

discussion bulletin

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In this issue...

UNEMPLOYMENT & REVOLUTION (conclusion)

- Art and revolution
 - Violence
 - U.S. bases
-



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FROM THE EDITORS

Once again we must apologise for the long intervals of time between issues of the Discussion Bulletin. We will not offer excuses, nor will we make optimistic promises about our future publishing schedule. We do however thank those readers who have told us that they find the Bulletin worth reading and that they hope it does not fold up. It is probably only due to such expressions of interest that we are ever sparked with enough enthusiasm to produce an edition. The moral, we hope, is clear: if you think the DB is useful, let us know. Better still, send us your comments on articles which have appeared and your ideas on topics we have not covered.

Our last edition was a special issue, consisting entirely of the first part of a major article, "Unemployment and Revolution". We now publish the remaining section of the article. Like the first instalment, it discusses a number of very important questions for the revolutionary movement. We hope to publish further articles on these topics, and we encourage readers to send in their responses.

Because of the importance of completing the publication of the unemployment article, we have had to hold over the article "Marxism-Leninism or Revisionism" written by former members of the Communist Party of New Zealand.

The next edition will also include one or more articles on the topic of "crisis and revolution".

In DB 10 we published an article called "World War III" and some notes from discussions of this article. We stated that the remaining discussion notes would be printed in a future issue. Some readers have told us that they find these notes confusing to read. This largely reflects the confusion in our minds, but we are undecided on the value of publishing the remaining notes in their present form. As noted in DB 10, a more finished article is to be prepared, setting out conclusions and identifying questions which require further consideration. This article has not yet been written. However two other articles in this issue - "U.S. Bases in Australia: some thoughts" and "Troops on Campus?" - deal with the prospect of a world war, and may be regarded as attempts to apply the ideas raised in the discussion group to concrete issues.

Discussion Bulletin is published by the Red Eureka Movement as a public forum for thrashing out the application of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought to the concrete problems of the Australian revolution.

Material from non-members is welcome. Financial assistance and assistance distributing bulk copies of the bulletin to others would also be very welcome.

Individual articles are the views of their authors. Signed articles use pseudonyms. Editorial comments are the views of the editorial team and are not necessarily REM policy.

Policy statements are made formally by the REM executive or membership and will be signed as such in this bulletin.

Articles hostile to REM policy and Mao Tsetung Thought may also be published in the bulletin.

ARMED STRUGGLE OR USELESS VIOLENCE?

Archie Watkins

I am not a member of R.E.M., but often read your Discussion Bulletin with interest. The "DB" has given some indications lately that some R.E.M. members are trying to shake off old dogmas and are looking afresh at political questions that used to be summed up in mere slogans. This is good. However, one of your "touch-stones of Marxism-Leninism" remains unturned - the question of violence and armed struggle.

I have rationally grasped, I believe, the historically-proven necessity for a revolution to employ armed methods to achieve political power and maintain it. Even if a revolutionary party achieves political power through the ballot-box, reactionaries would still oppose it and launch a counter-revolution. The Chile experience is a tragic reminder of this. No doubt most DB readers accept this principle anyway. I am more concerned with the question of violence. Certainly, armed struggle is a pretty violent affair, but "violence" and "armed struggle" can be two different things.

The scenario presented in the article "Development of Armed Struggle" in DB No. 10 is a case in point. To quote part of it:

The seeds of constant widespread **proletarian** armed struggle are around us **now**. When youth gangs turn on police trying to bust them, they do it with chains, knives, sticks and stones - and they do a lot of damage. The reasons are **obviously** political - the result of an inhuman system that cages and represses people until they hit out. Predictably it is often **against one another** (racism, rival gangs, domestic fights), but increasingly it is against the authorities.

Just because the working class **doesn't** chant slogans or **correctly analyse** the cause of unemployment is no reason to write off instinctively well-directed violence as a waste of time.

(emphasis added)

The author believes that communists can "unite usefully with the 'instinctive revolutionaries' mentioned above" and he goes on to predict gleefully that the housing estates and "fibrous-cement jungles" (?) will eventually become uncontrollable for the cops, and then "riot squads and the army" would have to move in. The author goes on to inform us that, although the underworld arms market is largely controlled by big business and police and politicians, we can still get arms from it.

To be fair, "agitators possessed of ideology" have a part to play in this revolutionary scenario. The readers of the article are encouraged to take up this role ("The bricks are flying - where are you?") but in any case, "...it's a sure bet there are many aware communists amongst the people now". To dodge the logical question of who these "communists" are, the author informs us they do not belong to any of the present left parties or groups. The article concludes by assuring us that "armed struggle is as close as your nearest house-brick".

Cute, hey? But there are a few assumptions in this that are not explained. Why is this violence "proletarian"? What kind of politics is involved in this "obviously political" violence? After admitting that some participants in this "working class violence" don't know who their class enemies are, the author calls it "instinctively well-directed" merely because it is sometimes aimed at police.

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What is being discussed here is aimless rebellion, the kind that can just as easily be utilised by fascists as by anyone else. Only the blind would deny that, for instance, the fascist National Front demonstrations in England are made up not only of middle class and upper class fascist organisers, but of hundreds of working class kids, "skinheads" and "punks", most of them unemployed. It is the violence born of alienation, frustration and social backwardness usually found in kids from depressed working class areas.

Even though the author of "Development of Armed Struggle" lists a number of real issues affecting working class people that may result in violence, he or she does not claim that the violence being described is really around these issues. We are presented with no evidence to support the claim that this violence is increasingly aimed at the authorities, but we **are** told that a lot of it is directed at members of their **own class** or against workers of a **different race**. It is also admitted that much of it is **not** the result of correct analysis of who the workers' class enemies are. What is revolutionary about this? The soldiers of the revolutionary armed struggle, the seeds of which "are around us now", prepare for revolution by belting up their working class neighbours, their wives or migrant workers??

It may not be their fault that they respond to alienation and repression incorrectly, but it is not to their credit either. It is either good or bad. I say it is bad. I work in the emergency department of Melbourne's major public hospital. The vast majority of patients we treat are working class people. I see a lot of the victims of the violence in question and often learn about the circumstances. Certainly with increasing unemployment, the harassment and violence of the cops against unemployed working class kids is increasing too. Petty crime, mostly small-time theft, is not surprisingly increasing among these kids. Many of those apprehended by the police are beaten up, and sometimes the kids put up a fight. But most of the violence and injury that occur in working class areas, especially Housing Commission estates, are carried out by young members of the working class against others of their own class. Assaulting Indo-Chinese refugee families is the latest trend, and many Australian kids - including children of older migrant communities - have taken to assaulting members of newer migrant groups, such as Turks or other non-Europeans. Cops don't need excuses to come into Housing Commission estates or working class areas - they've usually been called in by residents complaining of vandalism, gang fights, a domestic punch-up next door or a mugging.

Every Friday and Saturday night it's brawls between drinkers at city and suburban pubs. The participants, whether instigators or those attacked, are inevitably working class youths. The "classic" instances of working class kids directing violence at police in a mass way take place every New Year's Eve at Lorne, Ocean Grove or the City Square. Thousands of kids roll up and after a night of heavy drinking, get into fights with each other. The police move in to break up the fights or make some arrests and the kids, even those who may have been fighting each other, turn on the cops. All clever comments about "uniting against the main enemy" aside, the violence against the cops is only incidental - its cause is in backward, anti-working class behaviour.

I don't like cops, and if one or two get a brick in the eye while trying to break up a fight or arrest some kid who's put his fist through a telephone box, that's stiff. But don't tell me the kid with a grudge against telephone boxes and "wogs" or "chinks" is our potential revolutionary. He sounds more like a candidate for the National Front. To be fair, the author of "Development of Armed Struggle" obviously thinks it's bad that this "instinctively well-directed" violence is often racist and anti-working class, but he or she obviously thinks we ought to go along with it, brick in hand. The author believes that, with more communist participation in this violence, handicaps like racism and sexism can

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eventually be eliminated. But how can this be if racism and sexism are often the very basis of this violence. It is not instinctively well-directed; the confrontation with cops seems to be incidental.

(I am here reminded of the anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat last century. White diggers launched an anti-Chinese pogrom, killed some Chinese diggers and burnt or sacked their tents. When the troopers moved in to break it up, the white diggers turned on them. It's an infamous part of the history of the "White Australia" movement. Would we have said, "'Tis a pity about the racism, but at least they fought the cops"?)

The only people who are likely to be uncritically sympathetic to these "rebels" are the likes of the National Alliance (our "own" National Front) who would like to encourage latter-day Lambing Flats. They would have no qualms about violence against the police or among the "rebels" themselves, so long as they could channel that rebellion into racist directions.

Cheering from the sidelines while kids fight cops, get criminal records and end up in gaol without the dough for a smart solicitor is no substitute for revolutionising the working class. Furthermore, while the left is too weak to challenge the power of the state or even come to the rescue of these young rebels once they're busted, it is irresponsible to urge them to go like lemmings to the cliff. It smells of using people, viewing this section of the working class as nothing but a mob to be prodded on without even understanding why or how they ended up in the back of the police van.

What strikes me as funny about these kids and their brawling with cops is that, if they manage to stay out of gaol, they "settle down", get married, have a family and usually get a job and take on family commitments. They lose this "youthful rebellion". Most adult workers only confront cops if they're involved in union or community struggles. And then they get morally outraged about police violence rather than rub their hands with glee at the prospect of a "rehearsal for revolution" - they are not ready for it yet, and it is no wonder. Some people have given violence a bad name!

If you opt for fanning the flames of "youth rebellion" **instead** of trying to revolutionise the whole working class, young and old, employed and unemployed, you have more or less dumped the idea of the working class as the agency for socialist revolution. You are pinning your hopes on a rebelliousness that is in reality transient and often counter-productive.

Even if these rebels throw an occasional brick at cops, communists in their midst should tell them to stop ... stop and think. Communists have got to convince them that the workers' interests call for revolution, for understanding the necessity of armed struggle, not because violence in itself is glorious but because it is the only way to win, and that they won't get anywhere until they understand their interests, until they are class-conscious and refuse to let racism and sexism divide them. Communists should be working to develop that understanding. Once the workers have it, en masse, you won't have to worry about armed struggle - the question will beg itself. But there are no substitutes for this admittedly painfully slow and protracted process.

TROOPS ON CAMPUS?

Norm Sinclair

The following article appeared in the February 5 issue of SIBULL, the twice-weekly news-sheet of the Student Union at the Swinburne Institute of Technology in Melbourne. The Army Reserve had applied to the Union for permission to take part in Orientation Week and were knocked back. They then went to the Institute Director who overrode the Union's decision. When the Army Reserve appeared on campus the Union organised a petition and stuck up placards and generally got stroppy. A paper war was also staged in the columns of SIBULL.

Kerry Packer's Insurance Policy on Campus - Qualified Acclaim for the Union.

It is funny to hear people sound off about "undemocratic" action by a representative body when it adopts a policy in conflict with a non-representative, arbitrary "body" in the person of the Institute Director.

It is "democratic" for the Swinburne Director to permit the Army Reserve on campus, but "undemocratic" for the Student Union to oppose it!

I can easily understand people finding the army presence offensive. In its ideas and mode of operation it is utterly backward and reactionary. It represents oppressive authority in its most obscene form. And of the six wars in which it engaged only one of them was justified (World War II) - a not very impressive record.

Nevertheless, I can't say I agree with all of the views expressed by the Union.

The Union says there is a growing threat of war due to the policies of Fraser, Thatcher, Muldoon and Reagan. What about the policies of Brezhnev, Castro and Le Duan (Vietnam)? I really do think it is about time that people who are politically anywhere left of centre reconciled themselves to the fact that the state capitalists in Moscow are further to the right than the Frasers and Reagans of this world. Churchill's politics were to the right of Fraser's, yet compared with Hitler he was a positive progressive.

It is a simple fact that the Soviet Union has taken the path of military conquest (being too weak economically to compete with Uncle Sam in the market place). Eritrea, Afghanistan and Kampuchea are receiving the blessing of Soviet napalm. Countries such as Angola and Ethiopia are virtually ruled by Warsaw Pact forces. And Soviet domination of Eastern Europe is far more oppressive than U.S. domination of Australia.

The Union petition opposes increased military expenditure. I don't. I don't believe that NATO forces, or those allied to them such as Australia, are a source of full scale war in the present situation. Currently they are a deterrent. And when World War III breaks out (with Western Europe occupied in two weeks), I won't rule out the possibility of supporting Australian military involvement.

Of course, left-wingers would be wise to create their own independent military formations and to subvert right-wing control of the regular army. Also whatever you do, don't give your guns back when the war is over. You will then be in a better position to deal with the likes of Fraser (or Hayden) than you are at present. Storming the Education Department offices with fixed bayonets should prove to be a far more effective method of getting a TEAS increase than current methods!

Just a footnote:- Firstly World War III is on the cards. Secondly it won't mean the annihilation of the human race. With the latest generation of highly accurate missiles, strategy is now directed at knocking out the other side's nuclear capacity and winning the war rather than the mutual

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destruction of each other's population. During World War II the armed forces and civilian population were issued with gas masks, however, I can't think of one instance where the Nazis or Japanese resorted to poison gas, which if used would have caused considerable Allied losses (but also retaliation). These two rabid Fascist powers showed relative "restraint" (out of self interest). I can imagine comparable "restraint" in the extent to which nuclear weapons would be used. The fact that both NATO and the Warsaw Pact have gone to the trouble to create massive conventional forces seems to bear that out.

If the above is true, it may be "good news" from the point of view of the human race's continued survival. However, the bad news is that if it is possible for one side to win in a war between nuclear powers, such a war is much more likely than if it spelt mutual destruction.

Immediate Concrete Suggestions:-

- * Union form its own independent volunteer militia. (All left-wingers should know how to use a gun!)
- * Demand that the Australian armed forces implement democratic reforms. At the moment only backward thinking sucks can tolerate military life.
- * Call on the Australian Government to retain diplomatic recognition of Democratic Kampuchea and to provide **military** aid to the resistance forces of Eritrea, Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

ART AND REVOLUTION

Editorial Note: On the following pages we publish three articles debating various aspects of art and literature. The items were originally written as letters which were exchanged by two people living in different cities. Starting from a discussion of Chinese policies on the arts during the Cultural Revolution (as expressed in a Chinese pamphlet of the time), they move on to the general question of how revolutionary socialists should regard the cultural heritage of the bourgeois democratic revolutionary period, a question which has implications beyond the field of art and literature.

"THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION WAS NOT A CON"

I have just finished reading To Trumpet Bourgeois Art and Literature is to Restore Capitalism and wish to comment on it.

1. It is a significant document (cf. those available to us anyway) in the struggle of the young and developing proletarian literature and art against an historically inferior opponent.

2. Concomitant to this the pamphlet clearly points to the extremely reactionary nature of those who persistently try to advocate bourgeois literature and art (be they examples from the era of the bourgeois revolution or not) over and above the developing proletarian literature and art:

But in making the bourgeois Renaissance a "goal to strive for" under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat Chou Yang and Co. fully unmasked themselves as entirely representing the

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overthrown bourgeoisie and suiting their counter-revolutionary needs of capitalist restoration.

Spot on!

3. The pamphlet succeeds (in spite of itself) in pointing out that to portray something as "insurpassable" or the ultimate in achievement is un-Marxist, idealist, very reactionary and plain ordinary wrong. Bourgeois literature and art was, and is, an advancement on preceding literary and art forms. Proletarian literature and art is a gigantic advancement on all literature and art forms that preceded it.*

Chou Yang's theory of being "insurpassable" was in essence touting the "insurpassableness" of the capitalist system.

Correct!

4. The pamphlet also points out that the developing literature and art of the proletariat genuinely strives to represent the aspirations of the workers and peasants in their struggles to build socialism and is an invaluable and necessary aid in this struggle. It is unfortunate that the pamphlet does not also point out that for some time the new may appear (and be) weaker, clumsier, less skilled or polished - which is precisely why reactionaries can mislead people when comparing the two.

5. But enough praise. A life full of "warm hails" (wails?) is a boring not to mention moronic life. I'll praise it all right (about half a page worth) but I'm more interested in criticising and seeking your views on my criticisms because I feel that the faults in the pamphlet are very serious.

6. Firstly, and this is the least important point, I don't like the style. You know my views on that matter following our discussion at my place some months back. In fact it was following my gripes regarding the style of much Chinese revolutionary literature that you suggested I read this pamphlet.

Content and form are dialectically related and this also means that they are different. This pamphlet seems just as guilty style-wise as many other things I have read. For example, many of Mao's quotes in the pamphlet are preceded with phrases like "our great leader", "penetratingly points out", "applying Chairman Mao's great policies". This sort of thing really pisses me off. What is being said is true. Mao was a great teacher, his ideas were penetrating and his policies were "great" (i.e. correct, scientific). But if this is true why the fuck do we need to be subjected to the hard sell? The truth just doesn't need mountains of syrupy praise to buttress it up. It is quite capable of standing on its own two feet thank you very much! And to imply that the readership is too dim to see this without constantly reminding them (like canned laughter on the cheapo comedies on telly) is rather insulting. After a lifetime of capitalism I am suspicious of the hard sell merchants.

7. Also, related to the above, I feel that there is a contradiction in (correctly) asserting that bourgeois literature and art abounds with notions of saviours and super-heroes - the Kojaks, supermans, James Bonds, Spidermans and other assorted creepy crawlies - while flogging the new, improved redder-than-red Mao Tsetung Thought.

8. However, my main gripes deal with the appraisal of bourgeois literature and art during the period of the bourgeois revolution and the periods

* See the P.S. at the end of the letter

preceding it - specific mention is made of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Especially towards the end of the pamphlet there are quite a few passages which point out that the proletariat must be able to appraise correctly the classics of bourgeois literature and art; that specifically regarding China (but something that has general application) we must take what is good from the past and criticize and reject what is bad so that the past may serve the present. The trouble is that the pamphlet doesn't encourage people to do this at all. The most important quotation from the pamphlet, one which seems to contain the quintessence of an incorrect and idealist conception of literary and art criticism re the bourgeois revolution is this:

In attacking feudal rule it unfurled the banner of "renaissance" because it aimed, apart from arousing the militant enthusiasm of its own ranks, chiefly to disguise the paltry content of the bourgeois revolution so as to cheat and mislead the broad masses of the people (p.13)

In other words, the essence of the bourgeois revolution was to pull a con! The essence of the bourgeois revolution was not a con - and nor was it paltry!

As a body of thinking, Marxism does not fall victim to, let alone advocate wishful thinking or a petulant unwillingness to accept the achievements of current class enemies - of the bourgeoisie against the intransigent feudalist structures and customs. The issue is not to defend the bourgeois forces (by uncritically praising the bourgeois revolution) in the era of proletarian revolution but to correctly appraise it, especially during its "golden age" of the 16th to 19th centuries.

Since I don't feel threatened by, or unsure of my attitudes to the bourgeois revolution vis a vis the proletariat I can see nothing wrong with giving credit where credit is due. It is just plain fact that the bourgeois revolution was a great advance over feudalism. It unleashed the productive forces and brought forth staggering developments of these forces (and a bloody good thing too). This advance found its reflection in literature and art. I mean, what would you rather see - "humanism" (dismissed as a con by the pamphlet) or the divine right of fuckwits?

To dismiss humanism and the bourgeois revolution as a whole in this manner completely misses the point in the appraisal of this revolution's place in history. Surely the essence of this revolution was the overthrow of feudalism, the removal of the feudal fetters obstructing further (and very necessary) capitalist development. This was a very big, very important and very desirable advance and it is not very materialist to describe this advance as the bourgeoisie's desire to mislead "the broad masses of people". Besides the fact that I would much rather live in a capitalist society than a feudalist one (am I being "paltry"?) I find it rather astonishing that the authors of this pamphlet can dismiss the bourgeois revolution as "paltry" on the one hand while no doubt agreeing that it was vital for the new Chinese proletarian power to carry out the tasks of the bourgeois revolution on the other (if they're that paltry, why bother?)

9. What shits me so much about this is the fairly obvious reluctance of the authors to admit that there was anything progressive about the bourgeois revolution. There just isn't anything to be frightened of if, as the pamphlet correctly maintains:

Today we are building proletarian culture - the greatest and most revolutionary culture in mankind's history (p.26)

The fact that bourgeois culture is the second "greatest" doesn't worry me one bit or make me the slightest bit less inclined to vigorously support the development of proletarian culture.

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10. The worrying thing about all this is that if you don't accurately portray bourgeois culture, its revolutionary and reactionary phases, the place this has in the development of humanity and don't give people the credit of being able to see this, then you are asking for trouble. If it becomes obvious (or if people become suspicious) that you are not being honest with them then you are directly contributing to the development of conditions where the proverbial bad weeds may grow (and flourish).

Interested to hear your opinions.

P.S.

Proletarian literature and art is historically superior to anything that preceded it but it must not be forgotten that the developing aspect of a contradiction may appear (or be) weaker than the atrophying aspect for some time. (This includes a definite though variable period of time following the seizure of state power by the proletariat.)

What the Chinese were trying to do was to make culture a mass question, to encourage the workers and peasants to actively participate in the construction of proletarian culture. This was an exceptionally important development. What they did not seem to realize however (at least I have seen no evidence of it) was that although proletarian culture was, and is, historically superior, the proletarians and their representatives must **learn** how to translate this superiority into practical superiority. The advances made in China to this end were very important and it was quite correct for the party leadership to actively encourage these advances (a la Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and more). But, it was also important to temper this development with the realization that the proletariat was still learning its cultural skills and that part of this learning comes not only from struggle against bourgeois forces, but also from learning from the bourgeois heritage, i.e., implement the policy of taking what is good from the past and rejecting what is bad. To believe that the Chinese had finished this task (or even most of it) is, at best, naive. I do not believe that 27 years (or 10 if you take it from the G.P.C.R.) is enough. What sort of a guru would you have to be to be able to forge a vibrant and mature proletarian culture from the old, strong and very entrenched feudal one within a few decades? I just can't see it, and the more I read of today's China the more I feel that my assessment is correct. They got the ball rolling, they had actively and vigorously begun the search and were building solid foundations and, if you'll forgive me taking the analogy further, you can't build a solid construction without first building solid foundations - a culture needs its foundations as much as anything.

Don't misunderstand me - I am not knocking the efforts of the Chinese people to build a proletarian culture. What I am knocking is the apparent ignorance of people (inside and outside China) as to how far this building had progressed. I reckon it was early days and not late days - it wasn't even late days for the revolution as a whole! If we don't agree on this we will have no hope of critically appraising the advances made in China in constructing a proletarian culture - not to mention having no hope of appraising any culture anywhere!

"BOURGEOIS HUMANISM IS A CON"

I've been studying the notes sent over on the pamphlet To Trumpet Bourgeois Literature and Art . . . and have a few comments. From your drift I think I disagree with your position but I need to clarify further what your position is as well as deepen further my own knowledge of the issue.

I am enclosing a photocopy of a Chinese Literature No. 8, 1977 article that claims that Yao Wen-yuan inspired the article in question. I think that you will find the photocopy interesting. I would summarise the position in the photocopy as:

(i) they claim that the Gang of Four stood for total rejection of the bourgeois heritage.

(ii) they pay lip service to critical assimilation but in reality practise uncritical reproduction of past culture and ignore the task of creating new socialist culture.

I think the position that you advance in your notes is a double-barrelled one that has a little bit each way. On the one hand you point out the general truth that "the developing aspect of a contradiction may appear (and be) weaker than the atrophying aspect for some time". This is true and I would agree that it does apply to **some** (and to understand each other I think we will have to get down to talking about "which ones" - precisely) of the literature and art produced in the Gang of Five period (i.e. 1966-76). This "weakness" of the developing aspect of the contradiction is historically inevitable (due to the immaturity of the new forces) and is not a matter of mistakes by the Gang of Five. But then on the other hand you advance an argument that serious mistakes were made. This is the main point I want to take up with you:-

You say-

What they did not seem to realise however (at least I have seen no evidence of it) was that although proletarian culture was and is historically superior, the proletarians and their representatives must learn how to translate this superiority into practical superiority.

You then link this to the errors you see in the pamphlet of total rejection of the bourgeois heritage etc. I think you are saying here that serious mistakes were made due to wrong politics and ideology. This is something completely different from "historical inevitability". (I am pointing this out because I think you tend to mix up the two positions together.)

When I saw you last you speculated that the errors you saw in the pamphlet were a result of Lin Biao's influence. I'll take this up in a minute. It does confirm your position that "the faults in the pamphlet are very serious".

From talking to you privately I get the impression that you are not very impressed **at all** by the literature etc. produced in China during the Gang of Five period. I want to elaborate on this too. I do suspect (despite your words that "very important advances were made" etc - what were they?) that you are not very impressed at all by the proletarian literature and art of the Gang of Five period.

So I want to discuss the following main points:

- * Clarify your assessment of the literature, etc, of the Gang of Five period.
- * Is the pamphlet seriously marred by a Lin Biao line influence?
- * Does it argue for total rejection of the bourgeois heritage?

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I don't know of **any** work of literature, etc, from 1966-76 that you think is basically O.K. I think "Breaking with Old Ideas" (Chinese Literature 6, 1976) is excellent. I could point to other examples in the C.L.s of 1976 if you want. I mean I think it is both artistically and politically very good. It is a model of proletarian literature and art.

I also think (from my knowledge of them - I have seen some and read parts of the scripts of others) that the model revolutionary operas and ballets (most of them revised under Chiang Ching's direct supervision) are basically O.K., i.e. they have critically assimilated the bourgeois heritage and not totally wiped it. (See the appendix on the changes in the "White Haired Girl" in "Literature and Art and the Class Struggle in China" by Bill Kerr published in China in Transition, Adelaide Anti-Imperialist Study Action Group, 1979.)

What's your opinion on this? I can discuss other examples if you like. But I think we have to make the discussion concrete, not abstract generalisations.

Other literature etc. of the Gang of Five period is, I find, artistically crude and corny (e.g. "Investigation of a Chair" in C.L.9, 1976 is one that stuck out).

Before I say the next bit I would point out that I don't feel confident in assessing the positive and negative aspects of the bourgeois revolution against feudalism. Your notes have stimulated my interest in this subject. I am looking around for references and discussions on it (refer me if you have a good one). I am disagreeing with you because I feel fairly confident that you are wrong. But I'm not at all confident as to what the correct evaluation of the bourgeois revolution is.

You say that the essence of the bourgeois revolution was not a con and the content of the bourgeois revolution was not paltry. You say that there is a fairly obvious reluctance of the authors of the pamphlet to admit that there was anything progressive about the bourgeois revolution. You would much rather live in bourgeois society than feudal society etc.

The pamphlet discusses literature and art and not economics. I don't see anything wrong in the pamphlet not saying that the bourgeois revolution unleashed the productive forces. The pamphlet does acknowledge that there was "progressive significance" in the bourgeois political demands. The pamphlet does say that the banner of "renaissance" was a con ("to cheat and mislead the broad masses") and the content of the bourgeois revolution was "paltry". On this point I agree with the pamphlet and disagree with you.

I would rather live in bourgeois society than feudal society too. According to this comparison the content of the bourgeois revolution is not paltry. But compared with the proletarian revolution the content of the bourgeois revolution is paltry. As you point out it was necessary for the new Chinese proletarian power to carry out the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. That is **all** that Liu Shao-chi wanted to do which is why his line is "paltry". The proletarian power was striving to emancipate all mankind (as well) which is why its line was not paltry.

You talk of bourgeois culture as the "second greatest". This type of comparison (proletarian 1st, bourgeois 2nd etc.) I think is fundamentally wrong. The pamphlet quotes Mao - "our revolution . . . is the **only** revolution aiming at the final elimination of all systems of exploitation and all classes." On this scale the proletarian revolution is first and all the other revolutions are last. This point was stressed many times by the Gang of 5, taking their starting point from Marx - the 2 radical ruptures and the 4 alls.

You say:

This advance (i.e. unleashing the productive forces) found its reflection in literature and art. I mean, what would you rather see - "humanism" (dismissed as a con by the pamphlet) or the divine right of fuckwits?

Art and Revolution

I would rather see bourgeois humanism than divine right but I still think that bourgeois humanism is a con. Don't you? Exactly what are these positive aspects of bourgeois literature and art that should be critically assimilated by the proletariat? I find you vague on this (I think we should criticise bourgeois humanism not assimilate it). Writers like Tolstoy who believed it and promoted it ended their lives in despair, and this is reflected in their writings. Lenin wrote on this and I find the position of the Gang of 5 on Tolstoy (as reflected in this pamphlet) to be similar.

There are direct references to Tolstoy, Balzac and Chernyshevsky in the pamphlet. Also on p.104 of the enclosed photocopy there are various concrete charges against the Gang of 4. Generally I think the assessment of the "4" was consistent with Marx, Engels and Lenin. (Do you want the references?) There is one very clear exception. Marx, Engels and Lenin praise Chernyshevsky to the sky while the "4" article refers to him as a "bourgeois author".

I had some other comments on your notes too, but these are the main ones.

I think the pamphlet is very critical of bourgeois culture but much prefer it to your position which strikes me as being too uncritical. If there is Lin Piao influence in the pamphlet I think it is very slight. Interested in your comments.

"REBELS OF THE PAST WERE OUR COMRADES"

1. The question of Lin Piao's influence. This only referred to the tendency I criticized in the pamphlet of treating Mao with a larger than life, super hero reverence. I do not know what Lin Piao's position was on literature and art and cannot comment on this although his predisposition to embrace the hero figure theories in history provides clues. In any case this was not the main point in my criticism of the pamphlet.

2. You suggest that I don't like any of the literature and art of the G.P.C.R. period. Not so. The very reason I want to make a study of the arts of this period is that I do not know them. My interest has led me to want to know what advances (and mistakes) were made by the Chinese communists during the period of socialist construction and especially the G.P.C.R.

3. You are probably right about your appraisal of such pieces as "Breaking with Old Ideas". I too have read and enjoyed material in C.L. although I cannot remember what they were called or in which issues they appeared (not only is it four years since the last of this stuff came out but my interest in the arts occurred after the coup and I didn't keep the C.L.s I bought - c'est la vie!). In short it is rather hard for me to clarify my position on the literature and art of the G.P.C.R. period because I am simply not familiar enough with it. But let me say this much:

(a) It was of extreme importance. It was an attempt (largely successful until the coup) to build a genuine proletarian culture in a country whose national heritage lay more in feudalism than in capitalism. Specifically, it was how this was being done that is of especial importance and makes the cultural advances made in this period truly significant. Not only was the emphasis laid upon contemporary problems and happenings, upon real life in a society engaged in socialist construction and revolution with all that this implies, but the subjects of this literature and art were encouraged (and were indeed) the authors and creators of this literature and art. The responsibility for the arts was

literally (sorry about the pun) dragged down from the pedestal occupied solely by the intelligentsia and placed in the hands of the real authors of history. To me this was one of the great achievements of the G.P.C.R. In the last one of the Gang of Four C.L.s are a series of poems written by commune members. As a group they started writing poetry several years prior. As poetry I don't like it all that much (poetry often translates very badly and this may be part of the problem). But this is not really the point and can in no way detract from its significance - common people engaged in the construction of proletarian culture.

(b) But this does not mean that such examples should be acclaimed uncritically. Quite the opposite is true. It is certainly not perfect (not that this is a major sin) and they display a one-sided reliance on stereotyped style and content, in the sense that it is all flag waving, trail blazing stuff completely ignoring the use of metaphor and symbolic content which, for example, one can see and admire in poets like Shelley, Milton, etc, not to mention the contemporary revolutionary poetry of Mao who uses the techniques of symbol and metaphor to great effect - e.g. "Two Birds: a Dialogue".

(c) And yet this poetry is still significant for no matter what faults it contains in style and content it was an integral part of the attempt by the revolutionary Chinese people to construct a truly superior culture. So long as the proletariat continued along this path no matter how clumsy their stuff is to begin with, the production of truly great culture (in every conceivable sense of the word) was inevitable.

4. I don't know whether the Gang of Four rejected the bourgeois heritage or not. This too is one of the reasons why I want to make a study of Chinese literature and art. The comments I made in my letter referred to Chinese policy as perceived through the pamphlet (and as far as this is concerned it appears that the bourgeois heritage - in the arts anyway - was rejected to a significant degree).

You disagree with me on this which much of the last half of your letter elaborates.

(a) You say that the pamphlet discusses literature and art and not economics hence its evaluation of the bourgeois revolution deals with the arts and not the revolution as a whole. I disagree strongly.

Firstly the literature and art of any society is the reflection of its economic base so if it didn't discuss economics at all it should have (although not in a vulgar way). Secondly the pamphlet doesn't criticize the arts aspect of the Renaissance or Enlightenment at all. These are criticized as a whole and accused of being cons and paltry from the word go. Indeed the attacks made on these periods are ahistorical in that no mention is made of their historical context - as rebellions against a moribund and ubiquitous feudal system. Instead they have been plucked out of their time and placed in ours. In a different way Chou Yang was also doing this - in order to attack and prevent the development of the new (who in the fuck heard of humanity aiming to go backwards?)

The technique of building up a straw man in order to knock him down is simply not credible. Marxists have no need and should have no desire to use it. When Marxists do fall for it, it indicates a lack of historical perspective which, I think, is a serious fault.

(b) You agree with the pamphlet's assessment of the banner of the Renaissance as a con and the content of the bourgeois revolution as paltry. For starters the pamphlet dismisses the renaissance as a con, full stop, and not just its banner. Secondly the content of the bourgeois revolution was not paltry. Here again questions of economics (liberation of feudally gummed-up productive forces) and historical perspective (capitalism is very much better than feudalism - which is why feudalism has died in the arse) re-occur. To compare the needs of the revolutionary movement today - anti-imperialist, for socialist revolution, etc - with

the aims and achievements of the revolutionary movement between the 15th and 18th centuries and to conclude from this that these periods were cons and paltry is absurd.

The Renaissance was a product of the Dark Ages. Out of this appropriately named period dominated by omnipotent and ubiquitous ideologies of superstition, divinely-ordained social relationships, of hopeless presents and futures, developed one of the great revolutionary periods of history forging breakthroughs on all fronts. Philosophically the bulwarks of feudalism ideology were openly challenged and permanently undermined. It was a period of great rationalism and optimism, of the belief that people could shape their future. Economically the breakthroughs in fields such as mathematics, mechanics, etc, were instrumental in liberating the productive forces from the stifling feudal influence. That these changes were initially confined to sections of the ruling classes says more about the origins and spread of new ideas than the ideas themselves (remember Marx?).

The eighteenth century was, for Europe anyway, a French century, and for France it was a century of the growth of French materialism and of revolution. This materialism challenged and discredited the metaphysics of the seventeenth century by engaging in open political, philosophical and scientific struggle. That this century ended in revolution (one which proclaimed the victory of the new European society) was no coincidence. This was the Enlightenment. I need hardly add that the development of German materialism in the nineteenth century (hence that of dialectical materialism) would not have been possible without the Enlightenment. Consequently to oppose an alliance (albeit an historical one) with the bourgeoisie during its revolutionary phase is quite incorrect.

What is not incorrect is to struggle against and defeat those bourgeois elements who proclaim these periods as the ultimate in philosophical, artistic, etc, development in an attempt to sabotage the working class from developing its own revolutionary movement and culture. But this is something quite different. This is a contemporary struggle against reactionaries who wish to prevent change. The heroes of the bourgeois revolutionary period were also involved in struggles against reactionaries who also wanted to prevent change.

The differences between the aspirations of the revolutionary working class and the revolutionary bourgeoisie are great (two world outlooks I guess) but not that great. Just as the bourgeoisie had the benefit of historical hindsight over the rebels who brought down slavery, we have similar advantages over them. Of course our philosophies differ - our histories differ. All these revolutionaries - those who struggled against slavery, against feudalism and, now against capitalism and imperialism would all agree with Mao's maxims that it is right to rebel against reactionaries (those of the past did), and that if you dare to struggle you dare to win (they did this too).

Historically speaking these rebels of the past were our comrades not our enemies and we should and do draw inspiration from them. And questions of cons don't really come into it. Sure bourgeois society, feudal and slave society are all cons - as befits any society based on exploitation - but the con came later (along with a measure of history) at a time when it became clear that the new was not all that it was cracked up to be and needed to be replaced with something newer (but not the old in new garb).

5. You disapprove of my comparing bourgeois and proletarian culture (proletarian best, bourgeois second-best) and quote Mao in pointing out that only the proletarian revolution aims for the final elimination of exploitation. Hence proletarian culture is best and all others last.

I think you've missed my drift. Proletarian society aims at ending exploitation and classes and this puts it in a separate category I guess. But all preceding societies are not simply "last". The history of people has been one of struggle and advancement. Each succeeding type of society

(and its culture) have been reflections of this and each has been a progression on the other. No prizes for guessing which type is a progression on capitalism.

6. "I would rather see bourgeois humanism than divine right but I still think that bourgeois humanism is a con. Don't you?"

Sure. But I get the feeling that you equate an historical defence of bourgeois humanism with its advocacy now. In the era of proletarian revolution bourgeois humanism has nothing to offer us at all (and nor has it for the last 150 years). Those like Chou Yang who proclaimed its virtues (as Confucius proclaimed those of moribund slavery) are frauds, con artists - you name it. But if Chou Yang had been around in the seventeenth century, say, he would be worthy of support. What's good today may be bad tomorrow and all that. Isn't this what dialectics is on about? The progress of human development must be evaluated dialectically. That's why I don't mind defending the bourgeois revolution historically. As a progressive movement it's been finished for some time. But its worthwhile remembering that it gave birth to dialectical materialism and the philosophies of communism.

7. You challenge me to state some positive contribution that the bourgeois revolution has made to the arts, things that we can learn from, use, develop. It's an important question and one I'm not sure I'm capable of answering well. But to get the ball rolling, here is some food for thought.

It seems to me that the task of evaluating questions of aesthetics and the arts generally is a difficult one. Contributions made during the bourgeois revolution in other fields - physiology, political economy, materialism, the sciences etc, etc, were significant and fairly obvious. But what of the arts? While it is logical to say that these advances would find some direct or indirect expression, the question of what these contributions were remains.

Some answers:

(a) The art of the Renaissance A comparison between Renaissance art and the oppressive feudal art which preceded it is a graphic illustration of the ideological breakthrough made by the early bourgeois revolutionaries.

The Renaissance was a period of great hope, rationality and confidence. Its art reflected this - people's growing knowledge of themselves and of the world. That many of the themes remained religious should not blind us from seeing the gravity of the changes - figures were painted (and hence perceived by both artist and audience) in a manner celebrating the rediscovery of the marvel of the human body, its great expressive capacity and that only through the body's senses can we appreciate and learn from the world around us. The figure of David is not one of the Bible, but of fifteenth century Italy - unashamed, facing the future with confidence, capable of controlling destiny.

Art of the Renaissance was revolutionary because it was rational and because it demonstrated the possibility of people becoming masters of their fate.

(b) The art of the bourgeois tradition This tradition in art, which developed after the Renaissance, was a reflection of the development of capitalist means of production in Europe. While its values were historically progressive, they offer little to the proletariat.

The development of oil painting as an art form was first and foremost a celebration of private property - you are what you have and the bourgeoisie's way of seeing the world (ultimately determined by their attitudes to property and exchange) found visual expression through it. Everything was reduced to the equality of objects. Consequently it is of

no surprise that merchandise became the subject matter of much of this art (including women). Oil painting was developed to express this new dynamic wealth whose sanction came from the supreme buying power of money. It was therefore necessary to develop an art form which could demonstrate the desirability of what money could buy. On a visual level the great advantage of oils lies in the tangibility and great power of illusion transmitted through them.

A market in art thus came into being. Pieces were commissioned, bought and sold with the aim of displaying the owner's wealth, his possessions (be they land, stock, foodstuffs, furnishings or women which indicate a wealthy lifestyle and makes the owner an object of envy) or the noble and idealized way in which he viewed himself and family (the illusionary mythology paintings).

This tradition consists of hundreds of thousands of paintings nearly all of which were eminently forgettable (and forgotten!). That they are forgettable is not because of a lack of skill, but because they were produced cynically - the commission or the selling of a work meant more to the artist than the values it expressed. The force of the market made this inevitable.

And yes the values most of this stuff pushed (or more correctly mirrored) were a con because the dynamism of capital did not, and could not offer social mobility, etc, to the great majority of people who remained quite powerless to alleviate their sufferings within the new capitalist framework.

However the art itself was not a con. Contradictory as this may appear it must be realized that the art market was not directed at the proverbial masses who could barely scrape enough money together to live let alone buy pieces of art. The wealthy bought or commissioned art for their self aggrandisement and with the exception of the banal and absurdly pretentious mythology paintings there was no con involved (and the mythology material was more an exercise in self-deception). The qualities depicted in the paintings were very much the qualities of the owners of capital, advertisements for the sitter/owner's good fortune.

While progressive compared with feudal values, the values of the bourgeois tradition are in sharp conflict with those of the proletariat. The movement needs to be studied and understood, but rejected as a model upon which the proletariat should build its tradition.

(c) Art which opposed the bourgeois tradition It is a great irony that those small number of artists (and the small number of works) hailed by the bourgeoisie as the finest exponents of the tradition were precisely the artists who questioned and challenged it, producing works with diametrically opposed values. The bourgeois tradition necessarily excluded the expression of dissatisfaction through it, the asking of questions - of social existence, of people's treatment of one another, the exposure of corruption, patronage etc. Yet the great masterpieces of bourgeois art manage to do this.

Intrinsic to the bourgeois tradition was the concealing of contradictions in society. This is inherently reactionary (no matter where it occurs, in what form of society). It is the hallmark of progressive and revolutionary art to expose contradictions so that people will be encouraged to ask questions and to seek answers, solutions.

Following are two examples of what I'm getting at:

(1) Rococo art and Watteau

While studying art at school Rococo was the one style I actively disliked. (That I was also studying eighteenth century history no doubt coloured my opinion.) I find it hedonistic and artificial. It idealizes the indolent and carefree life of the French aristocracy and those dependent sections of the bourgeoisie by painting a charade, a pretence.

Watteau is the Rococo's acknowledged master. But he is this because his work defies the bourgeois tradition. The concept of absolute monarchy and with this the many obligations and restraints placed upon the aristocracy died along with Louis XIV. With hindsight we know that this new freedom had a fatal ending - the Revolution. This period was thus a transitional one, one of uncertainty. Watteau alone was able to capture this.

Unlike his contemporaries who painted faces as acceptable masks, as models of indolence, maintaining a charade for both their contemporaries and to posterity, Watteau painted what he saw. Not coming from the class he was commissioned to paint he was able to catch subjects questioning their role. Given that these decades led to Revolution certain members of the intransigent exploiting classes may well question their role. But Watteau alone painted it. The eyes of his subjects are like windows. They often portray abject boredom (rather than banal satisfaction), tension, restlessness, questioning. He had turned the tradition against itself.

(2) Goya

Goya was outraged at the denial of human possibilities, at the abuse people inflicted upon one another. His paintings of the corruption of the Spanish court are well known; he drew animals dressed in royal robes, he painted scenes of war, of massacres, of suffering. His protest was not just in the subject matter but often in the title itself. "Look at what has been done to them", "This is why you have been born".

His greatness was that he faced the issues of his day openly and judged them. Because of this his art forces the spectator (both then and now) to question and pass judgement. He too upturned the tradition.

There are still some things I have not touched upon which you raised in your letter - e.g. specific examples of good, bad and indifferent material in Chinese Literature and the photocopy of the Liu Ming-chiu article entitled "The 'Gang of Four's' Reactionary Approach to our Cultural Heritage" which appeared in C.L. No. 8, 1977. I am beginning work on both of these and hope to have something by the middle of the year (being realistic) or Easter (optimistic). I'll probably do the C.L. one first because there are a few things in it that need clearing up (it's ratshit, but reasonably clever - the first half anyway).

MAY DAY LEAFLET

On the following two pages we publish the leaflet distributed by the Red Eureka Movement at the 1981 May Day demonstration in Melbourne.

Some highly critical comments on the leaflet were sent to us and later published by the Committee in Defence of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, Box 474D, G.P.C. Melbourne 3001.

MAYDAY! - SOS! - MAYDAY! - SOS! - MAYDAY! - SOS!

Here we are at Mayday 1981. Soon it will be Mayday 1982 with the same dreary leaflets and the same dreary slogans from the same dreary groups and grouplets (except us of course!...). Not even a Maypole to dance around singing!

The International Distress Signal "Mayday" is a cry for help (from the French "m'aider" - help me). Isn't it time the left in Australia frankly admitted we are in trouble?

Today is some unimaginably depressing anniversary of achieving the 8 hour day. Not only are we still celebrating having won that, God knows how many decades later, but we aren't even **demanding** a six hour day or a four hour day, or any other **major** progressive reform **within** capitalism. We might as well be congratulating ourselves on the abolition of chattel slavery, or having come down from the trees!

In the late 1960s capitalism was still in a boom period and going strong. The left grew strong too, demanding the reforms that capitalism was able to grant. There was a fresh, positive spirit on the left as old and boring reformist ideas were challenged by people determined to rebel. The whole society was moving forward from the Menzies era, and people's ideas on the left were moving forward too, even faster.

Today capitalism is in a mess, stagnant and declining. We are heading straight towards a Depression worse than the 1930s, and a world war worse than the second world war. So the left is stagnant and declining too.

Interesting, isn't it? If the left was a fundamentally anti-capitalist movement, you'd expect that we'd be weaker when capitalism was doing alright, and stronger when capitalism was doing badly and when an alternative was clearly necessary. But it's the other way round. That suggests the left is not a fundamentally anti-capitalist movement, but a progressive movement within capitalism, able to grow when capitalism is able to accommodate social progress, but with no alternative to offer when capitalism forces a retreat.

In this period of retreat, the left comes over as a pack of whingers. We are always moaning about the Government doing this or that, but we don't have much to offer as an alternative. Sometimes we get really angry and militant with our "protests". But it's still always a matter of "protests" - accepting that **they** run the country and we're just trying to make sure they don't get away with too much.

Most people can't get very turned on by just "knocking", so they don't become politically active. Sure life's getting more difficult, but you can do more to improve your own lot by looking out for yourself than by agitating against the authorities. If you're unemployed for example, you'll do better looking for a job, than taking part in protests about it.

Often people on the left are even reduced to **defending** capitalism when trying to persuade others to become active. For example, we want people to take to the streets against the Fraser Government's policies. So we say those policies are the cause of all our troubles.

Malcolm Fraser gets up on television explaining basic principles of Marxist political economy. He says (not in so many words) that there's a world wide capitalist economic crisis developing and there is nothing his or any other Government can do about it. In that situation he says people have no choice but to put up with lower real wages, welfare cutbacks and reaction generally. After all, it's happening everywhere, not just in Australia, so it can't be the fault of the Australian Government.

We ought to enthusiastically agree that capitalism doesn't work very well and suggest that therefore we ought to get rid of it. But instead we insist that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with capitalism and it's all Malcolm Fraser's fault. We pretend that if only the Government followed different policies, it would be possible to have rising real living standards, improving health, education and welfare, and what have you. We're lying. We know we're lying, our opponents know we're lying and

most important, the people we're asking to take to the streets know we're lying, so naturally they don't come.

If slaves go on demanding that their masters improve their rations, they deserve to remain slaves, because they accept having masters and they therefore accept slavery. We have to build a movement to overthrow our masters, and run the world ourselves, and solve its problems ourselves, instead of demanding that our masters find some solution for us.

We need to present a clear alternative to capitalism, an inspiring alternative that people really want to work for, a practical alternative that can really work. The alternative, "as everybody already knows" is Socialism, or better still Communism. But if that's what we're fighting for, why can't we spell out (at least in broad outline), just what it means, and how we propose getting there? Why do we always avoid the issue and just talk about how bad things are now? Are we afraid that Socialism and Communism aren't very attractive and we need to paint a pretty grim picture of the way things are now, so as to persuade people to put up with the alternative?

When you look closely at the sort of "alternative" most people on the left really want, its not surprising they don't want to talk about it much and prefer just denouncing capitalism.

Some people on the left actually want to go backwards to a life of low technology "rustic simplicity". Not a great turn on for the millions of Australians who have escaped from the countryside, or migrated here from more backward peasant societies.

Others look favourably towards the societies of Eastern Europe or China, which is now firmly on the same road. They want to impose a regime here which actually has less freedom and less social progress than the present one. Even some who don't particularly admire any of the "socialist countries" seem to envisage some kind of restrictive regime with them as the new bosses - a prospect that would put most of us into the underground opposition. How could we put up with having **them** in power - they'd be much worse than Fraser, because they are already more narrow minded and dogmatic and less democratic.

Many just want some of the most glaring injustices of capitalist society to be resolved. They want better jobs, housing, education and so forth, and they don't believe they can get it without some major upheaval. But "Why don't they go and live in Sweden?"

Some actually have a vision of a better world, with fundamentally different social relations. But often it sounds suspiciously like a Christian Heaven - full of peace and harmony, sitting on clouds all day playing a harp. Very boring, no wonder Lucifer rebelled!

It's time to admit that the left in Australia (and throughout the advanced capitalist world for that matter), is ideologically bankrupt. We need to rethink our whole approach and really come to grips with the world we're in and how to change it. As a first step, we need to talk seriously to each other and examine and criticize each other's ideas in a comradely way. Being united against Fraser isn't a great point of unity, and being divided over the obviously inane aspects of each other's ideas isn't a great line of demarcation either. We need something deeper.

As a small Maoist discussion group, we in the **Red Eureka Movement** have had to admit that Maoism has been in a big mess since the defeat in China and most of the people who claim to be (or are described as) "Maoists" are pretty far off the planet. Naturally we have less hesitation admitting that about the various shades of Trotskyist, anarchist etc - after all, we thought so all along!

If you want to exchange views with us, please subscribe to our **Discussion Bulletin** and also send us your own ideas.

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CN 'INDEPENDENCE' AND THE ROLE OF FOREIGN CAPITAL

Norm Sinclair

The following notes are some roughly drafted heresies.

Being an advanced, highly developed capitalist country, Australia is dominated by big capital and being a small country, this big capital has a greater tendency to be foreign. Canada would be another example. There perhaps aren't many other comparable cases because most highly developed countries are either a lot larger than Australia or a lot smaller and totally absorbed into a larger economy as with the Benelux countries in the Common Market.

What objectives of any substance does the Australian revolution have that the revolution in America or Europe wouldn't have? What is meant by a two stage revolution in a place like China is fairly clear cut. The first revolution, the bourgeois democratic revolution had a distinct internal content, viz., abolition of feudal remnants. The main program of the CPC on that issue was land reform.

When people talk about an "independence revolution" or first stage of a two stage revolution in Australia, the only material content they can give is the notion of "kicking out" the multinationals. A concept that obscures more than it illuminates. Multinationals in Australia don't run plantations or economic enclaves that can be rooted up and disposed of, even if you wanted to. Multinationals' involvement is in the ownership of Australian productive forces that are inseparable from the rest of the economy. The multinationals would be taken over by an Australian revolution but they would be taken over in places like America too. So what's the material difference? I am not disputing that the revolution would go through various stages (the communist revolution probably has as many stages as there are days in the year). And the first stage, as far as the question of ownership is concerned, could possibly involve just taking over the larger monopolies (quite apart from any desire to have some unity with the small bourgeoisie, it might prove organizationally impossible to nationalize all industry in one gulp). But that would probably be the scenario in a place like America too. So we are still left with the question, what real differences exist between a revolution in Australia and one in America or Britain or Japan?

Multinationals as a concept has been isolated off from the rest of economic phenomena in a way that abstracts it from capitalism as such. Disembodied from capitalism and then attacked separately from it.

Support for autarchy is a prevailing view in the left. Its extreme form is represented by people like Ted Wheelwright who fear Australia's increasing integration into the world economy. According to Wheelwright, this increasing integration is creating or will create an insuperable barrier, if permitted to persist, to any possibility of social change in Australia. We will have been swallowed up by international forces which are seen as invincible. Why capitalism based on massive international capital and global integration should be seen as less vulnerable than small local capital is not made very clear. One thing is sure and that is

Foreign Capital

that it is diametrically opposed to Marxism; it is saying that the development of capitalism according to its own objective laws (e.g., concentration, the creation of a global economy and the destruction of pre-capitalist modes of production) is not creating the material basis for a more advanced, classless social system, but is prejudicing that development. (See Wheelwright's 1980 May Day lecture and his other writings.)

In the left we don't get even token acknowledgement of the positive nature of the tendency for capitalism to create one world or of the fact that in the final analysis the communist revolution is a global question and not a national one - one language, one culture and one social system.

The current left-wing dream is of a constellation of independent "socialisms".

Nationalist attitudes to "our" resources:- There are no doubt some grounds on which the left can be unhappy with the way that natural resources are extracted (and of course the blacks must have a right of veto to mining on land they claim). Nevertheless, with vastly more natural resources per head than most countries, Australia obviously must meet a considerable proportion of other countries' needs for these materials. To not acknowledge this principle is reactionary nationalism.

U.S. BASES IN AUSTRALIA - SOME THOUGHTS

Gus Herman

[Adapted from an article contributed to the **Theoretical Bulletin** of the Adelaide Anti-Imperialist Study-Action Group replying to an earlier article published by A.A.I.S.A.G. (see "More Gaps in the Eagle's Teeth" in **Adelaide Anti-Imperialist Newsletter**, No. 2 and "Gaps in the Argument" by Gus Herman in **A.A.I.S.A.G. Theoretical Bulletin**, No. 1). For A.A.I.S.A.G.'s address and subscription details, see "From the Editors" in this issue.]

Among those communists who see a world war looming on the horizon, discussion of our attitude to such a war tends to be transformed into the question of whether to be guided by World War I - when revolutionaries opposed giving support to either side and struggled to transform the imperialist war into a civil war - or World War II - when communists worked for the defeat of the Axis powers and co-operated with the Allied war effort. People's attitude to this question often determines their attitude to specific issues related to the international situation, such as the presence of U.S. bases in Australia.

WORLD WARS

Certainly the communist responses to the two world wars need further study. But we do so in order to throw light on the present and future international situation - we should avoid getting bogged down in nit-picking textual analyses and, more importantly, we should not assume that the situation facing us today is bound to parallel any previous situation. Moreover we cannot expect to have a fully-developed analysis of World War III when it hasn't even broken out yet.

Having uttered those cautionary words, my own feeling is that the present situation bears sufficient resemblance to the 1930s to cause communists to work now for a united front of all forces in the world opposed to Soviet aggression in order to delay, and if possible prevent, the Soviet Union launching a world war, and with the expectation that such a united front will be needed even more in the event of war breaking out. The two decisive factors to my way of thinking are the fascist nature of the present Soviet system and the fact that the U.S.S.R. is too weak economically to expand rapidly its areas of hegemony by any means other than long-term military occupation of other countries.

In the First World War, not only were both sides imperialist, but if either side won it would have made no fundamental difference for the working people of the world. The robbers were fighting in Europe over the possession of colonies mainly outside Europe. It would make no difference to the colonial peoples which power controlled them, and the situation faced by the workers in the major powers of Europe would be much the same whichever bloc was victorious in the war. That is why the Bolsheviks and revolutionaries in other countries fought for a third outcome - a victory for proletarian revolution. And the fact that this outcome was achieved, even though only in one country, certainly did make a difference to the post-war scene.

In the Second World War there were also imperialist powers on both sides, but surely there can be no doubt that things would have been a lot worse for the working people everywhere if the Axis powers had defeated their imperialist rivals. This I feel is what made it correct for the communists to unite with those imperialist powers which were fighting against the fascists. In carrying out this correct policy there were errors made, and many communists developed illusions about the nature of the non-fascist imperialist countries and failed to play an independent role within the united front. China of course provides the classic example of communists combatting such errors and, notwithstanding the fact that they had united with their own bourgeoisie and one of the imperialist camps, they achieved the "third outcome".

The arguments set out above are only a potted summary of the analysis which has been discussed at some length in publications of the Red Eureka Movement. Recent examples are 'Indo-China and Australia' in Discussion Bulletin No 9 and the discussion of V.V III commenced in D E 10.

Another group which would claim to agree broadly with this analysis is the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). For them, the process of working out the line on any particular issue (even one apparently not related to the international situation) is simplicity itself. In their eyes everything hinges on the threat of Soviet imperialism, and the only moderating factor is their opportunist desire not to move so quickly as to leave most of their supporters behind. So it was only a matter of time before the CPA(ML) worked out that U.S. bases, being aimed at the Soviet Union, must be basically "good things". The same reasoning is applied to everything - the over-riding need to oppose the Soviet Union should determine who are our friends and enemies, and so on. Thus Malcolm Fraser is basically a good thing too, although he would be even better if he took more notice of Vanguard's editorial advice to him to abandon his "harsh" policies towards the people (in the interests of the struggle against Soviet imperialism of course).

The CPA(ML) notion that our analysis of the world situation should determine who we regard as our friends and enemies in Australia is hardly a Marxist approach. We know that Fraser is a class enemy and that everything he does and says stems from his class position. While it would be absurd to reject a correct stand just because Fraser supports it, it would be equally absurd to imagine that his identification with certain correct positions makes him any kind of friend of ours. This applies whether we are thinking of his opposition to Soviet expansionism or his opposition to Ejelke Petersen's flat tax theory. (This is a separate question from that of whether we should **unite** on some issues with Fraser and his ilk. You can

U.S. Bases

unite with people who aren't your friends - in fact the whole theory of the united front, whether international or national, is about uniting forces whose interests are, on other issues, conflicting.) The CPA(ML)'s emphasis on "supporting" anyone who opposes Soviet imperialism implies that others will take the lead and communists will merely support them. However communists are supposed to struggle for the leading role in a united front, and at the very least play an independent role rather than a "supporting" one. Yet in the CPA(ML)'s world-view, the more reactionary the anti-Soviet force the more we should support it.

So our attitude to the international situation cannot determine our analysis of the class forces in Australian society. But does the converse hold? Do we need, as some people seem to think, a class analysis of Australia before we can resolve such questions as an international united front and the validity of the "three worlds" concept? I think not. Do Belgian communists need a class analysis of Australia before they can develop a position on the world situation? It is the same world situation whether Belgians look at it or we look at it. Of course our attitude to the world situation must be based on a class analysis and a class stand, but the class structure of Australia is a rather small part of the overall picture. If we come to the conclusion that a defeat of the Western powers at the hands of the Soviet Union would be a giant step backwards from the standpoint of the proletarian and revolutionary forces of the world, then that is our conclusion - even though it is the Western imperialists who are heavily involved in exploiting us and the Soviet imperialists are hardly exploiting us at all.

THE BASES

Given the above perspective, how do we react to the U.S. military installations in Australia, such as North-West Cape and Pine Gap? In deciding our stand we should start from the facts about these bases - what is their function, how are they likely to be used and what will be the results of their use?

One fact which has been a favourite of anti-bases campaigners for years is that the bases make Australia a potential nuclear target. This certainly should not be ignored, but when it is highlighted to the exclusion of all other considerations, it boils down to this: The fact that the bases might be used to assist in vapourising the innocent citizens of Moscow or Leningrad or Kiev is of no concern - what matters is that the Soviet government might try to forestall this possibility by firing a missile at our country. It comes as no surprise that the opportunist left prefers to rely on such a chauvinist approach, but if we consider ourselves to be internationalists we should look at the question in a broader context.

There could be various reasons why these bases are Soviet nuclear targets. It could be because they are designed to facilitate American aggression against the Soviet Union, or it could be because they are to help in defence against Soviet aggression. Or it could be a combination of the two. It would be rather short-sighted to automatically oppose anything that made us a target of an aggressive power. If the bases played a useful role in countering Soviet aggression they would of course be nuclear targets. Even without the bases, if in a world war situation Australia refused to bow to Soviet demands we could well be making ourselves targets for nuclear or conventional attack (and conventional weapons can kill you just as dead). The question still depends on the functions of the bases.

Of course it's difficult to be authoritative about the purposes of these bases because our government won't tell us, and there seem to be strong grounds for believing that our government doesn't even know. This in itself counts against the bases. A genuine military **alliance** between Australia and the U.S. where the two governments were equal partners and the Australian people were let into their confidence (we don't expect to be told anything that the Kremlin doesn't already know) - that would be one thing. But the present set-up where the Australian government plays a

subservient role and the people are completely in the dark is another thing entirely.

If the secrecy surrounding the bases was the only issue, we wouldn't necessarily demand that they be closed down, or even taken over by the Australian people. We could simply insist on our right to know what they are there for and press for genuine consultation about their use. As it happens, despite the official silence, we do have a fairly good idea of what the bases do from newspaper articles and books like Desmond Eall's A Suitable Piece of Real Estate. It would seem they are used to assist in monitoring Soviet missile installations and troop movements, they are part of an early warning system and they can help U.S. submarines fire missiles accurately. Is this sort of thing the key to defence against Soviet aggression? I think it is more of a substitute for an effective defence policy.

The principal factor in deterring and countering Soviet expansion is political - the formation of a genuine international united front, which involves the struggle for more equal relationships between the countries concerned and, most importantly, the mobilisation of the people. As far as military factors are concerned, the priority is to develop the capability of repulsing Soviet bloc invasions, in western Europe in particular. The weaponry required is basically conventional and, once again, mobilising - and arming - the people is crucial. "Nuclear deterrence" is not all that relevant to the real threat posed by the Soviet Union. We should certainly not be party to making it more likely that strategic nuclear weapons might be used as a panic substitute for an appropriate defence policy.

So, for all these reasons, I think the U.S. military installations in Australia should be opposed, as part of the struggle for an effective strategy of resistance to Soviet aggression based on an international united front in which the people are the most important factor.

Leftists and liberals alike often link the bases issue with the question of Australia's capacity to be self-reliant in defence. Desmond Eall, in the book cited above, maintains that Australia has no need to link itself militarily with the U.S. via the bases because we can defend ourselves relying on our own resources. He describes a defence effort involving "extensive participation from the civilian community" and claims that if Australia allocates its resources wisely it can defend itself against all regional powers. This may well be true but it ignores the prospect of world war between the superpowers. If we think this is a real possibility, we have to consider whether Australia relying on its own resources can ward off attacks, not only from Indonesia or Papua-New Guinea, but also from the Soviet Union.

SELF-RELIANCE AND ISOLATIONISM

We should (in fact, must) rely **mainly** on our own resources, but this does not mean we should be isolationist. I think it would be wrong, if the U.S.S.R. launched a world war, to advocate that Australia stay out of the war as long as possible and shun all alliances.

If we are internationalists we are not just concerned about the defence of Australia. We should not be satisfied to sit back and watch countries in Europe and elsewhere be over-run by fascist military occupation forces. Anyway isolationism is often not the best form of defence against aggression, even from the narrow standpoint of being concerned only with the defence of your own country. Of course we wouldn't be one of the first targets, especially if we were taking a neutral stance, but supposing the Soviet Union and its allies succeeded in subjugating Europe and Japan and knocking the U.S. about a fair bit, taking over lots of Third world countries in the process. Would they leave Australia alone? And if they didn't, how successfully would we be able to resist their invasion, and at what cost? Of course the anti-Soviet forces might well be able to win without our assistance, but are we willing to take the chance? (And if we **are** willing to take the chance, what if everyone thought like we do?)

What I am saying, in case it's not clear yet, is that we (I mean communists) should support Australia being allied with Western and Third world countries in a collective security pact against Soviet aggression, recognising that this could involve Australian forces being sent overseas. We should fight for such an alliance to be based on equality between all the countries involved. We should fight for a defence policy based on arming the people, we should advocate doing away with senseless regimentation and ceremony in the armed forces, we should (I think) oppose conscription for overseas service and in general we should resist the moves which the ruling class will inevitably make to use the threat or reality of world war as an excuse to discipline the working class and eliminate democratic rights. We should - as in any situation - take the initiative and struggle for the leading role.

If we were actually fighting in a war there would undoubtedly be all sorts of tricky questions popping up about whether in certain situations class struggle should be "moderated" in the interests of the war effort, and we would have to try to deal with them in a principled way in the light of the concrete circumstances. But at the moment there is absolutely no reason why anyone claiming to be a communist should be trying to tone down struggle. The CPA(NL) is hinting at this, but this is consistent with their whole ideology - if it wasn't the Soviet threat there would be some other excuse. Unlike them we can see that the world situation doesn't turn our money-bags rulers into good guys, but at the same time we should be willing to face the facts about the world situation even if it means that sometimes the worst people around aren't those who exploit us.

THE QUESTION OF ULSTER - Some Notes

plagiarised by Norm Sinclair

Are there two nations in Ireland? Does the Unionist population of Ulster have a right to self-determination? Generally speaking the Left's answer has been no. In response to the oppression of the Catholic population, it has endorsed the republican, as opposed to simply a civil rights/anti-discrimination position, even though a substantial majority in Ulster have made it perfectly clear they don't want to be part of a united Ireland and would fight and die to stay out. They consider themselves British and perhaps have a perfect right to do so.

We have to ask ourselves the question: could there be a **democratic** united Ireland given that it had **annexed** a population hostile to it? If Britain were to expel Ulster from the Union, the majority Ulster population would have no difficulty in suppressing the republican movement. Their policy is for far more rigorous suppression than the British government is prepared to carry out. Unless you are prepared to support a military intervention by the Republic of Ireland, a "Brits out" policy offers no solution for the catholic nationalist minority. Given that the Irish Republic has foresworn a military intervention, what does the call for a British pull-out amount to other than an Ulster free state with a harshly anti-catholic regime?

Perhaps a more appropriate policy would be to call for Ulster's **total** absorption into Britain and the creation there of the same social and political conditions as prevail in the rest of the country.

If the above views are wrong they need to be refuted. To date the "anti-imperialists" certainly haven't done that.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND REVOLUTION

Section 7. REVOLUTION

(NOTE: A number of comments on earlier drafts of this section have pointed to the conclusion that it really ought to be rewritten completely. However, it seems better to get the thing out, and allow others to comment as well. Please bear in mind that this was originally intended to simply round off the paper on "Unemployment and Revolution" in EB 11, by suggesting that revolution is a more "practical" solution to the problem of unemployment, than the various other "left" schemes to deal with it, that were analysed there. It is not intended to satisfy peoples desires for a meaningful answer to the general problem of "revolution", but merely to say something about what a revolution could do about unemployment. Unfortunately "everything, like everything else, is related to everything, as well as being a class question...", which makes it very difficult to complete an acceptable article about anything...)

In its normal state, capitalism has become an obsolete oppressive system that ought to be got rid off. A relatively small minority recognize this and are consciously anti-capitalist, but the masses continue trying to satisfy their needs within the system rather than by overthrowing it. So there is no real possibility of overthrowing that system and attempts to do so degenerate into futile reformism and/or terrorism, whatever the "revolutionary" rhetoric.

But during periods of economic crisis, the contradictions of capitalism sharpen and the possibility of actually getting rid of it arises. A substantial proportion of the population is drawn into active political struggle as they confront questions of what society is to do to get out of its impasse. There is no crisis that the ruling class could not resolve if it was allowed to, but with the masses politically active, the possibility arises of the ruling class not being allowed to, and of people taking things into their own hands.

In boom conditions, capitalism develops the productive forces at its maximum rate. That may be far slower than would be possible for a communist society, but there is no basis for comparison, so the obstruction is not so noticeable.

The "development of the productive forces" is not some abstract question. It means concretely that the wealth of society is increasing, not just materially, but also culturally and in every direction. Opportunities for development are open, and people who want to better their own situation can do so by grasping those opportunities. Most workers can expect better jobs, with a higher standard of living and better conditions. Capitalists can find opportunities for profitable investment. International trade is expanding and the different nations, classes and sectional interests are fighting over their share of an expanding "cake". Such fights may be acute, but there is always room for compromise about who benefits more, when nobody is actually asked to accept being worse off than they are already. Reforms may be fought bitterly, but there is scope for reform without shaking the whole system apart. Within a "pluralistic society", there can still be "consensus".

In crisis conditions all this is reversed. The cake is contracting and the fight is over who is to bear the loss. Among capitalists the fight is over who is to survive and who is to eat whom. Between capitalists and workers there is no room for compromise. Reforms become impossible and even past achievements may be rolled back. "We can't afford these luxuries

any more". Within the working class too, there is less unity as people find themselves in "hard times" where it's "everyone for themselves". The "social fabric" unravels, consensus breaks down and capitalist society stands revealed as based on sharply antagonistic interests.

The last major capitalist crisis was the Great Depression of the 1930s. Subsequent economic fluctuations, including the present one, have not amounted to much more than "recessions", so the inevitability of capitalist crisis has been forgotten until the next crisis again smashes the illusion. But even in "recession" the sharpening of contradictions can be seen, together with the complete inability of the reformist "left" to come up with any serious alternative program. All the signs point to a gathering crisis, much deeper than the 1930s, and the necessity for a serious revolutionary alternative opposed to trying to patch capitalism together again.

Internationally, overproduction intensifies the struggle for markets between imperialist nations as well as between individual financial groups. International conflicts that could have been resolved peacefully become intractable because the economic barriers have gone up and there is no room to maneuver. The "underdog" or "latecomer" imperialists can no longer hope for a place in the sun by peaceful competition in an expanding market. They can only expand at the direct expense of the established "status quo" powers and so they seek a re-division of the spoils by force. Despite its costs and risks, for them war becomes a more attractive alternative to economic collapse.

On questions of war and peace, the general "left" attitudes are perhaps even worse than the whining domestic demands that capitalists should continue running things but should do so more humanely and with less unemployment. Just as they shut their eyes to the real impossibility of continuing capitalist prosperity and "demand" a boom economy, they also shut their eyes to the real inevitability of imperialist war and "demand" peace. Pretending that the Soviet superpower is not aggressive, and that its arms build up is not preparation for war, but a figment of Reagan's imagination, becomes another way of avoiding the critical issues of war and revolution.

While the workers have no stake in the existing imperialist division of the world as preferable to the proposed new one, they do have a stake in opposing aggressive predatory wars and the accompanying overt denial of national and democratic rights. (The first world war was a different situation, not arising directly from an economic crisis, in which both sides had essentially similar expansionist aims). As we had to fight the fascist powers in the second world war, we would have to fight any fascist power that launched a third world war. (Although the Soviet Union still describes itself as "socialist", if it actually launched a third world war, the correct description of "social-fascist" would be more widely understood.)

If we fail to defeat social-fascist war preparations, we could be stuck with fascist domination holding up social development for decades. If we fail to organize independently around our own revolutionary program, we could be stuck with social development continuing sporadically in capitalism's self-contradictory manner, lurching forward to the next crisis and the next war. If we get our act together, while the bourgeoisie's act is in a mess, then we have a world to win.

All this relapse into the barbarism of crisis and war occurs as an obvious result of capitalism itself. Workers are unemployed, goods and services are unsaleable, plant capacity stands idle, and consumers are forced to do without, for no "unavoidable reason". All that stops the continued expansion of wealth and opportunities is the capitalist system of production for private profit. All that is needed for the unemployed workers to use the idle plant to produce goods that people want and need, is a communist system of production for use instead of profit.

We Need A Program

Obviously we are not in a revolutionary crisis right now, and no question of overthrowing any Western government arises immediately.

But a major economic crisis and/or a world war would certainly lead to a revolutionary crisis. The question of an alternative to capitalism will certainly be posed. Capitalism will survive if we let it. Crises can resolve the contradictions temporarily and allow a new period of expansion until the next crisis. The outcome of the 1930s crisis was the post-war boom, not communist revolution in Western countries. In retrospect this appears hardly surprising, since the Communist Parties devoted themselves to fighting fascism on a purely defensive basis, and advanced slogans like "Make the Rich Pay" that implied no intention to abolish capitalism.

In its present state of confusion, the left in advanced countries is hardly capable of even fighting fascism let alone challenging the bourgeoisie for power, let alone winning that challenge. There is even a strong tendency to be "soft" on social fascism and adopt a tolerant, apologetic or defensive attitude towards the overt denials of national and democratic rights by the Soviet Union. This can only make it easier to undermine those rights in the West as well. Certainly no movement unable to defend bourgeois democracy against ("socialist") fascism can hope to overcome the limitations of bourgeois democracy and replace it with communism.

Fortunately however, the confusion on the left is so great there is at least a chance the existing "left" movements and ideologies will disintegrate completely before the actual crisis breaks out, and there will be room for something new and genuinely revolutionary to emerge.

The task of building a revolutionary left is at present primarily destructive - exposing and undermining the reactionary ideology of the present "left". But we need to at least think about construction at the same time. The aim of destruction is to open the way for a revolutionary left that is fighting for progress rather than reacting against capitalism, and that is quite serious about winning political power to actually implement the social changes it is fighting for, instead of whining about the present rulers of society.

It has been said often enough that there can be no blueprints for the future because the people themselves will decide how to build the new society as they are building it. Fundamentally I agree with that, and will therefore refrain from attempting to present any blueprints. Nevertheless, it's appropriate to put forward a few ideas for discussion about what a revolutionary government might do to start building socialism. Consistent refusal to do so suggests that we are not fair dinkum about having an alternative. "No blueprints" is often a cop-out excuse for "no ideas".

Revolutionaries need to have a "program" that is more than an analysis of the present society and a promise for the future. We need to develop a clear statement of the concrete measures a revolutionary government would aim to take, so people can decide whether or not they want to fight for a revolution. Too many "parties" talk about "revolution" in the abstract, and none at all seem to be serious about it concretely.

These days people are rightly cynical about the "policies" and "programs" of political parties, whether "revolutionary" or not. Revolutionary Leninist ideas are widely discredited by the sterility of their apparent supporters, and Marxist concepts that sum up important truths from the history of revolutionary struggle seem empty because they have been repeated so often as banalities. One hesitates therefore to use the word "program", let alone "party", for fear of being taken for yet another loonie with pat simplistic answers to all the world's problems.

Nevertheless, in a crisis situation, people will judge according to how the measures proposed by revolutionaries compare with those advocated by the existing regime. It will be a very real life and death question for a revolutionary party to have clear policies to deal with unemployment and similar questions. If the revolutionaries do not form a political party

that aims to take power from the old regime then the old regime must continue. It won't just disappear in a burst of anarchist enthusiasm. If the revolutionary party does not propose policies that are more desirable and effective than those of the old regime, then why should anyone support a revolution? Even if there was a revolution, there would be a counter-revolution when the new regime failed to solve the problems that had discredited the old regime in the first place.

So we need to go beyond denouncing what the existing regime is doing, and start offering constructive alternatives, even though any such proposals are bound to be half-baked at this stage. Reformists will make constructive proposals as to how the present regime should deal with problems, with or without a change in the political parties administering the regime. Revolutionaries will make constructive proposals about how a new regime, a workers' state or "dictatorship of the proletariat", would cope with these questions.

Only left sectarians will talk about revolution in the abstract, without having in mind anything so mundane as taking political power and running the joint. But unfortunately the "revolutionary" organizations in Western countries are overwhelmingly sectarian. Their concern is to defend their own organizations and "principles" and not to make revolution. A discreet veil is usually drawn over the question of what a revolution might actually do about unemployment or anything else for that matter, because the alleged "revolutionaries" have no idea what they would do, and haven't even thought about it. This doesn't worry them much, because they are not serious about actually establishing a new regime, but only wish to denounce the present regime more extravagantly than a "mere reformist" would denounce it.

So let's talk about what communist revolutionaries should do, if we had the political power to do it. No doubt anarchists will disapprove, and insist that discussion of government policy implies we are bureaucrats no better than the old regime. But the choice society faces at present is between revolutionary government or counter-revolutionary government, and the road to abolishing all government lies first through establishing a revolutionary government (but certainly doesn't end there). Therefore if we want to eventually abolish the state, we need to start exchanging views about proposed **government policy**, now. The reformists talk about government policy because they are perfectly serious about governing, and there is nothing "unrealistic" about this intention of theirs. Revolutionaries should do so too, for exactly the same reason. Those who disdain to talk about government policy obviously have no belief in either reform or revolution, but only a slave's inclination to whinge occasionally.

The discussion below will not go into the many problems of building a new society and transforming human nature. It will not sketch any exciting vision of how wonderful a new society could be, but will discuss the more mundane problems of what a revolutionary government could do about unemployment in a society that still had not been transformed. Obviously this is not the main point of a revolution. It would be just as boring to have a revolution simply against unemployment as it would be to just have one to improve living standards. But this is an article specifically about unemployment.

In the first phase of communist society, the period generally known as "socialism", there would still be wage labour and commodity exchange through money. It would be quite impossible to abolish these social relations left over from capitalism all at once.

People would not work if they were not paid for it, and they would grab whatever they could get if they did not have to pay for what they consumed. Production would still be geared to market exchange. Basic social relations would still be bourgeois. There would be a bourgeois society in which the bourgeoisie no longer held political power.

A revolutionary government would presumably come to power only as a direct result of a profound political and social crisis, like the last Great Depression. Very likely too, it would arise in the aftermath of a

devastating world war. Either way, or both ways, the new regime would be faced with severe economic dislocation including unemployment, as well as all the problems of a regime born in civil war.

So what should it do about unemployment?

Obviously a revolutionary government should not attempt to deal with unemployment by any of the methods currently proposed from the labour movement. It could not simply reduce working hours, or raise wages, or increase Government spending etc. From the previous analysis we know that these measures would not work in a market economy.

"Revolution" does not mean that we would "demand" that the multi-nationals do this or that. It means that we, the working class or its advanced sections, take over the running of industry and make the decisions ourselves. To eliminate unemployment, revolutionary government would have to proceed with **abolishing the market economy**.

That will be a long struggle and there will certainly be setbacks. The democratic revolutions in Europe were spread over hundreds of years interrupted by various wars and counter-revolutions. They culminated in the establishment of the modern imperialist powers and not some "utopia". That result was a lot better than the medieval feudal societies that existed before. The democratic revolution was worthwhile and the sordid power struggles undermining feudal power were important. The Russian and Chinese revolutions suffered reversals too. But they, and their power struggles, were worthwhile. The coming Communist revolution will also be protracted and tortuous. But it has to start somewhere and we ought to be discussing it now.

It may seem odd to be discussing concrete economic policy for a regime that's nowhere near existing yet. But it's no more odd than the usual discussions of how to make capitalism work better, or how to retreat from it.

Expropriating Big Business

The first step towards abolishing the market economy and eliminating unemployment, would be to establish state control of the labor market by expropriating the big businesses that employ the large majority of workers. It would not be a matter of "kicking out the multi-nationals", but of taking them over, and advancing on the basis they have already laid.

Most likely it would have to be done on an international scale. The world economy is already "transnational" and we certainly wouldn't want to retreat from that to any kind of economic autarchy in the name of "independence".

Expropriation of capitalist property obviously relates to what the revolution could do about many other concrete problems as well, and also relates to implementation of the maximum program, towards socialism and communism. But in an immediate sense, the state taking over most industry is not in itself socialism, but can be state capitalism. It is only a pre-condition for socialism and a pre-condition for abolishing the market economy. Nevertheless, we will not discuss other aspects of the transition to communism here.

In Australia, like other advanced capitalist countries, a very large part of the labor force, about one-third, already work for the state at one level or another, or for public corporations like Telecom, or Government owned corporations like Qantas. These are already state capitalist industries.

Most of the rest of the labor force is employed by large corporations, often transnationals, whose owners play hardly any direct role in administering them, but are purely passive shareholders or bondholders. These firms could be converted to state capitalism by simple decrees transferring ownership to the revolutionary government, and by the cancellation of government debts. They would remain capitalist because they would still be employing labour to use it for making profit by selling goods on the market. But expropriation without compensation would undermine the eco-

conomic basis of the old bourgeoisie, and pave the way for communism. It would make the state responsible for hiring and firing the bulk of the Australian labor force, and therefore place the state in a position where it could take responsibility for employment and unemployment.

Many other workers are employed by small firms that are really little more than outside workshops for the big corporations, or "self-employed" in the same, completely dependent, situation. It would be difficult to simply establish state capitalism in these enterprises by decree. But taking over the big corporations on which they are dependent, means making them dependent on state owned enterprises. Control of the big firms would make it possible for the state to influence hiring and firing by the small firms, and so establish state control of that part of the labor market indirectly.

Naturally there is no great problem for a capitalist state to nationalize capitalist industries when it is necessary to the continued survival and development of capitalism - and no great benefit either. A revolutionary state doing it for revolutionary purposes is another matter.

The major obstacle to all this would of course be the state power of the previous regime, including local and foreign armies, navies and air forces, as well as terrorists, saboteurs etc. But we are talking about measures to be taken by a new state that rests on the power of the armed working class, so we may assume that these obstacles are being overcome through revolutionary civil and national war.

There are still a number of major economic obstacles that would persist even after victory in a revolutionary war. Let's look at a few examples.

First, the directors and top management of big industry, whether public sector or private, would side with the present ruling class against a revolutionary government. Unlike the owners as such, these people do play an important role in the actual organization of production, and cannot simply be dismissed by decree.

Second, many lower level executives, engineers, public servants and so on, who play an essential role in production, could not be relied upon by a revolutionary government, even though they have no direct stake in the other side. They see themselves, and are seen by others, as "middle class" (although their real status might be better described as upper strata of the proletariat, since their income is obtained from wage labor, not property ownership).

Third, there are substantial sectors of the economy, even in the most advanced capitalist countries, where people are still self-employed or work for small employers who do play a direct and important role in the actual organization of production - e.g. farmers, shopkeepers, professionals such as doctors, and a good deal of small manufacturing, construction and services enterprises. These could not simply be taken into government ownership by decree, nor are they all directly dependent on firms that could be. They would have to remain for some time as a "private sector" (quite different of course from the present "private sector" dominated by huge transnational corporations).

Certainly capitalism is already replacing small shopkeepers with supermarket chains, and family farms with agribusiness. Doctors will eventually be forced to work for salaries and so on. But it takes time, and a workers state would want to do it less blindly and destructively, and with more attention to the problems faced by the people concerned, than under capitalism.

As long as there was a private sector, relations between it and the state sector would have to be based on commodity exchange through money, and this would remain true even when privately owned businesses were being transformed into cooperatives as part of the process of socialization. In connection with the private sector, there would still be a labour market. This would continue until the state sector was able to offer jobs doing everything that needs to be done, on terms more attractive than the private sector. That could be quite a long time.

Fourth, there are links between the ownership of bigger industries and smaller ones, and even links to the savings, superannuation and insurance funds, and housing and consumer finance, of ordinary workers and working people. We cannot simply expropriate shareholdings and assume we have hit only big capitalists.

These problems all have to be faced up to, if we are serious about solving unemployment, because we cannot solve unemployment without expropriating capitalist private property in this wholesale way. International ramifications are left aside, on the assumption that we are talking about some sort of world revolution, at least in the advanced capitalist countries together. But that whole question needs to be gone into as well.

It may be repetitive to again emphasise that eliminating unemployment requires wholesale expropriation of capitalist private property. But usually this central point is left out entirely. The "socialists" and "communists" who agitate about unemployment without focussing on this issue, must in fact be demanding a solution within capitalism. They could not possibly believe in socialism or communism, or they would mention it at least occasionally, if only in their prayers.

Central Planning

Assuming we are able to solve the above problems, how would the establishment of state capitalism allow the revolutionary government to deal with unemployment? And how could it avoid becoming some grab, boring and repressive system like East Germany?

Economically, it would be a "fairly straightforward" (!) question of subordinating the state capitalist enterprises to a unified central plan, instead of production for the market. Socially and politically, this would be part of the same process that transforms capitalist production for profit into communist production for use, and wage labor into communist labor for the common good.

Since most workers would be employees of state enterprises, "manpower planning" or rather "labor force planning" could be carried out seriously. Instead of independent hiring and firing from a pool of unemployed, there would be a planned allocation of labour. Individual workers would all be permanent employees of the public service, not liable to hiring and firing as in private industry.

At present about 5% of the labor force are in career public services and there are also career services in some corporations like Telecom and BHP. In general these workers do not get hired and fired according to the needs of capital investment in their industries. Their firms manage such a large sector of the economy in a centralized way, that they are able to engage in labor force planning alongside their other investment planning and transfer and promote workers within the firm's career structure. There seems no reason why similar personnel practices could not be very quickly extended from 5% of the workforce to 80% or 90%, thus establishing complete state control over the labour market. (A large section of the Japanese labor force are "permanent" employees already, with another large section being "casuals" to provide the slack necessary in a market economy).

This would not in itself eliminate unemployment, as witness the present staff ceilings and cutbacks in the public service, and the existence of unemployment in the state sectors of economies in the Soviet bloc and China. But it would create the minimum organizational prerequisite for the government to take responsibility for unemployment. After all, if the government is not not the main employer, it is not responsible for employment, so how can it be responsible for unemployment?

As well as control of the labour market, the revolutionary government would have in its hands all the operating revenue and profits of big industry, and therefore the decisive funds for investment. Instead of the present anarchic distribution of investment through the capital markets,

there could therefore be a planned allocation through the state budget. This, and this alone, makes it possible to eliminate unemployment, simply by making full employment an essential criterion of planning. As long as firms decide their investments privately, and hire and fire accordingly, there can be no real "labor force planning". Once investments are centrally allocated, then the labor force can be planned too.

A single central plan would coordinate the requirements for labor of different occupations and skills in each industry and locality, and indeed in each establishment. The plan would take into account changes in labor force participation, the education system, immigration and emigration flows etc. The same plan would allocate funds for investment, together with the labor force required by that investment.

Far from discouraging new technology, to save jobs, the plan would facilitate its speediest implementation, to provide leisure. But the same plan that provided funds for a labor saving innovation in a particular industry or establishment, would also provide for the transfer and re-training of those workers made redundant, and the investment of funds in the industry that is to employ them, or the reduction in working hours that goes together with increased productivity.

The decisive point is that things would not just be left to "sort themselves out" through the the interaction of wages, prices and profit rates on investment, and the consequent formation and absorption of a pool of unemployed. No matter how much state ownership and "planning" there may be in a market economy, if production and investment decisions are at all regulated by "the market", they must to that extent be allowed to "sort themselves out" through market movements, including unemployment.

A fundamental distinction should be recognized, between this kind of central planning, in a state owned economy, and the sort of bureaucratic planning implied by "statist" proposals mentioned earlier. Here we are not talking about government "controls" imposed on separate, privately owned enterprises from above, while those enterprises are still basically geared to employing workers to produce goods for sale at a profit on the market. We are talking about a transformation of the enterprises themselves, in which they cease to be separate entities, and become social property working to a common social plan. That involves a political struggle, by the workers in the separate enterprises and in the whole society. It implies a social revolution as profound as abolishing the ownership of slaves by slaveowners.

The same distinction should be recognized between the central planning we are talking about, and that which exists today in the Soviet bloc and China. The "economic reforms" of the 1950s in the Soviet bloc, and more recently in China, established the same kind of relationships between central planning authorities and separate enterprises geared to the market, as were described as "statist" rather than "socialist" in section 6 above. Some forms remain similar to socialist central planning, but the content is commodity market relations and even the forms increasingly resemble those common in the West.

The injustices of slavery and serfdom were eliminated by abolishing the social institutions of slavery and serfdom themselves, not by prohibitions against maltreatment of slaves and serfs. The injustices of wage labour, including unemployment, will be eliminated by abolishing the social institution of wage labour itself, not by directions to employers to treat their workers better.

Labor Policy

The planned allocation and transfer of labor need not be bureaucratic like the present public service, although it probably would be at first. It can be made far more flexible than the freest labor market, simply by leaving enough vacancies unfilled all the time, to allow a wide choice of jobs. Industrial conscription has been required in both capitalist and socialist

economies under wartime conditions, but it can never be the peacetime norm in any post-feudal society.

Under capitalism, easy job changing only occurs in boom conditions. In a planned economy it can be deliberately maintained all the time, at the expense of some loss of efficiency in the establishments that have unfilled vacancies (but with an overall gain in efficiency due to labor mobility).

Imbalances would inevitably occur, but could be corrected by revision of the plan. Apart from other miscalculations, the plan would also have to take into account unplannable variations in the demand for labor by the relatively small private sector, just as it would also have to correct for other anarchic movements in market forces generated from that sector.

Even capitalism is normally able to maintain an approximate balance between the demand and supply for labor, with only the market price mechanisms as regulators. So there seems no reason to doubt that unemployment could be rapidly abolished with central planning. This has been the case even in relatively backward socialist countries like China, where the state sector was a relatively small part of the economy compared with agricultural co-ops. Only since the widening of market relations between separate enterprises has mass unemployment become a problem there.

In advanced capitalist countries like Australia, a revolutionary government would immediately have control over a far larger state sector than either the Soviet Union or China had when they were socialist. The remaining private sector would be insignificant in comparison, so there should be little problem.

At first however, the relations between state owned enterprises would still be market relations, just as the relations between Qantas, TAA, VicRail and the SEC are market relations today, with all the anarchy and waste that implies. The struggle to subordinate them to the plan, would be part of the struggle to solve the basic economic problems of transition to communism.

Simply directing state owned enterprises to adhere to a central labor force plan could not work while they were still basically oriented towards a market economy. If the products have to be sold on a market, and there is no market to sell more of that product, then it's no good having the government telling a state owned firm to hire more workers. Those workers might just as well be paid unemployment benefits direct - their services are not required.

Labor force planning can only work to the extent that labor power is not a commodity that is purchased to produce other commodities for sale on the market. When production is being carried out by society as a whole, rather than by separate enterprises engaged in commodity exchange, then society can allocate its labor time, as well as other resources. To the extent that separate enterprises exchange their products, then they must buy their labor power too, and to the extent that labor power is bought and sold, it cannot be allocated according to a central plan.

A necessary requirement for centralized labor force planning would of course be centralized wage fixing. Enterprises could not be free to determine their own wage rates if labor is being allocated between them according to a central plan. Otherwise the allocation of labor would be influenced by wage rates as in any other market economy. At the same time, as long as people still work for wages rather than for the public good, wage incentives will be required to attract workers from one industry or occupation to another, if unemployment or other forms of coercion are not to be used. Clearly wages and wage relativities must be fixed centrally - as though the present Arbitration system really did perform the function it purports to. But this also implies moves towards an abolition of wages as payment for the sale of labor power.

In a fully communist society, income would not depend on "wages" at all. Instead of price and wage fluctuations and unemployment, any imbalance in economic planning would simply result in shortages in facilities available for people engaged in various projects, and/or surpluses

of things people don't really want. Annoying, but not a major social problem.

But even in the early stages of transition, wages could conceivably be paid directly from the central budget, together with other "welfare" income. In that case enterprises would not "hire" their labor force directly, but from an employment bureau (as occurs now with some kinds of labor such as temporary staff). The rates paid by firms to the employment bureau need have no direct relation to the combined wages and welfare payments paid out of the state budget to the workers concerned. Imbalances can result in state subsidies to employment (or penalties on it), rather than unemployment (or labor shortages).

Similar proposals have been made for capitalist governments to encourage or discourage employment by altering taxes on wages. But there is really very little scope for that when the government's own revenue is dependent on those taxes. Moreover such adjustments could not cope with mass unemployment due to overproduction. It is a very different matter when the government revenue coincides with the whole revenue of big industry, and when central planning ensures a basic balance between production and consumption, leaving only minor deviations to be compensated.

When production is geared to social needs rather than profits, it is quite feasible to cope with increased labor productivity by simply reducing the hours of work required for given wages. Eventually, as technology continues to develop, and social attitudes change, very little work would be performed in "exchange" for wages. But from quite early on, the funds available for investment and job creation would not depend on profits, but could be allocated, just like wages and welfare payments, directly from the total revenue. Productivity increases that increase the total revenue can be used any way society wants. Cutting working hours in a non-market economy would not have the "paradoxical" effect of choking off investment and increasing unemployment due to reduced profits. Nor would increasing foreign aid or social welfare or wages have that effect. The total size of the "pie" would be the only constraint once there was no mechanism for the economy to "jam up" whenever "profits" had an insufficient slice.

With the transition from wage labour to communist labour, an increasing proportion of incomes would be based on needs (or desires), rather than payment for work (as a matter of right, not charity). Correspondingly, work would have to be an increasingly voluntary activity. Wage and welfare increases, and reduction in working hours, could then be planned together with the necessary investments in consumer goods industries, with additional flexibility provided by the increasing "social wage" of "public goods". When work has become a voluntary community service, there is of course no question of a "labor market" to require a "labor policy".

In making the transition, it would be necessary to arrange social services, foreign aid, public benefits, wages, insurance and housing and consumer finance, as well as investment, as allocations from total revenue all at the same time. In expropriating big industry, the revolutionary government would take the whole of that revenue into its hands directly, including those "profits" previously paid out through taxation or via insurance funds to provide pensions etc.

Universal social welfare coverage financed from current revenue rather than "funds", would compensate for most "savings" tied up in shareholdings etc., and small property owners could have their property redeemed rather than expropriated. The maximum number of people should gain from the expropriation of big industry and only a tiny minority should be losers. "Labor Policy" would have to embrace policy on these questions too.

The Struggle for Control

The social revolution required to transform capitalist enterprises into communist collectives obviously involves far more than government decrees

transferring ownership. The revolution itself would have produced workers' councils in many establishments, which would have taken over responsibility for management from the previous authorities. But that only establishes pre-conditions for the transformation, without actually solving the problem itself. Moreover, in many enterprises the workers' councils would be weak or non-existent, or a screen behind which the old bosses are still in charge, since revolution develops unevenly.

While the left is in opposition, it seems natural to assume that all problems of control should be resolved by "decentralization of authority". After all, the people in charge at the top are reactionaries, so the more room there is for lower level units to determine their own affairs, the more chance there is to adopt more progressive policies in at least some places where radicals happen to be concentrated. The problems in other places, where radicals have no influence at all, simply aren't worth even thinking about. Often a focus on "local" or "community" issues seems to reflect an acceptance that there is really nothing we can do about national and international issues.

With a revolutionary government in power, the situation should be reversed. The highest levels of the hierarchy should be more radical than the lower levels, and radicals at lower levels would be demanding obedience to government directives aimed at changing the social system, rather than agitating for autonomy where that would mean continuing in the wold way. (Of course this can change, if the revolution is defeated and the "revolutionary government" ceases to be revolutionary - but that simply means the radicals are in opposition again - it doesn't mean that the whole problem could be mysteriously avoided by "decentralization").

Anarcho-syndicalists seem to imagine that if everybody democratically discusses everything, production units will be able to exchange their products to supply each other's needs, and to supply consumer goods for the workers, with no more than "coordination" by higher level councils of delegates from the lower level establishments. Actually things are not so simple, and any attempt to realize that vision would only mean preserving market relations between independent enterprises, still not working to a common social plan. The concept involves a sort of "parliamentary cretinism of the workplace", even though anarchists and syndicalists are generally well aware that the right to vote cannot in itself transform bourgeois social relations into cooperative ones.

So far, modern big industry in the advanced capitalist countries, has always been based on capitalist production for profit, and nobody actually has much experience in how to run it any other way. Indeed many people allegedly on the "left" seem to be unable to conceive of it being run any other way, and dream of somehow going back to a smaller scale of production, for it to be "more human". On the contrary, it was precisely small scale industry that was suitable for capitalism, while the development of huge transnational corporations with a single management for entire sectors of the world economy, proves that the socialization of production makes private ownership an anachronism.

The only experience we have of communist labour for the common good has been in a few "community projects" providing voluntary services to the public. Everything else is based on people working for wages under the supervision of bosses to produce commodities for sale on the market. Often voluntary community projects also end up adopting a boss system, too, or remain hopelessly inefficient and get entangled in factional disputes that cannot be resolved without a clear chain of authority, and in effect, "ownership". Then they go under and reinforce the idea that capitalist production is the only system that can really work.

We should study the positive and negative lessons of the way small scale community projects and co-ops are managed, as well as studying the capitalist management of big industry, in order to prepare for transforming the management of big industry. The mentality that equates "popular", "democratic" and "cooperative" with "local" or "community" projects is a slave mentality that accepts the necessity of a bourgeois ruling class to

manage big industry and the affairs of society as a whole. We don't just want to create some free space within which slaves can manage some of their own affairs, although that may sometimes be useful. We want to overthrow the slave owners and abolish slavery altogether.

If modern industry is to be run in a fundamentally different way, then essential policy and planning decisions to run it in that different way will have to be taken by somebody. Whether they are called the workers council, the revolutionary committee, or the state appointed management, somebody will have to take decisions about the sort of questions currently decided by the boards of directors and top management of BHP, the ANZ Bank, the Treasury and so on. More importantly, people will have to take decisions about economic, as well as other questions, currently resolved by the boards of directors of General Motors, I.T.T., the Chase Manhattan Bank, the Morgan Guaranty Co, Mitsubishi, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. or C.P.C. and so on. Even more importantly, we will have to take decisions about questions which none of these bodies have the power to decide, since none of them controls the world market, either separately or together.

No amount of elections from below, directives from the revolutionary government, or consultations with the masses will change the fact that these people will be responsible for the policy decisions in industry and will have to know what they are doing. Nor would it change the fact that they are doing the job currently done by capitalist "bosses" and will have ample scope to develop into new capitalist bosses themselves (and bosses with wider and more totalitarian powers).

Most workers expect to have bosses, and that would not change overnight in a revolution. There would be a tremendous unleashing of workers initiative, but there would also be a strong tendency to retain or return to the old ways of going things, with new bosses, or even the same old bosses, in charge. Electing new bosses doesn't abolish the boss system.

The big issues are not decided "on the shop floor", to use a phrase much loved by advocates of "self management". Capitalism is already transferring more and more authority on the shop floor to workers themselves rather than supervisors or lower level line management. This only highlights the fact that questions like unemployment are imposed by market forces outside the control of "shop floor" management, or higher management for that matter.

Elected workers councils would be in exactly the same position of having to lay off staff, if there is no market for the goods they produce. Revolutionaries have to raise their sights **above** the shop floor, to places where more important decisions are taken, and to issues on which decisions simply are not taken in a market economy, because there are no decision makers with authority over the economy as a whole, and our fate is still subject to the blind workings of economic laws beyond our control.

If we want a revolution, then left-wingers, revolutionaries, will have to take on the functions of directors and managers of big businesses, as well as government ministries. Not many genuine left-wingers and revolutionaries have any great hankering to be on the board of directors of the Reserve Bank or BHP. But if revolutionaries aren't leading the workers councils to implement a socialist economic policy, then it can only be right-wingers, or unreliable middle of the road "experts" who are doing (or sabotaging) the job of management. Indeed in socialist countries, economic management functions seem to have been breeding grounds for revisionist bureaucrats.

Just saying "the workers will do it" doesn't solve a thing. Who are these workers who will do it after the revolution, without discussing what they will do, before the revolution? Power will pass from the hands of the bourgeoisie to the hands of the working class, because the working class will put forward a clear cut program to rescue society from the impasse it finds itself in under bourgeois rule. Slogans simply demanding a change in power because it is "more democratic" will get nowhere. The issue of "who decides, who rules" only arises in the context of "what is to be done".

Revolution occurs when those who presently hold power are unable to do what has to be done, and when the only way it can be done is for their opponents to take the power to do it. The most class conscious and politically conscious workers will be the ones discussing these problems beforehand, and if we don't have any ideas, how can we expect others to?

Socialist Management

The main areas of "management" in a typical capitalist firm are production, personnel, sales and finance. Research and development is another significant area in a small proportion of enterprises.

A lot of production management has become a fairly routinized function which could be readily taken over and transformed by workers councils. Workers should have no difficulty rapidly improving productivity over what can be achieved under a basically antagonistic system of bossing. While workers productivity undoubtedly improves as a result of capitalist "bossing", the very need for that bossing is itself a demonstration of how capitalism restricts productivity. Slave productivity was increased by harsh overseers, and also by having heavy tools that were hard to break (as well as hard to use). But productivity jumped much more with the elimination of slavery.

Capitalist bossing actually tries to keep workers stupid. "You're not paid to think" is the supervisor's catch cry, as soon as a worker starts saying "I think...". But in fact workers are paid to think, much more than slaves, serfs or peasants would think in their work, and they get sacked if they don't think. It's just that they're not supposed to think too much. Moreover modern technology places increasing demands on workers intelligence and requires a more and more educated labor force in greater and greater conflict with the old techniques of capitalist bossing. Communism would resolve this contradiction and unleash workers' intelligence in production, so that "management", "engineering", "research", "science" and so forth would cease to be restricted to an elite, excluding the contributions of the vast majority. Research and development would become much more widespread, be much closer to production, and require much less "management".

Likewise personnel management is an essentially routine function that will be made much easier by the elimination of "industrial relations" between hostile employers and employees. There should be no problem organizing the recruitment, training and allocation of labor in a plan based on full employment.

Purchasing and sales management does still involve an element of capitalist "entrepreneurship", although the work is done by salaried employees. But it can nevertheless readily be grasped and transformed, by the employees already engaged in it, and by other workers. The flexibility and dynamism of modern capitalism can be greatly exceeded by unleashing the workers' initiative in this area too, as well as in production, to seek out new needs and new products. Even in a state capitalist market economy, the elimination of useless competition would save a lot of trouble, with unified marketing and supply arrangements under central planning. As the "market" is abolished, the supply function would become another aspect of production planning, rather than a separate problem of "marketing".

The weakness of supply and marketing in socialist economies has been due to the general backwardness of those economies. They are (or rather were) "socialist" only in the sense of having revolutionary governments determined to accelerate the transition from capitalist to communist social relations. As far as the actual level of social development is concerned, the advanced capitalist countries have already reached a higher level, and this includes a higher level of centralized management and a higher level of organization of marketing and supply, as well as the well known higher level of productivity in most industries. Monopoly capitalism

If the new regime had no criteria for regulating investments there would be general chaos as each workers' council decides what it thinks should be produced and only finds out later that it lacks the necessary inputs or there is no market for the outputs.

In fact to begin with, the old criteria of market profitability would have to be used. To some extent even some of the old personnel, familiar with finance, would have to be used also. They would be disposing of state capital rather than private capital, and getting their perks from that, as before.

Starting from the old system, it would be a long struggle before the new system was really being used for planning, and experience in the Soviet Union and China shows that there is plenty of room for reversals along the way. As long as commodity production and wage labor exists, even the complete suppression of the old bourgeoisie and its replacement by a genuinely socialist state cannot prevent the cadres of that state themselves degenerating into a new bourgeoisie.

Of course the top managers and administrators who cannot be bribed or coerced into cooperating can simply be replaced by the workers councils. But most workers don't even know what they do, let alone how to do it differently, so there will be a pretty strong tendency to continue doing things the same old way. Workers would work, bosses would boss and financiers would finance, if these categories are not systematically uprooted.

Technically, it's not hard to imagine criteria for investment planning that aren't simply based on "profitability" in disguise. There's even a substantial branch of orthodox "welfare economics" devoted to the problem of production for use.¹

But implementing new criteria means going from private production for profit to social production for social needs, and requires fundamentally changing the way things are done.²

About 4% of the Australian labor force work directly in the "financial industry", apart from those doing similar work in the industries being financed. That's about half the labor force employed by the construction industry, and most of its effort is tied up with just trying to keep track of who owns what and transferring profits from one pocket to another (and to or from the taxation system), rather than actual investment planning.

The capitalist parasites are not even very good at keeping track of their own wealth, as is shown by the various multi-million dollar frauds that have been coming to light. They certainly don't do a brilliant job of investing it more wisely and frugally than public servants would, as is constantly suggested by apologists for capitalism. In fact even their investment function is carried out for them by accountants, advisers, brokers etc who receive a share of the spoils, but are not the actual owners of the capital they invest.

After a revolution these workers could be employed far more productively to ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible and to keep track of public property so that it doesn't get misappropriated.

¹ It can be proved mathematically that the capitalist pattern of investment according to the rate of profit can never lead to an efficient allocation of economic resources, and that "marginal cost pricing" amounts to a labor theory of value.

² The debate among allegedly "Marxist" economists about the so-called "transformation problem" relates closely to the problems Soviet bloc economies faced in allocating investments without using the traditional capitalist calculations based on an "average rate of profit". A "rate of profit" is essential when enterprises have separate interests, and "marginal cost pricing" is only feasible when they do not. The "optimal" allocation of resources according to a central plan is not the same as the "equilibrium" possible when resources are privately owned - whether competition is "free", "perfect" or monopolistic. "Equilibrium" situations can include unemployed labor and other resources, as long as the rate of profit is equalised and maximized).

There is no great technical mystery about financial work that means it could only be done by and for an old or new bourgeoisie. It just requires a major struggle.

Under slavery, public officials were necessarily slave owners. Under feudalism magistrates were necessarily landowners and under capitalism captains of industry were necessarily capitalists. But social relations change. All it needs is revolution to change them.

"Experts"

Bourgeois "experts" can work for the new owners of industry just as they used to work for the old ones, being bribed with high salaries if necessary. Or they can work for their own account, as "Nepmen" did during the "New Economic Policy" following "War Communism" in the 1920s Soviet Union. But unless the new proletarian owners at least know what they want, the "experts" cannot be forced to work in a fundamentally new way. In the long run they have to be replaced by the workers themselves, and in the short run they have to be tightly controlled by the workers councils, while the workers develop their own expertise.

In the immediate period after winning power, real control of day to day management in most enterprises would continue to be in the hands of bourgeois "experts" who know how to go it, but only know how to do it in a capitalist way. Where managerial power was not in their hands, effective management would still be paralyzed to some extent by the initial incompetence of workers who are taking on unfamiliar functions. No amount of decrees giving power to the workers councils would change those facts, unless we are supposed to wait until the working class has already completely changed, before having the revolution that will change it.

There would be considerable scope for resistance to and sabotage of government economic policy. There would also be difficulty reconciling the different priorities and demands of different sections of the working class itself. Only the practical takeover by the workers could gradually change this situation, and then only with reversals and a long historical struggle, combining mass pressure from the workers councils below, and coercion and inducements from the revolutionary government above, before the dictatorship of the proletariat has really effective control of even the state sector of the economy, let alone education, culture etc.

Nevertheless, the working class in advanced capitalist countries like Australia is already literate and quite highly educated compared with the workers that took power in the Soviet Union and China. Most "experts" are not bourgeois, but just highly trained workers, perhaps with a few airs. Even the managers and engineers in overall charge of industry at present are themselves salaried employees, mostly at no great social distance from the mass of workers. Engineering is already a basically proletarian occupation. Management not yet, but headed that way.

Where the workers councils are strong, it should not be all that difficult for them to encourage or compel most managers and engineers to cooperate, and to take on the functions of those that won't. It will be more difficult where the workers councils themselves are weak, which is bound to be the case in many places, since the revolution develops unevenly. But it would hardly be impossible.

Conclusion: the problem of abolishing unemployment by having a revolution is nowhere near as difficult as the impossible task of trying to abolish it without one! There is no need to politely cover up the absurdity of "left" schemes for dealing with unemployment within capitalism. We should say directly that these schemes are nonsense and go on to work out the realistic problems of preparing for revolution.

As the Communist Manifesto argued, we should raise the "property question" to the forefront of all immediate, practical struggles. Just how we can have a communist revolution in an advanced industrial society remains to be seen - its never been done before. But we should be quite clear that this is "what we are on about".

