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Australia US imperialism's sheriff in the South Pacific

Since America declared the war on terror the concept of an "independent nation" has been thrown out the window. The US has declared Iran and North Korea as well as Iraq "rogue states". America has basically declared its right to invade as it sees fit. America and Australia have also declared their right to intercept any rogue state ship which they consider might be a threat with weapons of mass destruction or something like that. Invade first ask questions later is America's new world order.

John Howard declared that Australia was prepared to intervene anywhere in the SE Asian or Pacific region to prevent any terrorist threat to Australia. This pleased George Bush. Howard is truly a man of his spirit. Howard did, understandably got a strong rebuke from Asian political leaders. They resented an implied lack of faith with regard to their ability to deal with terrorists. They resented even more Australia declaring its right to invade. Howard was forced to back down with regard to Asia. But the region which Australia will invade with impunity is the South Pacific. Australia is leading a military and police delegation which has taken over the running of ' the Solomon Islands. Whilst Australia claims to be there "by request" in reality the government of the Solomons had little option but to accept the conquest.

The imperialists have declared their right to invade "rogue states" now they also declare their right to invade "failed states". The first officially declared failed state is the Solomon Islands. So a battalion of Australian troops backed by those from other Pacific states New Zealand and Fiji have landed in Honiara to keep the peace. The police force has been taken over by a unit of Australians. Technically they have the approval of the Solomon Islands parliament. This consent has been given under duress.

How long will they remain there? We can't say. But success is defined by when the Solomons is stable enough to ensure effective exploitation by the imperialists and when there is no force within the islands which may support opponents of imperialism or terrorists.

This agenda must be totally opposed by anti-imperialists 'and class conscious workers in Australia. Imperialism crated the mess which is the Solomon Islands therefore an Australian invasion is not the solution.

Solomons:The failure of imperialism

We agree that the Solomon Islands constitutes a “failed nation”. We differ with the imperialists on what constitutes a failed nation and more importantly who was responsibility for the failure.

Solomon Islands was a British colony. Papua New Guinea was an Australian. but there was a similarity in the way they were cobbled together as nations. We would not be surprised if PNG ends up a “failed nation” also.

PNG constitutes many national and tribal groupings Many of these before independence formed national liberation groupings. Papua Gesena was the party of Papuan independence. But Gough Whitlam gave PNG independence He not only ignored the national demands of minorities he consciously opposed them having any rights on the grounds that small nations were not viable. It didn't occur to him that throwing together various different groupings often diverse from each other and in fact hostile to each other may not be viable either. His efforts led to the war on Bougainville.

Now the British imperialists may not have been as philosophically coherent on the national question as Gough. But they were equally slovenly in establishing their independent Solomon Islands. The Solomons has just celebrated twenty five years of independence. But they are still paying for the mess inherited from Britain.

There has been corruption in the police force and general instability. There has been communal rivalry between the Malitas and the Guadalcanal liberation forces. There has been gangsterism, robbery and lawlessness. Australia is unhappy with this situation. So they assembled their South Pacific version of “coalition of the willing” including New Zealand, Fiji and PNG. As with the American variant, it is called a “coalition” but one country is really calling the shots — Australia. Just as the American variant covers for US conquest, the South Pacific one covers for Australia's. The coalition has taken control of the Solomon Islands state.

Basically, Australia will run the Solomons as long as it is required to establish, consolidate and maintain a regime suitable to guarantee stability and imperialist hegemony. This may be a long time. It may also cost billions. But they consider their efforts worth it. Firstly they consider a destabilised Solomons rife for terrorist intervention. They also fear that Solomons destabilisation might spread into Bougainville PNG Vanuaatu or elsewhere.

But more important, imperialism is stamping its authority over the whole of the South Pacific. Woe betide if you threaten or inconvenience imperialist interests is the message. Imperialism reserves the right to move in and regime change.

This Australian agenda must concern class-conscious workers in this country, It must be fought tooth and nail. Workers action against imperialist intervention in I Solomons now!

Australia is a colony. Initially is imperialist master was Britain. But after the second world war, America took over as the dominant imperialist power. Howard goes the way with Bush because he knows where Australia bread is buttered. There are many Americans sympathetic to giving Australia favoured status in terms of trading because they see Australia's loyalty in relation to Iraq and the war on terror. Whatever America does, Australia echoes its support.

But Australia is not just a colony. It is a privileged colony .In exchange for being dominated by the imperialists, it is given its small sphere of influence in the South Pacific. Australian companies such as

Burns Philp WR Carpenter and CSR superexploit the workers of the Pacific. Australian military presence reinforces this. Woe betide any Pacific nation which chooses to disobey Australia's dictates.

So the issues at stake go beyond the Solomon Islands and its stability. Australia's presence in the Pacific must be opposed. It must be fought.

Australian intervention in the Solomons is more than just an act of conquest aimed at guiding Solomons along the imperialist path to stability. It part of a plan to keep imperialist control. Woe betide any small Pacific nation who dares to go its own way. Some countries have a real fear that they might be declared "failed nations" also. They would be subjected to the same treatment.. These fears are very understandable.

Australia has recently bullied the Pacific Islands Forum and is using aid (or its removal) as a stick and carrot to make Pacific Island nations tow the line. In short Australia is the bully boy of the South Pacific. This is a situation we, the left and workers movement must categorically oppose. And not just with words but with action

Workers action against t Australia's intervention in the Solomons and elsewhere is a matter of urgency.

Iraq: from invasion to guerrilla warfare.

Iraq may be free of Saddam Hussein. But no-one can say that it is liberated. People do not have a consistent electricity supply to run refrigerators in the sweltering fifty degree heat. There is a massive shortage of petrol. Iraqis are angry at Kuwaitis smuggling petrol out of the country while they have no supply at all. There is also no recognised government with any authority. Months after liberation" Iraqis have no idea who will be ruling them when the Americans depart. America still has no idea when it will depart.

Recently America has confronted the hard fact that whilst the invasion was over, the guerrilla war was just beginning. There was an unseen unknown enemy prepared to carry out well planned guerrilla operations against US servicemen. More than half the casualties the American forces have suffered have occurred after America's declaration of victory.

So who is America fighting? Well the Shiites are organised and fighting. But most of the terrorist action has been orchestrated with military precision. That is believed to have been carried out by the supporters of Saddam Hussein. Saddam is extremely unpopular. But he does have a support base both with Sunnis and with former members of the armed forces and bureaucracy. He is still popular in Tikrit his home city. He has yet to be captured so he still has an authority.

A significant act of terror was carried out outside the Jordanian Embassy. Jordan has offered the daughter of Saddam political assylam. The bombing is significant because it is believed that it was carried out with a group with close ties to El Quaida.

It is very understandable that the likes of El Quaida will take advantage of this situation. Most Iraqi's consider it to be a humiliation to be under the domination of the United States. No doubt El Quaida will consider that they are in market competition with the Baathists to show that they are the consistent anti-imperialists who will fight the evil empire more effectively.

The US invasion and occupation of Iraq has not hampered the terrorists. On the contrary it has helped them. Not only do they have the propaganda point that US invades innocent countries which threaten nobody, they can now organise within Iraq virtually with impunity. No doubt they will succeed in their recruiting amongst Muslim opponents of Saddam who also hate imperialism.

Meanwhile, the Americans are losing ground in Afghanistan. US direct occupation has made way for NATO military occupation. But all this means is that Europeans are doing America's dirty work. But basic all that the imperialists and their sponsored governments really control is the area around Kabul. The Taliban and other forces control most of the country side. In Afghanistan, the Americans have failed to reconstruct the new country in even with the backing of a significant faction — the Northern Alliance. In Iraq they have none.

Meanwhile the war goes on in Iraq. Troops are being killed almost daily. Buildings destroyed. Utilities and infrastructure such as electricity and water are being sabotaged. Revenge killings against the Baathists happen regularly. Every day brings a new horror story. When will it stop? Nobody knows. Certainly not America!

America is trying to dump its responsibilities on the United Nations. This is a bit rich. Having treated the world body with total contempt America wants it to clean up the mess. Effectively it is demanding other countries pay for their social disaster. It is now pretty clear the US and Britain lied to the world body over "weapons mass destruction". So the war is technically illegal. At initially America rejected any UN participation in establishing a new regime there. America treated the world body with contempt. Now it expects it to pay the bill

The point is that in terms of its stated objectives, democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan and victory in the war against terror, the US imperialists are failing. Where they are succeeding is in bullying many of its soft allies and opponents into submission. "You are either for us or against us" says Bush and many countries kowtow to them as they are economically or politically victimised by the world's most powerful imperialist country who currently has political domination and hegemony over most of the world.

Of course El Quaida, the Islamic militants are reactionary. But the "war against terrorism" hasn't defeated them, it has promoted them. Despite the arrest of key people such as Hambali, their mass support grows amongst subjectively anti-imperialist Muslims. Worse! America's power to exploit the resources of the Middle East grows also.

Iraq: dissident Maoists back imperialism.

Wars radicalise people. The first and second Gulf wars have mobilised people. Many of these people have hardened their radicalism and joined ostensibly revolutionary organisations, But also with every war you get former radicals who capitulate to imperialist pressure jump ship and join the enemy.

During the cold war, at various stages radicals found a rationalisation for deserting the Soviet Union, effectively giving military support to imperialism's war against it. Before the Second World War a group in the US led by Burnham, Abern and Schactman found that even though they believed in defence of the Soviet Union in the abstract discovered in the concrete circumstances it didn't relate to "the reality of living events" They developed all sorts of new theories which basically rationalised desertion "bureaucratic collectivism" etc.

This tendency more than confirmed Trotsky's prediction that what was then a scratch would end up as gangrene. Burnham and Schachtman ended up as cold warriors in the US Democrats.

Unfortunately Schachtmanism hasn't been dead and buried. The British tendency with Australian supporters Workers Liberty have taken up the banner,

In America, in the eighties a group of exMaoists led by David Horowitz, formerly of the independent magazine Ramparts, fought what they called "Soviet socialimperialism" so consistently that they ended up behind the banner of Ronald Reagan. They campaigned for him fundamentally because of his hardline stance for the imperialist conquest of the Soviet Union.

Now with the first and Iraqi wars against US imperialism we witness the desertion of a group of dissident Maoist's led by Albert Langer and Barry York. Albert Langer used to and probably still considers himself a "real Maoist" as opposed to those "capitalist roaders" who now rule in Beijing. And he harks back to the "real anti war movement" which took place against the US and Australian intervention against Vietnam.

Langer and York rationalise their position on the basis of Stalinist tradition — stalinist counter-revolution. Apparently it was right to support the allies in their war against fascist Nazi Germany so it is right to support the imperialist coalition when it invades "fascist" Baathist Iraq.

No it isn't right to back the allies against Hitler's Germany. The fact that it is an imperialist war transcends their ostensible antifascism. The main enemy is at home against one's "own" bourgeoisie. This is true, irrespective of the form of government the other imperialist government has. Imperialists have always used the totalitarian tendencies of the enemy — to whip up support for imperialist slaughter.

But there is a major difference between Iraq and Hitler's Germany. Iraq is not an imperialist power. It did invade Kuwait. It repudiated any claim to Iraq in 1994. Before the invasion it was making no territorial claims on any state anywhere. Langer uses the term "appeasement" in reference to those who supported or ignored the invasion of Kuwait. The invasion of Kuwait stemmed from a border dispute. It was not as if Saddam had a "Mein Kampf" which would lead to control of the Arab world. He has had no such ambitions.

So basically the Maoists are supporting an imperialist conquest over a state which has been a victim of imperialism. York and Langer didn't support the imperialists when they merely talked about "weapons of mass destruction" but when they mentioned liberation their eyes lit up.

What flabbergasts is how these veteran anti-imperialists take imperialist rhetoric at face value. For decades, the imperialists preferred option as alternative rulers of Iraq has been the "feudalist" reactionary Iraqi National Congress. This Congress with no mass or popular support wants to restore the monarchy. What if the imperialists restored them? Fortunately they have more sense. Imperialism has a consistent record of imposing reactionary regimes on the peoples of the world. Revolutionaries should act on the assumption that they would do so this time — and oppose any imperialist invasion.

Even if, for some reason, the imperialists delivered to the Iraqi people a truly democratic regime, then the invasion must still be opposed. The whole context of US imperialism must be looked at. A

US dominated state in Iraq would have immense power. A liberated Iraq in exchange for the oppression of the Palestinians, Lebanese, Iranians and the whole of the Middle East is not a fair exchange. This assumes Iraq is actually liberated.

Paul Wolfowitz and faction have their eye on “liberating” Lebanon and Iran. Of course they want to promote Israel. It is this faction which used September eleven to convince the president to go all the way and invade. The problem the Wolfowitz faction has is to carry out their agenda they have to consolidate Iraq and this is a long way off.

Revolutionaries do not cherry-pick when it comes to imperialism. Imperialism has an overall agenda of oppressing exploiting the world and opposing on nations reactionary regimes. It must be opposed in its totality. This is true even if they were to play an isolated progressive role in say Solomon Islands.

It is right to rebel against US imperialism

The Morris MacMahon picket line and the trade union bureaucracy

The Morris MacMahon dispute is living proof that you can still win something if you are prepared to fight. Basically, while the talk is about negotiated agreements, the new owner basically put to an ultimatum which amounted to the workers having to accept an extra ten hour work per week without any gain in pay and having to do shiftwork on the companies demand. Many of the workers have children and could not find the child care required for them to work afternoon shift. The workers members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, brought in their union, went on strike, set up a picket line and were out for twelve weeks.

Their settlement was not entirely satisfactory. But if they hadn't fought they would have got nothing. The workers were prepared to fight. But their picket line organisation left a lot to be desired, For this we blame, not the workers but the bureaucrats of the AMWU who were on their knees before bourgeois legality. Many of the pickets for token. The picketers made a bit of noise but didn't try to prevent anything. Some were more serious but suffered from lack of numbers. Eventually, the bosses found a way of getting scab workers in by the back way, avoiding the picket The AMWU were totally unprepared to meet this challenge. There were however, a few successful pickets which actually prevented truckdrivers from crossing the line and delivering to the factory. There are many thousands of AMWU members. If only they were mobilised consistently.

The bosses were very well prepared. They employed scabs and hired a scab busting operation to drive them in and protect them. The pickets put up a tent city around the factory. The bosses responded by erecting a ten foot wire fence to defend their property. The bosses were also very well prepared in their propaganda, aimed at scaring workers to go back. This was partially successful. They were also well armed legally laying and threatening all sorts of charges against the union and its members. the owner is indeed very class conscious in defending her class interest at every level, ruthlessly and efficiently.

The pickets were attended by all sorts of labour bureaucrats and celebrities. NSW Labour Council leaders paid a visit, as did Anthony Albanese, member for Grayndler and Greens MLC Sylvia Hale. Both the MUA and the CFMEU sent contingents to give their support. The pickets were, on the whole, a bit puny. But a few were quite spectacular and militant.

One of these was captured on film and used against CMFEU leader John Sutton. He was seen allegedly doing thousands of dollars worth of damage. This has become a major scandal. He has become very repentant and forced to repudiate “trade union violence”. His acts have been criticised by other bureaucrats. Tony Abbot, to be expected has used this to embarrass the “respectable wing” of the trade union bureaucracy.

John Sutton and the bureaucrats are on their knees pleading forgiveness for this “unacceptable behaviour” and that this is a mere blot on a copybook opposed to “trade union violence”. The establishment acknowledge that CFMEU are respectable but they are seriously concerned about this lapse. Fighting pickets is the last thing they want to see.

We have absolutely no sympathy for that car owner, whatsoever. If the owner didn’t want the car damaged then the picket line shouldn’t be crossed. It is as simple as that! All this sympathy for some car owning scab! What about the damage done to those workers had the owner’s demands had been implemented? Finding a thousand odd dollars for that person would be peanuts. finding child care, and the money to pay for workers forced to do shift work would be extremely difficult. Of course there will be no apology from the boss for the hardship those workers faced on the picket line.

To get and enforce our rights and conditions, workers are forced to go on strike. To defend the strike we need picket lines. Workers are entitled to ensure these are not crossed by whatever means necessary. Its time that this principle was openly proclaimed without apology or equivocation.

It is of no surprise that the respectable unions are apologetic, They are led by Stalinists who are imbued with the spirit of Accord — cooperation with bosses and the government. Greg Combet opposed the violence and pointed out that whilst such violence could never be condoned, it could be circumvented by a more conciliatory industrial relations system. He wants to go back to Arbitration. Yes this will be effective. It will tie the unions to the state and make workers pay for the economic crisis. And yes it will avoid confrontation. Unions whinge about the ideological campaign of the owner who is philosophically opposed to unions. But its time that unions were more philosophically opposed to bosses.

Basically the workers gained for their efforts, a 4.35% wage rise, a rostered day off every nineteen days to be effective in a years time. Unfortunately the bosses have refused to allow their union reps to return to work on the grounds that their “relationship had broken down” These stewards, though still receiving full pay are refused entry to work and are facing the sack.

Brazil: workers fight Lula’s “reform”

“Lula” DeSilva was the first ostensibly socialist president elected in South America since Salvador Allende was elected in Chile in 1970. It has been hailed as the biggest victory for the left since the Berlin war. He was elected with a higher level of popular support than any other president in Brazillian history. Over 61% of the population supported him. There was mass jubilation. His victory was seen as a victory over the globalisation agenda of imperialism which was causing mass hardship to the people of Brazil. Unlike the modern social democrats, Lula is not a technocrat nor a bureaucrat but a humble metalworker who became a militant trade union leader.

But even though Lula De Silva has clear working class roots, cares about working people and leads the Workers Party this does not mean that his government is a workers government — in any sense of the word. His deputy Jose Alencar is openly bourgeois. In fact he is Brazil's largest cotton producing magnate who has amassed a personal fortune of \$500 million. Hardly a proletarian! But Lula defends him as "a good nationalist, prepared to defend Brazil's interests on a global stage". He has also according to Theory/Practice News & Letters (on the net), committed to improving the wages and conditions of workers. Even if he does as he claims he is still thoroughly and utterly bourgeois. Even before entering office Lula warned the Landless Workers Movement that his government would not tolerate illegal land seizures,.

In relation to capitalism, Lula is trying to have his cake and eat it too. His government is committed to balancing the Brazilian budget. His finance minister Antonio Palocci is a former ostensible Trotskyist associated with the French CCI. He has forgotten his fake Trotskyist heritage. He told Newsweek "I am not a prisoner of any model" "The beginning of the Lula government was marked by a firm commitment to sound public finances and budget control" "Our aim is to produce a positive shock to an economic process running out of control" Sounds like economic rationalism. Well not quite but almost. With a bit more intervention than the rationalists would like, Lula is managing the Brazilian economy at the expense of workers and the poor.

So what does this mean? Pension reform! Reactionary pension reform which attacks the rights of ordinary Brazilian workers. Should Lula's "reforms be implemented to receive their pension, public servant will have to work longer hours and give up perks. The age which workers could receive a pension would be increased and pensions taxed. Understandably these measures have been met with mass working class anger, denouncing Lula as a traitor. In August 25,000 walked off their jobs in Brasilia, the country's administrative capital. These workers have our full support. Like any bourgeois government Lula is concerned with the huge cost to the economy of the pension system. What about the huge cost to workers if these "reforms" are carried out!

These are nothing new about Lula and his opportunist electoral manoeuvres. They are the same old-fashioned popular front policies which have been applied so many times in so many countries with devastating consequences for working class people. Popular fronts are a death trap for the working class. In Spain, in Germany and Chile they led to the working class being smashed and the imposition of fascism (in the case of Spain and Germany) and a brutal military dictatorship (in the case of Chile). The Chilean coup on September 11, 1973 was far more devastating in human lives than the events on the same day in New York, two years ago.

Basically, a workers movement subordinated to capital in the form of unity with overt capitalist parties exposes its impotence. The middle class gravitate to other forces who take power more seriously — the fascists. In Chile the deal required for Allende's unity with bourgeois forces was the disarmament of the working class. General Pinochet smashed an unarmed workers movement. A Chilean type scenario is not ruled out for Lula in Brazil. And workers must be prepared for it. But it is not ruled out that the ruling class might deal with Lula by peaceful means. Lula does not control the lower house of parliament which could very well compromise or sabotage his efforts and his government. Irrespectively Lula is captive of the ruling class who will deal with him when they see fit.

The popular front has traditionally been a stalinist strategy. Because he feared that the extension of revolution, worldwide would threaten his bureaucratic position of power, Joe Stalin converted the once revolutionary Communist International from a revolutionary international into a collection of parties committed to maintaining or reforming capitalism. Popular front was part of his theoretical arsenal — directed at the revolutionary left. These days it is not just stalinists who join the popular front umbrella. The so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International has joined the Lula bandwagon. As a reward it has received one ministerial portfolio. Meanwhile Lula will pragmatically administer Brazilian capitalism. He will do this in favour of the bosses and at the expense of the working class. There will be more “restructuring”. There will be further attacks on jobs wages, and conditions. To meet the crisis enforced by Lula, workers must organise. This means breaking all ties to Lula’s Workers Party and of course, his popular front governmentt.

What could happen next?There are many possibilities. The bourgeoisie could simply bank on mass disillusionment when Lula exposes himself as another bosses politician. But one of possibilities is that both Lula and the workers movement being smashed by counter-revolution possibly led by the armed forces. Brazil’s popular front could be a death trap also. Workers must organise with the appropriate programme to see this doesn’t happen.

Free the refugees!

There is a degree of jubilation of a court decision to allow some refugee children to leave the refugee camp and live in normal society. These camps are psychologically bad for children. In fact they are bad for people, promoting serious mental illness and suicide. This doesn’t worry Philip Ruddock nor the Howard Government. In fact Ruddock refuses to accept the decision of the court and is doing his utmost to put the children back inside again.

We think that they shouldn’t have been put in those barbaric conditions in the first place. We defend their right to come and live in Australia if and when they choose — unconditionally. We want their parents free also. The refugees come to Australia because they face barbaric conditions in their home countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. However for us this is a secondary issue. All proletarians should be free to come to Australia if the choose. **Smash all immigration controls!**

The workers movement has a duty to take a stand on the refugee issue. The Howard government is using chauvinism to whip up hysteria, to win support for their reactionary agenda which attacks not just migrants and refugees but unemployed, the public sector and all exploited and oppressed. The refugee question is more than an issue of humanitarian concern. It is a fundamental issue for class struggle in this country. It is no accident that Labor’s opposition on this issue is on the secondary issue of how they are treated. Labor merely wants the refugees to be treated a bit more humanely. It was Labor, after all which initiated the barbaric camps in the first place. What Labor began, Howard continued with increased barbarism. For Communist Left, the refugee issue is linked to the struggle for class interest. We have a proletarian perspective. We want workers action and not unity with churches, greens etc.