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Pauline Hanson and Australian racism

Pauline Hanson, Independent member for Oxley, has become a notorious celebrity both Australia and internationally. She has taken overt racism out of the closet. Australian Governments were doing a good job selling Australia to Asia, in particular Asian capital. Of course much of the multicultural image was just a veneer. The token politically correct multicultural Australia still restricts admission to Asian people, put boat people in prison camps and endorsed Black people to live in poverty and subject to vicious racist repression. It's just that this was done in with a multicultural image with so-called reconciliation for Black people.

As it is well known, Hanson was one of three openly racist candidates to be elected to Federal Parliament last March. The other two racists, Bob Katter (National) and Graeme Campbell (Independent) have not quite been so prominent. Nevertheless they are part of an Australia wide movement which is especially strong in the country and parts of the suburbs. It is particularly strong in Queensland and Western Australia. Candidates stood under the banner Australians Against Further Immigration. After the election, they polled very well in Paul Keating's old seat of Blaxland which includes the Bankstown area of Sydney. The Liberals weren't standing. But it is noteworthy that the vote went to racists instead of other bourgeois candidates and right wingers.

The extreme right have chosen Hanson as their front person. She has been marketed as a battler, whose politics are common sense developed through the school of hard knocks (her fish and chip shop in Ipswich) who says what ordinary people think. In reality she is far from a lone battling woman. She is backed by Graeme Campbell (and his electoral machine) and the local Liberal Party (despite her disendorsement) and the low key fascist League of Rights whose reactionary, racist version of common sense she is actually parroting.

For the first few months, Hanson had a quiet time in parliament. She waited until September to give her maiden speech. This put the cat amongst the pigeons. Her views are ignorant as well as racist and prejudiced. But she presented a coherent programme.

Australia was (according to her) "in danger of being swamped by Asians" She therefore wants a cessation of the migration programme and it to be restructured overtly against Asian migrants. She

made a scathing attack on Asian migrants bringing in their cultures and religions. She raised the spectre of Asian invasion. According to Hanson millions of Asians want to take over Australia. This is a lie. Only five percent of Australian residents are of Asian descent. The working class have no country. Workers from Asia should be welcome here. There is plenty of room in this country for anyone who wants to come. And Australian workers have been culturally enriched by the influx of people with different cultures.

She wants to formally abolish multiculturalism. What she means is that everyone who lives here must speak English and conform to the Australian stereotype.

She also attacked black people as follows “Along with millions of Australians I am fed up with that ar being promoted by the government and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aboriginals are the most disadvantaged people in Australia”. Well they are! And the statistics on malnutrition, death during child birth, homelessness show this. Of course Hanson mentions nothing about the massive subsidies given to those parasitic bludgers — the capitalist class. Hanson attacked ATSIC as “run by criminals” and “racist”. For her racism is doing something about the inherent racism of Australian society. Most Black people live outside the law. It is a white, capitalist, racist law which means repression and death. And they have every right to fight back. She, of course, is racist. She stated explicitly that she did not represent those in her electorate of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent.

She also wants Australia to reconsider it’s membership of the United Nations. She thinks this institution also is “full of criminals”. Who she has in mind is not the imperialist criminals who rip-off most of the World but the Black African, Asian, Latin American and Eastern European states who are victims of imperialist superexploitation and repression.

She wants to abolish the Family Law Act and the Child Support Scheme ‘brought in by the disgraceful Senator Lionel Murphy’. She also wants compulsory national service for young people (men and women) turning eighteen. Basically she offers a classical fascist programme of extreme racism, state repression and social reaction.

So what has been the reaction to this? Well the Labor Party and Democrats have opposed her. But they have hardly put the boot in. Howard has indeed gone on the offensive, but not against Hanson. His offensive is against “political correctness”. He has refused to attack Hanson in the name of “a tree and open debate’. Howard’s refusal to come out and openly attack the racists has given them a message. Whilst Howard wont come out openly and state his agreement, he will protect the racists and fascists from opponents so they can build their reactionary mass movement. Howard has made chauvinists comfortable about their chauvinism. Howard knows very well what he is doing. By helping the racist movement, he can perhaps split the Labor Party and ensure that racists will prefer the Liberals.

The net result of this has been an upsurge of racism. This involves both verbal abuse and physical racist attacks against Blacks and Asians. A Black kid, Tjandamura O’Shane gets burnt in a Cairns playground. Singapore troops get assaulted and robbed in Queensland. A bread shop, run by an Asian family gets smashed and graffitied in Swansea on Lake Macquarie, near Newcastle. There has been a whole rash of assaults and abuse of Asian and Black kids in the school playground,

throughout Australia. All this is a product of a reactionary racist environment which Hanson (assisted by Howard) has promoted.

The opposition from Labor and the Democrats has been pitiful. More vocal has been the opposition tied to Asian capital. Rob Borbidge, Tim Fisher and Jeff Kennett have all come out strongly condemning Hanson. Their stands are not based on altruism. They are scared of losing investment. Kennett is afraid that there may be a boycott of the Commonwealth Games. Borbidge is afraid Japanese interests might be reluctant to invest. He also fears that Asians might find Queensland less attractive as a holiday destination. This may cost the state millions of dollars. Hanson has facilitated a division within the National party. Bjelke-Petersen built an alliance, uniting

middle class small farmers with international finance capital. He cemented this alliance by taking a strong stand against the union movement and encouraging state repression against Black people and the student left. This alliance is now threatened. Asian capitalists are extremely angry with the overt racist environment. Borbidge must toe the line. But rank and file National Party members are extremely chauvinist and racist. Pauline Hanson is welcomed with overflow meetings organised by branches such as Bribie Island. All this is fertile ground for League of Rights, Australians Against Further Immigration, fascist alliance to recruit from the National Party.

Many have sought of apologised for Hanson by claiming that she merely expresses views of ordinary Australians. Well it is true that many of the ideas are shared. But she has actively crystalised these in a malignant way. When Hewson opposed Hawke "for betraying Australia's European heritage", public opinion went very much against him. He was ultimately forced to give up the campaign despite backing from Professor Blainey (on ABC TV) and National Action. The League of Rights also were holding mass rallies around rural Victoria. There was no fear then that any ALP Branch would be interested in the extreme racist agenda. Recently one ALP branch on the NSW South Coast wrote to Hanson for a copy of her speech, so they could study it sympathetically.

So how can we fight back? The movement Hanson represents is horrendous, reactionary and a threat to not just Blacks and Asians, but unemployed and the organised working class. Most decent people hate Hanson. But the point is to have a programme to fight her. Hanson is not just a person. She is the main public persona of a social movement which started developing under Keating and gained considerable electoral support last Federal election.

Australia has traditionally been a racist country. It was formed as a white outpost of the British Empire with it's own mini-imperialist domain over Asia and the Pacific. Australian's and Australian workers were persuaded to think of themselves as superior and privileged as compared to Asian workers. White Australia was a key plank in Labor's early platform. Australia formally had a white Australia policy up until the seventies. This policy changed partly due to the rise of the altruistic middle class whom Gough Whitlam based his support on, but also because capital required Asian labour. Its aim was to undermine the wages and conditions of the highly organised white labour aristocracy.

Australia has had traditionally, a rural and mining economy. Australian manufacturing only developed as a significant component of the economy during the fifties and sixties. This manufacturing was weak. It was undercapitalised, underequipt and suffered from small local market.

It developed under an umbrella of tariffs and protection. Protection did not strengthen manufacturing. Instead it maintained it in a state of weakness.

Protection did not mean economic independence. The imperialists were protected also. Politically protection played the racist role of dividing Australian workers from their class comrades. Chauvinist unions such as the AMWSU (dominated by the now defunct CPA) promoted reactionary slogans such as "Keep industry in Australia" and calling on the government to give money to the likes of BHP. Union bureaucrats believed in defending Australian jobs "by crawling to the Government) and "forgot about Asian workers. Australians were apparently worthy of employment but not Asians! Protectionism has facilitated racism within Australian workers

This current movement of which Hanson is the figure head, stems from the policies of the Hawke and Keating governments. Keating was fundamentally a monetarist who cut the public sector to the bone. He was a total lackey of imperialism. His turn to Asia, was linked to decline of British and US imperialisms who have previously dominated this country. Keating realised that it was Japan which was the imperialism likely to take place of Britain and America. Monetarist policies meant suffering for working people and unemployed. They also hurt rural people.

Fascism is a movement which can combine traditional racism with hostility to monetarism (as fascists believe in a strong state). Fascism was also stimulated by Keating's failure to solve the crisis of unemployment. For those who do not understand the crisis of capitalism, pointing to an increase in migrants is an easy rough and ready explanation. Last election the semifascist right won mass support by drawing the link between Keating's monetarist policies, Keating's turn to Asian finance capital and Asian migration.

We will be successful in fighting Hanson when we fight for a strong class conscious working class. We will beat Hanson when we show workers that their interests lie in unity with workers internationally, especially in Asia and the Pacific. We will win when we show them that being Australian plays the bosses game.

We will win the middle classes when we show that the working class can act decisively for proletarian power. In doing so we must take up the progressive demands raised by farmers, to win them to the proletarian vanguard. Farmers are at the mercy of finance capital, being driven off the land through mortgages and debt. It is only proletarian power which will repudiate debts, expropriate the banks and nationalise the land.

Subordination of the working class to the system, in some form of popularfront will not win the middle classes. On the contrary, it will show that the working class, or rather its proclaimed representatives are not serious in taking power. This drives middle classes into the hands of finance capital, or alternatively fascism.

Keating's monetarism has paved the way for Hanson and racist/fascist allies. In many country areas 28% of young people are unemployed. For the past ten years Hawke and Keating had tried all sorts of gimmicks. Many of these abused the unemployed and none of them worked. The racists and fascists, pointing the finger at migrants and 'dole bludgers' offered a simplistic solution. Unfortunately the left has been too tarred with Keating's bankruptcy and betrayal to be seen as an alternative.

Recently in Sydney there was a mass rally proclaiming 'Unity against racism'. It was organised by the radical and student left. Of course it was endorsed by organisations such as Democratic Socialist Party, Socialist Alternative and the International Socialist Organisation (through their paper Socialist Worker). It was also endorsed by broad fronts such as AntiBases Coalition, Bougainville Freedom Movement. It was also endorsed by the student movement and sections of the trade union bureaucracy. Its class character was shown by the fact that it was endorsed by the Young Korean-Australian business Association. The unity these people want crosses class lines.

For the radical left, the fight against racism is not a question of class struggle but of bourgeois morality. This front will unite people who are already opposed to Hanson. But it will not undermine the chauvinism of the labour aristocracy nor will it win the middle classes to the vanguard of the proletariat. A movement based on 'people' and "morality" can not address working people in terms of their own interests — opposition to the capitalist system. In fact opposition to chauvinism would disrupt the "unity". Anthony Albanese, Labor member for Grayndler will not be party to any criticism of Keating's record on immigration. Hawke and Keating Labor tightened restrictions on migrants and kept boat people in concentration camps. Stan Sharkey, who addressed the rally supports protection and immigration controls. He would not be party to any movement which would draw fundamental conclusions regarding the Keating Government. Criticism of chauvinism and the Accord, is for Sharkey, not on. So therefore this movement is severely restricted in confronting the root causes of racism.

Incidentally, the International Socialist Organisation had a meeting on whether the left should support the united front or the popular front. The claimed to be supporters of the former. But why then were they endorsers of the November 23 rally?. And also how do they explain their consistent support for the British AntiNazi League, which they have promoted in Australia?. ISO were the most militant wing of the popular front Bring the Frigate home Committee during the 1990/91 Gulf war when Iraq invaded Kuwait and the US aided by Australia responded by sending in the troops and brutally bombing Iraq. ISO members at their public meetings, opposed an orientation to the working class,.

We live in a world capitalist system. We should have nothing to fear from the internationalisation of capital. On the contrary, this paves the way for the internationalisation of the working class. Australian workers must link up with potentially revolutionary militant struggles in South East Asia and the Pacific. It is reactionary and utopian to cut off Australia from the world. It promotes racist immigration controls which lead to state repression against migrant workers. Chauvinists (reformist and stalinist) do workers a gross disservice by promoting their reactionary "national plans". They also assist the rise of fascism.

What is needed is a working class movement against racism and fascism. Such a movement must put internationalist principles before opportunist unity. It must oppose immigration controls, tariffs and protection as well as the more malignant variants of fascism such as Hanson. A weak class collaborationist working class will throw sections of the middle class and labour aristocracy into the hands of Pauline Hanson and her fascist/racist alliance.

Class struggle in South Korea.

During December, the Government decided to pass through National Assembly, vicious anti- union legislation. This was passed without opposition. The opposition were not even present in parliament. Under this legislation it becomes much easier to lay-off workers and replace strikers. The Legislation will deprive workers of holiday pay and enforce upon them a forty five hour week. The aim is to free the labour market meaning give bosses open slather. Workers have enjoyed job security. The aim of the legislation is to make this a thing of the past.

In Korea the bosses are using the same language as bosses and right wing ideologues everywhere. They talk about increased labour market flexibility to make Korea 'more competitive'. Workers in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere will be all too familiar with this rhetoric. Korean bosses are saying that if the legislation is not passed the Korean industry wont be able to compete with China. The aim of the bosses, internationally, is to resolve the crisis of the system at our expense, by a wholesale onslaught against the wages and rights of workers.

Real opposition developed very quickly from the organised working class. Mass strikes have been organised by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions. This confederation is currently illegal. Under the legislation it will be recognised but at the expense of it's members. Unionists have refused to be bribed. Hundreds of thousands of Korean workers downed tools. They have promised to strike "until the legislation has been repealed". They have our enthusiastic support. They should be backed by every unionists throughout Australia. This support should be backed by active solidarity such as strikes and black bans against the Korean companies and those investing and employing in Korea. The way to fight a ruling class acting internationally is not economic nationalism but international class solidarity. The principle of "an injury to one means an injury to all" must apply internationally.

Maritime union solidarity with Indonesian unionist facing the death penalty.

As we reported in RED 25, the brutal Suharto regime is cracking down on opposition. It is targeting the radical PRD, which it blames for most the militant uprising in defense of Megawati against the "leader" of the PDI imposed by the Junta. The PRD is accused of "using the language of communism". Its leaders are facing the death penalty. So too is trade unionist Muhtar Pakpahan of the Indonesian union Indonesia Sejahtera. In Indonesia there are two union movements. One is the official union movement which is effectively the labour wing of the brutal regime. Indonesia Sejahtera is the union which actually organises and represents members for trade union struggle. For this reason the government considers it dangerous.

In Australia Pakpahan is receiving active solidarity from the Maritime Union of Australia which includes seamen and wharties. The MUA is blacking loading and unloading of all Indonesian shipping untill Pakpahan is released. We fully support their stand. Although the leadership's politics (stalinist) are not consistantly internationalist, they have taken principled actions on many international issues. Their actions include solidarity with the people of Vietnam, East Timor, Sth Africa and Indonesia (where it played a key role inthe independence struggle).

This action comes at a time when the MUA itself is under attack from the Howard Government in Australia. It is on the waterfront where the Howard government sees the most need for "restructuring" "against restrictive workplace practices". Therefore they are out to smash the MUA. This solidarity action is also illegal under the new Reith/Howarci industrial relations legislation as it

constitutes a secondary boycott. Howard has, of course backed the autocratic regimes of South East Asia in opposing minimal conditions for labour.

This exemplary act of solidarity could see the MUA once again in the firing line, under threat from Howard. They should not be allowed to stand alone. Other unions must stand up in defense of Indonesian workers under attack. The ACTU supports the official tamecat unions. They have given verbal support for the MUA defense of Prabakan. This is abysmally insufficient. It is doubtful as to whether there will be any action at all, let alone effective action if Howard put the boot in.

Resistance to attacks on the waterfront unions in the months ahead is critical to the future of the internationalist programme and the independent union movement in Australia

New Zealand elections

These elections can be described as a victory for Winston Peters. Well New Zealand First is not the leading party of government and nor is Winston Peters Prime Minister. But few expected this. What has been achieved is what Winston Peters has been striving for many years— a more moderate National government. Labour moving to the rabid monetarist right forced National to follow suite. Peters objected to this extreme variant of economic rationalism. Peters developed politically as a protege of relatively big spending (by today's standards) but virulently antiunion Piggy Muldoon. Peters sought a party in Muldoon's mould. He split from the Nationals to form NZ First. Initially he was seen as a one man band. But for these elections he got electorally wise. He made a play for Labour's heartland on the basis of chauvinism and opposition to economic rationalism. He also could make a play for the Maori vote as a high status Maori politician and because Maoris have been victims of hard-line economic policies. NZ First was successful winning every Maori seat.

The result of the elections was initially a stalemate. National had the advantages a Labour could only get the numbers to form a government by wooing both NZ First and the Alliance. The Nationals merely had to persuade NZ First. The problem then for Peters was to persuade his anti-National constituency and his party that the Nationals were the way to go. He has been able to do this. He has been able to dictate terms to the Nationals. Now he has effectively got what he has wanted — a moderate National government. The economists aren't too worried as most of the damage has been done in terms of privatisation and Peters is a critical supporter of the Employment Contracts Act.

All this is bad news for workers. It will mean another repressive capitalist government. From the rise of Peters workers can draw important lessons about Labour. Peters' success in winning over Labour heartland is due to Labour's extreme right policies and the chauvinism which Labour has always stood for, paves the way for the extreme right. The Alliance has exposed itself as having nothing to offer. Manu Matuhake should learn that liquidation into that rotten bloc behind minimal demands betrays Maoris and hands over their support to Winston Peters.

The war in Bougainville means crisis for PNG.

Recently the leader of the Bougainville Transitional Government Theodore Miriung was murdered. The Bougainville Transitional Government is not the Bougainville Interim Government. It is the puppet government set up by PNG to make the transition —back to PNG rule. A PNG victory will mean that CRA will once again be given the divine right to exploit rip up resources and pollute. Miriung was killed not by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army but by the PNG armed forces. Why

did they kill their own leader? Well there are two main possibilities. The first being that Miriung was killed for being too decent and honest. He had made statements announcing the role of the PNG military and has stated in principle his support for Bougainville's right of self-determination.. The second is that he was killed because sections of the PNG defence forces don't want compromise. They want to win the war outright. As Miriung has credibility his absence will hamper any prospects of a negotiated settlement. It is unlikely that PNG will find an equivalent leader with a similar stature and respect as Miriung had from people of both sides throughout Bougainville.

PNG is having trouble winning the war. Operation High Speed 2 launched earlier this year failed to achieve it's intended result of a speedy victory. Currently there is an election campaign going on. Respectable bosses candidates are now supporting Bougainville. One supporter is former Prime

Minister Rabbi Namilau. Namilau, when he was PM initiated the blockade and accelerated Australian backed military intervention. His change of heart is a clear indication that whole sections of the ruling class think that they would be better off cutting their losses and stopping the war.

Workers in Australia continue action against the war and in particular, Australia's participation. The Bougainville people deserve the right of self-determination. They have a right to fight for this just cause. The situation where their national rights have been taken away has been created by successive Australian governments, Labor and Liberal. The imperialists, British and Australian have an interest in depriving Bougainville people their national rights. Workers in Australia have every interest in fighting imperialism. The imperialists and PNG compradors will only listen when they are forced to. The BRA are fighting in Bougainville. Their victory could be an inspiration to oppressed nationalities throughout the Pacific. Of course as a bourgeois nationalist movement they have serious limitations. In no way do we suggest workers organisations liquidate either organisationally or politically into the BRA. Workers should raise the banner of proletarian revolution. However even with the current leadership a BRA victory would advance the struggle against imperialism. Australian workers must take up the fight for Bougainville self-determination in Australia.

The "Socialist" Party becomes the "Communist" Party Part 1 proMoscow split from the CPA

For the past five years there has been a vacuum in Australian politics. No party has called itself the Communist Party of Australia. As it is well known, the middle class rump in continuity with the original Communist Party became so liberalised that they gave up even the pretence of using the name, calling themselves instead the New Left party. Of course it had been many decades since it actually was a real communist party — fighting for proletarian dictatorship. Trotskyists have considered themselves communist also. But those who claim its tradition either consider their grouping too small to be a fully fledged party or alternatively considered that the name Communist was too tainted with the banner of Stalinism.

The New Left Party, formed by the old CPA in alliance with some greens, peace activists previously unaligned "left" union bureaucrats, trendy student radicals and others, failed. It could not adequately define itself in relation to Labor. Most of its unionists identified with the Prices and incomes Accord and were tied to Labor. Any embarrassment to Labor, let alone hard line opposition would have turned away most of it's supporters. The New Left Party is now constituted as Left

Connections and has minimal public presence. Last election it authorised a few stickers warning against the Liberals. There are no doubt some old activists, in the SPA now CPA, may feel vindicated. History, as they see it has shown that the SPA was the real communist party. However they can't afford to be too proud and haughty. The SPA has had its share of splits. Many of their comrades have become disillusioned and fallen by the wayside. But most importantly, the Soviet Union upon whom they banked their revolutionary hopes has been destroyed by counterrevolution. So has its Eastern European allies. This new "communist party is not a vibrant youthful proletarian force taking up the banner of revolution. It is a clique of bureaucratic hacks who call themselves "communist" because they feel comfortable about the Stalinist tradition of bureaucracy. A look at their history shows just what type of "communism these apparachiks offer.

The Socialist Party of Australia was formed by those opposed the CPA's direction initiated by the Aarons leadership and adopted by the Twenty First Congress (1967) of the CPA. Those who became the SPA opposed this direction from the point of view of mainstream Stalinism. They were staunchly loyal to the World Communist Movement. Their socialist beacon was the Soviet Union. The 21st Congress adopted two new strategic principles; the Coalition of the left and the Charter for Democratic Rights. Most of the opposition was in the form of a trilateral front (rff

Geoff Curthoys pointed out that the coalition of the left meant a clear devaluation of the role of the communist Party, failing to recognise its leading role. Some took issue with the formulation "left" considering it to be too narrowing. Some argued that 'people front was more accurate to describe the liquidation. Some CPA leadership supporters including Darrell Dawson considered that coalition of the left merely described what mainstream communist parties were doing. For example, the Vietnamese Stalinists were part of a National Liberation Front, In Chile they were part of Popular Unity.

What was different about this debate was the participation of organisations and people who identified with the Trotskyist tradition. Both the International Group led by Nick Origlass and supporters of the mainstream United Secretariat contributed to the debate. November of that year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Tribune had a special supplement. One article contributed by Lloyd Churchward attacked bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was defended by a joint article by Pat Clancy and Laurie Carmichael. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the Churchward article was significant. Trotskyism had a degree of support amongst CPA rank and file.

The Western Australian State Branch opened its Conference by stating that Trotskyists had confronted the question of bureaucracy whereas many from the official communist movement hadn't. The next three years saw the CPA develop its perspectives. It also saw a major crisis develop in the post capitalist states. The CPA was under pressure. The fifties was a period when the CPA failed to attract any youth. The sixties saw a radicalising of young people — in response to the Vietnam War. The Aarons leadership saw the need to orient to the newly radicalised layer. Many of the new leftists were hostile to the concept of the parties "leading role" and skeptical because of what they saw was its consequence — the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union and "socialist countries". Of course their opposition wasn't Marxist and hence their politics were liberalised and liquidationist. The bureaucratic degeneration had class roots. The degeneration of

proletarian dictatorship they actually led to the liquidation of the party or its incorporation into the administrative bureaucracy and becoming a dead body rubber stamping the decisions of leaders.

Coalition of the Left was seen as the vehicle for working with young leftists around issues such as Vietnam and conscription. The new left also had a radical critique of society. They took up issues as sexual repression, censorship, racism, the elitist power of university hierarchies, bureaucracy, ecology, the stifling nature of bourgeois education and the technological revolution. In America Black Power erupted both as a product of racist oppression and in response to the Vietnam war where Black soldiers fought. In Australia, the Gurrindgi people took land owned by Vestey's at Wattie Creek and took up the struggle for land rights.

The Aarons leadership wanted to confront this radicalism. The pro-Moscow opposition were seen as hiding their heads in the sand, or worse, conservatives. Despite its orthodox sounding criticisms, the pro-Moscow opposition also wanted unity — with ALP leaders and bureaucrats. They were hostile to young radicalism as well as believing, sometimes religiously, in the party and genuinely fearing liquidation.

The late sixties saw a massive crisis within the post-capitalist states. There were uprisings in East Germany and Poland. In Czechoslovakia, the Dubcek leadership initiated measures to create a more liberalised society. The initiatives were wholeheartedly endorsed by the Aarons leadership. A Tribune correspondent reported about Dubcek's experiment: 'This country has taken a step forward' 'There is no false optimism, no closed subjects, no doctored public opinions, no ponderous announcements of leaders which have to be repeated ad nauseum, no directives to culture vultures about what the correct line ought to be. "The complete basis of a socialist community, say the Czechs is complete democracy and war on disinformation and complete participation by the people in the matters of government'.

The Dubcek led Czechoslovakia may not have been a complete break from bureaucratism, but it showed that there could be an alternative. The CPA leadership saw Czechoslovakia under Dubcek, in action, and they were forced to draw important conclusions. They also had the integrity to oppose the Warsaw Pact invasion as did a number of independent stalinist parties. They held a special public meeting Sydney Town Hall and put out a special issue of Tribune which called on the Warsaw Pact to respect the elected leadership of the Czechoslovak communist Party. To their credit, they drew some fundamental conclusions about Stalinism which other parties did not draw. In September Eric Aarons on the front page of Tribune Only this was no aberration. Nor can it be put down to the character of any individual even if reports of division in the Soviet leadership are true. "Then why? I think the main reasons are 1) The interests of the Soviet Union as a country have in its thinking become identical with the interests of socialism as a whole. 2) Bureaucracy has developed and with it a concentration of power'. This was a promising start — but only that. Neither Eric Aarons nor the CPA leadership possessed the political methodology — dialectical materialism — to analyse the bureaucracy in class terms, nor to understand the political consequences. Those who were to become the Socialist Party were divided. Some initially sided with the leadership but changed position on the basis of "more information". Some merely opposed it as a tactical mistake. It was only the hard-liners Edger Ross and Alf Watt who were fully "in unity" with the invasion.

The next bitter lesson about Stalinism concerned a dispute between the Soviet Union and China over an island located on the border. The CPA leadership saw in this conflict, the potential for war

between two socialist countries. In June '69 L Aarons and B Taft represented the CPA at the International meeting of World Communist Parties Moscow and put forward a dissenting view. The CPA signed only one section of the document concerning a programme of action against imperialism.

It has to be stressed that what the CPA did sign was a Stalinist strategy. The CPA leadership had made a break from Moscow but argued that sections of the "World Communist Movement" were revolutionary, notably the Vietnamese. The CPA also had fraternal links to the Yugoslavs and Roumanians. The proMoscow opposition fully supported the Moscow statement.

As well as these dramatic international events, the CPA wanted to be in touch with the radicalism which was occurring in Australia. Student power and Black power movements were developing. So too was a working class movement against the penal clauses. In '69 a near general strike, a mass eruption of workers anger released Maoist Clarie O'Shea from prison. The CPA were well and truly part of the movement. The proMoscow wing were sniping that all this was "adventurism" "left sectarian" etc. They were hardly an attractive pole for young radicals. In 1969, a CPA supported alliance of Communists and ALP members won control of the New South Wales Branch of the BLF. They were involved in militant struggles. Their "green bans" in support of working class housing, the environment, and heritage became history. For the proMoscow opposition this was "left adventurism".

In 1970 the CPA held another congress. Whereas the '67 Congress was clearly a move to the right, this Congress appeared radical. The leadership had introduced the concept of "workers control" in 69. CPA unionists had been active in it's promotion. Worker's control became part of CPA policy of a new militant unionism. This congress was praised by radical intellectuals "like the Church after Vatican 2". Some considered it to be a radical turning point in CPA history.

The only significant recruit though was Pabloite Denis Freney. Of course for the proMoscowites this was proof of their thorough degeneration. According to a recently published glossary, Trotskyism was still declared a counter-revolutionary tendency. Basically the CPA had adopted a strategy of adapting to radical protest movements. Although it was militant and optimistic. The CPA adapted to the petty bourgeois nature of these movements which including radical feminism, ecological pessimism, zero population growth. Although the CPA raised demands for workers control. This was not linked to any perspective, let alone a revolutionary one. Effectively what the CPA argued was that you could achieve workers control under capitalism. The blatancy of these adaptations made the proMoscowites seem principled. But of course they believed in a broad class collaborationist peace movement and reformist movements for price control and, of course, for peace.

The CPA had developed a formulation that the Soviet Union was socialist based'. His formulation denied the dialectical interaction between base and superstructure and covered for the bureaucracy. Of course the proMoscowites were totally hostile. So was Moscow. The International Communist Movement tolerated a degree of dissent — so long as fundamental conclusions about the bureaucracy were not drawn. Other communist parties had dissented. But only the CPA had questioned whether or not the "socialist bloc" was socialist. Behind the radical veneer, the central tenets of Stalinism were still in place — peaceful road to socialism, socialism in one country and the two stage theory of revolution. As the CPA was still part of the "World Communist Parties identifying with some of the post capitalist states it was still a stalinist party.

Alf Watt and Edger Ross had put forward their documents to the Congress. These were thoroughly defeated. They supported the classical two stage theory of revolution with an antimonopoly alliance around immediate demands. Before the Congress a group of young CPA members put one hundred names to a letter urging the CPA to have 'a revolutionary strategy relevant to Australian conditions — militant, democratic, tolerant of other groupings on the left effective in the fight to build a revolutionary socialist movement' Alf Watt replied that the two stage antimonopoly alliance was necessary. The proMoscowites were never confronted about their theoretical premises. They were merely dismissed as bureaucratic, conservative and irrelevant.

For going too far in opposition, Moscow declared war on the leadership of the CPA. Bill Brown, opposition leader was invited to Moscow. The proMoscow opposition set up Socialist Publications in an office in Redfern. They published Australian Socialist. They began to organise factionally. Despite proclamations of unity they themselves were not united. WJ Brown organised Socialist Unity Groupings. The aim was to form a new party. Australian socialist led by Ross and Watt opposed this, arguing for an orientation to reorient the CPA 'towards Marxism Leninism'. Other groupings included those around union bureaucrat Jack McPhillips and an opposition based on the South Coast.

There was certainly a lot in common between the groupings. They all considered the soviet Union, without reservation, socialist. They all opposed the CPA leadership's "sectarian" "divisive" policies. They all called for 'unity'. However there were differences. Some joined the opposition because of opposition to coalition of the left formulation. Others joined in later. These were mainly trade union bureaucrats, afraid that the new emphasis on democracy, rank and file control of unions, workers control might threaten their positions.

The division within the CPA was extremely bitter. Whole families who had been close friends for decades were now antagonistic. There were charges and countercharges. W J Brown charged Laurie Aarons with "putting the party in disrepute" for calling the Soviet Union "socialist based. His comrades drew up a petition seeking to prevent Laurie Aarons from representing the party overseas while the charges were being heard.

The leadership didn't expel them all. They expelled the ringleaders such as W J Brown Alf Watt and Edger Ross. Most of the exclusions occurred when the leadership announced a special card reissue. Cards would only be reissued if the member could pledge loyalty to the decisions of the party. Many Oppositionalists were sabotaging these by not selling Tribune, not giving money to the party. Often money supposedly to the party would be pocketed by Australian Socialist. The organisational concerns of the leadership were understandable. But the net result was the avoiding of a thorough debate concerning Stalinism and the political issues at stake. The proMoscow minority held meetings to decide their direction. The decision to form a party was taken in December 1971. The resolution to form the party was only passed narrowly at a small meeting which Australian Socialist understandably considered to be "not representative of Marxist -Leninists". At the time, opponents were not optimistic about their future. The founding members were aging, they were understandably perceived as conservatives, bureaucrats and not relevant to young people. They radical fashions such as long hair and so-called progressive rock stars. They opposed pornography and sexual promiscuity (from the point of view of prudery). They were also conservative in their trade union tactics when even many reformists sounded radical. But they had and gained some trade union base, the support of Moscow, and believed in their party. The CPA had a continuing

dilemma on how their party fitted in with the mass movement. SPA members had an almost religious belief in theirs.

In part 2 we will analyse the SPA role as an independent organisation.

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