

The failure of the “Malaysian solution”

A refugee crisis for the Gillard Labor Government

The Gillard Government has promised not to be soft on refugees When Kevin Rudd promised to be humane, boats kept coming from Sri Lanka. This was a bad look as Tony Abbott could point the finger and accuse Labor of failure to protect Australia’s borders.

Gillard has been advised that the best way to deter “people smugglers’ was to send refugees to Malaysia. Well this “solution” may deter the smugglers But for refugees it is both inhumane and cruel.

In Malaysia there is gross discrimination to both Christians and Shiite Moslems. Refugees in Malaysia are often persecuted and robbed by police. They must pay for their child’s education and for health care.

The High Court has decided that this “solution” is illegal. So Gillard has serious problems.

To continue offshore processing, she must change legislation. Neither the Greens nor the Liberals intend to come to the party.

The Liberals insist that refugees only be sent to a country which has signed the UN Declaration for Refugees. Malaysia has not signed but Nauru, Abbott’s preferred option has.

Gillard does not want a solution which may appear to vindicate Abbott. She also believes Nauru is not a deterrent to “people smugglers” Doing nothing means refugees being processed in Australia and once again Labor being exposed for “failure to protect Australia’s borders” Revolutionaries welcome all workers and oppressed to Australia whether “real refugees” or otherwise. We oppose all detention centres. We oppose all immigration controls. We want workers action to free the refugees.

Revolutionaries care about refugees as people. Yes it is barbaric that they should be forced to suffer massive emotional and personal stress due to being forced to endure barbaric prison camps. Currently refugees are processed in Australia. But they still have to endure concentration camps. Communist Left considers immigration and the refugee issue to be a significant for working class people in this country. Basically you either support the ruling class agenda or you oppose it. Opposing this agenda means standing up for refugees. Unfortunately a large section of the working class, perhaps a majority support “border protection” and oppose the refugees. Last election Tony Abbott successfully won working class support by arguing that he was prepared to stop the boats but Gillard was either unwilling or unable. We must oppose immigration controls outright and win support for refugees based on a class interest. Smash all immigration controls!

The World Wide Occupation Movement

Throughout the world millions are mobilizing against the corporate elite. They are justifiably angry at a system which destroys people’s live for the benefit of a small minority who make millions often billions.

It started in New York but was inspired by the events in Tahrir Square Cairo. In Tahrir Square hundreds of thousands of Egyptians mobilised for democracy. They were seeking to overthrow a dictatorship and not a corporate sector. In Egypt and elsewhere the armed forces exist to defend

capitalism. When these forces there realised that the system was not under threat they supported the mobilisations and the Egyptian revolution won.

The occupation of Wall St had different motivations. Things in America are desperate with many thousands losing their jobs and their homes. There seems to be no way out. Obama's "Yes we can" these days seems somewhat hollow. The Egyptian revolution appeared to give one. For the past six weeks the Occupation movement has spread around the planet including to Sydney and Melbourne.

This movement identifies with ninety nine percent as opposed to the cause of the problem, the one percent. For some the strategy is uniting the ninety nine percent.

Yes there are many positives. Yes they expose the undemocratic nature of the system. Yes they expose the capitalist class causing mass suffering to millions. Yes they offer an alternative vision which is a foretaste of the democracy of the future. Yes they raise important issues such as refugees. All this is positive. We, however take issue with strategy.

The events in Melbourne are indeed enlightening. There a prominent member of the one percent Mrs Elizabeth Windsor (Queen Elizabeth the Second) visited and received solidarity from a massive number of ninety nine percenters. Included was the Melbourne City Council. They directed other members of the ninety nine percent, namely the cops, to move the demonstrators on, which they did, physically attacking and arresting many. The force was on their side.

The point is that if we don't change this situation we don't win. The cops will not change sides. In Queensland during the Civil Liberties struggle one, and only one, cop broke ranks. He was an exception. The problem is also the many thousands who support Mrs Windsor. The Monarchy is, apart from being head of state, an important ideological weapon which they use against us.

It is not just the cops but many others included in the ninety nine percent who are our enemy. They include armed forces, smaller capitalists, security guards and high level bureaucrats.

The problem is also that those who should be on our side often don't support us. Many accept minor gains from the ruling class and identify with the ruling class. They support the Australian flag and put Aussie workers before workers in Asia and the Pacific. Tony Abbott gained support from some working people showing he was the most effective defender of Australia from refugees. He did this in order to enlist support for a programme attacking unions. These workers have to be won to our side on a principled basis. This means a political struggle against their false consciousness and their politics. Traditionally this has been Labor though many are now voting Liberal.

To win we must have a conscious strategy to smash the state. We must unite those with nothing to lose but their chains, the proletariat behind a banner to smash the state, to establish a workers state. We must win over others including sections of the middle class. We must raise important demands such as a republic, the right to gay marriage, opposition to the Northern Territory intervention, unconditional support for the refugees. To be revolutionary we must have total opposition to the system. This will not be achieved by merely declaring ninety nine percent!

In many countries the level of mobilisation is impressive. But make no mistake, the system can usually demobilise even millions of people. Until the new social system is established, we cannot claim victory. If those organised have no political leadership or no force we will be defeated. At

Martin Place, the cops carried guns. They were not doing so for nothing! Yes they are prepared to use them. Yet prominent members of Occupy Sydney made overtures to them, welcoming them to join the occupiers. This is dangerous folly. Of those groups which leafleted, Socialist Alliance, Solidar1ty, Socialist Equality Party and Communist Party of Australia, only the CPA made the point that cops are not our ally. The ninety nine percent/one percent strategy fits hand in glove with their “unity against monopoly” strategy. Antimonopoly capitalists are also our enemy.

In Sydney, two leading representatives of the movement are Mark Goudkamp of the Solidarity group andf Josh Lees of Socialist Alternative. It is a reflection of those two groupings that they identify with a movement which effectively crosses class lines.

We hate to spoil the party. But if a revolutionary strategy is not developed, putting the balance of force on **our** side, this movement could be bathed in blood.

Hickey Family. Not quite justice.

Only one of the charges in the court case against Tisha Hickey and others was sustained. On the others the cops were defeated. The charges included indecent language and resisting arrest. Tisha Hickey herself received \$10,000 in compensation. This is better than expected but it still aint justice.

Tisha was sacked from her job because of this. So much for innocent until proved guilty. So was her partner.

A fact sheet points out “ Tisha was, in fact, so brutally and emotionally traumatised by the whole raid that she found it difficult to leave the house for weeks”

For those who don't know, the story is this. September last year at her home in Riverstone, west of Sydney, Tisha Hickey received the twenty first birthday party from hell. For virtually no reason the cops burst in physically attacked the party goers. When those present objected, they were arrested. In custody two were deprived of their medicines. One suffering from diabetes an another with asthma.

There were three main reasons for this. The Hickey family are black. They come from Redfern and they are related to TJ Hickey, a young kid killed in a police chase. The Riverstone cops fear Redfern style militancy spreading to the western suburbs so they wanted to make an example. In September they made another attack against the family.

Police racism is, of course, nothing new and happens all the time. Blacks and others get systematically harassed, attacked and framed. Some get killed in custody The task is not to reform bad practices or weed out bad apples. The police force is a racist institution committed to attacking black people, gay people, the oppressed and working people. The point is to fight it. What is needed is to mobilise the organised working class to mobilise against all racism. The courts will only support us in extreme circumstances. On the whole they back the system and whitewash it. To fight the system we must fight racism.

Torres Strait Islanders demand autonomy.

In 1988 about the time of Australian Bi-centenary, the Torres Strait Islanders stood up. They demanded self-determination. They formed the Torres Uniting Party to press their claims. For them, at the time, self determination meant the right to secede. That is how communists understand it also. Communist Left supports the right to self determination for Torres St Islanders. This means either succession, or autonomy or the right to join Papua New Guinea if that is what they choose.

Torres Strait Islanders are Australia's Melanesian minority. The Torres Strait is between Cape York and Papua. The nearest island to Papua is about three kilometers away from Papua. So the strait itself is a political issue. Gough Whitlam wanted to divide it in two. The islanders opposed this proposal. So too did Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen.

Recently Torres Strait Islanders put their issues on the agenda. In August, Anna Bligh went to Thursday Island for discussions with tribal elders. She was greeted by demonstrators demanding "autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders" It was also raised by chiefs attempting to win Anna over. They succeeded. Anna Bligh is now a supporter of Torres Strait Island autonomy.

What is meant by autonomy is taking the islands from Queensland and creating a new federal controlled territory equivalent to the Northern Territory. They believe that this will mean money from the Federal government and thence more money. They also figure that this may mean more local control, which they are demanding.

Anna is going to have quite a few problems. It is indeed very difficult to change state boundaries. It requires a referendum. Will she be able to get this through state parliament?

Queensland parliament is full of state chauvinists who will no doubt oppose any loss of territory. Queensland is also full of state chauvinists. We will see what progresses. There is also the question of the attitude of the federal government in Canberra.

In any case, communists must champion the right of Torres Strait Islanders to self determination. We must realise that they have distinct interests and should not lumped with Aboriginal people as an afterthought.

Income management an attack on unemployed and sole parents.

It started with the Northern Territory intervention when Mal Brough brought in the army, took control of Aboriginal territory in the name of fighting paedophilia. The Intervention has been continued by Labor. The government decided that Black people there were spending too much on alcohol. So in order to prevent this the authorities decided that their income should be divided into two. Half of the money to go into our bank account. The other half to go into a "basics card". This is known as quarantining. The money on the Basics card can only be spent at Coles and Woolworths and only on food. This contravened the Racial discrimination Act which the Howard Government abolished.

The Rudd government did not want to discriminate on the basis of race, against Aboriginality. So their solution to the problem is to extend this quarantining firstly throughout the Northern Territory and then, throughout Australia. At the moment high unemployment areas such as Bankstown

(Sydney), Broadmeadows (Melbourne) and Logan City (Brisbane) are being used to trial quarantining. Unemployed are suffering.

The problems are many. You have to go to a Coles or Woolies. This may mean travelling many kilometers, even in metropolitan Sydney. You are not allowed to use your basics card at IGA or Aldi, or at your corner store. You might end up paying more for food as food at Aldi and often your fruit shop is cheaper. If you are from a different ethnic background you are deprived of the food of your culture. You cannot buy Vietnamese or Chinese food on your basics.

The other problem is that you have less for other essentials such as a mobile phone, car expenses and bills. Many need a mobile phone to get work. Many need a licensed vehicle for their family and to get work. In the welfare industry it is often a requirement for the job that you must have a licensed vehicle. Paying for these essentials is more difficult because half the money has to be spent on food.

In order to placate labour aristocratic chauvinists and sections of the middle class, Gillard Labor is quite happy to continue Howard unemployed bashing campaign.

Work for the dole has been modified but is still fully functional. There has been a bit of liberalisation in relation to "breaching" meaning unemployed losing money for not doing mutual obligation activities or missing appointments. But essentially, the fundamentals remain. The Gillard government is an unemployed bashing government.

Unemployment is on the increase. Basically restructuring is continuing. There is a mining boom but manufacturing is in continual decline. Jobs are under threat at QANTAS and have been lost at BHP Biliton. The NSW Government is also threatening to cut thousands of public servants. The government does nothing except attack the unemployed. The dole remains way below the poverty line. At the Taxation Summit, even right wing economists recommended an increase. The Gillard government does nothing.

The attacks on unemployed people are part of the ruling class offensive which attacks all working people. The labour movement must stand up in defence of unemployed people and for the right to work.

Trotskyist Platform and Libya

Trotskyist Platform was formed when a leading member of the Spartacist League of Australia split from that organisation. The issue concerned was the failure of the SLA to initiate a protest or action in support of the upsurge in Palm Island, North Queensland. The Spartacist League rejected the comrade's proposal because they claimed such a rally or action would not be "labour movement centred". There has been no serious attempt by TP to confront the political record or method of the International Communist League (the Spartacists international tendency) whose political framework they fundamentally share

Trotskyist Platform has put out two major statements on Libya. Both take a strong stand against imperialist intervention. The first is published on their web site. There is also a second publication entitled SUPPORT THE LIBYAN RESISTANCE AGAINST THE NATO IMPERIALISTS AND THEIR PUPPETS. We are concentrating on the second document, basically because it draws out strategy. With this we have major differences.

For a start we are in total agreement that there should be total opposition to the imperialist intervention and Australia's role in that intervention. As a TP speaker pointed out: workers action is the best way to defeat imperialist intervention. We entirely agree.

TP expose the bombing by the imperialists and its horrific affects on the people of Libya. This cannot be disputed. Yes this is barbaric and horrendous and must be opposed unconditionally. They also expose NATO's hypocrisy. For Trotskyist Platform, fighting imperialism means fighting their agents in Libya, namely the Transitional National Council (TNC). Yes, there is no denying that leaders of the TNC are working with the imperialists, hand and glove. For Trotskyist Platform this means supporting the Resistance. What they down play is that the "Resistance" is what remains of the Libyan military dictatorship led by Muamar Gaddafi, though one of their speakers calls for victory to Resistance without Gaddafi. The Resistance though, is dominated by the military.

Let's take two steps back and look at what their perspective means in practice.

For a start we believe, and are sure Trotskyist Platform would agree, that it is right to rebel against a military dictatorship such as Gaddafi's. Workers and others are fully justified in standing up to injustice and fighting state repression. There were all sorts of justified grievances against this regime which Trotskyist Platform acknowledge. At some stage this anger was bound to explode, especially with the mass upsurges in Tunisia and Egypt. Any upsurge especially by working class people should be supported. Even for an upsurge with reactionary consciousness, we oppose suppression by a brutal military dictatorship.

Given the weakness in class consciousness, it is though understandable that bourgeois consciousness dominates the movement – and thence a bourgeois leadership. It is also highly probable that such a leadership would sell out to imperialism. This is indeed what happened. We agree that the TNC selling out, allowing imperialism to bomb the country is of serious consequence. The point is how to fight it.

For Trotskyist Platform, at this stage, the revolution is now over and it is back to military dictatorship, for that is what the programme of the Resistance effectively means. They offer no way forward. So it is tough luck for workers who rose up against oppression. Because of the treachery of leaders, these

workers may face imprisonment or death if the Gaddafi forces win. That is what a victory for the Resistance would mean.

None of the alternatives posed, pro-imperialist TNC nor the military dictatorship of Gaddafi is supportable options for the working class of Libya. Both are popular fronts and both are death traps for workers and other oppressed. TP exposes the brutality of the TNC. Both sides are brutal and reactionary.

Should the bourgeois pro-imperialist leadership of TNC be fought? Yes indeed! The bourgeois pro-imperialists must be smashed! Workers committees must be formed to take control of the revolution! A revolutionary leadership must emerge. For a workers and peasants government in Libya!

This requires the construction of a revolutionary communist party with a revolutionary transitional programme.

Such a programme would include many other demands such as rights for women and homosexuals, the right to practice religion without discrimination, against racism towards other Africans resident in Libya, dealing with tribal differences and an agrarian programme.

Some may suggest that talk of arming the workers and overthrowing their reactionary leaders is not appropriate in the current context. We think it is entirely appropriate! Workers at the moment are armed. There are Libyans who understand the communist tradition. We think that a class line break within the TNC is possible. A victory for the TNC under its current leadership, will in fact harden reaction, **not**, as Socialist Alternative suggest, give revolutionaries a breathing space.

Trotskyist Platform points out reactionary forces within the TNC. Included under their banner are pro-imperialist liberals, El Qaida and racists. Yes these we condemn. Proletarians should remove these from the TNC and smash them. Trotskyists oppose the capitalist state dealing with fascism. We therefore support these forces being dealt with by the working class and not the capitalist state or its forces led by Qaddafi.

The Trotskyist Platform document lacks both class and social analysis. Though they do have some. This mainly concerns whether the TNC has majority support. They argue that this idea is fanciful. Begrudgingly they acknowledge significant support from people in Benghazi and the east of the country. Whether a majority or otherwise, the TNC have the support of millions of Libyans. TP claim that many of their supporters are perhaps dupes. In terms of supporting imperialism, they may have well been duped. That is why we must mobilise them to overthrow the leadership of the TNC.

Even accepting their analysis it is clear that the TNC supporters have the support of significant social forces within Libya. This is not a putsch but a mass rebellion. Overwhelmingly they are inspired by the "Arab revolutions" in neighbouring countries Tunisia and Egypt. They represent class contradictions and not a consistent reactionary mass. The point should be to unravel these contradictions so that the uprising can be converted into a real revolution with conscious working class leadership. Whether the uprising has minority or majority support of the overall Libyan population, this is the approach revolutionaries must take.

Yes the Gaddafi camp has contradictions also. Some of them are tribal. Others concern the decent people who have rallied behind Gaddafi's call to fight imperialism. Class lines must be drawn within the resistance.

We agree with Trotskyist Platform speaker Yuri Gromov speaking at a Sydney rally as follows:

“Moreover, if the courageous rebellions by the Arab masses are to go in a truly progressive direction, the idea of simply unity of all against whoever is the current ruler must be replaced by an agenda which is explicitly pro-working class, anti-imperialist and pro-women's rights. And since all wings of the capitalist classes there are tied to, and depend on the corporate bosses of the imperialist countries, the capitalist elements must be driven out of the opposition movements. In the end if political democracy and freedom from neocolonial subjugation is to be won throughout the Middle East, the toilers must seize state power. When they do make such workers revolutions, the toilers in power will naturally progress on to collective ownership of the oilfields, factories and banks. This will finally allow the masses to liberate themselves from poverty and unemployment”

Yes indeed! But in relation to Libya, Trotskyist Platform seem to have forgotten this in order to support forces of a military dictatorship against an imperialist sponsored bourgeois movement. The point is that the proletariat must lead and fight for power. This struggle will be set back either with a TNC win under its current leadership or with a victory to the Gaddafi led resistance. In Libya revolutionaries draw class lines.

COMMUNIST LEFT

Communist Left is a propaganda group based on a revolutionary communist programme.

Our programme puts revolution on the political agenda as the only way basic needs such as the right to work can be satisfied.

We are for the formation of a fifth communist international

P.O. 260 St. Peters 2044 NSW Australia

xred39@hotmail.com

www.communistleftofaustralia.com

