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South African elections

This election is a triumph for Nelson Mandela. He has fought for such an election throughout his life. Many of his comrades-at-arms have been murdered by the Apartheid state in that struggle. He has spent decades in prison. Now he is enjoying the fruits of victory. The African National Congress has an overwhelming mandate to administer South Africa. Mandela assures us this will be a government for all South Africans. This means not just for all national and racial groupings but for all classes. In reality it will be a government of the bourgeoisie.

The white racists did not give Mandela power because they felt guilt or good natured or saw the light about the immorality of apartheid. Faced with the choice of Mandela or revolution, these racist white rulers chose Mandela. They knew that there is strong sentiment for revolution amongst black workers. And if Mandela didn't deliver with his "responsible democracy" then a true proletarian revolutionary leadership could well emerge. This would be a real threat to their property and their right to super-exploit the black toiling masses. Nelson Mandela is committed to preserving private property and private ownership of the means of production. In South Africa most of this is in the hands of white people. There is a small black bourgeoisie emerging, many of whom vote National. But in no way is the racial make-up of the ruling class expected to fundamentally change.

Despite the relatively peaceful hand over of the administration of the system by the white rulers to the ANC there are still malignant by-products of the apartheid system who pose problems. The African fascists are pacified for the moment. But they remain armed and could attempt to sabotage at any moment. Within the apartheid system of white privilege the Afrikaners were always worse off. But this has meant that they were prepared to defend white privilege even more strongly than the Apartheid. They have built up their own private armies lest the apartheid state weaken. How these will respond to Mandela remains to be seen. Whilst these armies must be confronted as a mortal enemy, the right of Afrikaners to speak their own language must be defended.

Another malignant by-product of the system has been the promotion of reactionary chiefs such as the leaders of the Inkatha Freedom Movement. There has recently been violence between the supporters of Chief Buthelezi and the African National Congress and the South African state. As a rationalisation for national oppression, the South African rulers placed poorer sections of the country under the control of reactionary chiefs — the notorious Bantustans.

Bantustans do not represent a form of Black self-determination. To the contrary. They were counterposed to self-determination of the whole of black South Africa. The formation of the African

National Congress was a step forward in that it organised on a national level as opposed to a tribal level. However today it is a fetter on the struggle as ANC is fully loyal to the South African state. The alliance between Inkatha and the extreme right fascist Terra Blanche shows that just as in Fiji these chiefs could be a basis for fascism.

For decades ANC has been in struggle against the South African state. Now it is a prop for that state. They have made it clear that they pose no threat to the bosses who own industry nor the generals who administer the armed forces nor the police force. The super exploitation of the working class will continue and that class will remain overwhelmingly black. Before black people couldn't go to the cricket because of apartheid regulation. Now most black people can't go because they don't have the money. What has been gained is that now class lines can be clearly drawn. Fakers such as the ANC can no longer promise bourgeois democratic reforms to tie black workers to a capitalist programme because those reforms have been achieved and black workers remain destitute. Nelson Mandela is now clearly exposed as on the other side of the class line. When workers strike, black or white the armed forces will move in against the strikers. The troops will not be opposed by Nelson Mandela.

ANC has promised a programme of public works. Incidentally so does the National Party. We will see just how far these will be implemented. However even if what is promised is delivered in no way will it be satisfactory in providing the housing, health and transport needed. Nor will it solve the crisis of unemployment. The poverty of apartheid will remain for the great majority of black toilers.

These elections are also exposing the liberalised stalinist Communist Party of South Africa. Communism has had an expanded following in South Africa. After all, the injustice of exploitation has been posed blatantly. The rich have servants and the poor sleep in sheds. But the CPSA has misled anyone who has been led to believe that this party poses any threat to the system. When it was exposed just how much control the CPSA had over the ANC, the white rulers trembled in their boots. But not for long! It was soon show that it was the ANC controlling the so-called communists and not the other way around. The CPSA are not even standing candidates. Instead they are rallying workers to the ANC. This merely shows they offer nothing except class collaboration. They are signing their political death warrant.

The ANC is very much the fruit of stalinism in South Africa. It is a product of the stalinist strategy of the popular front — liquidating the interests of the working class, surrendering to the banner of the national bourgeoisie. The Pan African Congress is a product of divisions with stalinism. The PAC is more militant but it has fundamentally the same strategy. Standing candidates, to the left of the stalinists, are Workers' List, with a programme of reforms aimed at benefiting working people and an ostensibly Trotskyist grouping for the reconstruction of the Fourth International. Critical support should definitely be given to these Trotskyists. We do not have sufficient information to draw any tactical conclusion about Workers' List. In no way is the ANC or PAC supportable.

Internationally many on the left have rallied to the ANC. Partly because of its heroism in struggle and partly because of support for the stalinist strategy. This support not only comes from stalinists but also from former ostensible Trotskyists. In Australia this includes the Communist League whose US mentors are the Socialist Workers' Party and the Democratic Socialist Party who are the main force behind Green Left Weekly. The Communist League uses more Leninist rhetoric in their framework. They have argued that what is on the agenda is the bourgeois democratic revolution and not the

socialist revolution. For Lenin the epoch of imperialism meant the national bourgeoisie could no longer play an independent role. The stalinist strategy supported by the CL means surrender behind the national bourgeoisie's banner. Even before the epoch of imperialism Lenin would never have surrendered the independence of the working class. However the CL stratagem is simply at variance with reality. The black South African working class is strongly organised and militant and can fight for political power. It has been the threat of proletarian power which has conceded bourgeois democratic reform and not the CPSA through the ANC selling out socialism for bourgeois democratic ends.

At no time was it permissible for proletarian forces to surrender behind the banner of the ANC. However today with the ANC administering the South African state liquidation behind their banner is even more criminal. A proletarian revolutionary party must be built as a matter of urgency

— to fight for a revolutionary workers' and small farmers' government in South Africa.

COMMUNIST LEFT

Regular readers will notice that RED is now published by the Communist Left. Previously we have been known as Communist Tendency. Communist Tendency was formed in solidarity with the Communist Left Programme which we still adhere to. Communist Left Programme is in continuity with the first four congresses of the Third International and the founding documents of the Fourth International. When Communist Tendency was formed there were two other groups, Communist Left and Communist Left (Leninist) identifying with this programme. Both have deserted the tradition which they claimed to adhere to. As Communist Tendency is the only organisation who adheres to the Communist Left Programme. We therefore thought it appropriate to call ourselves Communist Left. We also stand in continuity with the principled record of the Communist Left's intervention within the working class movement.

Fascists in South Australia

South Australia is generally known for wine, liberal "enlightenment" and the Festival of Arts. It's the last place many would expect to see the extreme right emerge. Yet on April 8, Adelaide witnessed a protest blatantly and openly organised by National Action outside Prospect Town Hall. A hundred attended. A counter-demonstration, organised by the campus based Anti-Racist Alliance, had over eight hundred join it.

South Australia's liberal image is extremely superficial. It has been a centre of class struggle with its strong manufacturing base. As with the rest of Australia, this developed after the second world war under the umbrella of protectionism. Before the post-war boom South Australia was overwhelmingly rural and dominated by the Liberal Country League. Elections were rigged by a gerrymander. It was only in the late sixties that the ruling elite saw the need for a different form of bourgeois rule. This change of heart was not due to any altruism. It was as a result of the crisis and the need to head off class struggle. The crisis was beginning to hit and workers were angry. Sections of the ruling class wanted Government intervention to save manufacturing. They also supported workers' participation. Labor was elected at the state level to pursue this new direction in heading off class struggle.

Workers' participation sounded democratic, radical or even revolutionary. But the aim was to make workers responsible for the crisis of capitalism and undermine the union movement. It was this strategy that Labor's charismatic middle class leader Don Dunstan was vigorously

- promoting. He appeared trendy on middle class issues. He won support from the radicalised middle classes. But he always believed in keeping the trade union movement under control. Despite his anti-working class intentions being exposed by the far left, Dunstan had the overwhelming support of the trade union bureaucracy, including the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia. The Communist Party, whose influence amongst South Australian Union bureaucrats was relatively minimal, came out against Dunstan's schemes. Under the impact of the economic crisis and ruling class sabotage, the Dunstan Government collapsed. So too did any plan for government intervention and co-opting the union movement. Ruling class strategy was to attack, head on.

Today in South Australia, unemployment is rampant. According to official figures for all Australia there has been a minor reduction in the number recognised as unemployed. These figures hide the full extent of the number unemployed. In South Australia alone there was an increase. In areas such as Elizabeth, an outer suburb of Adelaide, where people were brought in to work in the car industry there is a sense of desperation. People know there that unemployment is going to be the future of many or even most of the people living therefore the indefinite future. Elsewhere, some employment may be created by promoting tourism. But certainly not for Elizabeth. It is in this environment that National Action is making its bid.

People are desperate. In the recent Bonython by-election there was a significant swing against Labor. John Hewson was right when he said that the Keating Government should accept this as a message of discontent. One small party that gained from the swing was Australians Against Further Immigration. With over 4,000 votes. Australians Against Further Immigration is typical of the broad fronts hard-core fascists recruit from with a broader mass of soft-core racists. They all promote the racist message that scapegoats migrants as the cause of unemployment and the crisis in general. Bonython is a working class area which includes Elizabeth. The fact that a blatantly racist organisation polled so well means extreme racist ideas have an audience in the working class.

In South Australia the fascists operate in an environment where the left has been exposed as bankrupt. The bureaucratic left has been compromised by their association with Dunstan and the Accord of the Hawke and Keating governments. They have shown that when extreme solutions are required, they are subservient to the system. More extreme and apparently militant, have been the Maoists with their "Dare to struggle, Dare to win" rhetoric. Their promotion of economic reactionary nationalism, including protectionism, has paved the way for the fascists. They have promoted the racist banner of Eureka. The Maoists have promoted militant class collaboration with the "patriotic" bosses. The fascists offer militant class collaboration against the working class. The Maoists have also suffered from the collapse of stalinism which has resulted in internal splits. No longer can Beijing be looked to as any beacon of revolution.

The emergence of National Action blatantly displaying its wares on the streets of Prospect is serious. Even if at the moment this group is merely campus based there is a serious danger that they could link up with those who voted for the racists in Prospect — and establish a strong base to brutally harass migrants (especially those originating from Asia) and organise to smash the organised working class. This is the historic mission of fascism which will be just as much a threat in South

Australia as it is in Germany, Spain, Italy or today in Russia. That is if the ruling class require its services and the organised working class don't act decisively. It is a serious reflection on the Left that opposition has been confined to the student movement.

Over 800 present at the counter demo shows that there is widespread opposition. But the pacifist nature of the demo has actually encouraged the fascists. Mr. Brander, National Action leader boasted in the Advertiser: "More ordinary Australians will come out and support us now, because we have been shown that we can't be stopped or silenced". NA intend to keep up their campaign. All Anti- Racist Alliance offers is protesting. But if they don't do something, they will be exposed as impotent. Fascism must be smashed. It is only the working class who can have both the force and the interest to smash fascism. The struggle is both physical and political. Unless the protectionist and racist poison is removed from the workers movement than fascists will gain influence. The chauvinism of the reformists and stalinists is assisting the fascists. Some workers and middle class people are backing the fascists because they realise that to unemployment especially in South Australia, extreme solutions are required. We must offer a revolutionary programme as the way out of capitalist misery.

Bougainville: Australian M.P.s white-wash imperialism

The war in Bougainville is still going on. Even Pius Wingti, who was telling the people of Papua Nuigini that the war would be over by Christmas, has given up predicting when it will be over. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army holds most of the territory and has had recently minor, but not decisive victories. In Australia the Bougainville Freedom Movement has conducted its popular front human rights campaign against the war. Recently in Melbourne its members planted crosses symbolising those killed from Australian involvement.

One of the "victories" of this "human rights" campaign has been to get a delegation of Federal MP's to make a tour to Bougainville. The idea of this is to get members of parliament to actually see for themselves the inhumane reality which will persuade them to change their minds. Human rights should not be the fundamental issue. The real question is: do Bougainville people have the right to self-determination? We must take our stand on the basis of this principle and not according to the military conduct of either the BRA or the PNG armed forces backed by Australia. No doubt human rights activists will point to violations by both sides. War is bloody and often serious mistakes are made. No doubt the conclusion drawn will be to call on the BRA to surrender so no more violations will occur. Imperialism wants peace so there can be continued exploitation.

The conclusion of the delegation was that Bougainville self-determination was impractical and that Australia should sponsor negotiations. Senator Stephen Loosley made a statement pointing to Australia's responsibility in creating the current mess. But he is using this admission of responsibility to rationalise a settlement on Australia's terms. Australia should play no role in PNG or Bougainville what so ever. However, as well, he denied that Australian helicopters were being used as part of the PNG military campaign. He claims they are just there for civilian and medical purposes such as the transport of refugees and the dropping of medical supplies. Any Australian presence there is a recognition of PNG and the denial of the right of self-determination for the Bougainville people. But this is fundamentally untrue. It is a whitewash of Australia's military role. Rosemary Gillespie and members of the BRA know that mortars are dropped by helicopter and those helicopters were given to the PNG Government by Australia.

There is a war going on and Australia is up to its neck in imperialist bloodshed. The workers movement in this country has the responsibility to do its utmost to smash Australian intervention. Trade union bans such as those endorsed by the South Coast TLC show the way. (see RED 25). Other Trade union councils have followed their lead. We hope that every unionist in Australia will take the maximum action possible to smash their war effort. This requires a campaign committed to opposing the war based on class principles and not bourgeois morality.

More attacks on the unemployed

The OECD has recently given the Keating Government its economic report card. On the whole the imperialists are pleased with his government's progress. However they have made some friendly suggestions. They suggest that Keating introduce a GST. They think that the level of the dole is too high. It is doubtful that Keating will adhere to the first request unless there is a major economic downturn. After all having campaigned so virulently against the GST a betrayal of this campaign promise would be met with widespread anger.

However Keating is well and truly on track in carrying out their advice on attacking unemployed people. The Hawke and Keating Governments have consistently obeyed the dictates of the bosses in attacking the Social Security system. They have introduced Newstart which means unemployed get the dole not as a right but subject to agreement. They have severely reduced the under 18 dole. Recent policy initiatives will mean further hardship and starvation. Recommendations include the abolition of unemployment benefits for under eighteen year olds. This will force them to either stay at school, be supported by their parents who so wages can't afford to keep them or alternatively, if possible, work for peanuts. Unemployed are to be forced to agree to a contract. The government has also got agreement with trade union bureaucrats to enforce unemployed to accept a training wage below that of the award rate. This is treacherous. Not only are trade union bureaucrats selling out the unemployed, but they are selling out the wages and conditions of their members.

Those unemployed who defy the government's demands face six months without any benefit at all. This will mean homelessness or starvation. The philosophy of the Keating Government is to make the unemployed responsible for their unemployment. This of course diverts people from the real cause of unemployment — the bosses system. They want to use the unemployed as a weapon to undermine award wages even further. They want to slash social security system to the bone. All this is done in the name of 'training' 'active employment strategy' and other euphemisms which mean harassing the unemployed into useless training schemes, forcing the unemployed to become cheap scab labour and cutting the unemployed off the dole. All this must be fought. Every job should be defended through direct working class action. Occupations not sackings! Unemployment must be fought through a continual reduction in the working week until everyone is employed. At the same time everyone needs increases Wages should increase at least at the same rate as rises in the cost of living.

Wages today are not enough. Unemployment is not the fault of the unemployed. No one should lose income for losing his or her job. A living wage should be the right for all. A person unemployed should be paid the same as they would be paid employed, or equivalent to the average wage. The unemployed must be organised into fighting unions to resist these attacks. All below award jobs should be blacked until the workers are paid award wages. It is only by abolishing this system of

exploitation that we can guarantee the right to work. We need to organise now. This means the construction of a revolutionary communist party.

For communist leadership in the building industry

Militants know the long and sordid record of the stalinist leadership of the BWIU (now part of the amalgam called CFMEU). It is a record of deals and compromises with the state and federal government. Its rhetoric is one of ‘working class unity’ — a sounding phrase. It really means surrendering workers wages and conditions. Supposedly this will increase the influence of the union. It is, actually, paving the way for the union to be smashed. The politics of the union leaders is the more right-wing variant of stalinism. The leaders are members or supporters of the Association for Communist Unity who broke from the pro- Moscow Socialist Party of Australia to the right, and members of the CPA-degeneration product Left Connections. This leadership has been wholeheartedly behind the notorious Prices and Incomes Accord. They assisted in smashing the more militant BLF. Its unity is a unity with the bosses, its system and the capitalist state. Recently it made a deal with the State government not to enforce the closed shop to ‘persuade workers’ to join the union. It is a practical example of the putrid role of stalinism.

The main alternative to this leadership offered at the moment to building workers is the Back on Track team. This is a rank and file group. Currently its main activity is taking the leadership to court in opposition to their totally undemocratically run ballots. As a typical rank and file group Back on Track unionists around simple trade union demands. They reject the overt sell-outs and general class collaboration of the stalinist leadership. They oppose the Prices and Incomes Accord and defend the BLF. Leading and politically coherent activists in Back on Track is Paul True of the Labor Party Militant tendency.

The serious problem with Back on Track is that its framework is far too narrow. The building industry is not an island. It is an integral part of capitalism. Basic problems building workers face stem from the laws of the system. The Accord is no accident. Under the impact of the economic crisis, the capitalist class through their medium the Labor government use the trade union bureaucracy to force working people to accept that they should pay for the crisis. The Accord is not an aberration. It is the logic of reformism and its handmaiden, stalinism. The fight against the Accord requires a fight against reformism. It requires a break from the national chauvinist programmes offered by stalinism.

Unemployment is a serious problem facing building workers. It can only be fought successfully through political struggle. A sliding scale of hours and wages is a vital demand to be raised in the building industry. A revolutionary intervention, a communist intervention, links day-today problems building workers to an understanding of the laws of the capitalist system and the overthrow of the capitalist system. Many questions facing building workers are not traditional trade union questions. For example, many workers come from countries such as Indonesia or Tonga and have to endure racism within the work place and the repression of the capitalist state when it restricts their right to live here. Questions such as subcontracting reflect the laws of the capitalist system. In the seventies, with the collapse of manufacturing, capital was diverted into land speculation in inner Sydney and elsewhere. This led to the mass eviction of low income tenants. It also led to the undermining of trade union conditions for building workers. The defence of trade union conditions required a struggle against finance capital.

Back on Track avoids political questions. Instead of linking the defence day-to-day issues such as wages, conditions and unionism to a critique of and a programme to overthrow capitalism, Back on Track deliberately fails to draw the link and fails to organise building workers beyond trade unionism. Political lessons can and should be drawn about both reformism and the many divisions in stalinism. Divisions in stalinism reflect differences in strategy between both the BWIU and the old CPA-led NSWBLF and the Gallagher led Federal Branch which took over the NSW Branch. An important conclusion is that only through a break from stalinism can there be principled trade union unity. Back on Track avoids any lessons about stalinism as this might alienate those former BLF members who may be aligned, at least ideologically if not organisationally, to the CPA (ML). To get minimalist unity, Militant is prepared to cover-over principled differences between Trotskyism and Stalinism. Paul True has a political perspective. He wants to keep the union chained to Labor. This is consistent with his deep entrust perspective of changing the Labor from within. We however, have every interest in breaking from Labor — in disaffiliation! Building workers do not require minimalist union leadership but communist leadership. Communist Left is committed to building such a leadership.

Trotskyism or Stalinism

To many throughout the world, Joe Stalin is remembered as an ogre; Joe Stalin is largely remembered throughout the world synonymously with the Gulag Archipelago, secret police, prison camps, queues, shortages and bureaucracy. Exposure of Stalin, the man, has been massive from many quarters. The bourgeoisie “expose” Stalin because they want to erase the traditions of communism from working class memory. Revisionists do it because they want to show their respectable credentials. They want to satisfy middle class who would be frightened off both by bureaucratic tyranny and by hard and principled politics. Trotskyists do it because he was responsible for the liquidation of revolution internationally. This required the physical liquidation of the proletarian fighters of the Bolshevik Party. By 1947 of all the Bolshevik leaders, Stalin alone remained. Stalinists also physically attacked or liquidated any opposition especially from the left, to their bureaucratic class collaboration not just in Russia but anywhere.

Yet both Stalin and stalinism still have some authority. There would be some in Russia and the former Soviet Union who would remember that life there was better under Stalin than it is now. The North Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cuban and Chinese stalinists are still in office and acknowledge Stalin’s theoretical heritage. So too do many Maoist guerrillas fighting in the third world such as “Shining Path” of Peru. Stalinism is first and foremost a political tendency. It is still extremely influential despite the disapproval or even hatred by many of the newer stalinists to the personal practices of the man whose political heritage they continue albeit in some amended form. A break from stalinism requires not merely disassociation from bureaucratic practices and the cult of personality. It means a break from the political consequences from the degeneration of bolshevism due to the victory of the Stalin clique.

The Trotskyism attack on stalinism is not merely personal. Stalinism has material roots. Stalinism is the ideology of a whole bureaucratic layer that emerged and strangled the October Revolution. In 1917 the world witnessed the first proletarian revolution; it was, truly, the ten days that shook the world. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, showed that the proletariat could overthrow the exploiters and take power. Their symbol, the hammer and sickle, was not designed by accident.

Lenin realised that to take power the proletariat needed to win over non-proletarian masses, especially the peasantry. However they must be won under the banner of the proletariat, under proletarian leadership.

Lenin realised that there were contradictions within the peasantry. Rural workers were their comrades-in-arms. Middle peasants could be won over. But big peasants were part of the enemy, the internal enemy which remained despite the seizure of power by the proletariat. Lenin also identified as part of the internal enemy sections of the Czarist bureaucracy which still remained after the seizure of power. To maintain power, undermine the internal enemy and fight the imperialists, the proletariat need a state.

The strength of the revolution has fundamentally determined the strength of the proletariat, both physically and politically, and the ability to undermine intermediate stratum and classes in a revolutionary way. After the October revolution there was a serious weakening of the proletariat numerically. There was also a weakening of the influence and control of the proletariat over the Bolshevik Party. There was an influx of those who were bureaucrats under the Czarist regime. Although there was also some influx of workers. Most of these had a poor grounding in Marxism.

The weakness of the working class and the influx of alien class forces into the Bolshevik Party led to factionalism. Three factions emerged. The right were led by Bukharin, the centre bureaucratic faction were led by Stalin and the Left Opposition were led by Trotsky. The factionalism occurred over how to handle the contradiction between the working class and the peasantry.

On the question of the peasantry there was unity between right and centre against the left. Bukharin called on the rich peasants, the kulaks to “enrich themselves”. This stood in contra-distinction to Lenin who had argued “even if they have quarrelled, the kulak can easily come to terms with the landowner, the tsar and the priest, but the working class never.” Bukharin was backed by Stalin. Trotsky was accused by Stalin and Bukharin of “underestimating the peasantry.”

This attitude to the peasantry was not merely confined to tactics for maintaining proletarian hegemony within the USSR. Stalin and Bukharin were to apply this to the Chinese revolution. It was part of their theoretical arsenal which led to their call for the liquidation of the large and significant Communist Party of China into the bourgeois nationalist Kuo Mm Tang. It has been a theoretical underpinning of stalinist strategy in the orient and the third world to this day.

The defeat of the Left Opposition was a massive defeat for the proletariat within the Soviet Union. The bureaucratic terror machine whose methods Stalin perfected has been a weapon not just against Trotsky and his supporters personally, but against the proletariat of the Soviet Union. It was to have major international repercussions—the sell-out of revolution internationally. Stalin realised that he would be seriously threatened not just by an awakened working class internally, but a successful revolution internationally. This is what his dictum — socialism in one country actually meant.

The consequence of this was the strangulation of the Third International (Comintern). Instead of the Comintern being an international agent for world revolution. The Comintern became Stalin’s agent for the strangulation of world revolution. The final dissolution of the Comintern in 1947 was the logic of this policy. Communist parties were converted into parties of the status quo. Communist Parties

used the name and authority of the October revolution to reconcile the working class into an alliance with their own bourgeoisie. This reconciliation was a process. Initially, communist parties appeared left. In fact, using the “left” rationalisation “social fascism”, communists in Germany consciously allowed Hitler to come to power in Germany — with bloody consequences for the German proletariat and well as Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and other minorities. The German Communist Party, a mass party, had the force to organise and smash the fascists. The stalinists argued “after Hitler, us” meaning that if we allow Hitler to come to power, and he fails, communism will be on the agenda.

The stalinists reaction to this gross betrayal was not to form a practical military alliance — a united front. It was to form populist blocks with all other classes — a popular front. Stalin had rejected revolutionary internationalism, the only real way to defend the Soviet Union. Instead he called for alliances with ruling classes “for peace”. Internationally he urged communists to build movements and alliances often headed by respectable bourgeois personalities. The revolutionary dictum “only revolutionary class struggle can stop war” was thrown out the window. Instead all classes (according to the Comintern) could be persuaded that peace was in “the interest of humanity”.

This led to an attack on dialectical materialism. The ruling class were now war-like, not out of their class interest to increase profits at the expense of colonial proletariats and competing imperialist powers, but out of its failure to understand the interests of humanity.

Stalinist parties abandoned the revolutionary programme of the Comintern. Now the revolution came in stages. Today the “communists” would fight for immediate demands, reforms and “against monopoly”. After this “first stage”, they assure us, socialism, will be on the agenda. Trotsky and Trotskyists have documented the multitude of betrayals carried out by stalinists under the authority of Stalin. In Spain the Communist Party acted as the “left” wing of the bourgeois government to smash the revolutionary workers and peasants. Revolutionary leaders were killed and imprisoned to maintain bourgeois power. stalinists boasted that Trotskyists and anarchists would receive the same treatment as in Russia — the concentration camp.

During the Second World War stalinist parties acted as a loyal appendage to the imperialist war effort. They formed a popular front to promote an allied victory. In the trade union movement they promoted labour discipline. They opposed strike action on simple trade union issues, let alone any revolutionary action which a communist should have carried out to smash the war effort. “The main enemy is at home” This slogan was just as relevant during World War II as to the first world war when it was raised by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. In France Charles De Gaulle acknowledged the role of the PCF “maintaining stability” meaning saving containing the working class and saving French capitalism. Before the Second World War the lines between stalinism and Trotskyism were clear. Stalinism was obviously a bureaucratic tendency committed to class collaboration and maintenance of the status quo. This is still fundamentally the reality. But the events after the war have obscured the lines of principle between stalinism and Trotskyism.

The advance of the Red Army into Eastern Europe and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie there under the gun challenged the view of many that stalinism was counterrevolutionary. The subsequent divisions in stalinism meant there have alternative versions of stalinism. The Russian

bureaucracy remained bureaucratic and passive. But not so the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese or Cuban who used revolutionary rhetoric and fought for their ideals guns in hand. Those disillusioned with the bureaucratic staid Russian variety could now latch on to a more dynamic alternative. The Yugoslav, Chinese and Vietnamese stalinists all made criticisms of the Russian bureaucracy. And their criticisms resembled those of Trotskyists. Mao called for an uninterrupted continuous revolution. This sounds similar to permanent revolution. But there is a qualitative difference. For Trotsky, permanent revolution meant the fight for proletarian hegemony — the dictatorship of the proletariat. Maoists still formed a popular front, a bloc of four classes, for bourgeois democratic national demands.

Many post-war critics of stalinism have latched on to divisions between the dissident communist parties and Moscow, claiming that the dissidents represent a break “unconscious Trotskyists”. The breaks from Moscow amounted to a further degeneration along national lines. The apparently greater militancy of the Maoists was not a break from stalinism but a reflection of different material interest of a different bureaucracy. They strongly adhered to the doctrine of “socialism in one country”, liquidating into the bourgeoisie in the form of national liberation fronts and liquidating the proletariat into the peasantry. They adhered to a two-stage theory of revolution.

Some have argued that whilst the Maoists and Vietnamese stalinists may have formally a stalinist theoretical framework, in practice they have gone beyond this in practice. Neither the Maoists nor the Vietnamese stalinists have ever based themselves on the proletariat as the vanguard of the revolution. Sometimes bourgeois nationalists and stalinists can go beyond their programme but they can never establish proletarian power. The best they can do is establish a society which has broken from capitalism and is transitional to the dictatorship of the proletariat — a workers’ and peasants’ state.

The military struggles of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Kampuchean and Yugoslav struggles were heroic. The Vietnamese had to endure saturation bombing, yet they stuck to their guns. That these fighters should inspire revolutionaries throughout the third world and in the imperialist powers themselves is understandable. However many of their admirers totally ignored the political weaknesses of National Liberation Fronts. The treachery of the Communist Party of France in being loyal to the French state reinforced to many the stalinists in Vietnam as being some sort of break from this repugnant tradition. In reality, they were applying the strategy of “socialism in one country” to different national conditions. The stalinists in France appeared more passive — a party of the status quo. The Vietnamese stalinists didn’t have the luxury of pacifism. They had military conflict forced upon them. What they fought for was not working class power but a democratic anti-imperialist, although capitalist, Vietnam. What they achieved was a state transitional to proletarian dictatorship.

It didn’t take long for the Maoist bureaucracy to show that under its authority, betrayals could be carried out of at least as great a magnitude as their co-stalinists in Moscow. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Communist Party PKI paid the consequence of loyalty to the national bourgeois regime of President Sukarno. Many millions of Communist Party members, supporters and Chinese lost their lives as they were massacred by the regime. The PKI, whose membership was at least five million, had been totally loyal to Sukarno. This loyalty exposed its weakness — its failure to fight for power. Indonesian workers and peasants paid a massive price for this failure.

The liberalisation of stalinism, through bureaucrats such as Dubcek in Czechoslovakia, as well as Khrushchev and Gorbachev actually reinforced stalinism. Many now believed that the bureaucracy could be pressured into adopting more enlightened policies. When Mao attacked Khrushchev and defended the Stalin's record, many believed Khrushchev was anti-stalinist. He did make some correct criticisms of Stalin's behaviour. Under Gorbachev the supposedly anti-stalinist Democratic Socialist Party of Australia actually argued that Gorbachev was "restoring peoples power". At no stage were the class roots of the bureaucracy addressed. To the extent that they were, the lessons drawn were right-wing. Gorbachev argued for more liquidation into alien class forces and identified with the right-wing Bukharin. The stalinist reconciliation between communism and nationalism led to war between post-capitalist states. After their victory over imperialism, the Vietnamese, Kampuchean and Chinese stalinists maintained and refused to renegotiate boundaries drawn up by French imperialists. Pol Pot attempted to regain claimed territory by force. The Vietnamese responded with invasion. The net result of fifteen years bloody battle (still going on) is the return of Prince Sihanouk as head of state for Kampuchea.

For the past thirty years we have witnessed in Australia, the continuing liberalisation of stalinism. So much so that, what was the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) barely exists even, in the most liquidated form. Not only is the Communist Party dead but so is its degeneration product New Left Party. Left Connections as it's currently known, barely shows its face. This total degeneration angers many older comrades who have given their all to the cause. They also understand that the existence of the CPA, with whatever faults, represented some sort of challenge to the ruling elite. The answer for them to today's liquidation agenda is to go back to yesterday's CPA with perhaps some amendments. No the answer to today's blatant liquidation is not yesterday's liquidation. Today's practice is a consequence of that liquidation.

Even when the CPA appeared to go left its practice was still within the framework. The CPA hated bureaucratic deformations in the Soviet Union, but it argued for more national independence. The CPA argued that the Soviet and other stalinist bureaucracies could be reformed. The CPA always had a two stage theory of revolution of democratic demands today, revolutionary demands sometime in the distant future. The CPA in the seventies replaced the formalised popular fronts such as peace committees with "mass movements" which were a militant variant of the popular front

The defeat of US imperialism and the victory of the National Liberation Front in Vietnam had a major radicalising effect on both the CPA and Australian politics in general. Workers realised that the system was wrong and took action against the war. The CPA went both to the left supporting direct action and to the right by supporting peace in solidarity with their Vietnamese comrades. The CPA during its more left wing turn saw itself applying a Vietnamese strategy to Australia.

The CPA was critical of the Soviet Union calling it socialist based". But it remained loyal to Vietnam, Yugoslavia and Romania which it considered socialist without

reservations. The CPA became apologists for the brutal regime of Nicolai Ceausescu of Romania. In other words the CPA, although it had broken from Moscow remained loyal to the dissident stalinist states.

An important opposition developed in the Communist Party in the mid seventies known as the Left Tendency. This tendency made some principled interventions. Firstly it argued against the "Marxist"

humanism of the Aarons leadership. The logic of the CPA leadership's method was all classes could undergo hegemonic struggle and break from bourgeois ideology. The leaderships struggle was one of moral persuasion and not material class interest. This led to both a liquidation of the class line and of the need to smash the state. The Left Tendency argued that mass movements be understood in class terms. This was a step forward. But unfortunately the Left Tendency avoided the question of Trotskyism. And in doing so remained within the framework of stalinism. The Left Tendency called for a new communist international. But it called for one including some parties such as the Vietnamese and in the Maoist tradition who were part of the stalinist tradition. Any "international" which avoids the fundamental lines of class principle adapts to the stalinist tradition, if their desired international were to eventuate it would have been a stalinist international.

The real choice is not today's liquidation or yesterday's opportunism but revolutionary Trotskyism. The stalinist tradition identifies with one or another wing of the stalinist bureaucracies (most of which are now defunct) or it argues that the bureaucracies can be reformed. Trotskyists stand for revolutionary action to smash the bureaucracies by the revolutionary action of the working class. We reject opposition to the bureaucracy from the aspiring bourgeoisie as is represented by Yeltsin... Stalinists have a national road to socialism based on a two stage theory of revolution. National liberation tasks or antimonopoly struggle today, revolutionary struggle in the distant future. Trotskyists have a strategy which links the need for revolution to problems working people face today, showing how these can only be resolved in a revolutionary way. This must be part of an international perspective which links the interests of Australian workers to the working class internationally.

The answer to today's liquidation is not nostalgia for yesterday's opportunism, is not to try to turn back the clock to some period when the practice of the CPA could be considered acceptable. It is to make a materialist analysis of the degeneration of the Communist Party in the context of the degeneration of stalinism internationally. And to make a clear and decisive break from that tradition.

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