

RED#78 March 2008

CONTENTS

Rudd's Tories rule: not ok!

Free Mumia Abu Jamal

Crisis in East Timor !

Setback for Chavez: Which way forward to Socialism

Fred Nile and Fascism

Turkey invades Iraqi Kurdistan

Rudd's Tories rule: not ok!

Last year, the idea that was inconceivable, happened. Every state and territory in Australia, and the nation itself is now administered by Labor. The Federal system at its conception was designed to deprive Labor of any chance of significant reform. The idea was that in those states with a strong working class base, Labor might be needed to head off the spread of working class unrest whilst the conservatives could govern in the more pastoral states. The rulers hoped the conservative parties would govern federally for a long time. Even if Labor governed federally, the idea was for the states to prevent it from doing anything which might threaten the system. This schema worked well for the ruling elites throughout last century. These days, however, Labor is so bankrupt that the ruling class needn't worry.

"We were elected as an economically conservative government and we will administer as an economically conservative government", Rudd Labor promises the ruling class and their system. He means it and the capitalists know he means it. With the threat of rising interest rates, Treasurer Swann promises a tough budget. This will mean that the poor will suffer whilst the rich will get tax cuts.

Kevin Rudd is sincere when he calls himself an economic conservative. He is also a social conservative. In fact, there is no issue on which he could be defined as radical.

Labor is planning to remove Australian troops from Iraq -- slowly. The US imperialists would like Australia to stay, even with token participation, as it makes them appear less isolated. They can tolerate this minor deviation so long as Rudd is loyal elsewhere. And this he is. Australia has assured America that it will be in Afghanistan for the long haul. Troops will stay for many years. The US has been concerned about many of its western Allies slackening off in Afghanistan. Australia is for the Americans an honourable exception. Rudd Labor is loyal to the US imperialist war drive but with minor tactical differences. Under Rudd, Australia will remain America's sheriff in the South Pacific.

Much is being made of Rudd's promise to rip up Workchoices and AWA's. He has kept his promise. He claims to have found a balance -- one very much in the boss's favour. Unions are not allowed to enter workplaces to organise. The CFMEU promised a campaign to win back what was lost thanks to Workchoices. Julia Gillard warned them that they would be met with the full face of the law!

Rudd is flying high on Black rights. His apology struck a chord amongst Australians in general. Sure, there should be an apology. It's important because it accepts responsibility for the gross crimes against black people in this country. The point is to compensate and this Rudd refuses to do. His apparently altruistic rationalisation is that the money would be better spent on improving Black health, housing and education. Just imagine if the victims of the NSW hospitals were given nothing

so the government could spend more improving the hospitals! Black lives were wrecked by racist government policy and they deserve compensation. The only way they can get it, thanks to Rudd, is through the arduous process of going through the High Court -- virtually impossible for all but a few victims. Workers' action for decent compensation for the stolen generation is needed now!

All this was a clever manoeuvre to embarrass the Liberals. It put them on the spot. Brendan Nelson equivocally apologised for the perpetrators, claiming that it was an understandable mistake rather than deliberate racism. People turned their back in anger. This he deserved.

And the apology, invasion of black communities by Federal troops and coppers continues. Rudd offers a bit more local community consultation but not much more! It is outrageous that Black property has been stolen, dole money robbed and communities destroyed in the name of "fighting child sex". Destroying black communities is not the way to defeat pedophilia. Building community solidarity is.

Howard's social security agenda was horrendous. He introduced mutual obligation for both sole parents and the disabled. Those on unemployment benefits (Newstart) were gradually introduced to work for the dole which then became a full time programme. Now unemployed people have to work twenty five hours per week for their dole plus \$5 for fares. The work is hardly light. It includes carpentry, concreting, bush regeneration, nurses and teacher's aid work. All this should be paid for at proper award rates but unemployed workers for the dole struggle to buy food and pay rent.

All this was introduced by Howard but does Rudd intend to fundamentally change the situation? Of course not! Unemployed will continue to receive their lowly dole payment, be breached and be forced to work as slaves. The attacks on sole parents and the disabled remain.

Work for the dole is also an attack on the unionised workforce. Why employ labour at proper rates when you can use unemployed labour for nothing? This threat will be used to ensure that employed workers sacrifice hard fought for wages and conditions.

Howard's so-called "Pacific Solution", meaning dumping refugees on Nauru, is now over. The Rudd government basically shares the Howard philosophy of "we decide who comes to Australia". Those disapproved of will be returned to where they came. Communists oppose all restrictions on immigration.

The elation over Howard's defeat and Rudd election is mostly based on personality. Howard was an obnoxious rodent - sneaky, dishonest and lying. He played on base instincts such as racism and chauvinism. Rudd is a much nicer guy and a lot more honest. But we should not blind ourselves to the fact that we have, in office, a Tory government which is Labor in name only. There is no commitment whatsoever from this government to advancing working class interest. It is a matter of urgency that a new party of labour be built. Unions should disaffiliate from Labor as there is no future in that party. Why pay membership fees to a party committed to attack our interests? Labor's right-wing degeneration is clear. Ever since Whitlam, Labor has been going right at the rate of knots. Even Whitlam's minor reforms were not acceptable to the ruling class. His government was ruthlessly deposed. Many decades later, Labor seems to have found a successful formula for its survival -- attacking us! We must reject Rudd and the constraints of parliament! Build a revolutionary communist party!

Free Mumia Abu Jamal!

Mumia Abu Jamal is a journalist and former MOVE activist and Black Panther. He has been framed for the murder of a cop. He faces the death penalty. The evidence that this is a frame-up is clear cut. He doesn't look like the Afro-haired person described by eye witnesses. Mumia has dreadlocks.

This case goes beyond just the frame-up of an innocent individual. It is political. Mumia has been an opponent of the racist US state throughout his life. He has exposed racist attacks on black people by the state. He has not equivocated even though it may cost him his life. The message the state, the racists and the ruling class want to put over loud and clear is that if you stand up against oppression it may cost you your life. Such threats inhibit resistance.

Workers have an interest in Black proletarians standing up against the racist state so we have every interest in freeing Mumia. It is the responsibility of the left and workers movement to organise protests and action to free him. CL supports protests by the Partisan Defense Committee which are proletarian based. Mumia is clearly innocent but we would defend him even if he was otherwise. Black people have a right to fight a racist system.

Of course, there is work to be done in Australia defending Kooris, Murris and other Black people who face similar repression. CL has defended the likes of John Pat and those on Palm Islanders who stood up against the system. Mumia is relevant here because of Rudd Labor's alliance with that racist barbaric state -- the USA. Free Jamal!

Crisis in Timor!

Events in Dili have led to the serious injury to Jose Ramos Horta and to the death of rebel soldier Alfredo Reinado. They stem from factional conflicts amongst resistance fighters against Indonesia who are part of Fretilin. Ramos Horta is president of East Timor. Xanana Gusmao claims that this was part of an assassination plot against himself. The main winner from these conflicts is Australia. Kevin Rudd announced more troops who will be in East Timor for the long term. Whilst this incident will give Rudd a rationalisation ("we must be responsible for East Timor's stability") the main purpose of these troops is to ensure the safety of Timor's oil for imperialism.

The events in East Timor are deep rooted. Reinado and Ramos Horta were once allies as part of Fretilin, the party which led the resistance. When Fretilin was fighting the Indonesians, many were trained in Mozambique using stalinist methods. After all, Mozambique was a former Portuguese colony which was liberated by guerillas. Others in Fretilin sought the support of the west. In doing so they inevitably adapted to the west. Ramos Horta, for example, supported the invasion of Iraq and this was music to the ears of right-wing commentators.

Reinado was a Fretilin fighter who was expelled from the armed forces. He and six hundred others complained about poor representation in the army for the western part of Timor. So he led a guerilla force which was declared illegal. The Australian government has been critical of the Timorese for not arresting Reinado. This is part of the rationalisation for declaring it a failed state.

One of the reasons that it is believed Reinado was not arrested was his alliance with Horta and Gusmao, in disruption aimed to destabilise Fretilin. However, Reinado was an embarrassment to Gusmao and Horta because Australia wanted stability and therefore opposed any rebel forces.

Gusmao and Horta have the clear support of the Timorese population. Fretilin is indeed guilty of stalinist methods which have put the population off side. A victory to Horta and Gusmao is also a victory to Australia. They support imperialist control. They accept military occupation and imperialist exploitation of Timor's oil. Left-wing opponents point out a degree of complicity between Fretilin and imperialism. They are right. But Fretilin is not the imperialist's preferred option. None of these factions can be supported by us revolutionaries. A revolutionary proletarian alternative must be built. We, in Australia, must reject any intervention military or economic. Workers' action must be organised to fight it. Timor could very well become the next Iraq.

Setback for Chavez? Which way forward for Socialism?

This article is reprinted from the (New Zealand) Communist Workers Group publication Class Struggle. CL has differences with this group on some issues. Their grouping has, nevertheless, strong roots in South America, their information is invaluable for the Australian left and workers' movement as it is urgent that we understand the situation so that we can give the appropriate solidarity.

The Bolivarian populist regime in Venezuela is the flagship of the World Social Forum's plan to build an alliance of states to fight for 'globalisation from below' by negotiating with 'democratic imperialism' for better terms of trade to fund 21st century 'market socialism'. Is the recent loss of the constitutional referendum also a setback for socialism?

Constitutional Reform defeat

The narrow defeat of Hugo Chavez constitutional reforms last month has forced a 'rethink' within the Bolivarian movement. Three million former Chavez voters stayed at home giving the anti-Chavez national bourgeoisie a small victory. Chavez accepted responsibility for making a mistake in holding the referendum and has called for a 'pause for reflection' on the road to the Bolivarian

<http://www.venezuela.com/analysis/3089>

Meanwhile the founding Congress of the PSUV is currently meeting with the delegates debating a draft program and reporting back to their 'battalions' for discussion and decision making. The referendum setback has also seen more debate in the movement around the course ahead, and raised distinct tendencies in the PSUV against Chavez earlier expressed wish. He says he is now happy to see the various 'Chavista' parties forming tendencies inside the PSUV!!

One such tendency is the MAREA socialist current of Stalin Borges and Ismael Hernandez of the C-CURA wing of the UNT. This was the majority of the C-CURA that joined the PSUV to fight for a working class program against the bureaucracy. It seems that their voice is being heard not only inside the PSUV but in the wider trade union struggle. The MAREA current in the PSUV has publicly condemned the sacking of a prominent C-CURA leader Oswaldo Chirino from his job in the Venezuelan state owned oil company the PDVSA. Chirino is one of the leaders of a minority in the C-CURA that refused to join the PSUV on Chavez terms of liquidating any political tendencies. Instead he called for the formation of an independent workers party. He also called for a no vote on Chavez constitutional referendum.

The sacking of Chirino follows a long struggle in the oil workers unions for a new agreement with the Chavez oil ministry. Chirino is one of the leaders of the largest oil union, Fedepetrol, which has 35,000 of the 60,000 oil workers. The agreement has been in negotiation since April 2007. In September workers were attacked by Anzoátegui state police as they tried to enter the negotiations. The state governor objected only after 4000 workers took to the street to protest. The contract settlement in November did not meet all of Fedepetrol's demands and included a drastic provision inserted by the oil ministry that forced all the unions to amalgamate into the United Confederation

of Energy Workers (FUTEV). Around the same time Chirino was told he did not have a job. In the last issue of Class Struggle 75 we argued for a tactical entry into the PSUV to fight for the right of tendencies so as to split workers from the bourgeois fractions, but with no illusions as to the class character of the PSUV. We said that Borges had a false idea of the PSUV as a potential workers party, whereas the task of revolutionary entry could only be to split the workers out of the popular front party into a workers revolutionary party. It seems on the face of it, that despite these illusions in the character of the PSUV the MAREA current is coming out openly against a Chavista state ministry. Has Borges left behind his illusions in the PSUV?

Not at all. It is good that his faction has supported Chirino in his fight against the oil ministry. But the problem here is not just a bunch of right wing Chavista bureaucrats dominating the oil industry, but a Chavista state bourgeoisie that has to be smashed. The PSUV is not a bureaucratized workers' party, it is a popular front party. And the Chavista state is not a bureaucratized workers' state, but a bourgeois semi-Bonapartist regime. This will become clearer if the Chirino faction in the oil unions mobilizes a UNT congress for his reinstatement and to repudiate the oil ministry settlement.

This is of course a demand that should be immediately raised by revolutionary Trotskyists who have entered the PSUV, to expose the Borges cover of the left leg of the popular front. It will be difficult when Chavez seeks to discipline the popular front in a confrontation with Exxon Mobil and US, but revolutionaries have to be clear that only a revolutionary working class party with a revolutionary program can win the struggle against US imperialism by taking power at the head of the working class and the poor peasants.

From state capitalism to state socialism?

Such a revolutionary program is necessary to expose the hollow pretence of 'socialism' in the draft PSUV program. This is full of talk of socialism, but very vague on how the existing state power that has served the bourgeoisie for centuries can become 'popular power'.

<http://www.venezuela.com/analysis/3095>

It seems that the draft program embodies the fundamental misunderstanding of the 'democratic socialist' left in Latin America, which is, that the state is the instrument of the class that has the power to take it and use it. This misconception is what lies behind the 'socialist' currents of various kinds inside the PSUV. It is the utopian view that peoples' power can be 'constituent' power, in the sense used by Hardt and Negri, and now very fashionable in the Latin American reformist left. As the draft program puts it:

"Of course, all methods of action lead to an end: the taking and exercising of power. This is because possessing power signifies the possibility - the only concrete one - of directly carrying out in practice the programs for substituting one political structure for another, and for changing a defective society for an ideal society. A political party that does not aspire in some way to take power has no reason to exist."

This will result from a process:

"3. Build Popular Power. Socialise power: The program of the PSUV has as its objective making reality the slogan "in order to end poverty you have to give power to the poor", or better said: the people. That is to say, build a government based on Councils of Popular Power, where workers, campesinos, students and popular masses are direct protagonists in the exercising of political power. The program of the PSUV proposes the socialising of political power, establishing the direct exercising of decision-making power by the masses in their organisations; their unrestricted right to scientific research and the free artistic creation, and the democratisation of access to all cultural policies."

More specifically this is a transition from state capitalism to state socialism:

"4. Planned economy. Communal state: The program of the PSUV proposes to move in the direction of a democratically planned and controlled economy, capable of ending alienated labour and satisfying all the necessities of the masses. Throughout this period of transition, which at this moment marches from a state capitalism dominated by market forces towards a state socialism with a regulated market, the aim is to move towards a communal state socialism, with the strategic objective of totally neutralising the law of value within the functioning of the economy." Or as we have argued in *Class Struggle* for some time, "state socialism" in this sense is really "market socialism" implemented by a bourgeois state, or as the draft program puts it:

"A society with property models that privileges public, indirect and direct social, communal, citizens' and collective property, as well as mixed systems, respecting private property that is of public utility or general interest and which is subjected to contributions, charges, restrictions and obligations."

But how is it possible to "neutralise the law of value" while still "respecting private property."

Subjecting [private property] to charges, restrictions and obligations" is exactly the definition of the "shared production agreements" of the oil multinationals with the puppet regime in Iraq, and the "mixed system" in Cuba. By this means does the law of value, and the market, assert its domination.

Yet this program is full of revolutionary rhetoric coming out of the mouths of reformists, including fake Trotskyists, in living contradiction with the state's ongoing defence of private property.

Wherever this contradiction raises itself, inside or outside the PSUV, it is the task of revolutionaries to actively insert the lever of the revolutionary program to win the militant masses to that program.

Fred Nile and fascism

In January this year there was a public meeting in Camden south west of Sydney. The purpose of the meeting was to express opposition to the building of an Islamic college in the local area. The meeting was not against religious schools in principle, it was just against an Islamic school.

ABC television filmed the meeting. The atmosphere of the meeting was similar to that of the Cronulla riot. Some were dressed in one day cricket garb and others in Aussie gear. Stickers and banners of the outright fascist organisation Australia First were visible. In short the audience was sympathetic to fascism. The organiser was Fred Nile and his Christian Democratic Party. Nile apologised for threats of violence blaming the Muslims for wanting their school in the area. He also promoted a so-called fact that similar schools have been a training ground for terrorists. Certainly some schools have done so. But there are many thousands of schools and many millions of Muslims, most of whom are not terrorists. Fred is deliberately playing up anti-Muslim prejudice and giving nourishment to anti-fascist extremists.

Fred Nile's movement originally called "Festival of Light" was formed as part of a conservative right cultural war against the Whitlam government and the radical counter-cultural movement which was numerically strong at the time. Tens of thousands flocked the streets protesting against the "sin and smut" of pornography and homosexuality. Of course most of those participants were not fascists and merely wanted to promote respectable right-wing morality.

Fred Nile politicised the movement forming a party Call to Australia which later became Christian Democrats. On the whole these parties were respectable right-wing and not fascist. But Fred's turn to fascism is not surprising. Given that both parties have succumbed to the Christian moral offensive,

the support for an outside pressure party has been limited. Fred has sought a new audience and that appears to have come from former supporters of One Nation and fringe groups. Fred took a stand last election behind the Australian flag for Australian values. He openly stood against Muslim immigrants and no doubt this gained him some support against the fascist milieu.

Fascism is essentially a class question. It is the radicalised middle classes mobilised behind the banner of chauvinism to smash the working class. From the beginning Fred's movement has had this potential. Today he is promoting himself as the respectable umbrella under which fascists can organise. He is extremely dangerous.

Turkey invades Iraqi Kurdistan.

An estimated 10,000 Turkish troops invaded Iraq backed by the Turkish air force. They were not part of the Coalition's invasion. They had their own mission. This is part of the war against Kurds on Turkish soil. The imperialists, through their "agreements", have refused to allow the Kurdish people their right to a nation. Kurdistan was divided between Iran and Iraq. Successive Turkish regimes and Saddam's regime in Iraq have stood for brutal repression. The imperialist's accusations of genocide referred to his brutal treatment of Kurds. They have made no accusations against their ally Turkey even though Turkish barbarism against the Kurds has been similar to that of Saddam.

The invasion of Iraq has given the Kurds a bit of a respite. There has been no promise of self-determination (indeed the contrary) but the coalition supporting Kurds have lived in their territory in safety, knowing that neither the coalition nor internal puppet regime was likely to attack them.

But of course, Kurdish fighters against Turkey have crossed the border seeking safety. We fully support them doing this. But Turkey will not allow them to have any safe haven. So in the name of "fighting terrorism" Turkey invades. America has declared its support for Turkey "against terrorism". This is indeed hypocrisy. When Saddam brutally repressed the Kurds it (according to America) was genocidal. But when Turkey uses similar brutal methods it is "fighting terrorism". It all depends on where you stand in relation to US foreign policy. It is noteworthy that both the Iraqi government and Kevin Rudd have differentiated themselves from America in that they call for Turkish withdrawal. What they don't support though is Kurdish victory. Kurds should have the right to self-determination in relation to Iraq and Turkey!

The vanguard of the Kurdish struggle is the PKK. This is a Stalinist organization. We have no faith in its politics. But they get our full military support when fighting Turkey. A military victory for the Kurdish fighters which would mean self-determination for Kurdistan would mean a significant democratic gain. It would also give impetus to proletarian revolution not just within Kurdistan but within Turkey, Iraq and the Middle East. But for this to be successful a Trotskyists leadership is necessary. The revolution should not stop merely at democratic tasks. The revolution must go all the way.

Turkey claims to have now left – mission accomplished. But of course, they reserve the right to re-enter. The lesson is that despite claims of concern the allied invasion of Iraq is no guarantee of their self-determination or even their safety.

