeoisie frequently uses to buttress its power and as an instrument to disrupt the united front of the working class made up, as it now is in Australia, of workers from many different countries.

Unity is disrupted when national pride is distorted to become national arrogance or when concern with the development of a particular culture is turned into nationalist narrowness, impeding the mutual enrichment of national cultures.

“Ideologues of the capitalist world ... stop at nothing to distort the national consciousness of the peoples, seeking to substitute struggle between nations for class struggle under the flag of national unity. And opportunists are their helpers and allies. Divorcing national from class consciousness ... “left” and right opportunists portray national unity as a supra-class value, and prevent working people from seeing their national interests in the socialist context — in close association with internationalism.”<sup>3</sup>

The forms of bourgeois nationalist ideology are varied and complex. It has been pointed out that in the United States, for example: “We see imperialist chauvinism, the cosmopolitan aspirations of monopoly capitalism and advocacy of national nihilism, and the worst kind of racism in the form of ‘white chauvinism’, on the one hand, and the ‘black nationalism’ of the extremist elements among the Black population, the national isolation and prejudices of part of the Indians, Puerto Ricans, etc. on the other.”<sup>4</sup>

Bourgeois nationalism not only acts as a barrier to the building of working class unity in action but also holds back the growth of involvement in and commitment

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<sup>1</sup>Lenin *Collected works*, Vol 22, page 347.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, Vol 20, page 25.

<sup>3</sup>*Leninism and the National Question*, Progress 1977, page 211.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, page 70.

to the Socialist Party of Australia among the most advanced sections of the community.

This problem appears to be taking three major forms at the present stage of our party's expansion. In some migrant communities the awareness of the need for a Marxist-Leninist party is well developed among the politically advanced forces. The SPA is looked to as that party and its leading role is being exercised to an increasing degree.

However, this "party sense" is contradicted by a persistence of nationalism which has negative results. In some cases, membership of the SPA is on the basis of a somewhat mechanical "transfer of loyalty" from the communist party of the country of origin to the Socialist Party, rationalised and/or reinforced by the fraternal relations between the two parties.

In other cases, commitment to the SPA again is not on a firm ideological basis but springs from our party's internationalist stand on issues relevant to a migrant community's country of origin.

In both cases, the possibilities for the full ideological development of those cadres are restricted. Their understanding of and therefore involvement in the vital SPA campaign for Australian national independence and sovereignty and other issues are held back until the party assists them to resolve the contradiction between communist party membership and bourgeois nationalism on the basis of proletarian internationalism.

Another form of this problem occurs when nationalism acts as a bar to the party winning and playing its leading role. In some migrant communities the SPA is accepted among the politically advanced sections but is seen as relevant for Australian-born citizens, not for the migrants whose interest and loyalty, and sometimes party membership, remain with the communist party of their country of origin.

A third and clearly inter-related aspect is the nationalism affecting the Australian born workers and some members of our party. A position which puts "Australia first", is unaware of or rejects the relationship between anti-imperialist struggles in all countries, including Australia, and/or downgrades the particular needs and contributions of migrant communities is not only politically incorrect — and therefore ineffective — but also acts as a serious barrier to building both our party and working class unity.

The solution in all these situations cannot be a mechanical transfer from one nationalism to another — this is unlikely and undesirable. The answer lies in the development of *internationalism*, in the victory of proletarian internationalism over bourgeois nationalism.

Internationalism is an organic and necessary element of Marxism-Leninism. "the fundamental basis for the activity of Marxist-Leninist parties in promoting the communist outlook of people of different nations, promoting their unity, cohesion, and convergence."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Leninism and the National Question*, Progress 1977, page 211.

An internationalist outlook leads the Australian born worker to act in solidarity with his class brothers in every other country. Internationalism also leads the foreign born migrant in Australia to participate in these solidarity actions and to join in the struggle for Australia's national independence and solidarity.

A blending of the factors, a combination of patriotism and internationalism, is the ideological basis for working class unity in Australia, a unity in action where all workers make their major contribution in and from Australia without underestimating the contribution that can flow from migrant workers' particular interest in the progressive movements in their countries of origin.

Engels wrote: "In the working class movement, the *truly* national ideas, ie, ideas consistent with the economic factors both in agriculture and in industry, factors dominant in a particular country, are at the same time always truly *international* ideas."



# A survey of Bourgeois Arts — Death in the Final Act

by Norman Goldberg

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Journal of Marxist Thought, CPUSA  
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**In the recent play, “Whose Life Is It Anyway?” the central character, an intelligent young sculptor, injured in a motor accident, paralysed from the neck down and hospitalised, reasons that there is no longer any purpose to living. He takes legal steps to compel the hospital authorities to allow him to die. Towards the end of the play, a hearing is held at his bedside. At its conclusion, the judge rules in his favor. The curtain descends as the “victorious” young man stares ahead, in contemplation of what is to come.**

This is not the place for a critical appraisal of the play, but it is worth noting that the idea of death as a rational solution to a seemingly useless life is here presented to us as a human right. The idea of death as a “rational” solution to meaningless existence is not strange to our culture. It is frequently a subject of fascinating conversation in intellectual circles, where suicide is taken to be a positive act of personal rejection of society. Suicides, suicide pacts, cult and state-organised assassinations and mass deaths such as the horror in Jonestown, Guyana, reveal the depths to which bourgeois society has sunk.

How different was bourgeois ideology in its earlier history. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the revolutionary upheavals of the new capitalist classes of Europe and North America swept away the dead hand of monarchies which were restraining their growth. Their ideological spokesmen — Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Jefferson and others — proclaimed, in different ways, the dawn of a new era of freedom. Of course, it was a class-confined notion of freedom. It was the newly won

freedom of the bourgeoisie, the rights of white men of property, yet it represented a higher advance in the concept of freedom and human rights nevertheless. It saw its full flowering in the English historical novels of Fielding, Sterne, Defoe, Smollett and Scott. In these novels the broad landscape of national history burst forth, a panorama of conflict and change.

These loose outlines and social values, as seen in the arts, became more defined as class relationships matured under the sweep of expanding commerce and industry. The rapid growth of capitalism in the nineteenth century created new social conditions of squalor and misery in the cities and factory towns. While the proletariat had not yet become the leading force, its existence was felt everywhere. Literature and art became increasingly critical of society.

This literature and art was characterised by its ability to generalise, to see individuals as part of a distinct social background. This ability to generalise has given us inspired works of literature and art throughout the major part of the nineteenth century.

The period of monopoly capitalism and imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the state monopoly capitalism of our present period have had disfiguring effects on culture and art. In life, the intensification of the division of labour, the monotony and seeming meaninglessness of work as an activity, heightened the sense of alienation in the worker, which Marx had analysed earlier. Alienation spread to the arts, which increasingly became separated from society. The ability to perceive and create art in a broad social sense diminished as personalisation and fragmentation of thought replaced generalisation. Art turned inward, preoccupying itself with the "private life" of the individual, with the "inner life", with psychology, fantasy and with artistic form for its own sake.

As an example, the process of "desocialisation" of the novel is seen in the work of Marcel Proust, who, while dealing with themes of a social nature, saw events as a series of disconnected private experiences. He also saw them in a psychological sense which blurred the reflective insight of his work. One of the last great examples of broad social perception still to be found in literature in the earlier stage of capitalist decline is in the novels of Thomas Mann. He described the spiritual crisis of the bourgeoisie of Europe, saw that this class was destined for oblivion, but left open and unanswered what would replace it.

In an interesting parallel, the same sense of class decline is seen in the plays of Anton Chekhov. However, here we *feel*, but do not actually see the shadows of the common people, in this case the peasantry, who would soon step in, fill the void and build a new social order. This begins to happen in the novels, and plays of Maxim Gorki. The Chekhov/Gorki connection in literature rounds out an artistic whole, so to speak, as a full literary and dramatic expression of what was taking place in Russia. Unfortunately, no writer arose in Western Europe to play Gorki to Mann's Chekhov, leaving Mann's novels in this sense, "unfinished". But then, the socialist revolution took place in the East, not in the West.

Bourgeois life and ideology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was no longer able to provide art with a progressive social viewpoint. Yet art did appear throughout this whole period in opposition to the dominant trend. Literature of social

realism, criticism and optimism crossed swords with the social order. From Emil Zola and Anatole France, to Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland, Alexander Blok, Stefan Zweig and Jules Romains — all writers of varying stripes, a literature was created that saw the injustice of capitalism “from the outside looking in”. The same sweeping attack of injustice distinguished the literary works of Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Ida Tarbell and Sinclair Lewis in the USA.

In the visual arts, narrative painting, the art that tells a story, conveyed the feelings of artists for the condition of the working class. Much of this is not well known, but this art did appear in a book several years ago, titled *Work and Struggle, The Painter as Witness*. Another powerful counter-current, running deep in the American culture, was the art of Black painters and sculptors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Theirs was and is an art of the very first rank. Of course, there was also the art of the “Ashcan School” of the early twentieth century, where painters like George Bellows, Everett Shinn and John Sloan depicted with warmth the life of the people in the teeming cities. Art continued as a reflection of the social and class outlook from that period to the present, basically divided into two categories — the prevalent bourgeois and the varieties of anti-bourgeois art.

Contemporary bourgeois culture and art is in insoluble crisis. State monopoly capitalism has become a carnivorous monster. It now uses the state as a special agency for superprofits on all sides of the economic organism.

In culture and the arts this parasitic monster excretes torrents of ideological poison on the people in a total effort to harness their minds to its purpose. All the arts have been affected. Examples of the recognisable ailments are below.

Television is the dominant means of mass communication. Almost every household in the USA has at least one television set. Television is now the main form of entertainment and recreation. It has eviscerated conversation and social intercourse. A large percentage of adults spend more than half their time away from work watching television. An equally large percentage of children spend more time at the television set than at school. Glib references to television as “the boob tube” or “chewing gum for the eyes” do not tell the whole story.

Its potential was long ago recognised by the ruling class, which has used it as its primary weapon in an attempt to robotise the thinking and tastes of the people. Television programming offers an endless variety of every kind of decadence. Violence of every sort is featured. Torture, sadism, murder and crime is everywhere. Racism, sexism and general social immorality invade our lives through the picture tube daily. When all this is added to the standard fare of mindless talk shows, shallow situation comedies and soap operas, we have completed the cycle of cynicism.

Exceptions to this happen when general social pressures compel the controllers of television to allow better programs. The struggles against racism have given us a few positive television productions about the life and history of Afro-Americans. There have also been programs about the problems and struggles of women and old people. By and large, these have been all too few and limited. There is still, as yet not one good program on television that represents the working class in a truthful way.

Films are not much better. While free of advertising controls that dominate

television, films require huge financial outlays and producers frequently must borrow millions of dollars from banks and other lending institutions, which put the banks in control of this art form. Films have become a world-wide business operation, with an international network of licensing, distribution, marketing and sophisticated promotion schemes.

This affects the tastes, cultural patterns, and even the economies of various countries. The British film industry has practically ceased to exist, having been taken over by U.S. and U.S.-controlled film producing companies. This concentration of ownership of film production has polluted the cultural atmosphere of certain countries to the point where political struggles have taken place to curtail or control the level of their distribution.

Better films, such as the recent "Norma Rae", "Harlan County", "China Syndrome" and others are contradictions to the prevailing output, showing the efforts of concerned filmmakers to function under very difficult conditions.

Bourgeois literature suffers for similar reasons. The acquisition of major publishing houses by conglomerates has made a supermarket product of literature. Books are churned out for mass distribution, with sights set on converting them into television series and films for the international market. This results in the same deadening effect on literature as on television and films.

Bourgeois literature is a desolate shadow of its former self. Having lost its capacity to generalise with social awareness, it has become locked in and subservient to the demands of its financial controllers. American authors such as William Burroughs, Nelson Algren, Jack Kerouac, Truman Capote and Joseph Heller give us little. Theirs are novels of distress. We find no heroes or positive forces, either on the scene or as suggestions of things to come. Apathy and an anarchy of values is what one reads in this literature, a literature of despair.

In the novels of authors like Saul Bellow, the chief characters are lost souls searching for identity, oblivious of the real world around them, self-indulgent characters, selfish and parasitic, groping aimlessly to the end. A different and more forceful quality is found in the work of Black authors, which, in general, remains a literature of perception, social sensitivity and commitment to struggle.

Modern visual art, painting and sculpture are firmly in the hands of large foundations, museums, corporations and banks. Super-abstract and non-projective contrivances adorn the walls of corporate lobbies, board rooms, conference rooms and offices in total harmony with their surroundings. This type of art has finally found its natural home, which is fitting. An art that has for long pretended to symbolise everything while saying nothing makes a welcome addition to a decor that exudes pretense. Art has become big business. It is an attractive commodity for investment.

Meanwhile our contemporary bourgeois artists still search vainly for some hidden "meaning" in a new twist of the brush. Long detached from any useful function in society, a condition not of their making, and incapable of grasping an outward perception of reality, they continue on a lonely road to nowhere.

The theatre is everything today, except that which it is basically meant to be — a dramatic arena for challenging ideas.

Musical theatre seems to be the only profitable venture undertaken today. It is the form most adaptable to films and the potential returns to the producers are greatest. More than half the establishment plays on Broadway are now musicals. This leaves little room and gives no encouragement to drama with a progressive social content.

Avant-garde bourgeois music ricochets around all sorts of electronic devices, experimenting with sound for sound's sake. It is an inner world of audio detachment. The computer industry has entered the music business, producing a digital synthesiser which may be programmed by the layman to compose "music".

Capitalism is not satisfied with only nourishing escape and despair in the arts. As socialism grows stronger and spreads to new areas around the world, capitalism becomes desperate and irrational. Unable to defeat socialism in the basic spheres of life, capitalism has mobilised its forces, adopting all sorts of cunning means of psychological warfare directed against the Soviet Union and fraternal countries. Coupled to its huge military buildup, its bolstering of oppressive and racist regimes wherever they exist, it has not overlooked art and has assigned a special role to it. The "arts desk" at the CIA is a busy place. With unlimited funds at its disposal, it scans all the socialist countries, probing for openings in cultural areas where it might cause mischief, if not worse. It seeks to take advantage of some particular situation and spread subversion. It works through publishing houses, seeking to spread anti-socialist ideas, to fund writing by misanthropes still living in socialist countries and to organise the smuggling out of these writings to the West. Through intermediates, it tries to seduce ballet dancers, musical figures and other artists to defect to the USA, with bribery and glowing promises of fame and fortune that only the USA can give them. Some vain and foolish people defect, tempted by the bribery. They arrive here with prepared scripts about the denial of artistic freedom for them back home, and are immediately given access to our leading stages where they display the "artistic freedom" supposedly denied them.

The freedom to conduct, perform, sing, write, dance and paint is a privilege, the special property of the artist. The *responsibility* that goes with this privilege is something else. At minimum, it requires a sense of conscience, a sense of humanity, social principles and courage. The artist-emigres who have recently come here, want privileges only. They have little sense of responsibility, which in time will corrode them as artists.

When bourgeois ideology, culture and art have run the gamut of all the avenues of dehumanisation, they inevitably lead to the end point of dehumanisation — death itself. This survey began with reference to a contemporary play which involves the right of the individual to choose death as a solution to a problem. Some forty years ago, in another play, "The Death of a Salesman", death also hovers in the background as the inescapable solution to the tortured life of its leading character. At the end, Willy Loman takes his own life and is thereby able to provide his wife with some financial security from his insurance policy, something he could not do in his lifetime. Death is imminent throughout this play, but it is a death symbol stemming directly from the illusory beliefs in the values of a brutal social system. It is a tragedy that demonstrates that nobody succeeds under capitalism, not even the successful. We see a social system that destroys the individual, the family, and therefore all of society. A comparison of "Death of a Salesman" with "Whose Life is it Anyway?"

reveals the forty year metamorphosis of the drama from the tragi-social to desocialised subjectivism.

Artists have a two-fold responsibility. They must first ally themselves with the struggles of the working class, joining their own economic and social demands with those of the working class. They must also learn from the working class, from its rich history and its experience. In this way they can best deepen and enrich their art. Only the working class and its allies have anything of fundamental value to give to artists. These are hard lessons to learn and a challenging road for artists to take, but it is the surest road to an art dedicated to life and the socialist future.

# Dimitrov's 100th birth anniversary

Statement made by J. McPhillips, Chairman of  
the Central Committee of the Socialist Party of  
Australia to the International Theoretical Con-  
ference for the Centenary Celebration of G.  
Dimitrov's birth, Sofia, June 15 to 17, 1982  
(slightly abridged)

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**In the name of the Socialist Party of Australia and on behalf of its Central Committee and the Party membership I greet this Conference, its participants and the organisations constituting it.**

We pay our homage to Dimitrov not only for his great anti-fascist stand but also, and mainly for his outstanding capacity as a redoubtable revolutionary, a proletarian internationalist, an adherent, advocate and practitioner of the scientific theories elaborated by Marx, Engels and Lenin and of the norms and organisational principles for a revolutionary party developed by them. We pay homage to Dimitrov as a devoted communist of world standing.

This homage on our part does not arise merely from memory of his work but from a realisation of the applicability of his writings and activities to the problems of the communist and workers' movement today, including that movement in Australia.

At a conference similar to this and held in the city of Sofia ten years ago, to mark the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the birth of Georgi Dimitrov the representative of the Communist Party of Ireland, James Stewart is recorded as saying:

“Dimitrov’s contribution to the international struggle of the working class and its allies for democratic rights, self-determination, peace and socialism neither began nor ended with the Reichstag Five Trial. A true product of the rich and courageous history of the Bulgarian Communist Party, his life’s writings and actions spanned the fight for national liberation, for democratic rights, against fascism, to the laying of the foundations of the socialist state in Bulgaria.

“Georgi Dimitrov’s profound impact and living contribution to the international communist movement is based on this experience and his creative application and development of Marxist-Leninist ideological principles in theory and in practice.”

In what is probably his most widely known writing, and certainly the most widely known in Australia, his report to the Communist International 7th Congress in 1935, Comrade Dimitrov put fascism as the most immediate danger to the peace of the world and to the democratic freedoms and economic well-being of the peoples.

He described the inner essence of fascism and pointed to the fact that if its real nature was known, many who were misled by it, would change their attitude.

He called for wide dissemination of knowledge of the real nature of fascism and the development of a united front against fascism and war.

Today the world faces an ever present and mounting danger of a nuclear holocaust and also the danger of devastating wars by sophisticated, conventional (that is, non-nuclear) weapons.

The Socialist Party of Australia has accepted the proposition that the struggle to prevent such wars, the struggle for the strengthening and extension of detente — military and political — for disarmament and peace is the most important international task facing us and we have declared that task to be the centre of the work of our Party.

Our experience in pursuing this task emphasises the need to expose the falsity of the “Soviet threat” and the real nature and purpose of imperialism. This latter factor is made the more difficult but the more urgent by reason of the close and formal alliance between Australia, as a middle-sized capitalist power, and US imperialism. Our success in this most urgent task is restricted by a wide-spread acceptance by the Australian people of the so-called “Soviet threat” and an equally wide-spread failure to understand the real nature and purpose of imperialism.

Pointing to the use of anti-communism by the forces of reaction Dimitrov said:

“Anti-communism served as a smoke screen of Hitler’s aggression, of the German imperialists’ drive for world domination...and now the American imperialists and their official representatives are also trying to use anti-communism as a smoke screen.” (*Georgi Dimitrov Speaking*, Sofia Press, p. 109.)

That is the position of US imperialism and its allies today including the current central government in Australia.

Just as Dimitrov saw the need to explain the real nature of fascism when calling for a united struggle against it as the main threat to peace, so today, experience shows the need to expose the real nature of imperialism for purposes of developing a broad



united front against the threat of world war. Our experience shows that such a process requires exposure of the basis for the government's foreign policy.

The struggle for peace encompasses a wide area and extensive aims and validates, in today's circumstances, Dimitrov's claim that "The struggle for peace is a struggle against fascism, a struggle against capitalism, a struggle for the victory of socialism throughout the world". (Ibid, p 96)

In the elaboration of concepts of the united front of various forces Dimitrov drew attention to a number of features.

He said: "... the united front of the proletarian masses will not be achieved in the name of abstract aims and ideals which are not yet comprehensible to the broad masses, but on the basis of every day needs and interests of the working masses". (Ibid, p 135)

"The establishment of unity of action in all sections of the working class, irrespective of the party or organisation to which they belong, is necessary even before the majority of the working class has been united in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the victory of the proletarian revolution". (Ibid, p 137)

Those concepts and processes have application today in the circumstances in which truly communist forces function in Australia. The "Socialist Program" of the Socialist Party of Australia states on this matter:

"The corner-stone of correct revolutionary strategy requires the achievement of working class unity in action. Without the united activity of millions of working people for their many demands and directed against state-monopoly capitalism there can be no real prospect of ending the power of monopoly, of winning working class power and creating the conditions for an Australian socialist society."

However, there are many in the communist and workers' movement who quote Dimitrov on the question of the united front as though he had advocated such a process as a substitute for, or an alternative to, class struggle and as a form of collaboration with the class enemy.

Dispelling such notions Dimitrov said: "The united front and class collaboration far from being identical, are, on the contrary, two profoundly opposed, quite incompatible and mutually exclusive tactics". "... the united front of labour, far from running counter to the uncompromising class struggle between labour and capital, is actually one of the forms in which this struggle is conducted under specific circumstances." (Ibid, p 136)

There are also those in the working class movement who, allegedly pursuing the aim of a united front of working class forces, and claiming to do this in accordance with Dimitrov's views, would proceed without the communist party or seek to minimise its role in such a united front.

On this, Dimitrov said,  
"Actually, only the Communist Party is the initiator, organiser and driving force of the united front of the working class". "When fighting for the establishment of a united proletarian front, the communists must never lose sight of the revolutionary perspective: they must be able to link the united front tactics with the strategic task.

namely the struggle for victory of the proletarian revolution for a dictatorship of the proletariat.”

“The reaching of an agreement with the social democratic parties for a joint struggle against the onslaught of capitalism, against fascism and war, as a way of realising the united proletarian front, in no way means to postpone or abate our struggle against social democracy as an ideology and practice of collaboration with the bourgeoisie.” (Ibid pp 138-9)

Dimitrov’s concepts are echoed in the “Socialist Program” of the Socialist Party of Australia. That program asserts the over-riding importance and need for a party guided by Marxism-Leninism and says: “Reformism seeks to ‘improve’ and modify the excesses of capitalism while preserving the system intact. This approach denies the need for socialist change and ties the workers to capitalism and all its ills. It is therefore necessary to combat the ideology of reformism even while fighting side by side with Labor Party (social democratic) workers in the common struggle.”

Despite some increases in wage rates and decreases in working hours recently granted to sections of employed workers in Australia, the national economy is marked by evidence of decline due to a combination of internal and external factors arising from the crisis afflicting the economies of all capitalist countries. In those circumstances living standards are being attacked and main features of the economic situation include investment deferments and abandonments, international trade difficulties and adverse balance of payment problems, high and increasing interest rates, continuing price rises, plant closures, threats to levels of social services and increasing unemployment.

These circumstances, which show signs of long term duration, require from the working class and its trade unions the development of a planned counter-offensive aimed not only at short term alleviating measures but at extensive and, in some respects, basic changes in economic policy as well.

The development and elaboration of the necessary program capable of encompassing the concepts of essential basic changes is essentially the task of a political party guided by the science of Marxism/Leninism and unhindered by concepts limited to reforms within the confines of capitalism. Successful implementation of such a program requires collaboration with, and support from, the trade unions.

Dimitrov’s writings on the trade unions give much guidance on necessary approaches to this problem.

He said: “Organising the masses and raising their class consciousness, the trade unions must also wage a struggle in defence of the interests of these masses against capitalist exploitation. On the other hand the success of this struggle also depends on the class consciousness and education of the militants.” (Ibid. p 64)

“... We are resolutely opposed to any dependence of the trade unions on the bourgeoisie and shall not give up our principled point of view that it is inadmissible for the trade unions to adopt a neutral stand with regard to the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.”

Comrade Dimitrov elaborated views concerning the role of the bourgeois state

and the need for it to be changed, concerning the need to build and maintain the basic role of a Marxist-Leninist party, including the question of proletarian internationalism and support for the mighty USSR.

We in Australia find all those views of Dimitrov acceptable to us as a Marxist-Leninist party and applicable to the struggle in Australia.

We are under no illusion about the difficulties in winning support amongst the mass of workers for these views and for policies based upon them.

Our difficulties stem from two main sources. Firstly, a deeply ingrained reformist ideology amongst the mass of the workers in the trade union movement and the existence of an influential social democratic party — the Australian Labor Party — which receives extensive support both from the class as a whole and from the organised trade union movement.

Our second difficulty is our own limited capacity. We are working strenuously to improve our own Marxist-Leninist capacity.

The Socialist Party of Australia bases its position on the same grounds as those in which Dimitrov based himself. We are confident in the correctness of those views, and of our ability to lift our own capacity as Marxist-Leninists.

That is the task we have set ourselves and we are certain that as the situation in our own country changes and more workers see the correctness of these views the Socialist Party of Australia, the Marxist-Leninist party of Australia, will grow in strength and influence.

# The real meaning of Left sectarianism

by S Hall

**There is much Marxist literature and many practical experiences to show the real nature and content of left sectarianism.**

From time to time, those concerned with this issue have tended to equate left sectarianism with Party discipline and the strict adherence of policies and directives formulated by democratically elected higher Party committees.

Left sectarianism can be many things, but it is not and never has been the application of discipline in respect of Party decisions.

Writing in *Left-Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder* Lenin said, "... the Bolsheviks could not have retained power for two and a half months...without the most rigorous and truly iron discipline in our Party" (Lenin Collected Works Vol 31, p23)

And again,

"victory over the bourgeoisie is impossible without a long, stubborn and desperate life and death struggle which calls for tenacity, discipline and a single and inflexible will." (Ibid p 24)

It is as well to recall here that the highest form of working class organisation is the Party. This is basic.

The best way to prevent the Party from being diverted by "leftism" (or any other deviation for that matter) is to strengthen internal Party discipline in support of Marxist-Leninist positions, not to weaken it.

In *Left wing communism* Lenin not only showed the social roots of sectarianism but also gave the key to the source of the argument that Party discipline can be equated to sectarianism.

What is the social base of sectarianism?

“...the petty proprietor, the small master...who, under capitalism always suffers oppression and very frequently a most acute and rapid deterioration in his conditions of life, and even ruin, easily goes to revolutionary extremes, *but is incapable of perseverance, organisation, discipline and steadfastness.*” (Ibid p 32. Emphasis added. SH)

So Lenin argues, as Marx and Engels did before him, that left sectarianism springs from the petty proprietor and that this person brings with him a disdain for organisation and discipline.

This is the view of other Marxist-Leninist Parties who also reject the idea that party discipline is equated to left sectarianism.

Robert Steigerwald, an outstanding revolutionary and leading member of the German Communist Party wrote,

“Petty bourgeois radicalism is understood ... as anti-authoritarian and generally speaking, its adherents consider themselves to be Marxist-Leninists. The whittling away of bourgeois liberties and spontaneity in the face of state monopoly control combined with these radicals' negative attitude towards concrete Communist organisation (and) discipline ... leads to a fundamentally anti-institutional, semi-anarchic approach ... it is also claimed ... a centralised Party under revolutionary leadership is unnecessary.” (Anti-communist Myths in Left Disguise. Robert Steigerwald. International Publishers pp 30-31)

Attempts to equate Party discipline with left sectarianism, bureaucracy, authoritarianism, etc are not new.

In 1903, Lenin and the Bolsheviks waged a struggle against those who wanted a looser party structure. He wrote,

“It is clear, I think, that the outcries against the much talked of bureaucracy are simply a screen to conceal dissatisfaction with the personnel of these centres, a fig leaf ... You are a bureaucrat, because you were appointed by the Congress not in accordance with my wishes but in spite of them; you are a formalist, because you base yourself on the formal decisions of the Congress and not on my consent; you act in a crudely mechanical way, because your authority is the ‘mechanical’ majority of the Party Congress ...; you are an autocrat, because you do not want to deliver power into the hands of the old gang. (The ‘old gang’ here referred to is that of Axelrod ... and others, who would not submit to the decisions of the Second Congress and who accused Lenin of being a ‘bureaucrat’ J.S.)” (From “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”, as quoted by Stalin in “Foundations of Leninism”, International Publishers; pp 114-115.)

So much for what left sectarianism isn't.

Lenin urged the Bolsheviks to wage a tireless struggle against ultra “leftism”, but he was also insistent that it be properly identified. This was because it clothed itself in deceptively revolutionary garb and was frequently more difficult to recognise than right opportunism. This remains true today.

Left sectarians in Lenin's day — and he said the best example of this trend in the

1920s was to be found in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party — could be identified by their attitude to three major issues.

These were,

1. The need to assess the balance of class forces,
2. The need for class rather than individual action, and
3. The attitude to be adopted by revolutionaries to the reformists.

(LCWs Vol 31 p 33)

In the first place, the “lefts” in Lenin’s day, as now, reject out of hand the need to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the various forces in the struggle for socialism. Alternatively, they grossly over-estimate the strengths of the working class and its allies while underestimating their weaknesses giving a distorted view of the forces for and against socialism.

In the former case, various trotskyst sects go to some trouble to advertise the obvious fact that some of the objective conditions making for revolution are with us here in Australia — a general crisis of capitalism, intensified exploitation of the working people, falling living standards, an advanced economic base on which to build socialism and so on. What is not recognised is that in addition to the existence of the objective prerequisites, which the SPA has recognised since its formation, there are also subjective factors which need to be present.

It is clear in Australia that the subjective factors, while taking shape, have never been developed to the point where a revolution is imminent. The subjective factors include a willingness by the working class to think and act as a class, to cast aside illusions about capitalism, to reject the ideology and policies of reformism and to be no longer prepared to accept rule in the old way. To try to take a short cut to revolution by skipping over the need to develop the subjective requirements for revolution is a recipe for disaster.

While the trotskysts reject the need to assess the balance of class forces, the Maoists nominally accept it. But the assessment they arrive at is so inevitably distorted as to have the same disastrous consequences as Trotskyism.

According to the Maoists the class enemy is a “paper tiger” whose bark is worse than its bite. One good kick is supposed to be able to bring the whole rotten structure of capitalism crashing down. The truth is that despite a few such good kicks from time to time, the collapse of Australian capitalism hasn’t happened. (It is to be noted that the Chinese revolution was itself the product of a very long and bitter class struggle.)

Georgi Dimitrov gave a similar characterisation of sectarianism to that of Lenin in his report to the 7th Congress of the Communist International in 1935. He said that sectarianism could only be overcome if communists “seriously take into account the actual level of the class consciousness of the masses, the degree to which they have become revolutionized, if we soberly appraise the concrete situation, not on the basis of our wishes, but on the basis of the actual state of affairs ... Sectarianism finds expression *particularly* in over-estimating the revolutionization of the masses, in overestimating the speed at which they are abandoning the position of reformism, in attempts to leap over difficult stages and over complicated tasks of the movement. He quoted Lenin who said,

“This is the whole point — we must *not* regard that which is obsolete *for us* as being obsolete *for the class*, as being obsolete *for the masses*.”  
(G. Dimitrov. Speech to the 7th Congress of the Communist International. Current Book Distributors. 1945. p 75. Emphasis in original.)

Is the SPA guilty of the “first sin” of left sectarianism — not recognising the need to properly assess the balance of class forces?

The 4th Congress documents state

“During the whole historical period of its existence, nothing approaching a revolutionary situation has existed in Australia. Economic conditions enabled the capitalist class to make concessions in terms of wages and conditions. The Party membership has had to contend with a great weight of reformist influence among the workers and the appearance that other organisations of the labour movement were able to win reforms on behalf of the working class” (4th Congress Documents p 17)

The SPA, both in theory and practice, is not guilty of this “first sin” nor have any allegations been made that it is.

The second unmistakable mark of the left sectarian is his worship of individual actions as opposed to unified class actions. When Lenin wrote of this in *Left Wing Communism*, he was referring specifically to the Narodniks and the exponents of individual terrorism. This is not a phenomena frequently encountered in Australia but it is a feature of socialist and national liberation struggles in other parts of the world. Ireland is but one example. Recently, the Communist Parties of Ireland, Canada and the USA held a high level meeting in Montreal at which a joint communique was issued on the Irish question entitled “For the Independent Democratic Republic of Ireland”. It stated in part;

“The three Parties reiterated their condemnation of Britain’s role in Ireland .... At the same time while honouring the heroism of the dead Irish hunger strikers, the three parties resolutely opposed the campaign of bombing and shooting by the provisional IRA. They declared that...the solution of the national question could not be achieved by individual or elitist group acts of violence...The ruling class’s technique of “divide and rule” by which national oppression is imposed can only be defeated by mass political struggle based on the unity of the working people” (Information Bulletin International Publishers Vol. 2/1982 p 43).

The SPA’s coverage of Irish events in its paper “The Socialist” has supported this basic approach of the Irish, Canadian and US communists.

While terrorism is not a phenomena in Australia, individualism is widespread and manifests itself in a disregard for organisation, a disregard and even contempt for decisions and pursuit of individualist actions. However, this is not at all inherent in the policies and outlook of the SPA.

This is evident in our support for the United Front of the working class which will embrace the vast majority of the Australian people against that small clique which constitutes the ruling class.

The SPA’s Fourth Congress resolution says:

“Without the unity of action of millions of the working class there can be no real prospect of ending the power of monopoly. The establishment of the United Front means the establishment of unity of action by all sections of the working class in support of the economic and political interests of the workers at each given stage of development and directed against imperialism and state monopoly capitalism. (4th Congress Documents p 20).

Where is the evidence that the SPA bears the second characteristic of left sectarianism? The evidence does not exist.

The third distinguishing feature of left sectarianism is its attitude towards the social democrats.

When the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Russia levelled criticism at the parties of the Second International, the Bolsheviks took them to task. Not because the right wing social democrats were not deserving of criticism, but because of the nature of the criticism the left sectarian SR's sought to make. Those early Russian left sectarians thought it was very “left” to attack the Social Democrats for some of their minor opportunist errors while objectively imitating their more serious errors on questions like the dictatorship of the proletariat and the role of the peasant farmers in the movement for socialism.

While attacking the social democrats for their obsession with the parliamentary arena to the almost total exclusion of other types of struggle, the “lefts” imitated the right wing opportunists in overestimating the role of the non-proletarian class elements in the struggle against capitalism.

In more recent times we have seen the elevation of all manner of persons to the status of a “revolutionary class” e.g., students, migrants, intellectuals, homosexuals, aboriginals, environmentalists, etc. None of these groupings are a class from a Marxist viewpoint, and each category contains individuals who are progressive or reactionary depending on that individual's class outlook.

The Socialist Party's relationship with the social democrats is principled and correct. It recognises that the ALP is a party seeking limited social reforms within the framework of capitalism. Most of these reforms will have direct or indirect benefits for the working people. In as far as the ALP intends to implement its reforms (and the sincerity of its leaders has in many cases rightly been called into question) we as communists should work with ALP members and give them our support.

The SPA's Congress documents state that “ideological differences need not be barriers to united action on policies held in common”. The Socialist Party has as its stated aim the forging of closer links with the Labor Party at all levels from Branches and individuals right up to the national leaderships. This is seen by communists as one aspect of building a united front of the working class which includes not only the SPA and the ALP but all the trade union and non-party organisations of the working people.

In building closer links we do not abandon our right to a separate identity, organisation, policies and our Marxist-Leninist ideology. We would level



comradely constructive criticism at our united front partners when the interests of the working people dictate. We would ask only that any united action be in the interests of the working class.

Is this an incorrect approach to the ALP?

The SPA does not display any of the three characteristics which Lenin referred to as symptomatic of left sectarianism.

Our Party, of course, does not work within a vacuum. We live within a capitalist society which consists of the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the working class which is presently dominated by a reformist ideology. It is natural, even inevitable, that some of the ideas and actions of the petty bourgeoisie and reformist influenced workers are going to find their way into the Party. It would, therefore, be ridiculous to claim that left sectarianism will not occur but it is not to be found in the adopted Party policies.

These same social classes are the origin of all non-Marxist and opportunist concepts of loose organisation to be found in many parts of the political left. It is the social basis of right opportunism as well as left sectarianism.

Our best shield against the penetration and effects of right and left opportunism is three-fold.

Firstly, it is necessary to ensure the working out of a correct political line, one firmly based on the application of Marxism-Leninism to all our task and struggles. Our Party's policies as set out in the 4th Congress resolutions is such a principled and ideologically correct statement.

Secondly, democratic centralism must be strictly applied in working out and then putting into practice the decisions arrived at. The principles of democratic centralism apply to everyone from the newest recruit to the party leadership. It is not a question of democracy for the membership and centralism for the leadership as has been suggested. This is not democratic centralism but a distortion of it.

Thirdly, an ideological struggle must be waged against the dissipating effects of right-opportunism and the isolating consequences of left sectarianism.

The 4th Congress documents adopted this approach. The Political Resolution says,

“Revolutionary change can neither be ‘gingered up’ nor achieved by watering down ideological principles, by failing to take a stand on principle or relying on the development of the spontaneous mass movement. ‘Left’ and right opportunism tend to fuel one another. Leftism gains ground as right opportunism shows its bankruptcy. Right opportunism is revitalised as the futility of ‘leftist’ excesses are repudiated.

“It is necessary to oppose both expressions of opportunism. It is not a question of a ‘balance’ between these two errors but of overcoming the ideological weaknesses which give rise to both. To ‘left’ and right opportunism we oppose a proper application of Marxism-Leninism.” (4th Congress documents p 17)

Let us proceed to build a united party of socialism based soundly on the scientific principles of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

# The Way to Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia

*Nguyen Duy Trinh* — Political Bureau member,  
CC Secretary, CP Vietnam

**The contest between the two opposite social systems — socialism and capitalism — is being intensified from day to day. Against the background of the tremendous growth of the might of the three world revolutionary streams merging in a great and united force, which has been steadily developing its strategic offensive and scoring more and more major victories, there is a steady weakening of imperialism and reaction, which are sinking ever deeper into their general crisis and are being pushed off their erstwhile positions.**

· Our adversary has not, of course, reconciled himself with defeat, for he has at his disposal material resources and a broad spectrum of insidious and dangerous means of warfare. For the time being, the balance of forces in some regions of the world enables him to start local or diverse special wars, by resorting to incitement and the fanning of local conflicts, which they convert into proxy wars. The United States has conducted a policy of hostility and open threats against Cuba and Nicaragua in the Central American region and the Caribbean, fostered schemes for using Israel as a shock force to put down the national liberation and national independence forces in the Middle East, and encouraged racist South Africa's aggression against Angola. In the Persian Gulf area, the United States has concentrated large contingents of its rapid deployment force. Pakistan has been converted into a bridgehead for carrying on the undeclared aggression against Afghanistan. Peking has pursued a line of striking an alliance with the United States for the purpose of fighting Vietnam and other countries of the Indochinese Peninsula.

All these moves and gambles are designed to secure sources of energy and raw materials, to establish control over strategically important territories and to win back lost positions. Such an expansionist and hegemonistic policy tends to produce an explosive situation in these regions and poses a grave threat to the people's independence and security. There is no doubt that imperialism, headed by the United States, will remain for a long time the main adversary of the socialist system, the national liberation movement and the cause of democracy and peace.

US imperialism has obtained a new ally in putting through its global plans aimed against the revolutionary forces of the epoch. It is Peking expansionism and hegemonism. The Maoist grouping within Peking's ruling circles, which has betrayed Marxism-Leninism, is the biggest force of international reaction which has entered into alliance with US imperialism and which is acting as the most dangerous counter-revolutionary shock force. Everywhere, it has taken up this role, confronting the three revolutionary streams, especially in Southeast Asia. The Chinese reactionaries' partnership with the US imperialists, now a characteristic feature of the situation in the world, tends to increase the danger of war and the threat to peace and security in the world, above all in Southeast Asia and on the Asian continent as a whole.

Following the trip to China by the US Secretary of State Haig, Peking and Washington took another step in gradually shaping up their deal, which is based on effective military-political alliance resting on common strategic interests aimed against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Peking is fostering fresh schemes designed to separate these countries from the USSR and to put them against each other. The sharpest edge of this policy is directed against the USSR, Cuba and Vietnam, while its propaganda cover is provided by the idea of fighting "world hegemonism" and "regional hegemonism". The Peking leadership is trying to flirt with the communist parties of some capitalist countries in an effort to range them against the USSR, the socialist community and the world communist and working-class movement. Peking has been straining to get the less developed countries to follow in its wake so as to divert the non-aligned movement onto a way that is far away from the real struggle against imperialism and colonialism.

Southeast Asia is now one of the hotspots of the world. The enemy's counter-attacks have been gaining in acerbity and ferocity with every successful advance in the region of the revolutionary cause of the three peoples of Indochina: Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. Having entered into a conspiracy, our enemies are carrying on an offensive against the positions of socialism, threatening the peoples' national independence, peace and stability, and blocking the development of relations of cooperation and the deepening of mutual understanding in the region. Following the defeat in Kampuchea and the direct anti-Vietnamese aggression in 1979, Chinese ruling circles began, with Washington's active support, wildly to mount a multiform subversive war against Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. This involves military pressure on the border, armed provocations, seizure of territory, and attempts to combine brainwashing with espionage operations; subversive activity among national minorities; formation of detachments from among traitors to their country; the organisation of subversion and attempts to undermine the economy. All these hostile acts are being put through within the framework of a strategy geared to the

task of weakening Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea; they are designed to create conditions for a large-scale aggressive war for the purpose of occupying the three Indochinese states and spreading Peking's expansion to the whole of Southeast Asia.

The facts show that China and the United States have achieved coordination on uniting and using Vietnamese, Laotian and Kampuchean reactionaries, and arming and preparing them for realising the hatched counter-revolutionary plans.

The subversive activity begun in Southeast Asia by the United States and China is aimed to weaken Vietnam, undermine the combat unity of the peoples of the three countries of Indochina, and to isolate them from the Soviet Union and the other socialist states.

The ruling circles of the ASEAN countries, in virtue of their class nature, their dependence on the United States, the pressure from China, and their illusions about Vietnam's difficulties, are still unable to reconcile themselves with the actual situation in Kampuchea. China, the United States and members of this grouping have been strengthening their interaction, making use of Pol Pot and other reactionary Khmer groups to fight the Kampuchean revolution. Bases sited on the territory of Thailand are used for hastily training and arming the remnants of the Pol Pot troops and other armed detachments of reactionaries whose military activity against the Kampuchean patriots is being stepped up to the utmost. At the same time, these circles are pushing their Kampuchean henchmen to set up a 'coalition government'. Having staged the international conference on the so-called Kampuchean problem, they used the UN rostrum for the adoption of resolutions amounting to gross intervention in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. China and the United States have been pressuring Vietnam in an effort to get it to withdraw its troops from that country, dreaming of a political solution of the 'problem' to suit themselves, and seeking to put the countries of ASEAN and Indochina against each other. This dangerous policy could turn Southeast Asia into a highly explosive zone of the world.

Our primary task — which signifies defence of the cause of socialist construction — is to give courageous rebuffs to the aggressive and subversive policy of Peking expansionists and hegemonists, who have made a deal with US imperialism. This calls for protracted and exceptionally difficult struggle in every sphere — political, military, ideological and economic. But while tirelessly enhancing our revolutionary vigilance and constantly maintaining a high state of readiness to defend our country's interests, we always value friendship with the Chinese people and have consistently advocated a continuation of talks to solve the problems in relations between the two countries so as to bring about their normalisation. However, to this day, the Chinese side has invariably refused to do so, and this makes the bellicose substance of the Peking rulers' line even more obvious.

Together with fraternal Laos and Kampuchea, we have put forward many positive proposals aimed to set up a zone of peace, stability, friendship and cooperation in Southeast Asia. Vietnam wants a normalisation of relations with the ASEAN countries on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, a further development of the dialogue trend, and frustration of Peking's policy designed to fan hostility between ASEAN and our states. Speaking recently on behalf of the three Indochinese governments, the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic put forward a new initiative at the United

Nations, when he formulated the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence relations between the two groups of countries.

The party and people of Vietnam are aware that the mission assigned to us by history now consists in reliable defence of national independence, successful construction of socialism at home and efforts to preserve durable peace and stability in the region, something that will enable the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to make a positive contribution to the cause of international detente and the defence of peace in Asia and throughout the world.

In the late 1970s, the victories of the peoples of Kampuchea and Vietnam brought about a new situation in Southeast Asia and further materially strengthened the combat alliance of the three countries of Indochina. These free and independent countries building socialism are an important part of the world socialist system in this region, where the balance of forces is changing in favour of the revolution.

The Communist Party of Vietnam and its people have scored considerable successes in overcoming the grave consequences of the aggressive wars started by the United States, the Peking hegemonists and their satraps, and also in effecting socialist transformations and building a new society. We were victorious in defending our socialist fatherland in beating back Peking's two-fold aggression: along Vietnam's south-western and northern borders. The Vietnamese people are engaged in fulfilling two strategic and closely interrelated tasks which consist in successfully building socialism and maintaining a state of readiness to fight in defence of the country.

Our successes are considerable. But in the process of our advance we come up against serious difficulties, above all in the sphere of the economy and the life of the population. These are difficulties in the national economy in which small-scale production continues to prevail for the time being, the economy which has seriously suffered as a result of a long period of wars and of frequent natural disasters. We still have little experience in administering the economy and the society, we have made some mistakes in this sphere, and these are now being gradually righted. It is all the more difficult to overcome them because much attention needs to be given to the maintenance of a high state of combat alert, so as to defend the fatherland and rebuff Peking's hostile policy.

The Kampuchean people, under the leadership of the People's Revolutionary Party, has scored major successes of historical significance in the period since the overthrow of the Pol Pot clique. However, because of the exceptionally grave consequences of Pol Pot's policy of genocide and the present intervention and sabotage and aggression on the part of Peking and other reactionary circles, the country still faces many trials. That is why the Kampuchean people are in need of diverse assistance from the fraternal countries.

Our party has resolutely reaffirmed that the strengthening of relations of especially close and all-round cooperation between Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea is a strategic matter that is of vital importance for the three states and a factor reliably guaranteeing the preservation of the independence of each of these three countries and the building of their new life.

We wholeheartedly welcome the close and fruitful coordination of the policy of the Socialist community countries with Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea which has been established in the recent period. This all-round support and coordination of

action in various spheres will daily produce even greater results, especially in explaining the just substance of the struggle carried on by the Vietnamese, Laotian and Kampuchean peoples, which the imperialists and other reactionaries want in every way to distort so as to mislead world opinion. Such coordination should also help the states of Southeast Asia to gain a clear awareness of the fact that the threat to peace and stability here is posed by the expansionist and hegemonist policy of Peking, which has done a deal with the United States, and the Maoism (with Mao) has continued to provoke disorders in the countries of the region.

The coordination of our joint action is designed to thwart the policy of the United States, China and other reactionaries aimed to isolate Vietnam. The party and people of Vietnam will always remember that their victories in the war of resistance against the US aggressors and for the salvation of their fatherland, like the successes in socialist construction and defence of the country at present are inseparable from the valuable support of the Soviet Union and other fraternal socialist countries. Our party, led by its Central Committee, which is headed by Comrade Le Duan, has constantly emphasised that alliance and all-round cooperation with them in the spirit of socialist internationalism is a fundamental and principled policy. We regard our alliance with the USSR as the cornerstone of our international activity and foreign policy, because we believe that the USSR is the mainstay of the socialist system and the world revolution and because we proceed from the revolutionary substance of our Marxist-Leninist parties and states, which are guided by common communist ideals. Such is our fundamental and long-term strategy, which has become the earnest of the Vietnamese people's victories in defending the country and building socialism, a guarantee of the strengthening of its positions on the Indochinese Peninsula.

Reactionary circles, headed by US imperialism, have been feverishly reforming their ranks and putting up fierce resistance to those who stand for the cause of revolution and peace. This results in an ever greater exacerbation of the confrontation between the forces of socialism, peace, democracy and national liberation, on the one hand, and the forces of imperialism and reaction, on the other. Their aggressive incendiary policy is the root cause of the present tension in the world arena.

It is becoming ever more obvious that a task of especial importance today is to carry on the struggle for peace, to cut short the sinister schemes and aggressive acts of imperialism and the whole of international reaction. It is profoundly logical that the Peace Programme put forward by the 26th Congress of the CPSU for the 1980s has met with such a great response among all honest men in the world. A wave of action by various strata of the population under the slogans of struggle against nuclear weapons, the arms race and war — unprecedented in scale over the past several decades — has rolled across the countries of Western Europe, Japan and even the United States itself. The public at large has approved and given support to the peace proposals and initiatives of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries designed to ease tension in Europe, the Persian Gulf area, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the Far East; to Mongolia's proposal that a convention of non-aggression should be signed by the countries of Asia and the Pacific area, and to the initiatives of the three countries of Indochina aimed to turn Southeast Asia into a zone of peace and stability, friendship and cooperation.

The present situation insistently demands the formation of a broadest front to bring together — for struggle against the incendiary and aggressive course of imperialism, entering blocs with other forces of international reaction — the socialist states, the communist and workers' parties, the national, democratic and peace-loving forces and circles within socialist and social-democratic parties acting for peace. Leonid Brezhnev was quite right when he said: "It is necessary now, today, to do everything to block the way of those who want boundless armaments and military gambles. It is necessary to do everything to secure the human right to life."

Of crucial importance for victory in the battle for a peaceful future will be our persevering efforts in strengthening the might of the socialist community to the utmost, providing reliable defence of the positions of socialism, and constantly maintaining vigilance and readiness to rebuff any adversary wishing to weaken our ranks or to undermine our cohesion. We must closely interact in standing up for the lofty goals of the epoch, carrying high the banner of peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.



**A periodical conference of the Foreign Ministers of Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam was held in Ho Chi Minh city, July 6-7, 1982. It made some new proposals to settle the conflict in the SE Asian area. Here are the main proposals set out in the communique from the conference.**

The Conference analyzed the situation in South East Asia and the struggle of the Lao, Kampuchean and Vietnamese peoples to build up and defend their countries and to promote peace and stability in the region.

The presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea in no way threatens Thailand's security. Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam have on several occasions proposed to sign with Thailand treaties of non-aggression and non-intervention in their respective internal affairs. At the same time, they are ready to negotiate with Thailand on all necessary measures to ensure security, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity for each country. The People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam reaffirm their standpoint regarding the partial withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea provided that reactionaries in the Beijing ruling circles are no more allowed to use Thailand's territory to help the Khmer reactionaries oppose the Kampuchean people, and that the Polpotists and other reactionary Khmer forces are disarmed, no longer supplied with weapons and food nor allowed to use Thai territory to impede the revival of the Kampuchean people. As an act of goodwill, the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam agreed to make the first step; they decided to withdraw a number of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea in July, 1982. Depending on the state of security and stability at the Kampuchea-Thailand border and on Thailand's actions in response to the initiative, Kampuchea and Vietnam might consider a further withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea in a near future.

The People's Republic of Kampuchea reasserts its proposal of July 18, 1980 as to the establishment of a demilitarised zone along the border between Kampuchea and Thailand. If Thailand is not yet prepared to adhere to that proposal, the People's Republic of Kampuchea proposes the setting up of a safety zone along the border between Kampuchean and Thailand. Only the armed forces of Kampuchea will be present in the part of the safety zone situated in Kampuchea. The Vietnamese troops who are assuming internationalist obligations in Kampuchea will not be stationed in that area. Only the armed forces of Thailand will be present on the part of the safety zone located in the Thai territory. The Pol Pot remnant troops and other reactionary Khmer forces must be expelled from and refugee camps moved out of the safety zone.

To ensure the implementation of the agreements on peace and security at the border between the two countries, the two sides will agree on an international supervision. If the United Nations gives up the recognition of the representation of the Pol Pot or disguised Pol Pot clique, the People's Republic of Kampuchea may consider a United Nation's control.

Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam propose the convening of an international conference on South East Asia with the participation of the two groups of Indochinese and ASEAN countries, of Burma, of 5 countries who participated in international conferences on Indochina in 1954, 1961-1962 and in 1973, i.e. the Soviet Union, China, the United States, France, Great Britain and of India, a neighbouring country who for a very long time has kept relations of friendship with the South East Asian countries and greatly contributed to safeguarding of peace in Indochina and in the region for the past twenty years.

Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam hold that the rigging up of the so-called coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea is a farce aimed at concealing the evil nature of the Pol Pot clique in an attempt to reimpose the genocide regime on the Kampuchean people just saved from death, is a plot hatched by reactionaries in the Chinese ruling circles and the ASEAN to interfere in the Kampuchean internal affairs and to continue creating tension in South East Asia. The three countries consider the retaining of the representation of the Pol Pot clique at the UN under whatever name is an illegal act which contravenes the UN Charter. For the sake of justice and the UN prestige, Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam demand that the UNO expel the Pol Pot and disguised Pol Pot clique and seat the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the sole genuine and legal representative of the Kampuchean people. The People's Republic of Kampuchea declares that, in the immediate future, it does not require the UN to accept its representation but rather to leave the Kampuchean seat vacant.