

SEPTEMBER : Following the Channel 7 " Revolution " ballyhoo, Channel 9 promotes a vast " Socialist Revolution " campaign, Channel 10 a " Third World Revolution " blast, and Channel 2 a " Cultural Revolution " drive. Asked to comment, Communist Party secretary Laurie Aarons says : " This sure buggers everything." US takes over whole of Northern Territory.

OCTOBER : American developers buy Canberra and announce they now own the whole of Australia. Prime Minister W.C. Wentworth (who has replaced Gorton) goes to Washington with Gurindji elders to lead a march on the White House bearing banners : " Give Us Back Our Land !" Nixon calls in National Guard ; Wentworth goaded.

NOVEMBER : Nixon bans mini-skirt ; Women's Liberation Movement leads successful American revolution. Wentworth released, land given back to Australians, but sex banned.

DECEMBER : Revolution in Australia.

Our last issue

Many readers have sent us messages regretting our closure, and we thank them warmly for their interest and understanding, as for their support over many years.

Few have had a chance to spell out their answers to our questions about the future of the Left, though several have said they would like to do so if there were time. Unfortunately time is what we cannot offer.

We will, however, be remaining in existence as a group for the time being, and can be found at the same address (Box H159, PO, Australia Square, Sydney 2000). We hope that readers will continue to keep in touch with us, as we will with them, and will let us know their ideas about future possibilities.

Meanwhile we thought our best final contribution would be a retrospect on the political era in which OUTLOOK has been in existence, and we invited Ian Turner to make it. What he has to say has relevance for the future.

OUTLOOK

An Independent Socialist Journal

EDITOR : Helen G. Palmer. SUB-EDITOR : Grace Bardsley.

EDITORIAL BOARD : Audrey Blake, K.D. Buckley, G.W. Ford, K.T. Fowler, Len Fox, Ian Morrison, Jan Morrison, Rex Mortimer, R.M. Shaw, G.H. Sorrell, J.F. Staples, E.L. Wheelwright.

OUTLOOK is a forum for fact, thought and opinion in the cause of socialism in Australia. Views of individual contributors are not necessarily those of OUTLOOK.

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The *Australian* on November 3 reported that Overseas Containers Ltd. chief Sir Andrew Crichton, answering criticisms of containerisation, "said the new system was passing through a phase of healthy discussion not unlike an election, where one side said white was black and the other the reverse".

The US journal *Newsweek* reports that Canadian security police last month raided the library of a Montreal university and confiscated an art exhibit labelled "Cubism"; later they explained that they had mistaken the display for Cuban propaganda.

Check your reaction time on this one : A man was driving his son to school. They had a bad accident : the father was killed instantly, the son was taken to hospital. In casualty, the surgeon looked at him and said : "That's my son !"

If you find this still puzzling after more than five seconds, examine your assumptions. Women's Lib will be after you.

Award for Best Headline, from *Australian*, 3 Nov 1970, re Jindivik drones : PILOTLESS AIRCRAFT DEMAND INCREASES.

Written by R.H. Tawney in 1921, when the idea that anyone should be paid £20 wages was fantastic — but topical today :

"Hence the idea which is popular with rich men that industrial disputes would disappear if only the output of wealth were doubled, and every one were twice as well off, not only is refuted by all practical experience but is in its very nature founded on an illusion. For the question is one, not of amounts, but of proportions ; and men will fight to be paid £30 a week instead of £20, as readily as they will fight to be paid £5 instead of £4, as long as there is no reason why they should be paid £20 instead of £30, and as long as other men who do not work are paid anything at all".

And this week's advertising award to the SMH : "Where to see the Pope" in ecclesiastical lettering, then at the foot, "If it's fit to print, it's in Sunday's SUN-HERALD, the paper you can take into your home".

Gorton Proves Pensioners Well Off
Old Bill and Mary down the street
When they read Gorton's speech
Put it between two slices of bread
And had it for dinner. They said
It was undoubtedly very nourishing
But might have been more tasty if
they could have

Afforded some butter to put on it.

THE LONG GOODBYE

IAN TURNER

How to review over thirteen years, 82 issues, of *Outlook*? What it has said, what it has meant, what it has accomplished? To run through the file — from the first roughly printed sixteen pages (June-July 1957), which opened with the optimism of "Socialism is again becoming a live issue in Australia", to this issue which will, unhappily, close the file — is to have an overview of a long chapter in the life of one generation and one stratum of Australian radical intellectuals, to confront again their preoccupations and their practice, their hopes and their fears, their attempts to find a new self-definition and a new faith. But I should say "our" rather than "their", for I am part of this generation and this stratum, and *Outlook* is part of my political and intellectual autobiography; so perhaps I can best do the job I have to do in personal terms.

The *Outlook* generation was born in the 1920s, into a world where those who had survived the shambles of World War I had resurrected the ability to hope. But hope died many deaths — in 1929, with the Wall Street crash; in 1933, with Hitler; in 1935, in Abyssinia; in 1937, at Shanghai; in 1938, at Munich; in 1939 in Spain. These were the social and political impressions of our childhood and early adulthood, and they shaped our lives. An end to poverty amid plenty. Down with capitalism. The united front against war and fascism. *No pasaran!*

We were intellectuals, so we sought a theory of society which would define our present condition and teach us how to transcend it; we found it in Marxism. We were activists, so we sought the means of maximising our political potential; we found them in the "vanguard of the working class", the Communist Party. We were, I suppose, revolutionary romantics, so we looked for a utopia which would prefigure our future; we found it in the USSR and, later, in China.

It was a total commitment, surviving Stalin's bloody purges, the "exposure" of Tito as a Trotskyist agent of US imperialism, the blood-letting in Eastern Europe, the intellectual thuggery of Zhdanovism. It not only survived but was strengthened by the feeling of embattled isolation engendered by the anti-communist hysteria of the Cold War. We canvassed the Stockholm petition to ban nuclear weapons, and hailed the Soviet A- and H-bombs as guarantors of peace. We denied the existence of Soviet spies, and saw CIA and ASIO agents everywhere. We were impervious to evidence, believing that anything which ran counter to our picture of the world was a fabrication of the class enemy's propaganda apparatus. We had been tempered in the struggle, and, as Communists, we were part not only of a world movement but of a world-wide family which had humanity and truth and history on its side.

Then, in 1956, came the one piece of evidence we could not set aside — Khrushchev's secret report to the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Our minds had to some extent been readied to receive it by the Soviet rapprochement with Yugoslavia and the first tentative rehabilitations of the victims of the East European purges,

and by the indications — even from Communist sources — that all had not been well with the 20th Congress; but this was the moment of truth. I remember buying a copy of the *New York Times* which contained the report, taking it to a cafe and reading and re-reading it with the sickening conviction, not only that this was an authentic document, but that what Khrushchev had said was in essence true. I was booked to speak that night on communism to a youth group of a suburban Presbyterian Church; still in a state of shock, I stumbled through a lame defence of the principles of communism, if not its practice.

It was the attitude to truth, the response to a self-evidently authentic document, which forced the intellectuals to reconsider their relationship to the Communist Party. In Sydney, a group of comrades, many of whom were later involved with *Outlook*, produced an "underground" edition of the Khrushchev speech, and were expelled from the Party for their trouble. In Melbourne, my closest party associates and I circulated the document as widely as we could and tried to insist that it be discussed. Ted Hill, then Victorian secretary and one of the Australian CP representatives at the 20th Congress, told a meeting of selected cadres that the document was basically authentic; but the party leaders allowed their rank and file members to believe that it was a State Department forgery. I remember a series of long and bitter discussions with one member of the Victorian Executive (who, it later emerged, had some sympathy for my position) in which I insisted that there was no future for the Party unless it confronted this truth, and he argued that truth must await its opportune time.

Then, late in 1956, this first crack in the Communist monolith became a yawning gulf with the revolt of the Polish and Hungarian Communists and workers against Soviet hegemony. The responses were virtually predetermined. For the party hierarchy, the revolt represented the decisive challenge to their power and to the meaning of their lives. For those of us who had, however reluctantly, accepted Khrushchev's truths, Poland and Hungary were the inevitable consequence of what we now identified as Stalinism.

These were traumatic months. Within the context of our faith and our commitment, we were confronting the question posed by Kirillov in *The Possessed*: "If the laws of nature did not spare even him, have not spared even their miracle and made even him live in a lie and die for a lie, then all the planet is a lie and rests on a lie and on mockery . . . What is there to live for?" Some did die, and some went out of their minds; many "voted with their feet" or abdicated from all politics in angry disgust; others (some already out of the Party, some still in) set about the arduous and anguished work of redefining themselves and creating new meanings for their lives.

It was a threefold process: to redefine one's attitude to the world communist movement; to restate the meaning of socialism; and to assert a new relationship to the Australian radical and labour movements. For two

weary years. I tried to fight for those positions within the Communist Party, but was finally expelled. I remember a telegram from a friend in Adelaide: "How does it feel to be a leaderless liberal?" And I remember an argument with a comrade: "What are you going to do now?" "Join the Labor Party, I suppose." "You're going into the bloody wilderness."

It was true that I had lost the movement in which I had lived, for fourteen years, as in an extended family, which had provided me with emotional security, intellectual certainty, and what I thought of as a significant role: but so had many others, and we all had the same problems — to find a new base, new convictions, and new roles. The first job was to discover the truth that we had hidden from ourselves. The comrades began to circulate books (particularly Deutscher and Trotsky) and to publish documents (particularly those emerging from the Polish, Hungarian and Yugoslav dissidents and from the English *New Reasoner* group), and to meet together in discussion groups. (Curiously, we never — then or later — established a formal organisation: partly because of a hangover from Communist indoctrination against "factionalism": partly because we had had a gutful of organisation: and partly because we didn't know what sort of an organisation we wanted).

Out of that, *Outlook* was born, in mid-1957 in Sydney, with Helen Palmer as midwife. ("Midwife" is appropriate, for, throughout *Outlook's* life, Helen has seen her role not as imposing her own views or personality on the journal, but as bringing to life the ideas of a diverse group of contributors, sharing a general commitment to what came to be thought of as "socialist humanism", and as ensuring, with remarkable success, that issues came out in good order and on time).

The immediate occasion was the failure of the Communist Party to publish one of the key documents of 1956, a speech by Wladyslaw Gomulka to the Polish Central Committee. But the contents of this first issue were a pointer to some of *Outlook's* continuing pre-occupations: as well as Gomulka, there was review of John Burton's *Labour in Transition*, which offered a new assessment of the ALP, and articles on "Socialism and Civil Liberties" and "Workers' Self-management." *Outlook* had begun the process of collective re-definition.

In what might be called its "first period" (1957-60), *Outlook* was concerned above all to declare a position in relation to the world communist and Australian labour movements, and to seek new and relevant meanings for socialism. Its stance on the communist powers and the local Communist Party was cautious — friendly criticism rather than frontal attack, a determination to avoid the vehement, emotional anti-communist posture adopted by some of the 1956 "defectors" from Communism. Not that this found a sympathetic response: the CP was quick to denounce *Outlook* and its supporters as "revisionist" betrayers of socialism. I remember an occasion, before my expulsion, when I was carpeted by the party leadership for my support of *Outlook*. I admitted the charge, but said, in attempted extenuation, that I was doing my best to see that it didn't turn into an "anti-party" organ. The party leaders made it clear — to my rather naive surprise — that that was what they expected, and wanted it to be: their evident concern

was that no alternative focus of leadership should emerge within the socialist Left. But, quite properly, *Outlook* did not respond to this provocation: it held then, and continued to hold, that there were many sincere socialists (as well as some corrupt power-seekers) in the communist movement, and that it was important, for socialism, to keep open the channels of communication and debate, to assert the political significance of united socialist action in such popular radical causes as the peace movement.

Of even greater importance, in terms of *Outlook's* later development, was its attempt to define a new relationship with the Labor Party. The traditional socialist-communist approaches to Labor had been either attack and destroy, or capture and transform; *Outlook's* contributors started with the assumption that the Labor Party was where the bulk of working-class and radical middle-class voters were at, and proceeded to inquire into the nature of the Labor Party and to ask what could be done. The discussion drew in the ex-communists, who were looking to the Labor Party as an outlet for meaningful socialist (as they understood it) activity, and the "Labor left." There was agreement about the importance of working for a Labor electoral victory, but a fundamental (though incompletely explored) disagreement about socialist tactics in respect of the ALP; many ex-communists had moved from the Stalinist "assault from without" to the Trotskyist "bore from within" position, rather than accepting the Labor Party for what John Burton said it was, a party operating within a relatively prosperous and increasingly middle-class society, seeking to win support for radical democratic and egalitarian reforms. But already contributors were concerning themselves with practical policy, directed towards the mass labour movement: education, the Aborigines, New Guinea, foreign relations.

By 1959, *Outlook* had articulated a fairly clear position. The job of socialists was not to form a new socialist party as an alternative to Labor, but "to work in and through the ALP, which commands the electoral support of the workers and of intellectuals who seek change . . . The ALP can win support for socialist policy based on principle and on solid information about the present situation and the needs of the people. The first step must be to win over the ALP rank and file." (Vol. 3, No. 1).

In its "second period", 1960-64, *Outlook* directed itself towards this task. The narcissistic concern with world communism had ended, though the journal maintained a sympathetic interest in Castro's Cuba, the South-East Asian revolutionary movements, and the liberation movement in South Africa, and kept a critical eye on the Soviet-Chinese split. Now *Outlook's* major interest was in the social and political choices confronting Australia. In issue after issue, long articles and specially arranged symposia and supplements investigated and made detailed proposals (in a Labor political context) for socialist policies on major Australian issues: fiscal policy, automation, urban development, economic planning, foreign and defence policy, education, the Aborigines, New Guinea. *Outlook* and its contributors, having worked their way through the discarded dogmas and established their intellectual independence, saw themselves as provid-

ing what the mass labour movement in Australia had generally lacked: a centre of critical analysis and long-term thinking. Predictably, we met with apathy, suspicion and hostility. I remember, at an *Outlook* symposium on New Guinea which Gough Whitlam attended, asking the ALP Deputy Leader (as he then was) why the party didn't adopt the policy we were advocating. Whitlam replied that, while he agreed with the policy, the climate wasn't right: "You create the climate and we'll adopt the policy." I remember also sitting on the banks of one of the rivers which flank Canberra, addressing copies of one of *Outlook's* special issues to every member of the Federal Labor Caucus; we didn't get much response.

In retrospect, the turning point for *Outlook's* "third period" (1965-70) was Vietnam. The journal had always been ambivalent towards Labor — recognising the limitations of a mass reformist party, but hoping that something could be done to stiffen it. But then came the aggressive American intervention in Vietnam, followed closely by Australia's lickspittle token gesture, which drew an equivocal Labor response. From its earliest issues, *Outlook* had responded sympathetically to the Third World revolution; now, it rightly recognised the American-Australian intervention in Vietnam as a climactic occasion. In an important editorial, "Can Labor Lead?" (No. 4, 1965), *Outlook* said:

What people are looking for is leadership based not on expediency but on principle, political maturity and humanity. Leadership involves taking the initiative, not being ham-strung by operating within the frame of reference chosen by the Government. Labor must seize this opportunity to question the basic assumptions on which the Government's foreign policy rests, to break out of the sterile anti-communist posture into which we have been forced and to work out new and constructive ways in which to react to the Asian revolution. That kind of leadership Labor is now in a position to give. But opportunity does not knock twice.

The ALP was slow to respond to opportunity's knock, and *Outlook* reacted accordingly. Later issues were increasingly critical of Labor's hesitations, its seeming concessions to electoral expediency — particularly after the elevation of Gough Whitlam to the leadership of the Federal Party. The journal's point of focus moved away from the advocacy of well worked-out socialist policies for the mass labour movement, to critical socialist comment on national and (increasingly) international affairs: its emphasis was now on the newly-emerging sectional or ad hoc campaign organisations, civil liberties, anti-Vietnam, the student movement. And, reflecting the new interest in Third World politics and Maoist doctrine aroused by Vietnam, for a year or more *Outlook* was dominated by a fierce doctrinal dispute on the ins and outs of the Cultural Revolution.

And now for the balance sheet, as I conceive it.

What did we achieve? First — and in some ways most importantly, at least for the individuals immediately concerned — *Outlook* provided a refuge, a place for many of us to examine, and to lick, our wounds of 1956, to regain our intellectual and emotional health and vigour, to come back fighting. Without *Outlook*, inspired as it was by Helen Palmer's humanity, tolerance and

equanimity, we could not have done that: we would have been left wandering in anguish and despair in a political wilderness.

Secondly, we formulated and propagated significant socialist policies on many of the major problems confronting Australian society. Immediately, it seemed as if our proposals had fallen on stoney ground — but, if we look at what are now the accepted terms of discourse of the Australian labour movement, and its present policies, it is clear that, at five years' remove, many of our initiatives have borne fruit.

Thirdly, we contributed greatly to the continuing active involvement of the *Outlook* generation in the major issues and movements of our times.

What do we score on the debit side? First, that *Outlook* is ending — and we must ask, why? I believe that we made four major mistakes.

Our concerns were overwhelmingly those of middle class intellectuals — political theory and values, world issues, major social policies, not the everyday problems which most Australians (industrial and white-collar workers) confront: we did not engage ourselves, except where they impinged on politics, with the immediate concerns of the trade unions and professional associations, and so denied ourselves a necessary link and a potential base.

We did not fulfil our intention of a detailed investigation of the nature of contemporary Australian society and culture, so that the policies we advocated were not always as far-seeing as our aspirations, and were sometimes vitiated by being thrown into a social and political vacuum.

We suffered from that characteristic weakness of intellectuals, impatience, perhaps even arrogance. Committed to rational inquiry and to pushing inquiry to its limits, we tended to believe that once a question was solved in principle, it was solved in practice. Yet, even then, we were sometimes timorous, unwilling to carry our ideas through to a comprehensive conclusion. Helen Palmer said (No. 1, 1970) — and this is my only criticism of her occupancy of the editorial chair — that "ours is a time not so much for definition as for exploration"; but, after a decade or more, definition was what we needed if we were to continue.

And, finally, we did not back our ideas with organisation — neither organisation of the Socialist League or Alliance type which was canvassed on several occasions and which might have consolidated and given cohesion to our ideas, nor organisation to win acceptance of our ideas within the mass labour movement — in the first place, the ALP.

Now we face the dilemma of whether our own grouping, and the new radical movement that we have, at least partially, helped to create, will atomise into a series of special interest groups and ad hoc campaigns, losing a co-ordinated endeavour and a central direction towards the socialist transformation of Australian society, using as its levers the institutions of the mass labour movement and the organs of popular protest. For thirteen years, *Outlook* has been a significant element in the vanguard, standing on the ground of socialist humanism; is there anything that can take its place?