

#67 May2005 Iraq

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Iraq the imperialist conquest continues

Two years after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq is still a bloody mess., The resistance is still as strong as it was a year ago and there is no sign of it giving up. Every day brings news of a new suicide bomber killing more Iraqis and foreign invaders. Fifty percent of Iraqi's are unemployed and twenty five percent survive on handouts. The American led Coalition occupation. has solved nothing.

America is claiming the election to be a success as the proportion of Iraqis who voted was greater than many expected. A serious concern about this election is that Iraqis voted along religious and communal lines. Shiites and Kurds voted. The Sunnis did not. There is a real fear that what America has created is a communally divided Iraq which might easily tear itself apart.

The elected government has no real power. It is at best, an administration for a state dominated by US capital and propped up by US and allied military might. America would not allow an indigenous Iraqi leadership to seriously challenge this.

As is well known, Australia is increasing its military commitment. 400 more Australian troops have been sent to southern Iraq. They are not welcome there. The locals recognise them not as liberators but as invaders, which indeed they are.

This is, of course contrary to the "promise" made by Howard made last election not to increase Australian troop commitment John Howard has a habit of breaking promises. It is a reflection of ALP "opposition" that he has been allowed to get away with it. In Britain, the Tories are making Tony Blair pay for his lies. Of course, they are hypocritical. They were totally loyal to the imperialist war effort and if they were the ruling party would have behaved exactly the same as Blair.

Two years after "victory" the imperialists still cannot say when they will be getting out. Condoleezza Rice wants Iraqis to take more responsibility in dealing with the resistance. This shows that the imperialists are desperate

We, workers of Australia cannot wait until some government decides that Australian troops are no longer necessary. Working class action is needed now to smash their imperialist conquest.

Strikes, black bans and workers direct action must begin now and continue until Australia plays no part in this barbaric invasion!

Uprising at Glenquarie

Glenquarie is a housing estate about a kilometer east of Macquarie Fields. Few know that it exists let alone the massive social problems that exist there. But for those who know it, it came of no surprise

that a riot erupted between police and unemployed people who live on the estate. The unemployed there have nothing. The housing is inadequate. There are no jobs within miles. There are no decent amenities. Glenquarie is a long way from the major centre of Campbelltown and over forty kilometers from the City of Sydney, public transport to either Sydney or Campbelltown is totally inadequate. Glenquarie is a backwater where unemployed westies are left to rot — out of sight, out of mind.

Federally they are in the electorate previously held by Mark Latham. When Latham talked about the “aspirational voter” he wasn’t talking about unemployed of Glenquarie. They know that “climbing up the ladder of opportunity” (as suggested by Latham) is a pipedream. Liberals hate the unemployed and Labor takes them for granted. So Glenquarie’s issues are not on the election agenda. This is true for either state or Federal Parliament.

In this environment, crime and drugs are a fact of life. So is police harassment.

Unemployed in Glenquarie are not political. But they know that the police force is part of the problem and not part of the solution. It is in this environment that the upsurge known as the Macquarie Fields riots occurred. Of course isolated upsurges cannot defeat the state on their own. What is needed is a united struggle between workers and unemployed to smash the state. For the failure to get this unity we blame not the rioters but the workers movement. There has been a drastic failure to fight both unemployment and attacks on the unemployed. The union movement has done nothing whilst work for the dole has been implemented attacking both workers and unemployed. The workers movement has failed to fight for a shorter working week to spread the work around at the boss’s expense and not our own. And essentially they have accepted capitalism which means oppression and poverty

Given that unemployed in western suburbs ghettos remain isolated, there will be more uprisings such as Glenquarie. We must fight for revolutionary leadership. For worker and unemployed unity against all attacks and to fight the capitalist system

Liberals. The new centralists.

The Federal State system was designed to assist the conservatives. The very class conscious ruling class realised that it was Labour who - needed a strong centralised government to implement socialist reform and the best way to frustrate this was a system of checks and balances. Labor may win a majority and a socialist mandate in the House of Representatives. But it was unlikely to get a majority in the Senate. They were very well aware of the class structure of the states. They knew that New South Wales and Victoria were strongly working class in terms of proportion of their population. They also knew that Queensland Tasmania, South and Western Australia were overwhelmingly rural and middle class in terms of proportion of population. Most of Australia’s population live in New South Wales or Victoria. But these states get the same number of seats within the Senate as less populous Tasmania and South Australia. So by introducing a House of parliament based on states rights called the Senate they could head off any working class move to reform. They also divested certain powers to the states so as to further weaken the national government.

The Liberals and the ruling class within this country would have been very aware of inefficiencies. But they have considered these a price well worth paying in order to maintain political stability. So for decades they have been loyal federalists and determined supporters of states' rights. But now there is a change of heart and the Federal Liberal party is advocating a more centralised system, undermining states' rights.

A key reason for this is that they know that they have tamed Labor. It has been decades since any Labor government or opposition has put forward any policy which poses any major disadvantage to the system, let alone a threat. Gough Whitlam wanted a more centralised system with Federal government control. But ever since Labor has offered a slightly pinker version of mainstream conservative policies. No-one on Federal Labor talks about nationalisation or socialism even in a diluted form.

Traditionally, people have countered a Liberal Federal Government by voting Labor on the state level. This is what happens at the moment. Labor controls every government in this country, state or territory, except the Federal government. The Liberals and their ruling class allies want to undermine Labor power and the way to do this is to undermine the states.

Of course, the Liberals are beginning to see the inefficiencies of the system. From the ruling class point of view. It is very difficult for companies to relate to ten different labour awards which allow them to enforce workers overtime in some parts of the country but not in others. There are also different taxes and different levels of tax paid in each state (stamp duty for example). Bosses have serious problems making adjustments to the different conditions.

However another and possibly the main reason for the new Federalism is to curb the power of the Labor Party. Costello now has a big stick called gst money. As he points out this is money taken out of our pockets which should be used for the benefit of the community. Clever Costello decided that state's finances should come out of gst money. As Labor controls the states it is now more difficult for a Labor Government to "roll back" (to use the rhetoric of Kim Beazley) the gst. So Labor has not merely given up "rolling back" the gst, let alone abolishing it.

Costello is now using the GST as a means to hit the states on taxation. Now that Labor states are dependant on this revenue for schools, housing and hospitals Costello can use the threat of withdrawing GST revenue to whip the states into shape. He has demanded the removal of company taxes and stamp duty. What he is effectively doing is diverting the burden of taxes from rich to poor. GST means more tax for poor people as we spend a greater proportion of our income on basic expenditures such as food, transport, rent and education. The reform he wants is less tax or no tax on capital gains, profit property etc.

So basically, Costello has the states very much under control. Of course he will score points about deficiencies in state infrastructure such as hospitals, schooling and Beaties failure to develop adequate port facilities in Northern Queensland.

Labor is paying the price for its failure and inability to bring down the Howard government. The squeeze on Labor states will continue.

Laurie Aarons — a political balance sheet

Laurie Aarons general secretary of the Communist Party of Australia in the sixties and seventies, was a man who had an immense affect on Australian left wing politics. The fact that he has not been given the credit he deserves is due to his many political opponents who for different political motives are happy to bury his record.

For his old comrades, CPA degeneration product called Left Connections, Aarons represents a militancy which they seek to forget. They are a respectable unit seeking moderate class collaborationist politics. They still have influence though. They influence the leadership of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

For the current Communist Party of Australia, they want to bury his record. From their point of view his failing prove their claim as the true Australian communists and that surrendering to Trotskyists is the road to ruin. For them, unity maintaining the Stalinist orthodoxy was the way to go.

Others who seek with to denigrate the record of his party are his rivals for the support of radicalised youth notably the current leadership of the Democratic Socialist Party who during Laurie's period of CPA leadership were known as Resistance and then the socialist Workers League

crisis. Membership had dropped from fifteen thousand in 1955 to five thousand in 1967. The crisis was even greater than the numbers suggest. The people lost were young people and intellectuals. They lost the very people they were banking on to build the party in the future.

The main cause of this massive departure was the Soviet invasion of Hungary which the CPA supported. Aarons never publicly repudiated his support though in Tribune, Brian Aarons published a "reassessment". In a prosperous post war Australia young people were prosperous as was Australian society in general (one percent unemployment). But they rebelled against reactionary constraints such as sexual prudishness and censorship, a backward education system, racism and white Australia, and after 1965, Vietnam and conscription. The Stalinist soviet model was hardly an attractive alternative.

Also the nature of capitalism appeared to have changed. Young people believed in the scientific and technological revolution which appeared to overcome contradictions such as boom and bust which had plagued capitalism before the war. Traditionally communists based their strategy on radicalisation of the proletariat due to economic crisis. These crises appeared to be over.

When Laurie Aarons became CPA Laurie Aarons set himself the task of recruiting young radicals. In 1966 he launched a new strategy called coalition of the left for radical social change where the CPA worked alongside other radicals as equals.

The CPA then launched a discussion bulletin called Discussion This was a truly democratic bulletin open not just to party leaders but radicals outside the party and Trotskyists

The Tribune supplement marking the anniversary of the Russian Revolution featured a picture of Trotsky and an article about bureaucracy in the Soviet Union by Lloyd Churchward. Of course, Pat Clancy and Laurie Carmichael wrote a reply denying that bureaucracy was significant. The Western Australian branch strongly identified with Trotsky. As well as this Tribune defended dissidents in the Soviet Union such as Daniel and Senievsky

The direction of the CPA in '67 was clearly to the right. The Coalition of the Left was established as party strategy. Opponents such as Geoff Curthoys correctly pointed out that this denied the leading revolutionary role of the working class. The other aspect of CPA strategy was the Charter of Democratic Rights. Basically this meant struggling for rights under capitalism leaving socialism to the indefinite future

Things in 1968 were to change rapidly. In Czechoslovakia, the liberalised Dubcek regime truly had wholehearted majority support. CPA leaders went to Czechoslovakia and saw this democracy in action. They liked what they saw. Moscow, of course, made accusations of counter-revolution. These the CPA thoroughly investigated and repudiated. Dubcek and cronies pledged loyalty to socialism and the Warsaw Pact. They signed an agreement with Brejnev. But after making this agreement, the Warsaw Pact invaded.

The CPA reacted decisively against this unwarranted invasion. They held a meeting at Sydney Town Hall. They demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy. They launched a signature campaign. Those signed included politicians and unionists as well as CPA members. Many who signed now regret their stance. They were praised for this by both grouplets claiming to be Trotskyist, Socialist Perspectives and International. Eric Aarons published a front page article in Tribune denouncing Soviet bureaucracy.

The other major event of 1968 was the uprising in France. This truly shook the world. This was not just the largest major strike action in France's history it involves workers councils factory occupations throughout France. The Communist Party of France denounced the uprising "not a revolutionary situation". Well it the responsibility of communists to turn uprisings such as this into revolutionary situations. And if this was not a revolutionary situation then the revolution will never come. In reality, the PCF was a key reason for the defeat of the upsurge

At the time, the CPA sided with the PCF. However by January '69 there was clearly a rethink. Laurie Aarons in his address commented on how the spirit of France was coming to Australia. He was referring to working class militancy. As he was making his report the workers of government owned internal airline Trans Australia Airlines were in struggle. The CPA advocated workers control tactics. He predicted that the key issue would be the much hated penal clauses to the Arbitration Act. Here he was spot on.

In May '69 Clarrie O'Shea Maoist tramway union leader from Victoria was jailed for correctly refusing to hand over union documents. Working class struggle erupted throughout Australia. The CPA were well and truly leading the action. This effectively smashed the penal powers. The become unenforceable even though they remained on the books.

In 1969 the struggle against Moscow continued. CPA leaders L Aarons and Bernie Taft went to the International Conference of World Communist Parties in Moscow. They played a dissident role. They only signed one of the three documents. Meanwhile. China and the Soviet Union were in conflict over an island in the Azzuri River. The CPA correctly realised that the two powers were acting not in the interest of world revolution but national interest of two socialist states. They saw that this dynamic could lead to war and even to nuclear war.

They were praised for their efforts by Denis Freney leader of the Pabloite International Grouping who had been whipping up new left support in an effort to change the CPA. His vehicle was the Revolutionary Socialist Alliance who held a national conference in May '69. At that conference the new left were impressed by Aarons CP support for the slogan Solidarity with the NLF.

The CPA though were impressed by the US Moratorium held in October '69. After this they abandoned the slogan and the new left felt betrayed. In Brisbane the RSA broke up when the CPA attempted to bring Australia Party activists into the umbrella

joining the CPA only Freney and colleague David McKnight came to the party.

The 1970 CPA Congress was a triumph for Aarons leadership. The pro Moscow forces were well and truly defeated. The new radical new left CPA. appeared to be well and truly in command. The leadership were confident that the Congress would be hailed as "the radical turning point in the party's history." "Like the Catholic Church after Vatican 2" said Doug Kirsner. a leading new leftist.

After their massive defeat, the pro- Moscow opposition did not give up lightly. For the next year and a half they sabotaged CPA operations by refusal to collect money and sell Tribune. Their party then called the Socialist Party now called Communist Party was established in December 1971.

Defeat the pro-Moscow opposition, they did. But the hard part was to establish a coherent alternative. This it didn't. The majority was effectively an alliance between third world oriented Stalinists (Laurie Aarons) and liberalised popular frontists (Jack Munday). The weakened CPA was vulnerable to all sorts of middle class ideologies such as radical ecology, feminism and Black nationalism

The new CPA could not establish the theoretical role for their party. As Denis Freney noted in an internally circulated leaflet, militants were totally alienated from any meaningful branch structure and the Sydney District Committee had trouble making decent decisions let alone carry them out. He recommended the abolition of the Committee. All this he pointed out correctly was a result of failure to understand the role of the party.

But the new radical CPA bandwagon kept rolling on. The builders labours became famous with their green bans as well as many other significant actions. The developed the workers control movement as well as workers control in a number of industries. The CPA was militant in the power industry through their rank and file committees known as ECCUDO. They were also active in protest activities such as against South African rugby tourists.

The CPA proclaimed rank and file control. CPA leaders found this difficult to carry out in practice, to the extent that they tried. Laurie Carmichael was forced to apologise to Ford workers in Broadmeadows, Melbourne for doing a deal behind their back, selling them out.

In November '72 Gough Whitlam was elected prime minister of Australia. The CPA, whilst praising some of his efforts, were committed to working class independence from incomes policy.

Gough Whitlam was always an opponent of significant wage rises believing that workers should be satisfied with his minimal reforms.

During the Whitlam years both inflation and unemployment really hit hard. Whitlam demanded workers accept the suffering. The CPA leaders of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union at least campaigned for wage rises (albeit inadequate considering the massive inflation) and open ended agreements. They opposed penal provisions.

In September '73 the popular front Allende Government in Chile was smashed by the military. The CPA responded by claiming (falsely) that it didn't believe in a two stage theory of

revolution. The response to this was the emergence of Victorian leadership raising policies influenced by the Communist Party of Italy. They wanted policies which adapted to the Labor Party, pursued unity with the trade union bureaucracy and opposed new left radicalism. They sought a closer relationship with the world communist movement, Meanwhile, Moscow gave the CPA an ultimatum to abandon its categorisation of the soviet Union as "socialist based".

Laurie Aarons went on the offensive. He announced in the opening address that strategic differences were involved and CPA Congress documents were based on a one stage strategy for revolution. The majority Aarons tendency, the Centre won the congress with the support of those later known as the Left Tendency who had a stronger working class orientation. The Centre leadership was though very much under siege,

The CPA had a perspective of workers control under capitalism. They carried militant struggles in the coal industry such as Nymboida, in the metal industry such as Harco plant in Campbelltown and on the docks (PDS in Newcastle) Workers control tactics under capitalism can be important so long as revolutionaries intervene with a transitional programme to overthrow capitalism. This the CPA didn't do.

The CPA was totally unprepared for the massive economic crisis and economic restructuring. So was the Whitlam government. As the Whitlam government started to crash so did the CPA. When the Whitlam government went dramatically to the right at the Terrigal Conference the CPA begged it to adopt progressive policies, Of course, the reformists didn't listen.

The ECCLTDO power workers were being defeated. They were betrayed by NSW Labour council. The SPA were in unity with Labor Council. More seriously the NSW BLF was being smashed by the Federal Branch led by Norm Gallagher I alliance with the - bosses. The NSW BLF did some important work defending working class housing against developers. But overall, its perspective that you could tame the concrete jungle without overthrowing capitalism was utopian. Their failure to have a revolutionary perspective and the failure of other unions to come to their defence paved the way for their demise. These other unions included those led by the CPA and SPA. The CPA refused to make a balance sheet it simply abandoned radical policies.

When Sir John Kerr governor general, sacked the Whitlam government the CPA politically fell in behind Whitlam as a more militant wing. "Women vote for yourselves (Labor)" said a Women's Liberation broadsheet fully endorsed by CPA Women's Liberation activists. This turn to the right was endorsed at the '76 CPA Congress which marked the end of Laurie Aarons period as CPA General Secretary.

In terms of being a radical organisation, it was all down hill for the CPA after that. They eventually found the name "communist" a barrier to their real politics— tailing mass protest movements and

pressuring the Labor Party. The CPA metal workers had no answer to the crisis so they abandoned their militancy and pressured the incoming Hawke Government to save Australian manufacturing. Hence we got a Prices and Incomes Accord. Workers paid but bosses didn't come to the party.

AMWU leaders are still trying to "save Australian manufacturing"

CPA liquidation was also facilitated by the collapse of the post capitalist states and the rise and fall of Eurocommunism which they on the whole identified with. But no matter how far the party would go to the right it was never good enough for the Taft minority who split off to form the Socialist Forum. Socialist Forum were notorious in the Labor party for their rotten dealings with the Right.

In an article in Praxis,, their internal bulletin which replaced Discussion Laurie opposed the CPA liquidation project which was being pushed by brother Eric and son Brian. But he remained loyal to the party and was dragged down with it. Whilst he did not initiate the project, he does deserve some responsibility for the theoretical weakness which led to the total degeneration.

Laurie Aarons never broke from Stalinism. In 1971 he wrote an article defending Trotsky as a leading Bolshevik as opposed to a counterrevolutionary. But his theoretical framework was always within framework of Stalinism. This was shown when in 1969 just after Ho Chi Minh died. Laurie defended not merely Ho as a fighter but Ho's nationalist theoretical framework—socialism in one country.

Laurie supported the CPA remaining part of the World Communist Movement in alliance with states independent of Moscow such as Vietnam, Yugoslavia and Romania.

So there are two main lessons of Laurie's political; life. Firstly it is not enough to merely oppose the distasteful bureaucratic practices of Stalinism. The class roots and political roots must be opposed — root and branch.

The second lesson is that one must have a materialist analysis. His failure to understand the post war boom meant he could not address the collapse of that boom. The militancy of that period was based on a booming capitalist economy. So when the boom collapsed, so did the militancy. The CPA had no answers but to collapse. Incidentally, Aarons was not alone in this failing. Ernst Mandel United Secretariat Fourth International leader promoted a similar analysis which he called neocapitalism. Resistance shared this analysis.

Communist Left stands for

There were many good militants in the Aarons led CPA and without his leadership, many important struggles would not have happened. There are positive lessons to be learned from these struggles.

But whilst we can respect some of the militancy, the theoretical and political framework of the Aarons leadership must be opposed — root and branch. For whilst it remained militant it remained within the camp of counterrevolutionary Stalinism.

- Building a revolutionary alternative to Labor
- Political power to poor and exploited through a revolutionary workers and small farmers government

- Revolutionary expropriation of capitalist industry (as opposed to bourgeois nationalisation)
- A Sliding Scale of hours and wages
- For women's and gay rights. Free abortion on demand.. Socialise housework and child care.
- Opposition to all immigration controls
- Self-determination to the Black (Koorie Murrie; Nungah etc) people of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders
- Class unity with workers of Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere. No to tariffs and protection. Defend jobs everywhere!

No to import controls!

- Total opposition to Australian intervention in PNG, Bougainville, Indonesia, Timor, the Pacific, in the Middle East and else where. Workers' action against Australia's participation in the US imperialist "war against terror".

A new revolutionary communist international

Communist Left

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