

# INTERNATIONAL-3 (66)



BRING THESE BOYS HOME NOW !

## czech crisis.

## students and revolution

HOW CAN THE  
STUDENT  
REVOLT IN  
AUSTRALIA  
ACHIEVE ITS  
AIMS ?

WHICH  
WAY the  
CPA ?

FRANCE: C.P. ROLE:  
PERSPECTIVES:

## a revolutionary socialist magazine:

aug-sept 1968. 20c.



1.

STALINISM RAMPANT  
THE STALINIST INVASION OF  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Stalinism has once more come alive with a virulence little expected. The invasion of Czechoslovakia is now followed by menacing growls by the bureaucrats of Eastern Europe and the USSR in regard to Rumania and even Yugoslavia.

This aggressiveness on the part of the Soviet stalinist bureaucracy is of course largely explained by its deadly fear of socialist democracy and workers self-management spreading within its own borders and eventually threatening the whole bureaucratic power structure in the Soviet Union itself.

However another factor is undoubtedly the increased strength of the Soviet Union in the world arena in relation to world Imperialism. This real strength, which reflects in a distorted way the growing strength of the world revolution as a whole, has as a side-effect a feeling among the Soviet bureaucracy that it can do what it wishes in its own "sphere", given the implicit tacit agreement that exists between Imperialism and the Soviet Union. Yet this immense might of the Soviet Union is used to serve the narrow interests of the privileged bureaucratic social caste which exists in the Soviet Union and rules there.

Stalin was unable to intervene in Yugoslavia in 1948 both because of the strong reaction that would have faced him from the Yugoslav masses who would have gone back to the mountains from which the partisans had just come, but also because the world balance of forces with Imperialism was unfavourable to such an intervention. The USA after all had a monopoly of nuclear weapons.

Today the picture is vastly different. The cynical and hypocritical rulers of the USA and Australia of course seek to make political capital among backward masses, but they show little real concern. NEWSWEEK (2.9.68) reflects this cynicism. The US "had no choice but to play a leading role in world expressions of outrage against the Soviet aggression" but "after a decent period of mourning" they intend to continue in talks "pretty much as before". Clearly, Czechoslovakia is your sphere, Vietnam ours...

This immense might of the Soviet Union explains its contempt for the opinion of the vast majority of Communist Parties that have protested and for worker and student opinion in Western Europe and the world. In Stalin's day, the CP's in the capitalist world were a vital ingredient in Soviet diplomacy. Today, however, the physical might of the Soviet is such



that the CP's have become largely dispensible -- although they of course can still play a useful role for Soviet diplomacy. Moreover, their stalinist education can be counted on to make them pliable to Soviet pressure at a later date. In addition the rebirth of revolutionary movements in the advanced capitalist countries means that a common front will arise between this movement and the Soviet Union objectively on many issues.

The Soviet too, after having rid Czechoslovakia of truly communist elements and those who were intoxicated with the breath of workers democracy that passed through the country in the past eight months, after a police terror, the Soviet bureaucrats will be able to prop up the Czech economy so that it can for the moment buy the masses with consumer goods. This is what has happened in East Germany and Hungary. It of course does not solve the problem in the long run, and even heightens the contradictions which exist.

Yet this bureaucracy, intoxicated with its apparent strength, is increasingly a heavy burden on the whole nationalised economy. Nowhere was the retrogressive nature of the bureaucracy clearer than in Czechoslovakia.

#### ECONOMIC CRISIS PROVOKES NOVOTNY'S FALL

The Czech economy came to a full stop in 1960. In 1963 the gross national income actually fell by 3.7%. Certainly the pressures from the Soviet Union also weighed on the Czech economy. It was reliant almost completely on the Soviet for raw materials for many of its industries. And here exploitation was immense. The Soviet for instance charged the Czechs twice the price for petrol supplied in an agreement lasting to 1974, that they charged the Japanese and Italians, in other words, twice the real world market price, (18 roubles a ton for the Czechs, 9 roubles for the Japanese and Italians !)

However, it was more the internal economic arrangements that weighed heaviest of all on the Czech economy. The economy was run on stalinist lines : a pyramidal control, with orders concerning all features down to the last nut and bolt coming from Prague. The whole administration was filled with bureaucratic time-servers whose major test was sycophancy to the Novotny clique. In addition, the emphasis was on production of quantity and particularly on heavy industry. After the base had been established, the Czechs by 1959 had the possibility of a "take-off" into the scientific and industrial revolution which is sweeping the world. Yet the old system could not cope with such a take-off and so the whole economy ground to a halt.

The well-known Czech economist Radovan Richta in a book CIVILISATION AT THE CROSS ROADS (1) speaks of this inability of the

existing centralised economy to cope with this necessary leap forward and the increasing gap between Czechoslovakia and advanced capitalist countries in this field. In production of computer systems, the Czech production was 50 times lower than the USA and 10 to 15 times lower than Britain or Sweden. Richta demanded a rapid expansion of this modern science-based industry.

Yet this concept took many years before it finally won through. The Sik reforms attempted to place the Czech industry on a new basis,

with decentralisation and an attempt to have more technocratic managers appointed in the place of the stalinist hacks. Yet this also was insufficient to meet the needs of the new type of highly developed scientific and technological industry the Czechs had to develop to enter into the modern industrial field. It was also necessary to involve the workers themselves in production. "A broad scope for social initiative, frank exchange of views, and democratisation of the whole social and political system becomes virtually the condition of the dynamics of socialist society." (ACTION PROGRAM (2))

But if the Czechs began to consider the whole question of worker participation in management, they fell short of adopting a clear-cut program of worker self-management, while maintaining however some concepts of workers control. (3) Yet the discussion just before the Russian invasion was already raising all the questions of workers' self-management. The active discussion on this question and the way to really contest the bureaucracy's grasp may well have been a major reason for Russian intervention. (4)

Meanwhile the workers were contesting the bureaucracy's privileges installed under the Sik reforms; there were a number of strikes contesting the fashion the bonuses had been divided up by the managers of different enterprises. The economic reforms of Sik then had a number of contradictory aspects: they maintained the power of the bureaucracy as a whole and

#### A CZECH STUDENT WRITES TO LONDON TIMES.

We reproduce below text of letter published in London Times of August 24, 1968.

#### 'NO CAPITALIST PROTEST

from Mr. Jan Steiner.

Sir, - I am a Czech student here on holiday, but I know that I will speak for many of my countrymen when I say this :-

We do not want your Government to make a protest about what is happening in our country because it is a Capitalist Government and like all Capitalist Governments it only makes its protest when it is safe or "political" to do so.

Your Government is helping another government to exterminate a whole people in Biafra. The American Government is trying to crush a people in Vietnam.

Whatever these governments say this in fact is what they are doing. So it is hypocritical for these Governments to criticise the Russian Government. Their support really does not do our cause any good. The people who will do our cause any good are the ordinary people of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, yes -- and Russia. These people, perhaps very soon, will rise up against their own governments. We only want the support of people who believe in us, and not just for their own ends. This is complete hypocrisy.

Yours faithfully,  
JAN STEINER

77 Cromwell Rd, SW 7, Aug. 22.



strengthening the power of the local factory manager at the base. Yet the need to maintain some worker participation in the running of the factory and to lessen the alienation that becomes a real hindrance to increased productivity, they felt the need to give the worker some role in the factory management, although marginal. The same sort of phenomenon is occurring in a number of advanced capitalist countries. (See particularly de Gaulle's proposed reforms).

Yet when management is really in the hands of the local factory management, it is more visible to the workers than when decisions were taken in Prague. Thus the worker is more easily able to contest individual decisions and eventually the very function of the bureaucrats. He become dissatisfied with simple control and demands self-management. That self-management moreover can only have real meaning in the framework of a fully functioning political socialist democracy.

It was in this sphere that Czechoslovakia had progressed most remarkably. We only have to mention the fact that left communist oppositionists could organise and print a paper, that openly Trotskyist and Fourth International documents were published, to show the extent that democracy had progressed. (5)

Yet such democracy is incompatible for any length of time with the rule of the privileged bureaucratic caste that exists in Czechoslovakia.

#### THE ROLE OF DUBCEK AND SVOBODA

The "liberals" in the Czech Communist Party who came to power at the beginning of this year have shown the dual character of the "liberal" tendency of the bureaucracy. Given the economic necessities of a modern economy, especially one trying to make a "take-off" into the modern scientific industrial revolution, and the needs for greater freedom that this economy also demanded for its citizens-producers, the Dubcek regime decided that only a real sense of freedom could succeed. Yet socialist democracy must because of the very nature of the economy immediately raise the basic questions of who really rules much more rapidly and starkly than under capitalism. Capitalism has in the advanced countries a well-oiled machinery which its position as a class with long historical roots allows it to maintain the illusion of democracy and freedom for the masses. The bureaucratic caste cannot however allow itself such freedom for the masses because such freedom automatically questions its role. Precisely because the bureaucracy claims to rule for the masses and has no historical class role, and because the economy is nationalised, that bureaucracy must rapidly disintegrate as a political unit once the masses are allowed even the political freedoms the bourgeoisie can afford its wage-slaves in the advanced capitalist countries.

The "liberals" then found that within a few months new forces were arising questioning the very essence of the regime. Certainly, rightist and even counter-revolutionary forces existed in Czechoslovakia, but the most certain way of limiting their influence was by the extension of real socialist democracy and workers self-management. The surest way to extend their influence was to send in the Soviet tanks.

However, the most important forces were those for real workers democracy. These forces were strongest among the students and the intellectuals as a whole. However, among the workers the echo of this agitation was also spreading.

The "liberal" leadership was caught between these new forces and the bulwark of stalinism -- the Soviet bureaucracy. Their actions over the past weeks has been of wavering between a determined resistance, even at the risk of their own lives, and capitulation. On the other hand, some of the leaders of the Czech Communist Party appear more determined and forthright in their call for resistance. Thus some of the "liberals" tend to become something more than that, and side decisively with the masses. This above all occurs at the middle and lower ranks and among the youth.

It will be difficult to know exactly what knowledge the Soviet had that Dubcek and Svoboda would order the Czech Army to offer no resistance and call for strictly limited passive resistance. Yet the potential knowledge of the Czech leaders attitude may well have prompted the intervention. It is an essential right of a country on the road of workers democracy to resist by all means any attempt to intervene with its destiny, even if such intervention comes from the Soviet Union. It is essential, for instance, that both Yugoslavia and Rumania make crystal clear their intention to resist to the last man such military intervention. That is the only language the dictators in the Kremlin understand.

Yet resistance to the Red Army means also that an essential part -- even the major part -- of such resistance should be political in form, agitation to show the Soviet soldiers how they are misled.

A valid comparison is with a group of strike-breakers. They have to be resisted, including physically, even though they are (backward) workers. There must also be political agitation among them, but that will only be effective if there is a hard, determined resistance.

A truly revolutionary leadership would have prepared the Czech people and Army for such intervention. It would have armed the workers in workers militias. It would have stated unequivocally that any invasion would have been fought to the last man. It seems now the Rumanians and Yugoslavs are learning from the Czechs' mistakes.

Dubcek and Svoboda, subject to enormous mental and even physical



pressure from the stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin, have themselves capitulated in large measure, although their very survival gives the lie to the Soviet excuse for intervention. However, with their present line Dubcek and Svoboda are acting the role set for them by Brejnev and Co.. On the other hand, there is a clear sign that once the stalinist grip on the country is assured, Dubcek and the others will suffer the same fate as Imre Nagy. Indeed, unless Dubcek is prepared to become a Kadar or a Gomulka, then that is the only fate awaiting him. Already the KGB is pouring in its hundreds into Czechoslovakia.

### THE REAL TRAGEDY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The real tragedy of Czechoslovakia lies in what it could have been and the effects it could have had on the whole world -- East and West. The Czechs were constructing a socialist and workers democracy which would not only have inspired the Russian, Polish, Hungarian and other East European workers and students; it would have also set an example in real workers democracy that would have inspired the workers and students in the advanced capitalist countries as well.

That hope has been cut short by Russian tanks, sent in by the stalinist dictators of the Kremlin. Stalinism is alive and living in Moscow, but in the rest of the world, it is now reaching its end. Soon too the Russian workers and students will give it the coup de grace in the Soviet Union itself.

But for the immediate, we may well be entering a period in which the harsh repression of the stalinist era will return, and the military might of the Soviet Union be used to crush socialist democracy wherever it raises its head. But that can only render the contradictions more explosive and the political revolution of the workers and students against the bureaucratic dictatorship more inevitable.

31 August 1968

#### Notes:

- (1) This book is referred to in an article by Dr. Z. A. B. Zerman in the London Sunday Times, 25.8.68.
- (2) Quoted by Eric Aarons in CZECHOSLOVAK ACTION PROGRAM in AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW, August-September 1968.
- (3) *ibid.*
- (4) See the article "How to build workers democracy -- debate in Czechoslovak press" quoted in the MILITANT, New York, August 2, 1968. The article reproduced there is written as the 'first of a series' by Professor Zbynek Fiser in the daily NOVA SVOBODA and in the left communist INFORMACNI MATERIALY. The article deals with the

relationship between workers self-management and workers democracy in the political field. It seeks to find a way for self-management in which some of the pitfalls of the Yugoslav example could be avoided.

(5) The MILITANT also contains news of large extracts published in INFORMACNI MATERIALY from a declaration of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on Czechoslovakia. Only those extracts critical of the USSR had been omitted. The June 24 1968 issue of this journal also contained a report from a Henri Cigan on the French May Revolt and the counter-revolutionary role of the French CP. The same issue also contained an interview with Rudi Dutschke with a German magazine after a visit by Dutschke to Czechoslovakia.

### LEFT COMMUNIST GROUP FORMS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The following was printed in INFORMACNI MATERIALY, a left communist journal now appearing in Czechoslovakia, June 14.

On June 7, 1968, a meeting took place of those responding to a call published in RUDE PRAVO of May 21 for the establishment of a left-wing association. In a working discussion we clarified a series of theoretical and practical questions. We agree that we want to work to deepen the revolutionary socialist process begun in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and that we reject all attempts to halt or eventually to reverse this progress. We want to give our most active support to the Czechoslovak Communist Party in every way that will deepen the socialist character of our society. We fear, however, that many obstacles will be put in the way of our efforts both by the conservative forces and the liberal forces, in essence anti-communist, who are growing.

We want to function as a free association of discussion clubs and circles. In this association, we want to carry on primarily theoretical discussion and educational work in active support of the principles of socialism in our country and in the world revolutionary movement. We want to fight for the development of forms of democratic socialist society. We want to have ideological contact with all elements in the international revolutionary movement. We want to work for an unfettered exchange of information in this sphere. At the same time, we demand the speedy adoption of a new law granting freedom of association so that we can legally organize our work.

Our address is : Julie Novakova, Postovni Schranka 1023, Praha 1.

☐ Taken from the MILITANT, August 2, 1968. ☐

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WEST AUSTRALIAN COMMUNISTS  
PROTEST TO SOVIET EMBASSY  
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The following resolution was sent to the Soviet Embassy in Canberra to the Czech Consulate and to Laurie Aarons, national secretary of the CPA,

It was signed by a number of Communists and Socialists. The members of the CPA who signed included Rivo Gandini, State Committee Secretary of the West Australian Branch of the CPA and 5 other State Committee members. Rivo Gandini was reported at a public protest meeting of the West Australia CP branch to have urged Australian Communists to organise aid to any Czech underground formed to resist the invasion.

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"We, the undersigned, condemn unequivocally all those responsible for the armed invasion by the Governments of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary attacking the people of Czechoslovakia.

"We believe that this illegal action is the result of deep hostility among these Governments to the spread of workers' democracy in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

"We declare our full support for all forces seeking to spread socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia, and in the invading countries.

"We consider that the leaders of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary have shown themselves over a long period unfit to be called Communists.

"We add our voice to worldwide demands for the immediate withdrawal of foreign forces from Czechoslovakia."

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BY WAY OF CORRECTION

TRIBUNE of August 28, 1968, gave some prominence to a statement made by Denis Francis at the YSL symposium on France concerning the status of Jean-Pierre Vigier, author of the booklet FRANCE'S MAY REVOLUTION published by INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS. It is true that Vigier apparently was removed from the FCP Central Committee around 1960. Denis Francis was in Paris in 1967 and was under the impression then that he was still a CC member. Vigier is a world-famous intellectual and physicist who made many visits to Hanoi and Havana. He was a member of the FCP until May 1968. We were glad to hear that a TRIBUNE journalist recently in Paris considered it a valuable document despite this mistake. We hope TRIBUNE will continue to show such anxiety for journalistic exactness.

WHICH WAY THE  
C.P.A. ?  
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The CPA confronted with France and Czechoslovakia.

The "crunch"(1) has certainly arrived with a vengeance for the CPA. First the French May Revolt posed the need to break with the neo-reformist aspects of stalinism; then came the Czechoslovak crisis posing the need to break with the traditional subservience to the Soviet Union bureaucracy and examine in depth the nature of this bureaucracy.

This article was originally intended to take up certain points made by cde. Rivo Gandini in the last issue of INTERNATIONAL in reference to my booklet, the COMMUNIST PARTY CRISIS-- a left criticism, which was published in March of this year. However, the events of the past weeks have meant that I shall examine more the present crisis rather than examine in detail his criticisms and appraisal.

I think that the Czechoslovak crisis has verified one of the major points made in the CP CRISIS: that is, the need for a really profound marxist analysis of the stalinist past of both the Soviet Union and the CPA. Unless that is done, there can be no real understanding of the Czech crisis. Unless the basic social reality of the Soviet Union is understood -- the existence of a privileged ruling bureaucratic caste that took power from the working class under Stalin and still rules through a dictatorship over the class -- then, no real analysis can be made.

The "trotskyists" have been accused by some CP leaders of having a fetish on "bureaucracy" and using it as a simplistic means of explaining everything from the CPA to the CPSU and capitalism.

Now, it is true that Revolutionary Marxists deal with the problem at great length. Often, too when speaking to comrades miseducated in the stalinist school, we have to adopt a rather simple method of explaining it. It is often necessary to repeat that elementary social fact about the Soviet Union in the same way as we repeat the existence of the working class and capitalist class as a fact to backward workers in capitalist society. Of course, capitalist society is infinitely more complex than the bald statement of two antagonistic classes would make it appear, yet acceptance of that basic fact is fundamental to marxism no matter how much it is qualified and added to afterwards. The same applies to the elementary social fact of the existence of a privileged ruling bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union, which will even invade another Workers State to defend its privilege.



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Once that elementary social reality is accepted, then the road is open to a more thorough analysis of that caste, of the different layers composing it, of its complex sociology, of the changes in its composition since Trotsky's classical analysis, of its ideology, of its effects on philosophy, art, etc., as well as its economic effects and the effects it has had on the world working class movement, including the CPA.

If a Communist Party wanted to make such an analysis, it could make a real contribution to the clarification of the world working class movement on this question.

### WILL THE C.P.A. FACE UP TO THIS QUESTION ?

In reply to a question asked at a meeting on Wednesday night, 28th. August, Laurie Aarons, general secretary of the CPA, stated that the National Committee intended to open up a discussion in the Party on precisely the question of how such an event could be explained in marxist terms of social analysis. He also stated that he recognised that privileges existed in the Soviet Union which were beyond acceptable bounds, etc., and generally agreed that the question had to be discussed and seriously examined.

In fact, the CPA has little real choice. Those who have agreed with its opposition to the Soviet invasion will now begin to demand some real explanation. Others who have supported the Soviet have done so because they are simply being consistent with thirty years of Stalinism in the CPA. They too need a real explanation.

It only then speeds the disintegration of the CPA to dodge the real questions involved. To spread a confusionism, an anti-Trotskyism means that the Party will lose on both sides.

It is to be hoped then that the Party does go through the agonising reappraisal promised by Laurie Aarons and doesn't accept the "easy" way out of simply leaving the issue at a protest and hope that it will end there.

As we have mentioned in the article on the Czech crisis in this issue, we believe that the nature of the links of the CPs with the USSR has changed and that they are not important links in Soviet diplomacy which can now rest much more simply on the might of the Soviet State. The CPs who cut the umbilical cord with the USSR must then find another raison d'être. When they are large mass parties, as in France and Italy, their transformation into left, neo-reformist, basically social-democratic parties is easy, even natural. When, however, they are small and without any mass political base, then they face a real crisis for finding a role in modern capitalist society. Either they can be transformed through a series of agonising reappraisals into genuinely revolutionary parties, tapping the revolutionary upsurge among the youth, or they can become

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aged and ossified sects without any real influence or hope of change. In that case, the construction of revolutionary socialist parties as real alternatives to the capitalist system will channel the student revolt and also the discontent inside the small CPs.

Let us say right now that the CPA, unless it proves willing to make such a reappraisal and adopt a revolutionary socialist position in Australian society, and allow the free functioning of different currents and tendencies in its ranks, including the right of public expression, then the CPA will be faced with a sizeable challenge from the left in the next couple of years.

But such a struggle is essentially wasteful of the slender resources of the Left in this country. Much easier would be the entry of all revolutionary socialist elements and groups into the CPA with full right of expression and tendency, including, if necessary the publication of organs such as INTERNATIONAL. That would however certainly mean the loss of some old-time stalinists (who will probably leave in any case after the Czech affair) and even of some neo-reformist trade union leaders who may support the leadership on Czechoslovakia, but would not on such a basic change in the Party structure and policy.

The mood of the youth and of the revolutionary atmosphere arising in Australia is incompatible with even the modified democratic centralism (of the stalinist type) which pertains in the CPA. It is true now that you can say anything you like in the CP without getting expelled. You can associate or be known to associate with the "trotskyists" and still remain. Why then not formalise the freedom which does exist by a complete renewal of the Party rules and structures which would allow the absolute degree of right of tendency (right to organise as a group in the Party around different issues or on a series of questions, right to have proportional representation on Party bodies, minority reports, right to caucus, right to circulate material among members -- and even in extremis, and this is not a tendency right usually, to publish material externally, in a public way). Right of recall is also a basic right of tendency.

Such a structure will pertain in any revolutionary socialist organisation to be built and will certainly suit better the mood and needs of the revolutionary youth.

### C.P.A. ATTITUDE TO FRENCH REVOLT

The attitude of the CPA, at least as reflected in its public attitude left much to be desired on France. While at meetings some CPA leaders were prepared to criticise the French CP's attitude to students and student power, in fact, their attitude as a whole was a whitewash of the French CP's attitude, and one that "the French CP must know best".



The French revolt was a test because here was a revolutionary situation in an advanced capitalist country. How far was the CPA able to recognise and support it? On the surface it failed dismally. Although there was widespread discontent with the French CP role, and many were openly critical (the ARENA group, Rex Mortimer, the West Australian members in large numbers, etc.) there was the old stalinist reflex coming into play -- defence of the fraternal CP. For others unhappily, it was only explicable in assuming that they were really wedded to the parliamentary road and the neo-reformist interpretation of the "coalition of the Left".

But the left noises made by the CP on student power and on the revolutionary upsurge among the youth sound phoney to the very people they are trying to influence when they seek to justify the French CP.

Again, the CPA must really decide where it is going and then adopt a consequent policy in all circumstances.

The trade union officials as a grouping remain a conservative force inside the CPA. However, a truly revolutionary socialist party might be able to win them over in large part if it sought honestly to fight on these issues.

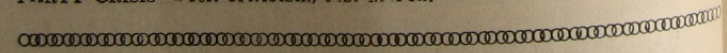
The OPEN LETTER of the Australian Section of the Fourth International and the SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE group to members of the CPA and supporters on the Czech crisis posed the basic question of the Party really discussing and campaigning for a really marxist analysis of the Soviet bureaucrats' attack on Czechoslovakia. If the statement of Laurie Aarons on Wednesday 28th. was correct, then that discussion will take place and such an analysis may even be made, at least in part.

But after that basic task has been carried out, the CPA must face up to its own stalinist past and decide what its future path shall be. The "crunch" has come -- it has still to be seen what will be the final outcome.

Denis Francis  
1 September 1968.

Notes :

(1) "The coming months will be the crunch", I wrote in COMMUNIST PARTY CRISIS - a left criticism, last March.



THE NEXT ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL

will contain a reply to the Communist Party's booklet "France in Perspective" which could not be included in this number for shortage of space. We shall also deal more generally with issues raised in discussion of THE COMMUNIST PARTY CRISIS.

STUDENTS AND THE AUSTRALIAN REVOLUTION  
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A Perspective is needed

No one can now be in doubt that the world upsurge of radical youth has reached Australia. In bold actions which have jolted the sluggish protest movement into responses sometimes admiring and sometimes indignant, they have challenged the tradition of "conformist protest" time and again. They have taken the struggle for civil liberties onto the streets of Brisbane, lifted the anti-Vietnam war movement to the level of active solidarity (NLF aid at Monash), launched the first attack on a U.S. Consulate in Australia (Melbourne) and forcibly removed security police from a campus (Sydney).

They have thus established themselves as a vanguard, in the only way such a title can be won: not by withering verbal attacks on the other trends in the movement, but by undeniably vanguard activity.

University students supply the core of this vanguard. On their own stamping ground, the campus, they have likewise launched -- and sometimes won -- important struggles against oppressive administrations or unsatisfactory courses. This home-ground activity was seen, for instance, at Sydney University early in 1967 (the Humphreys case); but the most notable arena of this kind is undoubtedly Monash. Some of the enormous possibilities of the "student power" movement were shown there in (successful) struggles as that over the sacking of the bookshop manager and, in particular, the fight against the draft discipline statute.

However, the student struggles, whether inside or outside the university, are not guided by any particular political perspective -- indeed it is only a small minority of the participants who see any relation at all between their actions and the wider political scene. Paul Goodman rightly comments on the American student movement: "By such means they will never get power. But indeed, they do not want power, they want meaning."

Indeed, it is precisely this demand for meaning, a refusal to accept routine processing, dehumanised administration or systematic murder, no matter how handsomely presented, that separates out this generation from its predecessors -- who were prepared to accept so much meaninglessness and false meaning.

But unfortunately, to operate only on this level is to leave power precisely where it is now: with dominating financial power in the big property-owners, delegating political and social power to subsidiaries prepared to go along with them -- whether factory managers, members



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of parliament, newspaper editors or -- university administrators.

It hardly needs to be said, that there would be little point in aiming at a transfer of this power into the hands of a centralised State administration -- in achieving a nationalisation of industry which resulted in the sort of oppressive bureaucratic rule seen in the Soviet Union. Power in each sphere needs to be put as far as possible into the hands of the immediate producers; certainly this cannot be done without ridding ourselves of the present capitalist ownership, but this is not enough in itself. The crucial concept here is that of self-management; decisive power over the running of each factory or university for instance being actually exercised by those people -- workers or academics and students -- who are immediately involved.

This article does not argue for, but assumes, the need for a radical change in society of this kind, which amounts to a revolution. If the present student upsurge is to have the revolutionary effect that most of its leaders want to see, it is obviously desirable to try to estimate the main lines a revolution could take in Australia, and base on it a strategy for the student movement today. The following brief notes are intended to open up this question.

### STUDENTS AS DETONATOR

It is vital at the outset to emphasize that the question of revolution is a question of mass behaviour. This assumes that "putschist" and "elitist" ideas of revolution by an energetic minority do not need to be refuted. Unfortunately such ideas do exist in various forms, in the student movement in particular, and do need refutation; but this will not be done here. Nor will we do much more than assert that the indispensable force in such a mass revolution, at least in Australia, is the working class as the only social group with the force and striking power needed to displace the well-entrenched capitalist class.

This implies that the intelligensia, and in particular the university population, do not constitute such a force and indeed few would deny this. But if this is so, we must conclude that the main significance of student political action is to be sought in its relation to the development of the working class as a revolution force.

It is in this light that we must evaluate the vanguard youth activity mentioned above; and indeed, against the background of a bureaucratic and routinist labor movement, under leaderships largely assimilated to, and defenders of the status quo, the vitalizing effects of the radical youth actions are inevitably small, but still undeniable and significant.

From the May Revolution in France in particular, the useful concept has emerged of the revolutionary role of the student movement as that of a detonator. Not itself possessed of sufficient explosive power to shatter the system, its actions and example can yet set off the working class to revolutionary energy which is adequate to the task.

The fact that a revolution must necessarily involve the masses, and in particular the working class, needs to be taken seriously. A revolutionary movement will not come about by arithmetical addition to the present number of vanguard cadres, and it is quite hopeless to apply to the development of a mass revolutionary movement considerations (which may be quite valid in their sphere) derived from a study of the way vanguard elements become radicalised.

This is relevant, for example, to the question of a policy of "confrontations". Undoubtedly, the direct challenge of oppressive authority, especially when it is hypocritically camouflaged, is a necessary and continuing tactic in the building of the movement. But it would be formalist and mechanical in the extreme, to imagine that each instance of open suppression will automatically "expose" the system in a positive way to ever wider sections of the masses, and lead to ever wider struggles with even more clearly revolutionary content. Even less realistic is the naive and elitist concept of police batons stuffing more revolutionary consciousness at each blow into the thick skulls of the masses.

In reality, the mass response to repression depends critically on their concern over the issues of struggle involved. In neglecting this question, and emphasizing the form of "confrontation" itself, we certainly make things easier for ourselves, since the crucial problem of political leadership then disappears -- namely, the problem of locating those issues on which can be developed present struggles having a clear connection with a future revolutionary upheaval. But the price we pay for pushing this problem aside is to be politically ineffective in the long run.

It is quite unreal to imagine that the results of repression are always positive, in that the real enemy then stands more clearly revealed, etc. . . On the contrary, the struggle will certainly be damped down, for instance, unless the issues are so important to the masses involved that they will determine to overcome the newly-revealed difficulties also.

### WHAT ARE THE REVOLUTIONARY ISSUES?

All this emphasizes the need for a program, for defined issues of struggle. If they are not to be simply paper expressions of political piety, they must be acceptable to the masses at the present time, and thus be capable of stimulating mass action. If they are not to be restricted to the level of reformism, and serve as an adjunct to preserving the system, their full attainment must be incompatible with the continued existence of that system. These criteria roughly express the concept of a



transitional program which really needs more explanation than can be given in this article.

But this should be enough to illustrate a crucial point. While mass struggles occur (and should occur) continually and on a wide variety of issues, not all these issues have a potentially revolutionary (i.e. transitional) character. The existing system has developed a high degree of skill in absorbing and accommodating a wide range of dissatisfaction -- as is illustrated by the "barn-cat" behaviour in general of the trade-union movement. That is why the first requirement of a revolutionary leadership must be to locate the truly transitional issues, stimulate the struggles around them and take the initiative in proposals to raise the level of these struggles.

This point is very relevant to the question we are concerned with here. If the "student revolt" is to figure in the most effective manner in the Australian revolutionary movement, we must have an idea of the path that movement is likely to take. If we accept the above points, this means essentially that we must estimate the main transitional demands stimulating the movement.

The building of an Australian revolutionary leadership, and the confirmation in practice of its transitional program, are tasks still to be accomplished. But the movement cannot simply flounder meanwhile in the morass, lacking all sense of the main direction to travel. And particularly since the May revolution in France, it is now possible to state with some confidence the nature of some of the crucial demands in such a program.

### SELF-MANAGEMENT : A KEY CONCEPT

The ones that are relevant to us here will concern self-management. For the working class, this means a workers council in each enterprise taking the major decisions on all questions relating to production. For a university population, this means staff student government substituted for the "establishmentarian" Senates and Councils, which rule at present with varying degrees of bureaucracy, and act with different shades of emphasis as auxiliary organs of the State.

These goals of full self-management are the necessary transitional demands to combat both the existing capitalist control and the future bureaucratic danger. In the light of this goal, day-to-day issues occur naturally which raise the question of partial measures of control -- whether workers' supervision of apprenticeship training, the opening-up of the company's books to the workers, or staff-student handling of particular spheres of decision at present arrogated by the administration.

It is only this general strategic slogan of self-management which

can give the revolutionary answer to the major discontent of neo-capitalist society. Much of the alienation characteristic of that society presents itself to the common man as a certain powerlessness, an impotence in the face of events which is more than just a "feeling" -- in the dehumanised world of all-important technology and unimportant people, this impotence is an objective reality. As a result, "Black Power" has fired the imaginations of the oppressed black Americans; "student power" has been a powerful rallying call against the dehumanized processing of the universities; and banners inscribed with the slogan "Workers Power" flew in marches and on factory walls during the general strike in France. The principle of self-management answers to this fundamental and justified need, and can illuminate the path to a revolutionary reconstruction of a rotten society.

### THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY

What conclusions follow from this for the academic struggles in Australia today? They emerge quite clearly if the preceding arguments are valid. The main significance of the movement in the Universities is to be found in the "detonator" effect, on the working class movement in particular. The closest links between the academic and working class movement are thus prime requisites if the universities are not to appear to the worker as remote citadels whose doings are quite irrelevant to him.

Chats with sympathetic union officials can prepare for the forging of such links, but do not themselves constitute links of the required kind. It is only by unity in action around issues of common concern that these links can be forged.

This unity is obviously essential if the "detonating" effect is to be significant, if it is to be too sizable for the reformist labor leaders to damp out -- as they will certainly try their hardest to do (like the CGT and CP in France). But -- detonation on what issues?

The answer to this question, also, is implicit in the discussion above. If self-management is the crucial issue from a revolutionary viewpoint, we cannot ignore the quite extraordinary position of the university; there is probably no institution in society today where the prospects are so bright for a campaign for self-management by staff and students. Moreover, actual assertion of student power have already demonstrated in practice that these prospects are no mere illusions, but that significant gains can be made which open up the path to really weighty achievements.

But this path will not be consistently followed, unless the true significance of university self-management is appreciated, a significance extending far beyond the university itself. A university which won measures of self-management -- and of course it is the students who, as in the past, can be expected to show the way to the academic and



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non-academic staff -- would thus demonstrate to the working class how dispensable are the accepted rules of everyday life, whether bureaucratic or managerial. To the extent that real links existed with the workers' movement, the example thus set would inevitably put on the agenda questions of self-management in the factories and workshops.

### SUMMING UP

On the question of a perspective for the radical student movement, this article is intended as the first, rather than the last, word. To facilitate discussion of its propositions, it might be useful to summarize them:

1) radical student actions have been and still are of unquestionable value to the revolutionary movement, but suffer from lack of a general political strategy.

2) This strategy must be based on a broader perspective: that for the movement as a whole.

3) To achieve this perspective, we cannot duck the necessity of finding the issues on which mass action against the system is probable. A formalist "confrontation" theory evades the question.

4) The working class is the only social force in Australia with the strength to overthrow the system.

5) The student movement can act as an essential "detonator" of the broader and stronger movement.

6) To achieve an effect of the scale required, the closest unity in action is needed now between students and workers.

7) The crucial revolutionary issues in our society will centre around self-management.

8) It is by the struggle for staff-student government of the university, and the consequent example of self-management given to the workers, that students can have their most significant effect on the system.

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If these theses are valid, then the harm being done by the lack of a general perspective seems considerable. What should be the two basic concerns of the movement -- practical unity with the working class, and the struggle for university self-management -- are not being jointly pursued in a principled way in any Australian university, even though their general desirability is usually acknowledged. (Something like two poles of the movement appear: Brisbane, student-worker links are strongest, while at Monash "student power" ideas have won notable successes

The student movement, for all its admirable achievements, has tended to lurch from issue to issue without any map to guide it. This is not the best way to get where you want to go. It is hoped that this contribution may lead to a discussion on this very important question.

A. PATRICK  
31 August, 1968.

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[ Readers are invited to submit their views on this article and the topics it raised for publication in future issues -- Editor, INTERNATIONAL. ]  
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THE POLICY OF THE FRENCH  
COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE MAY CRISIS---

THE PARLIAMENTARY ROAD  
TO CAPITULATION.

In the past we have traced the different stages in the increasingly opportunist swing of the FCP policy over the past year.

Some FCP members believed this was due to a fall in combativity among the workers whose class consciousness had been softened by the consumer society, which had ruled out any revolutionary initiatives. This analysis -- which had theoretical pretensions -- in fact served to justify this opportunism. They thought that when the situation changed, the CP would change. This has not proved so. The FCP by increasing its scandalously worded warnings against students and by trying through the CGT to keep the struggle strictly on wage questions, acted as a brake on the May movement.

Any revolutionary organisation would have rather called on the students and workers to form a common front and would have held up as an example worthy of emulation those workers who organised for extra-economic demands,

But the FCP could not do so without abandoning its electoralist parliamentary and legalistic policy whose orientation and strategy is outlined in Waldeck-Rochet's little opus "What is a Revolutionary?"

As for the way to achieve such a policy, FCP policy oscillated between two tactics. One aimed at the Gaullist regime itself satisfying the workers wage demands; the other at linking the wage struggle with one for a left government on a common program, with the FCP holding some ministerial seats,

The first one was the main tactic applied, with some timid approaches to the second until 24 May -- the time of de Gaulle's first TV speech which was seen by some as an act of resignation. Then over the next few days, the FCP adopted the second tactic -- the perspective of a left government. As a result the CGT position hardened temporarily and negotiations were broken with the Chamber of Commerce (the Patronat).

After de Gaulle's reassertion in his 30 May speech, the FCP quickly gave up the perspective of removing the government and lent all its weight in an effort to more than ever channel the movement into exclusively economic demands. The attacks on the leftists increased and became more virulent. THE F.C.P. WELCOMED THE PERSPECTIVE OF ELECTIONS with much relief. After all a fortnight before Etienne Fajon had in HUMANITE after being informed of the intentions of the beleaguered regime, forsworn that there was no way out but elections... On the need for elections there was a more-or-less tacit agreement between the FCP and de Gaulle on what each saw as their own self-interest. THE FCP'S INTEREST LAY IN IT NOT HAVING TO LEAD THE CLASS IN A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION.

In any case, the results of the first round of voting showed that even from the viewpoint of its own self-interest, the FCP had calculated wrongly. By presenting itself as the Party of Order, Wisdom and Moderation and by stressing the unnatural combination of the Tricolor and the Red Flag; by appealing to the most backward national and nationalist sentiments; by disputing the Gaullists claim to the Tricolor, the FCP could not assure the most backward elements of its electoral support, who preferred the UDR, while at the same time the FCP separated itself even more from the most serious revolutionaries who abstained or even voted for the PSU to show their fierce disapproval.

This policy can be in part explained by perusing PRAVDA which during the crisis never questioned de Gaulle's personal position and contented itself with denouncing reactionaries in his entourage. PRAVDA's left Gaullist position went only as far as regretting de Gaulle's anti-communist statements. The FCP policy in the revolutionary crisis is an example among many of the subordination of the interests of the world proletariat to Soviet diplomacy. But in the present case, that is only a partial explanation. For it hides the disease the FCP has contracted on the national plane after thirty years of opportunism.

The FCP's political practice has created in its bureaucracy and in the Party from top to bottom electoralist and reformist reflexes. Its revolutionary sensibility has been considerably blunted, while quite noticeably its ability to estimate the possibilities of a political situation and especially the absolutely new features of a movement such as that of May 1968, has been reduced.

CF MACHINE HOSTILE TO ATTEMPTS AT  
DIRECT WORKERS SELF-MANAGEMENT.

The attempts at direct management at CSF of Brest (self-management), Donges (self-management), etc., or the establishment of a central strike committee taking charge of economic activity over a whole region (in Loire-Atlantique) are all new forms of struggle, chapters in a new program of action whose creative nature is foreign to the FCP machine and something it can only be hostile to. It was not only considerations of Soviet diplomatic needs that led the FCP to hinder the development of the struggle but also the fact that student and worker actions were outside the preestablished norms of its political practice.

May 1968 is the first example of a new experience whose deepening study will allow a new revolutionary strategy to be developed. The FCP cannot be inspired by the recent revolt so profound is its neo-reformist sclerosis. The CP's in the colonial world have played little role in the revolution, unless it was a counter-revolutionary one.

The first example of worker and student struggles of a revolutionary nature in a highly industrialised country and the FCP was incapable as a



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whole of a revolutionary conversion. That is a major conclusion revolutionaries must draw. From now on a new revolutionary organisation must be formed, something indispensable due to the objective situation and the masses' aspirations.

It is one thing to denounce the reformist sclerosis of the FCP leaders and another to include all militants of the FCP in this denunciation. The FCP is not homogeneous. Another lesson of the May movement was that certain differentiation occurred among FCP militants and that that will increase under pressure of events. The FCP crisis goes beyond the intellectual; it also touches workers in that organisation. The FCP militants acted in very different ways in action. There were cells "on the line"; there were also "leftist" cells. In the more rightwing swings of FCP policy many militants were close to breaking -- belonging to the Party posed them problems. True these militants have been regained by the Party but not politically. And despite the efforts of the Party machine to protect them from revolutionary contagion, they are no longer sheltered from such contamination. How are they going to greet the explanations of HUMANITE in the parliamentary road, union with the FGDS etc. when during the crisis Mitterand, Defferre and even Mendes-France approached the Centrists rather than the FCP?

The possibility of revolutionary propaganda and action has greatly increased inside the FCP and among the workers since the May crisis. The major historical examples used in the propaganda of left groups previously (the lost chances of 1934-6 and 1944-6) were abstract to militants and seemed much more questions for historians than for militants. Moreover most members of the left had not lived through the Popular Front or Liberation. But from now on large layers are now able to understand that their Party has failed them.

That is why the revolutionary organisation that must be constructed must direct a major part of its propaganda to CP militants.

R. MERLIN

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LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE

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Other reactions to Czech Events

A New Zealand correspondent writes "the Socialist Unity Party national chairman, George Jackson, cut a sorry figure on TV the other night when he said that the USSR, Poland, East Germany, and Hungary are all socialist countries so they must have had very good reason to move in on Czechoslovakia, omitting to mention that Czechoslovakia is also a socialist country. I was reminded of Claude Jones's recent remarks here, to the effect that the French CP was a very experienced party and if they did not think that the events in April-May warranted a major push, there must be some very good reason for it." Our correspondent also tells us that Jones spent some time in New Zealand rubbishing the Trotskyists, which led our reader to believe we have some influence!

According to the London Sunday Times only ten CPs have supported the Soviet, including the American CP.

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... "WHEN THE TIME COMES" ...

Revolutionary Marxists leafleted a rightwing migrant demonstration on Saturday, 24 August in Martin Place. Reception reasonably friendly considering ... However here are some extracts from a letter we received in the mail:

"... Your people came there like red rats, pirates! - whit red flag what we hate terribly! We should like to kill all damned people who wear red clothing, or have a red flag! ... we are ready to fight against any communist for life! No mercy for them. You watch it... Sorry Australia do not send more troops with all western countries to fight the bloody red rats in Vietnam. We want to force the government to band the Communist Party and arrest all this gangsters... we do not forget about you, if the time comes..."

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POLE AND EAST GERMAN REACTIONS

London Times (24.8.68) tells of Polish reluctance and fears of a Bay of Pigs catastrophe. Editors complained to Gomulka that they found it difficult to present the invasion to the public. Gomulka told them they would print what he told them. In East Berlin workers refused to sign petitions supporting the invasion. Leaflets were distributed saying "Think of the reputation of socialism... Demand that you are finally correctly informed."



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