



Theoretical journal
of the Socialist
Party of Australia

Australian Marxist Review

- ★ *Karl Marx—Berlin International Conference*
- ★ *Marx and revolutionary organisation*
- ★ *Proletarian Internationalism*
- ★ *Bourgeois propaganda*
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- ★ *Australian Literature*
- ★ *Building the party*
- ★ *Left sectarianism*

QUARTERLY
NEW SERIES No 9
AUGUST 1983
Price 60c

Australian Marxist Review

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**Published by New Age Publishers
237 Sussex Street, Sydney
Phone (02) 264 5688**

Note from the Editorial Board

We have dedicated this issue of the *Australian Marxist Review* to the anniversaries of the birth and death of Karl Marx. As Steve Hall says in the introduction to his article, the life of Karl Marx "was one of enormous courage in the face of formidable obstacles and untiring devotion to the cause of scientific communism which he and Engels founded." He concluded by saying: "Let us follow his lead."

This issue of the *Australian Marxist Review* is running late. We apologise to our readers for the delay.

We have therefore made it a double issue of interesting and valuable articles.

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Karl Marx and our time— the struggle for peace and social progress

This is an extract from a report by Socialist Party of Australia Central Committee Secretary, Alan Miller who was the SPA delegate to the International Scientific Conference held in Berlin on the above topic. A Miller's report was delivered to a meeting of party members and friends of the party held in Sydney on May 7, 1983.

The International Scientific conference entitled "Karl Marx and our time — the struggle for peace and social progress" was one of the most important international political events in recent times.

Held in Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic, from April 11 to 16, the conference was organised and hosted by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.

The conference had two purposes. Firstly, to honour Karl Marx and his work on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his death which occurred on March 14, 1883 and also the 165th anniversary of his birth on May 5, 1818.

The second purpose of the conference was to examine the current struggle for peace and social progress in the light of the ideas advanced by Karl Marx, the founder of scientific communism.

There were 142 organisations, representing 111 countries, at the Berlin conference. Firstly, there were the communists. If a world meeting of communist and workers' parties was held tomorrow, I hazard a guess that the same number of parties would attend. So in a sense, the communists gathered represented the equivalent of a world meeting of parties. Representation of Marxist-Leninist parties was at the level of leading collectives such as political bureaux and executives while Comrade Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the host party, was in the chair.

But this great world gathering went far beyond the communists. Labour party, or social democratic party, representatives participated, for example, the Social Democratic Party from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Social Democratic Party of Finland, PASOK from Greece and the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Sweden.

Other parties present included the Socialist Party of Chile, Italian Socialist Party, Socialist Party of Japan, Socialist Progressive Party of Lebanon, Socialist People's Party of Mexico, Socialist Party of Uruguay, Puerto Rican Socialist Party, and there were two socialist parties from Belgium.

Such parties, along with the social democratic parties, of course, represented various trends of non-Marxist socialism. The point is they were in Berlin to honour Marx and to engage in dialogue.

The representation from the national liberation movements was very extensive, covering Marxist-Leninist parties and other parties associated with the emerging and newly developing countries.

It is no exaggeration to say that the conference was broad and truly represented a tremendous, many-sided, movement of progressive mankind.

It was a scientific, theoretical conference in the sense that conference was grappling with scientific ideas. However, it was not a scientific conference in which only communists took part. It was, in fact, a contest of ideas between communists and non-communists.

Two processes occurred simultaneously at the Berlin conference which contained a rich political lesson, a lesson in the best tradition of Karl Marx. Firstly, despite the breadth of forces and the variety of opposing views, there was a high level of unity for peace and progress. At the same time, a principled struggle of ideas took place in which the Marxist-Leninist parties played a significant and positive role.

The principled contest of ideas assisted the process of unity, placed it on a better basis, gave more depth to the unity. The striving for unity assisted the quality and considered nature of the debate, gave it greater purpose, put it on a much better level.

These two processes were a perfect example of what Lenin meant when he wrote about Marx in the following way:

“In uniting the labour movement of various countries, striving to channel into joint activity the various forms of non-proletarian, pre-Marxian socialism ... and in combatting the theories of all these sects and schools, Marx hammered out a uniform tactic for the proletarian struggle of the working class in the various countries.”

We quoted this statement in our party's contribution to the conference which was presented early. This was fortunate for, somehow, that quotation seemed to sum up the essence of what was happening in Berlin.

The level of unity for peace was high and this was an outstanding feature of the conference. Conference was fully aware that US imperialism was seeking a first nuclear strike advantage and that the installation of new rockets in Western

Europe later this year was part of this plan which, without any exaggeration, threatened the existence of our planet. Conference was aware of the implications of the "star wars" theories for outer space warfare conjured up by the Pentagon madmen. Conference was aware of the adventurous plans of US imperialism in the Middle East, Central America and South-East Asia among other places.

The unity of the Berlin conference on peace was significant. The broadness of the conference itself made it significant, but the peace work spreads out through the efforts of those who had gathered in the GDR capital, and our party is part of that process.

Conference participants warned of the danger of blaming both sides for the war threat, through the two super-power line, and showed the association of this with anti-Sovietism and anti-communism.

The Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have a magnificent record when it comes to peace. The Prague declaration of the Warsaw treaty countries called for an agreement between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, for mutual renunciation of the use of military force and for the establishment of peaceful relations. Conference delegates spoke favourably of the offer by the German Democratic Republic to make its entire territory available for the purpose of establishing a Central European zone, free of battlefield nuclear weapons, in response to a proposal for such a zone by Sweden.

The conference showed the willingness and capacity of communists to unite with others for peace. Such willingness extends to conservative people who would never attend such a conference as was held in Berlin because they are opposed to Marx. The basis of unity in this case is simply opposition to nuclear war.

The conference, at the same time, revealed how we communists see the connection between peace and socialism. This understanding of the link between peace and socialism goes back to Marx himself. He said socialism is the embodiment of a society "whose international rule will be peace, because its national ruler will be everywhere the same — labour!" Karl Marx said the working class should be "conscious of their own responsibility, and be able to command peace where their would-be masters shout war." Finally, he said that the fight for a peaceful foreign policy "forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes."

The Berlin conference showed how communists clearly see the imperative need to unite with those who hold a different ideological position from theirs in order to move along the path of social progress. Not only was there unity on peace. There was a considerable agreement on important issues in the area of social progress. There was strong anti-imperialist unity and a deep desire for a new international economic order.

During the course of the conference, the Marxist-Leninist parties brought out in sharp relief how experiences of the communist and democratic movements had underlined the correctness of the ideas of Marx.

It was made plain that Marxism could not be separated from Leninism, that Lenin had applied Marxism creatively in the period of imperialism. Today Marxism-Leninism guides the international working class.

The conference made a rich examination of the complexity of social life and struggle, but certain fundamental ideas came through.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany Central Committee, in its theses for the Karl Marx year said:

“Together with Frederick Engels, Karl Marx defined dialectical and historical materialism, the political economy of the working class and scientific socialism, the components of a homogeneous scientific theory for the working class.”

The profound truth of this statement was certainly revealed in Berlin.

It was shown how historical materialism could x-ray history and show its inner workings. No longer should history be regarded merely as a series of accidental events. The foundation of the political and intellectual activity in any historical epoch is economic production and society's structure based upon such production. Since primitive communism, history has revealed how class struggle has driven society forward through a series of exploiting societies until the arrival of the modern working class which, in liberating itself, frees society forever from exploitation of man by man.

It was shown how the theory of surplus value laid bare the relations of exploitation between capitalists and workers, and this relationship defies reconciliation and, I might add, will defy the social contract theories of Bob Hawke and those who trail behind him.

Conference dealt with the dictatorship of the proletariat and how the attitude to this concept determines whether or not one is really a Marxist-Leninist. Working class power not only prevents the class enemy from regaining power and privilege, but is instrumental in building the socialist economy, in educating the masses in the proletarian socialist world outlook.

Conference underlined the fact, tested by world working class practice, that workers do not reach scientific socialist understanding automatically. The working class requires the leadership of a Marxist-Leninist party if it is to win the battle for power and spearhead the construction of communist society.

It showed the link between national and international factors in the work of communists, how proletarian internationalism must pervade our work and, as part of this, we act in the best national interests. Our party, today, in its loyalty to international working class principles, and by opposing bourgeois nationalism, acts in the best interests of our country. We denounce the so-called patriots of the capitalist class who would sell our interests and endanger this country, in order to serve the interests of exploitation and profit.

Conference touched on the role of the working class in the so-called metropolitan countries struggling against imperialism, including the imperialism of the country in which the workers live, and forming an alliance with the peoples struggling to free themselves from colonial bondage, including the people who are direct victims of the one's own imperialism. In this regard, we have big responsibilities in Australia.

These are the fundamental ideas which inspired the Berlin conference and, I am entitled to say, these are the fundamental ideas which guided and inspired the decisions of the Fourth Congress of the Socialist Party of Australia and

continue to guide and inspire the work of our party's Central Committee. These ideas are the very brain, muscles and heart of Marxism-Leninism.

These are the ideas which brought victory in the Great October Socialist Revolution, the great turning point of the world and which drive forward the world socialist system, the community of socialist countries, the countries of real socialism. They mould the modern international communist movement which today works in nearly 100 countries of the globe.

These are the ideas which are great because they are true, ideas which not only interpret the world but change it, ideas which profoundly influence the three great streams of progressive humanity — the socialist world, the working class movement in the capitalist countries and the national liberation movement, ideas which are relevant today despite the assertions of the capitalists and their revisionist and opportunist apologists that they have lost their significance.

These are the ideas which show that Karl Marx, the man so loved and hated, whose birth and death we commemorate this year, lives with us today.

Marx and revolutionary organisation

by Steve Hall

This year marks the centenary of Karl Marx's death (March 14, 1883) and the 165th anniversary of his birth (May 5, 1818). His life was one of enormous courage in the face of formidable obstacles and untiring devotion to the cause of scientific communism which he and Engels founded.

Marx was a proletarian, a scholar, a political economist, a philosopher, a lawyer, a historian, a husband, a father, a humanist, a true friend to the oppressed, an unyielding enemy of exploitation. He was a genius of the first order and one of the greatest people who ever lived. But above all, he was a communist revolutionary.

Karl Marx has been dead for a century and yet his influence is more extensive and pervading now than at any time in history. The theory which bears his name is the torch by which hundreds of millions are navigating a political course in this unique epoch of global transition to socialism.

In place of the great man himself, we have his legacy — an unconquerable scientific theory possessed by an invincible international communist movement. The legacy is a vast store of tested scientific theory and practical experiences which is being constantly enriched and reaches into every aspect of social, political and economic life.

In the context of the SPA's current stage of development, it is well to reflect upon Karl Marx's contribution to the questions of revolutionary organisation.

Lenin showed us that Marxism consists of three component parts — philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism. Marx's approach to revolutionary organisation did not emerge separately from these principal components of Marxism, but together with them. As each component part was developed, the need to confront the question of organisational principles, to implement them was thrown into sharper relief.

This process came to a head with the establishment of the Communist League

which was inaugurated in London during its first congress in June 1847. It was the independent proletarian party for which Marx and Engels had been striving for many years. The groundwork for this new party had been carried out by Marx and Engels principally in the communist correspondence committees and the League of the Just during the 16 months prior to the first congress of the Communist League.

Marx and Engels were always aware of the need for an organisation to give life to their new theory, for without such an organisation Marxism would never be anything more than lines upon a page. As Engels wrote many years later:

“For the proletariat to be strong enough to win on the decisive day, it must — and Marx and I have advocated this ever since 1847 — form a separate party distinct from all others and opposed to them, a conscious class party.” (Marx and Engels, *Selected correspondence* p 386)

In the course of their work preliminary to the league’s formation, Marx and Engels made known their views on the type of organisation needed to effect a revolutionary transformation to socialism.

Proceeding from the main obstacles then confronting them (that is, the splitting and befuddling views of Proudhon and the pseudo-religious “theories” of Weitling), Marx and Engels argued that the new party should be firmly based on sound scientific theory. Other theories, and the people advocating them, were to be kept outside the party if it was ever to be effective. For, as Marx wrote, to address the worker “without a strictly scientific idea and positive theory is tantamount to a silly and foul play at preacher.” (Quoted in *International Working Class Movement*, p 387)

Marx not only welcomed but actively campaigned for Weitling’s expulsion from the Communist League on the grounds of his persistent advocacy of unscientific theory and loose organisation. Marx always refused to tolerate the notion that there could be more than one political line within the proletarian party. This, of course, remains one of the central tenets of democratic centralism to this day.

The struggle against unscientific and utopian socialist theories was the salient feature of the period leading up to the Communist League’s formation and for several years beyond. This struggle not infrequently led to the expulsion of those advocating non-scientific theories.

These non-Marxist views bore the content of what we today would call right opportunism and “left” sectarianism. Marx opposed “both the sectarian character of the then associations of workers and craftsmen....and the theoretical immaturity and organisational amorphousness of new mass movements.” (*Ibid* p 384) It is to be remembered that during the 1840s, right opportunism was distinguishable most obviously by its approach to organisational forms.

The ideological struggle waged by Marx and Engels against the right and “left” varieties of petty-bourgeois ideology ultimately strengthened the Communist League and later facilitated the formation of the First International.

Both Marx and Engels also regarded the Communist League as being

composed of the vanguard of the working class. Any attempt to weaken this feature of the league was consistently opposed by them.

Under the influence of Marx and Engels, the Communist League adopted a draft charter containing certain organisational principles which closely resembled those used by modern parties of democratic centralism.

“A congress called regularly was proclaimed the supreme body of the league. The executive functions were to be performed by the Central Committee. The primary cells of the league (Communes) were united in districts. Regular membership fees were instituted. The election of the leading bodies at all levels — from the communes to the central committee — combined with subordination of the lower bodies to the higher. At the same time, the draft charter retained certain provisions inconsistent with the new tasks facing the working class movement, for instance, the incompatibility of membership of the league with membership of any other organisation or the requirement for approval of congress decisions by communes.” (*Ibid*, p 390)

The league’s second congress — it was this congress which instructed Marx and Engels to write the Communist Manifesto — was held six months later (December 1847). Here, at the behest of Marx and Engels, (a) the requirement of communal ratification of congress decisions was removed from the constitution, (b) league membership was made dependent not merely upon acceptance of its program but also upon “active personal work” and “revolutionary energy” and (c) the prohibition on joining other organisations was removed.

Thus in six months, under the influence of Marx and Engels, the Communist League transformed itself from an ad hoc alliance of socialist cells into an organised political party possessing all the organisational norms of a modern Marxist-Leninist party. Only the requirement that party members should work under the party’s direction was not expressly included.

This was because the point was not a matter of dispute in 1847. An express provision to this effect was included in the constitution of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party at its third congress in 1905 by Lenin and the Bolsheviks after it had been rejected by the Mensheviks at the 2nd Congress held in 1903.

Marx’s untiring efforts, particularly in 1846-47, laid the foundations of the world’s first party of scientific communism, equipped with a revolutionary theory and the organisational structure necessary to give that theory life and to build extensive links with the broad democratic forces then on the ascendancy. But he always distinguished the need to build such broad links (which he considered vital) from the urge to build a “broad” party (which he opposed as blatant opportunism).

Marx has shown us the way to build a bigger, stronger party. Let us follow his lead.

The importance of Proletarian Internationalism

by Bill Briggs

Internationalism has been the very cornerstone of the work of communists since Marx and Engels first put forward a program for the working class. Internationalism in fact corresponds to the best interests of the working class, aimed as it is at deliberately drawing people and nations together, while encouraging friendship and vigorously discouraging any form of national chauvinism.

Lenin, speaking on the international workers' movements, in very practical terms said: "Capital is an international force. To vanquish it, an international workers' alliance, an international workers' brotherhood is needed."

The history of the communist movement in Australia has been a history of proletarian internationalism beginning with the foundation of the Communist Party in 1920. International solidarity first took the form of support for the fledgling Soviet state, battling against internal reaction and foreign intervention. Solidarity with the USSR has been a feature of Marxist-Leninist activity throughout the history of the Australian communist movement.

Later, in the thirties, the working class of the world responded to the cause of Republican Spain. Thousands of working class fighters from all lands went to Spain to oppose fascism. Australian communists fought alongside communists from around the world under the banner of internationalism.

Australia then, as now, was geographically isolated but still a part of the world. Australian communists correctly saw the struggle against fascism in Spain as the responsibility of progressives everywhere.

Australian communists and progressives responded to the call: "Sheepskins for Russia" when the Soviet Union was engaged in a life and death battle against nazism.

Since the war, campaigns of an internationalist character have continued. The magnificent campaign against the Vietnam war is perhaps the finest

example of proletarian internationalism in action.

Today the focus is on the struggles in Central America, the Middle East and Southern Africa and still the Marxist-Leninists are in the forefront of these campaigns.

What has happened since the war has changed the face of the Australian working class. Today, over 50% of our blue-collar workers were born outside this country. The huge influx of migrants into Australia has brought a new dimension to the struggle in our country and to the communist movement. The struggles of Greek, Arab, Central American, Turkish and other workers are more than ever part of our struggle.

Our Party can proudly point to the number of migrants in our ranks. Our newspaper with its Greek and Arabic pages attests to the strength of our links with these comrades.

Internationalism, as a major factor in our work, takes on a new dimension in our present circumstances. While regarding the struggles in their own native homelands as of vital significance, the foreign-born communists need to strive, side by side with their Australian-born comrades to win socialism in Australia.

Australian-born members of our party need to look outward, to see the international working class battle as inseparable from Australia's own struggle. Foreign-born members of our party need to look inward to see that the class battle here is part of their struggle.

Our history has bright chapters of internationalist solidarity. Our future and the future of the SPA lies in internationalism and the further binding of people together. In the words of Engels: "It is only the proletarians that can destroy national insularity, it is only the awakening proletariat that can establish brotherhood between different nations."

The struggle for a peaceful and better world was and still is an international struggle.

On bourgeois propaganda

by Hannah Middleton

1983 has been described as a year of danger and decision, a crucial year for the maintenance of world peace, indeed for the very survival of our species and our planet. The planned stationing of cruise and Pershing II missiles by the United States in Western Europe has brought about a political crisis with deadly implications for the entire world, a crisis which must be solved if it is not to lead to the ultimate military disaster.

Despite our **current and necessary** concentration on new weapons systems, the struggle of the **world-wide** peace forces, with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as **their most** advanced and leading contingent, to defeat US imperialism, its **military-industrial** complex, monopoly interests and its NATO and other allies, is **being conducted** in the realm of politics and ideology.

Despite the **appalling danger** of a nuclear war and the conventional wars being fought in the **Middle East**, Latin America and other parts of the world, the present **period** is characterised not by military but by *ideological* warfare — a **battle in which** the capitalist class is sophisticated, innovative, flexible, dishonest, **ruthless**, often brilliant and too often successful.

There are many **examples** of this. One which is typical and current is the statement: “There is a **world economic crisis**.” Appealingly simple, apparently innocuous, perhaps **imprecise**, it actually has deadly ideological implications and is deliberate — a **clever piece** of bourgeois ideological manipulation.

Is there a *world economic crisis*? Of course not. The *capitalist system* is in the throes of an **inescapable** and savage economic, social, moral and conceptual crisis. Capitalism is a system “Which is on its death bed, unable to cope any longer, gripped in a **deep crisis** affecting every aspect of life, but unwilling to accept the new **socialist civilisation** which is emerging ever stronger and more widespread.” (P Symon, *For Peace and Life in the Socialist*, 19/1/83)

In contrast, the **economies** of the socialist countries are stable and expanding, offering not just **full employment** but releasing human creativity and in harmony with the **developments** of the scientific and technological revolution.

And this is their continuing essence, despite occasional incorrect political and/or economic decisions (as in Poland temporarily).

Yet the phrases “world-wide depression” and “world economic crisis” are common currency in the Western media — and also unfortunately in other places such as recent documents of the Amalgamated Metal, Foundry and Shipwrights’ Union and the Maritime Unionists Socialist Activities Association. (*Newsletter*, 19/1/83)

What does the introduction of these phrases achieve for the capitalist ruling class? One element is the incorporation of the socialist community into an undifferentiated world in crisis. The socialist countries, it is implied, are also in crisis; their system does not function effectively, they are also suffering from inflation and other attendant problems of an economic crisis.

Such a concept assists and consolidates the direct attack on socialism as an economic system which does not work, which is not working, that the West also mounts. Repetitious claims of harvest failures, low productivity and quality, of imminent collapse, along with Reagan’s farcical assertion that the Soviet people are eating sawdust, are examples of this open onslaught.

The concept deliberately obscures the essential differences between capitalism and socialism. It is crucial for capitalist ideologues to develop a two-pronged, inter-related attack in the economic sphere: that socialism is a system which cannot work and that there are no real differences between capitalism and socialism.

The linking of these two propositions contains obvious dangers — if there is no difference between the two systems and socialism cannot work, then logically nor can capitalism. However, we are talking about propaganda and not logic and the route to the logical conclusion is interrupted in the propaganda and the attack on socialism simultaneously consolidated by use of the lies about “human rights” and other anti-Soviet slanders.

The danger in linking the propositions is justified by a different and overriding consideration for the bourgeoisie. Capitalism *must* conceal the nature of the two world systems. While scientific socialism *must* understand reality in order to change it, capitalist ideology must try and cover up the facts of exploitation and class struggle as part of the effort to prevent change. In essence, truth is anathema and death for the capitalist class.

This objective necessity for capitalism to conceal its essence is complemented by its need to conceal from the exploited the alternative, the real essence of the socialist system. The deliberate efforts to present the two systems as basically undifferentiated has a long history — not contradicted by the equally persistent capitalist efforts to draw unfavourable comparisons *between* the two systems.

The *convergence theory* suggested the coming together of the two systems on the basis of the scientific and technological revolution. They would “converge” as scientifically based, highly industrialised systems. Class power, the ownership of the means of production, exploitation, values and morality are factors deliberately ignored or excluded in this Western theory.

An extension of it puts forward developed industrial societies, both capitalist and socialist, in opposition to the “under-developed” countries. The two most highly developed industrial countries, the USSR and the USA, referred to as “the two super powers,” are classified as being in the “first world;” the remaining industrial countries, socialist and capitalist, are the “second world;” and the under-developed countries are the “third world.” This approach is still propagated by the leadership of the People’s Republic of China.

The “two super powers” concept is used predominantly against the movement for peace and disarmament. Appealingly simple and apparently even-handed and fair, requiring no effort of real understanding, it allows a very effective blurring of the fundamental differences between the two systems in their approach to disarmament, denial (and distortion and rejection) of all the Soviet Union’s and Warsaw Pact peace proposals and concealment of the real source of war.

The combination in the “two super powers” concept of the convergence approach with anti-Sovietism has created a powerful and influential propaganda weapon against the peace movement and an effective resolution for capitalism of those dangers inherent in dooming one of the two systems also claimed to be comparable or identical.

The current terms “world-wide depression” and “the world economic crisis” are the latest editions of this continuing convergence saga but they also contain other elements of great value for the ruling class.

The terms convey images of powerful, almost impersonal forces in the economic sphere, a process throughout the world, above and beyond the reach of men and women and their governments, most comparable to uncontrollable natural cataclysms such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions with their concomitant human suffering that all alike share and mourn.

The working class remains held in subjugation, for who can act in this country or that against forces and processes of such breadth and magnitude? Denied also is the truth of the source of the crisis in the capitalist system, the truth about the socialist system and the working class is without the information necessary for it to identify and act effectively against its real enemy and for a clear alternative.

Reactionary governments are considerably assisted by these false images and explanations, for who can blame leaders who present themselves as equally helpless in the face of these forces and unable to solve a “world crisis?” Indeed, in Britain before the election which gave Mrs Thatcher’s Conservatives the biggest majority of any government in that country since 1945, opinion polls showed the majority of the British people did not blame Thatcher for the over three million unemployed.

In our own country, Fraser clearly benefitted from this concept for some time. Today it is a significant component underpinning the essentially class collaborationist policies of the Hawke Government in the economic sphere.

If we are to be more effective than the bourgeoisie in the ideological battle, we must fight on a number of fronts, knowing that although the army is small now, truth in the hands of the people is ultimately invincible.

We must separate the two systems, making clear their fundamental differences, the unbridgable gulf between the new of socialist humanism, democracy and civilisation as against the old barbarism, exploitation, oppression and war of capitalism. Differentiating the systems necessarily implies countering anti-Sovietism with the truth about socialist societies as well as exposing and condemning the capitalist system.

Our task requires not only the correct strategy and tactics but also that we identify the many bourgeois propaganda tricks and expose them by giving the truth, in appropriate forms, to the Australian people. For truth — the understanding of objective reality in all its forms and motion — is our greatest weapon against bourgeois propaganda. Truth and social progress are indivisible.

Class struggle or class collaboration

by Anna Pha

Classes are groups of people distinguished primarily by their relationship to the means of production. In developed capitalist countries such as Australia, there are two basic classes: the capitalist class which monopolises the ownership of the means of production and the working class which does not own the means of production but which carries out the social production.

The relationship between the two classes is one of domination, exploitation and subordination of the producers by the owners of the means of production. For example, in the privately owned manufacturing industry, the average rate of exploitation (of surplus value) is almost 100 per cent (calculated from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue 8202.0, 1980-81).

This means that for every eight hours a worker works, four hours of that work is for himself or herself and four hours is for the owner of the means of production.

This class division of society is reflected in the political system and whole social life of society, with political power in the hands of the minority employing class — the bourgeoisie.

The relationship between the two classes is antagonistic, their interests being diametrically opposed. *Class struggle* can be defined as the relations, both material and ideological, between these two classes.

The basic contradiction of capitalism, between the *social* nature of production and the *private ownership* of the means of production, is expressed in the struggle between the two antagonistic classes. "The struggle is evoked by the diametrically opposed social position and contradictory interests of the different classes." (*The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy*, Progress, p369)

There are other ways of dividing society into groups of people that do not relate directly to their relationship to the means of production. These include

groups defined on the basis of sex, race, religion, occupation, income, education and so on. Such classifications are often used by the ruling class and reformists to cover up the basic class relations of society.

While the level of class consciousness of workers may vary and, through successful ideological propaganda, be suppressed, class interests cannot be changed; *the class struggle cannot be eliminated without changing the economic system and its production relations.*

The class interests of the worker and the capitalist remain firmly tied to their role in the system of social production. These interests were described by Marx as long ago as 1847: "... if we remain within the relation of capital and wage labour, the interests of capital and the interests of wage labour are diametrically opposed." (Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital*, p 36.)

The class struggle has three basic forms — economic, political and ideological.

The economic form is centred on the day-to-day struggles such as those waged by the trade unions around wages, working and living conditions, job protection and so on.

The political struggle is for the emancipation of the working class, for the overthrow of capitalist power and the establishment of the democratic power of the working class. It involves a change in the class essence of government power from bourgeois power to working class power.

Lenin emphasised the importance of the political struggle. He said: "... economic struggle can bring about a lasting improvement in the conditions of the masses of the workers, and a strengthening of their truly class organisation, only if this struggle is properly combined with the political struggle of the proletariat." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 10, p 160.)

The ideological component of the class struggle creates class consciousness, shows the means of struggle and aims to counter bourgeois ideas and propaganda.

The class struggle plays a crucial role in society's historical development as it is the means by which an obsolete social system is transformed into a new and higher system.

For example, the struggle of workers to gain shorter hours and higher wages brings a reaction from the employers who introduce more efficient technology to boost profits. This intensifies the contradictions of capitalism as it results in a large pool of permanently unemployed.

The basic contradiction within capitalism can only be resolved by a social revolution. The class struggle is the principal means, the driving force, for the overthrow of the system of capitalism, and the working class is the revolutionary class.

In fact, class struggle is the motive force in the transformation of society — not just revolutionary transformation but other ongoing changes including reforms.

The bourgeoisie and their agents deny the necessity for and even the existence of class struggle. They present themselves as the driving force for

progress on behalf of the whole nation. Alternatively they present the need for “co-operation” between employers and employees.

The bourgeoisie devote apparently inexhaustible funds and energy through their various agents to the suppression of the class struggle. They attempt to blunt class consciousness, divide workers, buy workers with concessions, introduce human relations programs and promote schemes for social peace, all aimed at giving capitalism a “human face” and concentrating on personal rather than property relations.

At times the bourgeoisie also resort to more overt methods of suppression by using the state machinery (for example courts, the Arbitration Commission, anti-strike legislation and so on), military and police.

Propagation of *class collaboration* is one of the major non-coercive means used to suppress class struggle. It is the policy of co-operation between employer and employee, between capitalists and workers (usually workers’ leaders), which rejects the idea of class struggle and *sacrifices the interests of the working class*.

The term “class collaboration” has a specialised meaning. It does not cover any and every type of agreement which might occur between employer and employee. The essence of class collaboration lies in three things:

- (1) Class struggle is rejected as outmoded or obsolete;
- (2) the interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat are regarded as identical;
- (3) the workers get the worst of the deal, partly since their acceptance of the class collaborationist approach means they are still in conflict but have agreed not to defend themselves.

Class collaboration attempts to disarm the working class at the same time as the bourgeoisie heighten their offensive, leading to working class surrender.

Class collaboration is a powerful weapon of *class struggle employed by the bourgeoisie against the workers*.

In arguing that the class struggle is obsolete, right-wing social democrats and reformists such as Prime Minister Hawke and ACTU Secretary Kelyt promote the concept that all Australians — employers and employees — have common interests; that the path to economic recovery depends on the co-operation of employees with employers. This class collaboration concept of “common interests” forms the ideological basis of the Accord between the ALP and ACTU.

Developed monopoly capitalism has given rise to new features of labour-capital relations. Reformists and some revisionists, aware of these new symptoms, accept the new “theories” being promoted by the bourgeoisie and argue that Marx is no longer relevant. For example, they argue that:

“Developed capitalist economies cannot be understood or their problems adequately dealt with on the basis of the simple dichotomy between workers and capitalists. Their structure is increasingly one of a complex web of interests.” (B Mountford, AMFSU untitled paper, 29/5/82, p8)

So the class interests of workers and capitalists have changed, according to Mountford who goes on to say:

“They [the trade unions] need to be able to grasp and embrace the interests beyond the traditional working class. If the industry policy side of an agreement is seen to work for the interests of workers alone, it will be resented and resisted by other sections of the community.” (Mountford, p 8.)

Mr Mountford does not have in mind technologists, scientists or supervisory staff who play a necessary part in production. He actually has in mind the capitalists themselves when he speaks of a “complex web of interests.”

The denial of the antagonistic relationship between labour and capital, this illusion of common interests, is outright class collaboration, serving only one set of interests — those of capital.

Social partnership concepts that pretend workers can get off the wages treadmill within capitalism by such means of a social contract are equally class-collaborationist and harmful to the working class.

To replace struggle by such approaches disarms the working class; to look for “common interests” sacrifices the interests of the working class; to suppress the legitimate demands of the workers and deny them the right to make such demands is to facilitate and increase the exploitation of the working class.

The setting of limits to the economic struggle of the working class (for example, “no-strike,” “no-claim,” or “delayed strike” clauses in awards, contracts for social peace, wage restraint and so on) inevitably takes on the character of class collaboration.

It is important to restate a previous point — that class collaboration does not apply to all agreements that occur between employee and employer.

Agreements won through negotiation and struggle, such as wage increases, health and safety provisions, hours of work and so on, constitute a vital part of the class struggle. Such agreements, especially when incorporated in legally binding awards or legislation, provide protection for workers. They serve the interests of workers and are won as a result of economic, political and ideological forms of class struggle.

They are in sharp contrast to agreements reached through collaboration which trade-off rights or conditions, replace struggle and subordinate the interests of workers to those of capital and the capitalist economy.

Reformist attempts at “redistribution of power within the capitalist system itself” (L Carmichael, *Tribune*, 13/10/82, p 11), to replace struggle by “co-operation,” “consensus,” tripartite discussions and “reconciliation” contradict the essence of power under capitalism and fail to tackle the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

These concepts show their advocates have fallen prey to bourgeois propaganda which denies the primacy of class struggle and promotes oppression, divisions and diversions from the class struggle among workers.

The Constitution of the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) states that the party “has no interests separate from those of the working class and it serves the interests of all exploited people.” (SPA Constitution, p 3.)

The SPA in adopting this stand recognises the basic contradiction of capitalism, rejects false theories of “common interests” and pursues revolutionary struggle for the emancipation of the working class. It rejects class collaboration as opportunist and harmful to the interests of the working class.

It is always necessary for workers to retain their full capacity to wage economic and political struggles for democratic rights and demands. Any surrender of rights or any voluntary restrictions on the capacity to struggle amount to an abandonment of class struggle in favour of class collaboration.

Features of the 4th YSL Congress

by Spiro Anthony

(Part of a report to the July 1-3 meeting of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party of Australia).

The 4th Congress of the Young Socialist League of Australia was held in Sydney on June 10-13, 1983, under the theme "Youth Forward for Peace, Jobs and a New Way of Life!"

The work of the congress was extensive. The constitution and program were re-formulated, a detailed National Council report was adopted, together with a document entitled "Immediate Tasks of the YSL" which sets out eight main priorities for the youth league including practical steps for implementation.

Noteworthy was the considerable enthusiasm of delegates, the broad cross-sections of youth represented and participation of delegates from each Australian state, the unanimous adoption of all decisions and the international recognition including attendance by representatives of the Leninist Komsomol and the Communist Youth of Greece.

Particularly since the 4th SPA congress in October, 1981, the youth league has grown in size, influence and reputation. The historic significance of the 4th party congress especially in regard to its assessment of the nature and role of the party, which encompassed a clarification of the nature and role of the youth league, was reflected in the concepts advanced by the YSL congress for the further development of the youth league.

These concepts and new directions in the work of the youth league constitute the special significance of the 4th YSL congress.

At no stage during pre-congress discussion or at the congress was there a suggestion about Marxism-Leninism being inappropriate as the theoretical doctrine of the YSL, or that Marxist-Leninist ideas cannot inspire young people in today's conditions.

There were no calls for the "updating" of Marxism-Leninism, or modifying

basic principles for national considerations, or any statement in support of the contemporary revisionist line that no one interpretation of Marxism-Leninism is necessarily correct.

This commitment to Marxism-Leninism is not an abstract choice, but is substantiated by the real progress of the YSL in recent times and through knowledge of international experiences. In a number of capitalist countries, youth movements are being re-vitalised through the application of Marxism-Leninism to to-day's conditions. It is in fact to-day's conditions of the imperialist war threat and the economic crisis that is exposing the futility of the diverse political philosophies that afflicted youth movements — including this country's — in the 60s and 70s.

At the congress, the spontaneous chanting of "S-P-A! Y-S-L!" was something new. There is a new spirit in the youth league.

This enthusiasm and confidence can be directly related to the closer working relationships that have been developing between the league and the party, an understanding among youth league members of the party's leading role in social change, and an understanding that being the party's helper and reserve is the best way the YSL can help overcome the problems of young people in Australia.

There are many implications of the type of relationship that has been forged between the YSL and the party. Two will be mentioned.

Firstly, direct association with a political party helps to get across the idea that political solutions are needed to overcome the problems of youth. That is, just as the trade union movement on its own cannot bring about real changes, the youth movement too must look towards political solutions and political mechanisms if it is to have any significant impact.

Secondly, the relationship with the SPA in particular helps to reinforce the idea that not any political solutions will suffice. The YSL doesn't aim simply to "politicise" youth, but tries to convince young people to support the actual political solutions advanced by the SPA.

This does not mean that the YSL's loyalty to the party is counterposed to serving the interests of youth or, as was put not so long ago, that the youth league's connections with the party would deter young people from joining the YSL. On the contrary, serving the youth and serving the party are one and the same for the YSL because the party's total program for society provides for the real needs of young people. Furthermore, in today's conditions, how could a youth organisation genuinely talk about politics if it stopped short of nominating a particular political party to support?

Congress documents specifically point to the task of the YSL to develop appropriate ways to explain and popularise SPA programs among young people. It is not sufficient for YSL members to support personally this or that party activity, but it is necessary for the whole of the YSL to work amongst the masses of youth for the fulfilment of party objectives.

Thus the YSL does not act *with* the party or have a fraternal relationship

on the basis of equals, but the YSL acts *for* the party. It is commissioned for this purpose.

Given this political framework for YSL/SPA relations and the great importance, and indeed urgency, of winning young people to the support of the party, a number of customary attitudes and practices in relation to youth league work still need to be overcome.

These include: the further development of party methods to assist the youth league more effectively, and at the same time understanding why the party need not be organised within the youth league as in other organisations; taking immediate steps to help complete the establishment of YSL branches next to party branches and formalising the communication between the two organisations at all levels; fully recognising the need to protect the democratic centralism of the YSL and the need for party organisations to help lower YSL organisations implement decisions of higher YSL bodies; giving greater recognition to the value of party members' work in the YSL; giving more attention to promoting the YSL in the course of party work, including party publications; giving more emphasis in the formulation of party programs to the young generation, and the party finding the right ways to issue more explicit directions to the youth league.

The main objective set by the 3rd YSL congress was "Build the YSL," whereas the 4th congress set the objective to "Build the mass character of the YSL basing our work on the principles of Marxism-Leninism."

To achieve a mass character, qualitatively different approaches were defined by congress. Essentially, these are as follows.

Firstly, the content of YSL activity requires a shift in emphasis, namely a greater concentration of activities around the actual problems of young people. The YSL needs to become, and be seen as, an organisation primarily concerned with fighting to advance the rights and interests of youth.

This is not to underplay the role of social, cultural and recreational activities in the youth league. Such activities are necessary for a youth organisation, as a happy and friendly atmosphere and a range of interesting activities are important for attracting and retaining members. Furthermore, with some youth, for example, particular groups of migrant youth, cultural activities represent the main way, and perhaps the only way to interest them in the YSL at the present time.

Yet to achieve a mass character, congress declared the necessity for the YSL to be more actively concerned with young people **outside** the YSL, helping them to become organised, helping them to struggle around critical problems in their day-to-day lives and giving proper political direction. It is not the case of either social activities or struggle for youth rights, but a matter of selectively introducing both, giving overall predominance to the latter.

Secondly, concerning the form of action on youth problems, there is a need for the YSL to project itself more openly, to put forward ideas more boldly and decisively and for individual members to be more conspicuous as YSL members.

It is impossible for the youth league to develop a mass character if its

members work secretly, hesitant to bring YSL views before young people or believing that their activity as a member of another organisation is sufficient in itself.

This change in style of work will present a lot of difficulties, especially as traditionally concealed methods of work of many communists in Australia does not give much encouragement to our young activists.

In addition, accusations of “leftism” and being “against other organisations” will probably need to be answered. Yet is it leftist for an organisation to want to put forward its own policies? It is leftist and elitist not to want to share policies with others, and rightist to hide the YSL. Furthermore, rather than being against other organisations (such as trade unions and student unions) YSL policy, in line with party policy, is to strengthen these organisations through socialist input so that they can more effectively carry out their stated tasks.

In regard to united youth front actions, congress called for a much more assertive approach in communicating and building relations with all sorts of youth organisations, including but not just left wing or political organisations.

To project the YSL more, it is of course necessary to devise proper methods and tactics in each situation, and there are a lot of hostile forces, disguised and undisguised, that will come down hard on the YSL and individual members. Much will depend on the courage of members and on how much backing they receive from the YSL and from the party.

Thirdly, the YSL will not develop a mass character if differences cannot be seen between working in the YSL and working in the party. In this regard, congress documents specifically refer to such matters as recruitment criteria, theoretical education and special assistance to new members to spell out the particular approaches that are required in the YSL.

A line of thinking that needs to be contended with is that since the YSL is a Marxist-Leninist organisation with a vanguard role, then it should only recruit young people who are knowledgeable in Marxism-Leninism, understand and accept the SPA program, have a proven record of struggle and will strictly observe democratic centralism from the day they join. Yet this is unreal; there are no such young people who are not already in the YSL.

The YSL is a Marxist-Leninist organisation and **does** have a vanguard role to play in the youth area, and it is **because of this** that it has the task of introducing socialist ideas to young people who don't know about socialism, explaining about the party to those who have little idea about the party, helping inactive youth become active and teaching discipline to young people who have little experience in organisations. YSL doors are not open to all young people, yet many tasks cannot be performed with young people unless they are members or very close to the organisation.

To this extent, congress declared that the YSL must be more determined in its recruitment, accept the education of non-political or contrary youth as a

task rather than an obstacle, train and direct more cadres to work with new members and learn to accept that not all members will be in a position to join the party or even stay in the YSL.

The party has different expectations of its membership, and the YSL must not try to duplicate these expectations.

To be continued

Dangers in new education policy

by Tom Gill

In considering the educational policies of capitalist governments, we have to distinguish between a bourgeoisie which still had “a world to win” (as in the 18th and 19th centuries) and one which today sees that world slipping from its grasp. In former times, the education of the masses was regarded favourably, and, limited as they were, bourgeois policies often had progressive aspects. For example, our party’s 4th Congress resolution echoes the words of the Victorian Government in 1872 with its policy for a free, universal and secular educational system.

Today, however, our ruling class is faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, capitalism in crisis has reason to fear an educated working class but on the other hand, increasing technological complexity is calling for a highly educated work force. (This attitude to education is reflected in the bourgeoisie’s ambiguous attitude to science).

Two ways, complementary to each other, are being adopted in an attempt to solve the problem. The first method is to try to combine a very sophisticated education in specialised fields, with virtual illiteracy or even superstition in other matters.¹ The second approach, by no means inconsistent with this, is to educate an elite, isolated from the majority of the community, who carry out the tasks which involve an understanding of complex processes, while the poorly educated masses are either unemployed or work machines, the principles of which remain a mystery to them.

The *details* in what follows apply to Victoria, but the general principles are of much wider concern. Emphasis where it occurs has been added by the author of this paper.

The Victorian Labor Government has outlined some important aspects of its education policy in a series of four ministerial papers, dated March 1983. The policy is a further step towards the implementation of the policies initiated by the previous Liberal Government and, looked at with the problems of the ruling class in mind, we will see that it may have disastrous consequences as far as the education of the working class is concerned.

I propose, in what follows, to concentrate on one particular aspect of the policy. This is what is described as the “genuine devolution of authority and responsibility to the school community.” This means that a great deal of responsibility for the curriculum and general administration of the school will be passed to the school council.

This council will have, in the case of primary schools, not *less* than 50 per cent parents as members, and in the case of “post-primary” schools, not less than 33 1/3 per cent parents. In each case there may be up to 20 per cent of the members “co-opted by the elected council to represent *wider community interests*.” These two groups will clearly be able to dominate the council.

In addition, the principal shall be a voting member and staff shall be represented, and in the case of post-primary schools, there shall be “adequate student representation.” (Paper No 4, p9) There is no suggestion that “post-primary” as yet means anything different from “secondary.”

There is, in the ministerial papers, no prescription of the method of electing the school councils — and the method of election is certainly a matter of concern. This matter will no doubt be dealt with, after a fashion, in the proposed legislation.

The general policy is spelled out as follows (paper No 1, p 5):

“Accordingly, the government has as a major objective of its educational policies a *shift in the focus of education to the school*. Therefore, school councils will have major responsibility for deciding the educational policies of their schools.

“The government will amend the Act and Regulations to make the school council responsible, within the framework of overall State policy guidelines, for the educational policies and plans of its school. This increase in responsibilities will be of fundamental significance.

“The government sees genuine school/community interaction as essential to the development of collaborative educational processes which are supported by the community.”

What have we to criticise in these proposals? The ideas they express are very dear to the hearts of most liberal petty-bourgeois intellectuals and in opposing them, the SPA may find itself beside some of the worst reactionaries in the community. The reactionaries, of course, oppose these ideas in the main because they do not understand the reasoning behind them; they are living in the past.

In any case, these so-called reforms should be judged on their merits, and the widespread lack of a full understanding of the issues makes it a matter of urgency.

The Australian Teachers’ Federation (ATF) in a policy statement in 1976 recommends: “That ATF recognise that there can only be effective community involvement in the educational policies of the school when there has been a devolution of power from the central administration to the *staff of the school* with respect to the educational objectives of that school.” This was framed well before the Victorian Government’s proposals were known.

There are already quite marked differences between schools in different areas of the state, particularly between schools in the various suburbs of Melbourne. The increased autonomy of the schools, with devolution of power into the hands of parent and “community”-dominated councils, can only augment these differences.

There exists, among a quite significant section of the population, a general hostility towards education and, naturally enough, this has a certain geographical distribution. The educational policies of parents will vary from fanciful theorising, through various well thought-out positions to complete apathy and these attitudes will correlate with the parents’ own education and thus with their economic position and location to a large extent.

There will thus be a tendency to freeze the students into the norm for their locality. We might expect a Labor Government to take drastic steps to remedy this but one or two small sections in their documents suggest the opposite. In paper No 2 (page 15) we find the following:

- ★ The activities of schooling should, on some empirical or rational basis, have *relevance* to the lives of the children.
- ★ Close connection between schools and the *groups which shape and nurture the social identity of students* will assist the schools to expand students’ perceptions of themselves and *their* world.

This brings out again the old idea of “relevance.” We can almost hear a respected businessman explaining to the school council how ridiculous it is to teach algebra to a student who will work at a checkout in a supermarket or collect unemployment benefits.

There has to be, in any just education system, the opportunity, hopeless though it may seem, for any student to carry on with further education. It is hardly worthwhile speculating on who the “wider community” representatives will be. In most suburbs or country towns, the prospect is horrifying.

So much for the effect on the students. For the teachers, there is the threat of victimisation by bigoted religious or political elements.

The government says that it will not “give school councils the option of asking the school staff to ignore the government’s multicultural, non-sexist or such other policies.” (Paper No 4, p6) But what about a council that attacks a union activist or an atheist, or one who tries to teach the theory of evolution, or a council which sneaks in more and more biased religious instruction? How much courage would this government, or *the next*, show then?

The principal naturally is at greater risk than the other teachers, particularly since “a further development under consideration is the involvement of school communities in the selection process of the school principal.” (Paper No 4, p11)

The ministerial papers seem to take it for granted that fragmentation and diversity is good in itself. There is no valid reason why a centralised education system cannot work well. Local control of education to the extent envisaged seems to imply a downgrading of the content of the whole educational process. It is not made clear, nor even mentioned, how the new autonomy will fit in with entry requirements to universities, institutes of technology and so on.

Education is one of the most important tasks of any government and it is, if not surprising, at least depressing that a Labor Government is shirking its responsibility in this field. Admittedly schools have recently gained some autonomy regarding syllabuses but the latest plans go much further and the scheme seems to be designed to be irreversible, certainly not without serious disruption. Why are these changes being proposed? Partly, one might suppose, because of the petty-bourgeois liberal's fascination with "grass roots democracy," "consensus" and so on, but perhaps for other reasons as well.

However, in the *Age* (May 3, 1983), the paper's very competent Education Editor, Mr Maslen, drops a hint in two different places about the shape of things to come. To quote:

"For the first time in the Education Department's 110-year history, each State school will have the sort of independence long held by Victoria's top private schools."

And in another article:

"...the freedom about to devolve on State schools has been held by most of Victoria's 600 non-government schools for years."

Mr Maslen does not actually let the cat out of the bag but does give us a glimpse of it. The drastic changes proposed for the school system, changes which simply ooze grass roots democracy and community participation (à la USA), have another side to them. This is a side which Mr Maslen no doubt appreciates fully but cannot very well spell out in a factual account of the proposals *as they stand*.

The devolution of responsibility to local school councils make it very easy to incorporate private schools in the State system and there is no doubt that this possibility has been considered — it would be a miracle if it had not. The final result would be one State system where each school decided whether or not it was religious, whether or not it employed lay teachers, and so on.

The funding would be in the main 100 per cent from government sources, although we assume collection of extra funds by school councils will be expected. This is not made very clear in the four ministerial papers. The development of a policy of incorporating the private and state sectors will require very minor amendments to the proposed legislation.

It should also be unnecessary to remind Labor Party supporters that the first few months of the Hawke Government have significantly changed the prospects of a long Labor regime in Victoria and any Liberal government would be more than delighted to have such a set-up handed to it on a plate.

The proposals of the Victorian Government constitute the most serious step so far towards the dismantling of a centralised democratically controlled, free, secular and compulsory education system. The fragmentation of control will augment the differences between schools in different areas and will facilitate political or religious discrimination against teachers, a feature of education in the USA during the McCarthy era (and at many other times).

The scheme opens up the possibility of the incorporation of religious schools

in the State system, a feature of education in some overseas countries where the idea of secular education never really took on.

Opposition to the plans of the government is imperative, both inside and outside parliament, and it is particularly important to alert liberal teachers and others to the dangers of the scheme, supported by many because of its "democratic" and "autonomous" facade.

NOTES

1. *The Age* (20/12/82) has a report on the activities of a Transcendental Meditation (TM) group, led by a psychiatrist (Dr Byron Rigby), which is engaged in meditating so as to "adjust the laws of nature" using what they call TM Sidhi techniques. They will, by "thinking," end droughts, sickness, economic problems, crime and they claim remarkable successes in many fields. What is alarming is that they are led by a psychiatrist and have support from a nuclear physicist, Professor Brian McCusker, a well-known and reputable Sydney scientist.

Professor McCusker is quoted as saying that the "mechanistic picture held by many people today was not correct. Materialism (which asserts the primacy of matter) is out as a philosophy and once you say that, the sort of thing that Byron Rigby and the TM people are doing becomes much more likely to be correct." According to quantum mechanics the observer was essential, without the observer there could be no universe, 'all events are consciousness'," he said.

NB Where emphasis occurs in quotations, it has been added to the original.

The Palestinian Revolution after the battle of Beirut

by Naim Ashhab
Political Bureau member
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This article has been abridged from the World Marxist Review. No. 5 1983. It was written before the recent divisions in the PLO erupted but it gives background to these events.

The Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) has lost Beirut, one of its strongholds, which is hard to replace outside Palestinian territory, and its contingents find themselves scattered over several Arab countries. Developments have shown that the United States, Israel and Arab reaction wanted to use the pullout of these contingents from Beirut not only for undermining and doing away with the international political and moral gains of our revolution but for eliminating the Palestinian problem as such. This sinister alliance hostile to our people is now stepping-up its pressure on the Palestinian national movement in an attempt to split it, to form warring groups inside it and thus to prevent the movement from making its own decisions. Plots and cunning ploys come one after another, their aim being to give the Palestinians no respite after the Beirut drama. This was also the purpose of the Sabra and Shatila massacres — the enemies were intent on terrorising and fomenting a mood of resignation among the Palestinians, above all in the occupied territories.

On September 1, 1982, or before the ships carrying the heroes of the battle of Beirut arrived at their destinations, President Reagan announced his notorious Middle East plan. Right after that, Arab reactionaries, primarily the rulers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan, intensified their pressure on the Palestinians; they wanted to compel the Palestinian movement to accept terms robbing our people of the right to establish their own state and making their sovereign will dependent on the will of the Jordanian regime. In line with this campaign, King Hussein put forward a plan in favour of a

confederation between Jordan and the Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It is painful to have to note that some other Arab countries seized on the enormous difficulties encountered by the Palestinian revolution to contribute their share, deliberately or otherwise, to the formation of factions within it, advancing extremist slogans in the process and thereby supplying reactionary Arab regimes with a pretext to evade implementation of the decisions adopted by Arab countries at the Fez summit (September 1982).

It was in that unfavourable atmosphere that the 16th Session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) met in Algiers last February. In spite of the difficulties, the meeting displayed a tremendous will for Palestinian unity; the presence of an unprecedented number of high-level delegations from Arab and other, primarily socialist countries was an unmistakable sign of solidarity with our people.

Chief Result

Observers consider unanimously and with good reason that the chief result of the 16th PNC Session is the preservation of Palestinian national unity. This unity is the only guarantee of the Palestinians' complete independence in decision-making and offers a solid basis for the further progress of our revolution. It is a factor enabling the revolution to tide over the misfortunes that have fallen to its lot, above all the loss of Beirut. The session showed that at this stage the Palestinian units approach the issue of national unity with a keen sense of responsibility. Significantly, this fundamental approach has found clear reflection in the Political Declaration adopted by the meeting.

With reference to the plan for a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, the document says: "The Palestinian National Council considers that future relations with Jordan will be based on the principles of a confederation of two independent states." This means that these relations, which presuppose appropriate commitments, will become of an independent Palestinian state.

It follows that the PNC approach to the main drafts and proposals for the solution of the Palestinian problem was explicit and realistic and strengthened the sound political principles of national unity. As for the "Reagan Plan," the Political Declaration formulates the attitude to it in the following terms: "As far as its trend and content are concerned, the Reagan Plan neither accords with the inalienable national right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state, nor recognises the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, something which is contrary to international law... Therefore the Palestinian National Council declares its refusal to consider it a suitable basis for a just settlement of the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Zionist conflict."

Seeking National Consolidation

The high opinion of the results of the 16th PNC Session which we have expressed with due regard to the situation before and during the meeting is no reason for shutting our eyes to the shortcomings of certain of the formulations adopted. It seems to us, for example, that the renunciation of the "Reagan Plan" could have been put in more explicit terms to preclude all misinter-

pretation. This is all the more so since Reagan's "initiative" is fraught with more dangers than the Camp David accords exposed before the whole world and since Arab reaction persists in its efforts to profit from that "initiative." The Political Declaration says nothing about these forces, nor does it lay bare the subversive role of Arab reaction that virtually assumed the role of accomplice in the frankly pro-Israeli tactics pursued by Washington throughout the latest Middle East war. This omission stands out against the background of the perfectly reasonable dissatisfaction expressed by the 16th Session at the passivity which the Steadfastness and Resistance Front showed in those crucial days.

It would also be appropriate to comment on the section of the Political Declaration which states, if very briefly, that the PNC, noting the growing unity of the Palestinians' patriotic, public, trade union and mass organisations, calls for effort to form and develop a National Front in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Although the two previous sessions of the PNC, unlike the latest, devoted much attention to the problem of reviving the National Front there, more and more frequent attempts have lately been made in these territories, especially since the Palestinian fighters left Beirut and the territories seized by Israel became an arena of decisive confrontation with the invaders, to split the Palestinians' mass organisations, primarily those in which Communists play a leading role. It is also revealing that in spite of earlier recommendations of the PNC, no real steps have been taken to revive the National Front in the occupied territories.

The latest PNC session confirmed the increased national unity of revolutionary contingents within the PLO and pointed out the importance of work to establish within the Front organisational relations at the level of all its institutions and bodies on the principles of joint action and collective leadership. This provision found reflection in the organising policy program approved by the 14th PNC Session and was reaffirmed by the 15th. But it was never implemented, above all with regard to the Palestinian Communists, who found themselves barred from decision-making outside the occupied Palestinian territories, yet no efficient National Front can be set up in the occupied territories without their active participation. Currently the PLO leadership maintains friendly relations with all communist parties, Arab or non-Arab, as the latest PNC meeting at Algiers indicated. At the same time, activity designed to isolate the Communists in the Palestinian liberation movement is intensifying. This trend, which poses a threat to the development of our revolution, is apparently due to the groundless fears engendered by our growing influence in the occupied territories and, on the other hand, by concessions made under the pressure of Arab reaction.

And now for the contemporary strategy of our struggle. Speaking of the military operations and unity of the armed Palestinian units, the Political Declaration states: "It (the PNC—*N.A.*) stresses the need to unite the armed formations of the Palestinian revolution in one national liberation army." The Palestinians' armed struggle is an eyesore to the reactionary regimes of oil-producing countries, which are prone to make deals with Zionism and imperialism.

The foregoing implies that effective measures are needed to consolidate the various contingents of the resistance movement scattered over different countries after the battle of Beirut. It is necessary to concentrate and consolidate the Palestinian forces after their withdrawal from Beirut around a common fighting centre meeting the requirements of the Palestinian revolution both geographically and politically in order that far-reaching occupation plans and the Camp David deal may be resisted. Lastly, an effort must be made to centralise the sources of financing the PLO.

The last problem calling for comment is that of relations between the Palestinian people and the peoples of Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. It is well known that the alliance between the Palestinian revolution and the patriotic forces of Lebanon has yielded positive results. On the other hand, the mass movements supporting it in other Arab countries has betrayed its weakness, as events in Lebanon showed. Major efforts are required to strengthen the alliance between the Palestinian revolution and the peoples of these countries.

The number of PLO bureaus in various world capitals today exceeds that of the official missions of any Arab state, which is evidence of international recognition of our revolution. However, this positive trend should not lead to restricting its links with mass non-governmental movements, should not develop at the expense of such links, particularly in the Arab world. Reactionary Arab rulers try to limit such links to their bureaucratic apparatus. The financial report submitted to the PNC session says that ever since 1981 the PLO has been supported by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and UAE. This reliance on the pillars of Arab reaction may have extremely dangerous consequences, particularly in the highly difficult conditions of today, when plots are being hatched and the Palestinian revolution is under pressure.

The only way to avoid the trap that has been set is to draw on generous donations from the mass of Palestinians and from other Arab peoples.

Hostile Campaign

The outcome of the 16th PNC Session caused consternation, bitterness and anger in the camp of the enemies of the Palestinian revolution, by showing that their scheme aimed at splitting Palestinian national unity had miscarried. The media of some reactionary Arab regimes, in particular those of Egypt and Jordan, misrepresented the meeting.

Going on at full pelt is the expropriation of lands belonging not only to Arabs living in the occupied areas but to Arabs who are Israeli citizens. There is increased activity to build new Israeli settlements, and Zionist religious fanatics have even tried to make their way into and entrench themselves on the premises of Al-Aqsa mosque, one of the most revered holy places of Islam. A fascist terror campaign is unfolding in the occupied territories, with armed bandits going as far as to kidnap small children and poison pupils. The invaders are stepping-up repression against Palestinians and Lebanese patriots.

The Palestinian people hailed the results of their highest national forum. A new powerful wave of popular anger against the invaders' reign of terror is surging high in the seized territories.

The outcome of the 16th PNC Session will benefit the situation in the Palestinian movement and help end political vacillation among some of its organisations and forces. The morale of Palestinians also benefits from heroic actions by the populations of the occupied territories and from Syria's growing capability to defeat further Israeli attempts at aggression.

The new context of the struggle encourages a critical revision of certain attitudes which objectively hamper the accomplishment of our national tasks. Needless to say, the important thing after the 16th PNC Session is to ensure that its decisions are steadfastly translated into reality.

Looking at Australian Literature

— a survey

by Hyrell Waten

In the capitalist world today we are witnessing a crisis in the arts. No longer does art provide a uniting force in the culture of the country. Since the Second World War culture in Australia has been fractured and removed from the lives of the ordinary people. A "high" culture is elitist, separated by a great gulf from the "pop" or "popular" arts that are the concern of the mass of the people which is supplied by TV, radio and relatively cheap paperbacks sold in the supermarkets and the bookstalls at airports. Much of it is of United States origin.

Australians have always been big readers. Overseas publishers have prized the rich market in Australia. In the 19th century the best Australian writers, Lawson, Paterson and Furphy amongst them, were widely read by the working people to whom they offered an interpretation of their lives and their environment in Australia, often, but not always in a bush setting. In general the followers of "high" culture were remote from Australian writing.

The intellectuals and the ruling circles did not accept the notion of Australian writing; they got their literature from England. University students and those in the private schools for the children of the educated and the wealthy were not aware of Australian writing. They read the poems and stories of the popular English writers. It was English and English writers were good. They struggled to understand a life that was quite foreign to them; the trees, flowers, birds and animals were unknown to them.

It seems strange to many people that there is now an organisation of academics and writers, concerned about this colonial attitude, that campaigns for the study of Australian literature in our universities. This does not mean the end of the "cultural cringe" now open to American culture which has become powerful since the Second World War. English influence is still powerful in elitist circles.

Australian literature has its origin in the convict period at the beginning of the white conquest of the country. The settlement was not two years old when the first English play was performed in Sydney by a wholly convict cast. It was "The Recruiting Officer" by Farquhar and was a first step in a new culture that would draw on the great tradition of English literature and adapt it to a new world.

The 19th century in England was the age of the novel about ordinary people with unique personalities who aspired for something; goodness or happiness, money or position, and they were firmly based in the life of the period. Man was the centre of the universe in the 19th century and the literature of the period anticipated a socialist position where art is a unique means of mirroring objective reality and a means through which people think about life. There was a belief in the historical process and in the possibility of altering society and human nature, and the recognition that art consists of unique skills and should become the possession of all mankind not merely of the elite.

Australian writers of the 19th century were influenced by Dickens and Mark Twain and the poets Shelley and Walt Whitman. Magazines of this period played an important part in the promotion of Australian literature and provided outlets for writers of short stories and for poets. As early as 1803 the *Sydney Gazette* appeared and published poems of many local writers and in 1810 the earliest separately published local literary publication appeared, a series of royal birthday odes by M M Robinson, an Oxford-educated lawyer transported for blackmail.

By 1850 the *Southern Cross* edited by D H Deniehy appeared and published our first notable Australian poet, Charles Harpur. In the many magazines and papers of this period almost all had a "Poets' Corner."

In Melbourne Marcus Clarke was editing the *Australian Journal* and he proclaimed that the journal would publish "no 'original' story, the scene of which is laid elsewhere than in the colonies or which does not in some way treat of colonial life or subjects of colonial interest."

From 1894 to 1906 the *Sydney Bulletin*, with A G Stephens as editor of the literary pages, played an outstanding role, publishing Australian poets and short stories and providing a critical basis for writers.

Many writers of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were attracted by the idea of English chartism, the labour movement and of utopian socialism; it seemed that a different and better society could be built in Australia, the separate colonies being in the forefront of social reforms. Writers found a readership amongst the outback workers, on stations and in the shearing sheds and amongst the emerging industrial workers. Henry Lawson, Mary Gilmore, E J Brady, Bernard O'Dowd, John Shaw Neilson, Miles Franklin, "Steele Rudd," Louis Esson, James Devaney and Paterson were some of the writers of this period.

From the beginning of this century to the 40s there were big developments in literature. The period began with disillusion with Federation and the war. There was no sign of a new society in Australia and the attempt to found such a society based on utopian ideas in South America had failed. But a school of

new writers emerged, unselfconsciously Australian and concerned with city life as well as the "bush." Katherine Susannah Prichard, a committed communist and foundation member of the Australian Communist Party, wrote a series of social realist novels based on workers in the forests and the gold towns of Western Australia and Vance Palmer continued his series of novels exploring middle class moves. They were joined by Gavin Casey, Leonard Mann, Frank Dalby Davison, Kylie Tennant, Dymphna Cusack, John Morrison, Alan Marshall and many other novelists and short-story writers. The short story remained a favourite literary form. Judah Waten's first stories appeared and attracted attention as the first attempt to write a new aspect of Australian society, the immigration-created societies of non-English-speaking background. He wrote as an Australian but with roots in a foreign community, and as a communist. There also emerged, from the wartime armed services education program, a group of writers such as Frank Hardy, Eric Lambert, Walter Kaufmann and others.

Patrick White's first novels appeared and he and Christina Stead continued to write from abroad and to win critical acclaim. Quite a group of talented Australians including James Aldridge and Jack Lindsay worked from outside Australia.

A characteristic of this period was the formation of writers' organisations to provide places for the discussion of literary problems and ideas and to fight for some improvement in the position of writers. Early in the century the Federal Government had established a Commonwealth Literary Fund to provide decent burials for indigent writers. This fund was further developed to provide several writers, who had made a contribution to literature in Australia, with fellowships, with a modest income for a year. Needy writers were sometimes given pensions.

In the 50s McCarthyism invaded Australia as it had taken over the book and film world of the USA. With the growth of the cold war, American writers were silenced by the closing of all publication avenues or were driven out of the country.

In Australia there were two commissions, the Sharpley and the more important Petrov commission, that attempted to show that communism was a conspiracy and that communists were spies and menaced the safety of the country. Writers who had expressed socialist or communist ideas were attacked in court and in the media. However, Australian writers and even some politicians not of the left felt some commitment to Australian literature.

In the 30s and 40s there had been groups of left-wing writers, especially in Sydney and Melbourne, who met regularly to discuss the problems of writers and the meaning of "socialist realism." They published a little magazine *The Realist* that brought the poems and short stories of realist writers to sympathetic readers.

Out of this climate grew the Australian Book Society in 1952, a limited-liability company to publish books and campaign for Australian literature. This was done with enthusiasm and with the support of many unions and the Communist Party until the late 70s. The first realist films and the folk song musical *Reedy River* grew out of this climate.

However there had always been in Australia, in opposition to the democratic, realist tradition, a conservative anti-socialist and anti-realist tradition which grew stronger in this period. The unofficial leader of this grouping in the 50s became James McAuley who was an active member of the executive of the Democratic Labour Party as well as an important poet.

For two decades there was a sharp polarisation of writers in Australia but with the outbreak of the Vietnam war, with the Australian government subservient to a foreign power, the USA, and the selective conscription of 19-year-old youths, a change took place.

Leading writers like the dramatists David Williamson and Alan Hopgood and poets such as Bruce Dawe, in their work and their public activities, signalled a change in the literary community. The election of the Labor Government at the end of 1972 and the establishment of the Australia Council with the Literature Board developed a cohesion of the literary ranks that was stronger than ever before. Many new writers appeared and there was a great increase in the number of books published. Support for magazines and for Australian publications and the many grants for writers changed the climate. Then came the dismissal of the Whitlam Government and the election of the right-wing Fraser Government with the drive towards anti-Sovietism and preparations for nuclear war.

Patrick White, our first Nobel Prize winner, today represents the writing community, an outstanding speaker and worker against nuclear war and for peace. Today there are few Australian writers who line up for Reagan and reaction.

Building the Socialist Party

by Eddie Clynes

The Political Resolution of the Fourth Congress of the SPA said:

“Our party can only be strong and really influential among the working class if it has its organisations among workers in factories, industries, institutions and all workplaces. It is in the whole production and distribution process that exploitation takes place. It is at work that the workers have organised trade unions, it is at the places of work that sharp class struggles take place.”
(Political Resolution 4th Congress, p 16)

The SPA is a relatively young party. We inherited a situation where the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was in the process of severing its links with the working class, closing down its former workplace-based branches. Students, intellectuals, declassed elements were being seen as the social forces for revolutionary change. The working class struggle was dubbed the “workers’ movement” and treated as just another movement for social change.

To actually become the leading political party of the working class in this country, we have to multiply many times over our links with the working people. We must build branches of our party all over Australia, in every sizable workplace, in all major localities, taking up the problems of the people and leading the struggle in these areas.

Our party must reach a stage where it raises all the important issues affecting the Australian working people, running campaigns in which hundreds, and eventually, thousands of active members are taking party policy to the people. We need to be speaking at many meetings, distributing thousands of leaflets and posters, buying time on radio and television and greatly increasing the sales of *the Socialist*.

Our activities in non-party organisations must also grow. As our Fourth Congress resolution states: “Many members of the Socialist Party are involved in work in non-party organisations. In the course of participating in the struggles of the working people many more will become active in such organisations and will bring to their work, in an appropriate manner, the political

policies and ideas of the party, winning support for them, helping to build and strengthen the party and its influence and at the same time strengthening and building the non-party organisations.

“The question arises: How can this multiplicity of working class and progressive organisations be given a common direction in the class struggle? How to co-ordinate them? Who is to determine the general line, work to have that general line accepted by the workers and the organisations of the class? How can unity be achieved, recognising that united mass action is a condition for progress and success?”

The resolution goes on to say: “Only a political party which has the aim of a socialist society, bases itself firmly on scientific socialist principles and has firm links with the working class can provide the political, ideological and organisational leadership to carry through these tasks.” (*Ibid* p 14)

There are no short cuts in building such a Marxist-Leninist party. It is a long complex process.

In the recent Federal election, the party tackled the problem of giving concrete content to our slogan of *real change*. It was a challenge to us to put forward solutions to the problems and needs of the working people which appealed to the people, which were seen to be realisable and which, at the same time, were integrated into our longer-term program for social change.

It is our success in this task which will give us real influence among the people. When the SPA is recognised, through our activities, as having workable, specific proposals to tackle unemployment, the housing shortage, taxation reform, migrant needs, inadequate social welfare services, full land and mineral rights for Aborigines, the growing threat of nuclear war and many other issues, then our party will really grow.

What has been achieved and the work being done in a number of areas are evidence that we have begun this process, but we will remain relatively uninfluential until all our comrades fully apply themselves to the job of taking the party's policies to the people.

The SPA is just emerging from a long period of inner-party struggle. As a result, the ideological understanding of many members has been lifted considerably. The majority of members are now very conscious of the type of party needed to carry out the above tasks. Democratic centralism is more widely understood and accepted. However, the twin errors of right and left opportunism persist both inside the party and within the wider labour movement.

It is necessary that these two errors should be understood and recognised if their influence is to be rooted out and defeated.

In our party's recent period, especially since the Fourth Congress, the accusation that the SPA is sectarian has been levelled at the party by individuals and in circulated documents. Even the bourgeois press took up the cry. So this provides the opportunity to go more deeply into this question.

Often the charge of sectarianism is supported by no more evidence than accompanying statements that the SPA is isolated, that we are not with the masses, that we are not accepted by the masses. This is a very shallow understanding of the problem of sectarianism.

In all the circumstances there are many things the party cannot do. There are many struggles taking place in Australia in which the SPA is not directly active; for example, the recent struggle at the Commonwealth Engineering (Comeng) factory in Sydney. But does this prove the SPA to be sectarian?

First of all it overlooks other areas where our party members do have influence — in the peace movement, the struggle to save jobs in various industries, in some trade unions, among the youth, in migrant communities and so on.

Sectarianism is a theoretical error. It springs from an inadequate analysis which fails to disclose the social forces able to achieve the goal and from a lack of knowledge of the objective relationship between different social strata or classes. If this leads to an over-estimation of what is possible, sectarianism may well appear. Isolation is a *consequence* of the sectarian error, not the error itself.

G. Dimitrov said that “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.” (G. Dimitrov, Speech to the 7th Congress of the Communist International, CBD edition 1945. P 75. Emphasis in original)

Some experience of the past helps to illustrate this point.

During the Vietnam Moratorium movement in the late 1970s the ultra-left in the movement fought hard to have the slogan *Victory to the Vietcong* accepted by the whole movement. The movement could be united around the demands for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and opposition to the conscription by the Australian government of 19-year-olds. This was a totally wrong slogan for the very broad movement which existed and far from uniting it and strengthening it, caused splits, weakened the movement and isolated those who sought to impose it.

This is not an argument against raising advanced slogans or ideas which may not be supported by masses in the first place.

In the earliest days of opposition to the Vietnam war, the Seamen’s Union took a bold, outspoken stand against the war. It was one of the first unions to do so and the first to take industrial action. It was relatively isolated at the time in the trade union movement. Do we conclude that the Seamen’s Union was then acting in a sectarian manner? I do not think so.

The same could be said of the CPA, which in the early days of struggle against the Vietnam war was alone among the political parties to take a stand. It was isolated, but was it pursuing a sectarian line?

Earlier this year, the Socialist Party was almost alone in criticising the signing of the ACTU-ALP Accord. Our views were not accepted by the masses. We were isolated. But was this a case of sectarianism? The SPA’s position is now much more widely shared and this is likely to increase as the working class experiences for itself the consequences of the course being followed.

When Marx first wrote *Capital* and when he and Engels founded the Communist League in 1847 it had only a handful of members. It was the only

such party in the whole of the world. Was that a sectarian act? Now there are over 90 such parties with millions of members.

Being isolated, in the sense of not having mass support or acceptance at a particular time, is an inadequate criteria to determine whether a particular policy or tactic is sectarian.

If an organisation is sectarian in the real meaning of the word it will not develop extensive links with the people, it will stagnate over a period of time, it will not be able to set in motion those processes necessary for the achievement of revolutionary goals.

But no one has brought forward any criticism or analysis of the program and policies of the SPA to substantiate the allegation of left sectarianism. This is not to say that examples of left sectarianism do not occur. With the long-standing influence of sectarianism in the Australian communist movement it would be surprising if there were none. But they are not reflected in the adopted policies of the party which calls for struggle against it. But this struggle is not assisted by obscuring the real meaning of left sectarianism and presenting it in terms which do not enlighten but cloud the question.

If left sectarianism arises from an over-estimation of the level of development, its twin brother, right opportunism and revisionism, arises from an under-estimation of the level of development.

An under-estimation leads to faint-heartedness, defeatism, an abandonment of necessary tasks and particularly, to the liquidation of the role of communists and their party.

We can turn to the Vietnam Moratorium again for an example. It was necessary for the responsibility of US imperialism for this conflict to be brought out sharply. It was necessary for the communists to develop an anti-imperialist understanding in the first place. The CPA should have circulated its own propaganda with this aim in mind. This was done to some extent, but all too often, the communists at that time, tried to impose anti-imperialist slogans on the whole Moratorium movement which was wrong. Much more could have been done by the CPA, in its own name, to increase the understanding of the masses that imperialism was the cause of the war in Vietnam. In this example, left sectarianism is coupled with a rightist error at the same time.

A rightist error is also to be seen among those who base themselves on the "good points" in the ALP-ACTU Accord. There are "good points" in the Accord but they are also accompanied by "bad points." It is a tricky business to try and "balance" between the two. In any case this misses the real essence and purpose of the Accord which is to push the idea of class collaboration, that there is a common interest between workers and employers, that wages should be restrained because they cause inflation and unemployment and so on.

The Statement of Accord led directly to the economic summit convened by the Hawke Government which took these sentiments even further.

The fact that this approach was the essence of the Accord is borne out by the fact that there is a strong tendency in the trade union movement at the moment

to seek a solution to workers' problems by looking for "stability" in this or that industry.

For example, the agreement between the Master Builders' Association and most of the building unions says that the objective of the agreement is to develop "more satisfactory procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes," to "improve industrial relations" necessary "if private investors and governments are to increase the level of construction activity in Australia." The agreement specifically speaks of improving the "efficiency and stability of the industry."

If we accept the premises of the Accord and the summit, if we do not point out their real political significance, we miss the chance of deepening working class consciousness and lead the working class into passivity and inaction. How else can "no-strike" agreements be judged except as a suspension of the class struggle?

Another rightist concept is contained in the "coalition of the left" idea. This concept reduces the Marxist-Leninist party to being just one of a number of left forces, organisations and movements. It results in the liquidation of the Marxist-Leninist party which becomes submerged into the "broad" movement. This is what actually happened to the CPA. It is so obvious now as to be beyond argument.

A right-opportunist mistake is also made by those who imagine that by building-up support for the ALP by stressing the positive points in its program and campaigning around them, without putting forward the Socialist Party's independent policy on these issues, they are, somehow, improving our party's standing.

This position is justified in some circles as "building the united front." Actually, it amounts to falling into the trap of tailing behind the ALP, waiting for the ALP to come up with the solutions, or attempting to push the ALP along from behind.

The Fourth Congress resolution states "... the united front is in essence a political concept and consequently relations of a party to party nature must be built." (*Ibid* p 20)

The establishment of a united front between the SPA and the ALP, for example, would be the result of many united actions by members of both parties, at all levels, around the economic and political interests of the working class and directed against imperialism and state monopoly capitalism.

To achieve such actions, we must build support for our own policies so that our party becomes known as an organisation having a real influence and able to mobilise many people.

If we do not become such a party, why would another party wish to engage in united action with us?

These erroneous methods of building the revolutionary movement are rejected by the SPA. The real question is: How to broaden and how to deepen and maintain real communist work.

“One might appear to be quite broad by adopting, say, the Labor Party point of view. We could get many more votes, even elect members to parliament. But the price for that is abandonment of our communist positions and adoption of reformism.

“It is possible to carry on ‘broad’ work in this or that mass organisation and, by cloaking one’s party outlook or by failing to carry on communist work, make perhaps what appears to be greater progress.

“But this is the path of liquidation of the party...” (*For peace, real change and a bigger, stronger party*. SPA Central Committee statement, March 1983)

The SPA understands the decisive role of the Marxist-Leninist party. Our program and policies are based on the application of scientific socialism to our present conditions. Part of this struggle is to oppose and overcome the various deviations which inevitably arise because of the pervading influence of the ideology of the ruling class which finds a variety of expressions among the middle class and the working class. The most persistent in the ranks of the communists have been the “leftist” and rightist errors which, when one goes into it, are the two sides of the same coin.

Not “the real meaning of left sectarianism” — merely the Marxist definition

by Ray Clarke

S Hall, author of the article *The real meaning of left sectarianism* in issue number 7 of the *Australian Marxist Review* (AMR), would do well to take note of the point made in an article in the same issue by Peter Symon who says: “It is desirable that definitions should be arrived at and agreed upon.”

A Marxist definition of sectarianism has been arrived at and agreed upon in the international communist movement for the past 50 to 60 years. S Hall has apparently never heard of it. He presents us with a new discovery — the “real meaning.” He has discovered a social base for sectarianism, the first “Marxist” theoretician to have done so.

But his discovery is intended to serve a narrow political end. The essence of his article is to prove that as the “social base” of sectarianism is the “petty proprietor, the small master” and as there is no such social base in the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA), therefore the SPA (particularly its present leadership) is not guilty of the sin of sectarianism.

The first question to be answered is not what is the “real meaning” of sectarianism but what is the accepted Marxist understanding of the term.

L H Gould in his *Marxist Glossary and Philosophic Dictionary* (fourth enlarged and revised edition, 1967) defines sectarianism in these terms:

“Incorrect policy or correct policy wrongly applied which tends to isolate the communists and other progressives, leaving them small in number, a ‘sect’ ... sectarianism is essentially a lack of confidence in the capacities and initiatives of the labor democratic masses ... Failure to recognise that the communists and the other militant democrats cannot by themselves achieve the tasks of the socialist

revolution ... failure to recognise that communists represent the whole of the interests, needs and aspirations of humanity ... adoption of a policy and using slogans corresponding thereto no longer in accordance with the changed conditions ... ignoring the fact that the thinking in all social experience and activities possesses relative independence ... using unsuitable methods of approach, propaganda style which do not attract or convince the masses.”

Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism (written by a large group of Soviet academics, supervised by representatives of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR) says: “Sectarianism is based on a dogmatic attitude to various theoretical propositions and formulas as though they offered a solution for all possible problems of political life.” (p 433)

“The essence of sectarianism consists in isolation from the masses, the failure to take advantage of the available opportunities for revolutionary work and an effort to evade the vital issues raised by life itself. Whereas revisionism seeks to reconcile the party to capitalism, sectarianism deprives the party of its ties with the masses without which it is impossible to wage a successful struggle against capitalism.” (p 434)

The point is also made on page 434 that in the beginning, many of the communist parties formed in capitalist countries after the October Revolution committed errors of a sectarian nature. At the time, Lenin called this an infantile disorder of left-wing communism. These errors manifested themselves in a refusal to work in trade unions headed by reactionaries and opportunists, to participate in bourgeois parliaments, make compromises when necessary and in general to employ flexible tactics.

How does Hall see the position? He poses the question on page 37 of his article:

“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.’ (*Left-Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder* in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 31, p 32)

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

As a matter of fact, Lenin does nothing of the kind suggested by Hall. Let me quote the paragraph in full.

“Little is known in other countries of the fact that Bolshevism took shape, developed and became steered in the long years of struggle against *petty-bourgeois revolutionism* (Lenin’s emphasis) which smacks of anarchism, or borrows something from the latter, and, in all essential matters, does not measure up to the conditions and requirements of a consistently proletarian class struggle. Marxist theory has established — and the experience of all European revolutions has fully confirmed that the petty proprietor, the small

master (a social type existing on a very extensive and even mass scale in many European countries) 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. A petty bourgeois driven to frenzy by the horrors of capitalism is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries.”

Lenin does not, as Hall claims, reveal the social base of sectarianism. He does not use the word sectarianism. He is discussing the social base of “petty-bourgeois revolutionism, which smacks of anarchism.” Nowhere in his writings does Lenin discuss the social base of sectarianism because there is no such thing as a social base for sectarianism.

Sectarian errors, which lead to the isolation of left political parties and groups, have been made, are being made and will continue to be made by parties of the left, including those claiming to be Marxist-Leninist, quite irrespective of their social composition.

Lenin was always meticulous about his formulations and many times in his writings used the word sectarianism but in its correct Marxist sense on which Gould elaborated his definition. For example:

“The *sectarianism* (Lenin’s emphasis) of the Social Democratic Federation (in England) and the German-American Socialists in America reduces theory to ‘rigid orthodoxy’ (they want the under-developed workers to swallow the theory all at once).” As Gould put it — “using unsuitable methods of approach, propaganda style which do not attract or convince the workers.”

Now let us look at the next quotation from Lenin in Hall’s article and the conclusions he draws from it. Hall says (*AMR*, pp 37 and 38): “Left sectarianism 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. (Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 31, p 33)”

Hall should read Lenin more carefully and try harder to understand what he is really talking about.

This is a typical ploy of the trotskysts — to quote Lenin, or misquote him or quote him out of context and then to interpret what Lenin meant, to support their own narrow political attitudes. This is precisely what Hall does.

In the first place, Lenin wrote this in *Left-Wing Communism* in April-May 1920 but he was discussing a situation which existed in 1903, not “this trend in the 1920s.”

Secondly, Lenin was not discussing the problems within a Marxist party but was discussing the situation, in 1903, in a party that “rejected Marxism,” the RSRP.

Thirdly, Lenin was not discussing left sectarianism at all, he does not use the term. He was discussing "the tendencies of petty-bourgeois revolutionism" in the Russian labour movement.

The point is that there is no petty-bourgeois base of any significance in the SPA at the present time, but sectarianism is a major problem. Sectarianism can and does arise among the working class and other class strata. Sectarianism was on many occasions in the past a major problem in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) which was always in the past characterised by a sound proletarian base.

For example in 1928 under the Kavanagh leadership, the CPA decided that a communist could only take office in a union where the majority of members accepted communism and even then must return to work in industry after two years.

What Gould describes as a "classic example of sectarianism" was the decision of the German lefts to withdraw from the existing unions under reactionary leadership and set up "brand new, immaculate little Workers' Unions," the only condition for joining to be "recognition of the Soviet system and the dictatorship" of the proletariat.

The SPA in Sydney early in 1982 issued a leaflet criticising the activities of the membership of the Sydney Branch of the Wateside Workers' Federation in such a way that it led to a mass meeting of the membership deciding by 395 to 5 to withdraw all support from the SPA until they had received a satisfactory apology.

In the three examples of sectarianism quoted, it led to the isolation of the communists from the masses and had nothing to do with the influence of "petty proprietors and small masters."

Sectarianism or sectarian errors arise from a one-sided or inadequate understanding of Marxist theory or from a dogmatic application of a previously correct Marxist estimation of a situation in a completely new set of circumstances. ("The Bolshevik boycott of 'Parliament' in 1905 was correct ... the Bolsheviks' boycott of the Duma in 1906 was a mistake." Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 31, p 35)

Whatever variety of forms sectarianism takes, it inevitably leads to the isolation of the party from the mass movement, to a decline in its influence and, more seriously, to a decline of the party itself. This is the real meaning of sectarianism.