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The Gulf on the brink of war

The imperialists are rattling their sabres. Opening British Parliament, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher threatened that Iraq would be met by force. The United States has just announced a build-up of forces bringing the number in Saudi Arabia to 300,000. With battleships and aircraft in the Persian Gulf to back them up and 150,000 allied troops. The imperialists can't be seen as losers. A victory to Iraq would give impetus to the struggle against imperialism irrespective of Saddam Hussein's motives.

The imperialists have as their accomplice the Gorbachev bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. According to a New York Times article quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald, Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze commented “on the question of whether or not the use of force will be ruled out. .A situation may arise which will call for such a solution”. Well, perhaps the stalinists would prefer it if the imperialists tried harder to impose their will by peaceful means. They have made things clear that when the imperialists do attack militarily they won't do anything about it. They certainly won't arm Iraq or break U.N. sanctions. According to the New York Times article “it appears to Mr Baker (U.S. Secretary of State) and Mr Shevardnadze that while force must not be ruled out and that military action should be sanctioned by the Security Council, they are far from agreeing on when force should be used and what limitations if any should be imposed on the nations involved”. The Gorbachev bureaucracy's polite criticisms over what degree and at what time force should be applied hardly constitutes an anti-imperialist stand.

This is an imperialist war. Last century Kuwait was bought by Britain as a protectorate. Since then this reactionary Sheikdom has been propped up by Britain as a bulwark against the Turkish Empire and its oil exploited at the expense of the Arab people. Kuwait is one of quite a few statelets around the Gulf area which are best described as oil fields with flags. Good riddance to all of them! All power in Kuwait is in the hands of the al-Sabah family who have been maintained by Britain. The majority of the population are immigrant workers from countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. They have no rights. Even the 300,000 strong Palestinian community who have lived there for generations still can't get citizenship.

Working class people in this country have a responsibility to stand up to the war drive. This means taking direct action against the war including strike action. This means opposing all covert forms of imperialism such as trade sanctions. All imperialist action must be opposed whether it be under the blue banner of the UN., the Southern Cross or Stars and Stripes. We must unequivocally defend Iraq.

The only people that we can trust to remove Hussein are the Iraqi working class. A working class movement must be built without delay. Imperialism will only be defeated by force-class struggle. It will not be

Trotskyist support for the popular front

ON OCTOBER 13, in Sydney, the popular front Bring the Frigates Home Coalition had their “teach-in”. The main speakers for the first session were Dr Hannah Middleton of the stalinist Socialist Party of Australia, George Petersen, former M.L.A. for Illawarra of the Socialist Alternative group and a representative of the B.W.I.U.

Hannah Middleton argued that it was against Australia’s interest to participate in the war. George Petersen argued that Australia was a small independent imperialist power. and that the main enemy was the Australian bourgeoisie. During the discussion George Petersen was challenged about his identification with the popular front by Spartacist League and Communist Tendency. Replying to Communist Tendency he commented that whilst the industrial action was the highest stage of the anti-war movement, a mass movement had to be built first. To the Spartacist League he argued that their alternative amounted to “standing on the side selling your paper that a few bought and even less read”. In fairness to the Spartacists they have had a picket at Garden Island dockyard. But both they and the Socialist Labour League have left themselves vulnerable to this type of criticism. They have not built an alternative to the popular front. “OK you can stand on the side and be pure or you can build the Bring the Frigate Home Coalition”. This is this type of argument that holds a bit of weight with quite a few independent activists and they throw out all revolutionary arguments against class collaboration “because they mean that you do nothing”.

The Bring the Frigate Home Coalition follows the common sense rules of bourgeois politicising. Marches, petitions and moral arguments are all part of their arsenal. It is up to Marxists to show that bourgeois democracy is a fraud. Imperialists act not out of morality but out of class interest. Material interest must be fought with material interest. Those with a material interest in fighting imperialism are the working class. Imperialism can be fought not by being pressured by public opinion but by being smashed by those with an interest in doing so.

Now George Petersen has a consistent record in popular front politics. But the leader of Socialist Alternative Phil Sandford should know better. Twenty years ago on behalf of Workers’ Action Sandford authorised a broadsheet that took a principled position. The broadsheet informed workers that “Vietnam is a bosses’ war, STRIKE AGAINST THE WAR! ..Australian workers have a.. particular interest in the Vietnam war since they are engaged against the very people who profit from war — the small group of people who run big business”. Workers’ Action appealed for class action based on class interest. The formulations in leaflets authorised by Socialist Alternative such as “working class and people’s protest” are aimed at making the popular front sound revolutionary.

In fact there is plenty to be done to build a principled working class united front against the war. So let’s set out concretely, step by step, the tasks required:

#1. Draw up a Broadsheet. The purpose of this broadsheet would be to provide an analysis of, an exposure of, imperialism’s role in the Middle East including the artificial statelet of Kuwait. It would expose the role of the Australian ruling class and link the imperialist war drive to the attacks on

working people here. It would show concretely how working people have a direct interest in taking direct action against the war. Thousands of broadsheets would be distributed in work places, train and bus stations shopping centres and social clubs.

#2. Draw up a petition — aimed at mobilising workers and not changing government policy. The petition can be a vehicle for those workers who may not be in a position to become active but who want to show their support. When challenged by union leaders “Where’s your support?” — the petition provides the answer! Of course it should be made clear that much more is required and that signing a petition is only a start.

#3. Organise pickets of strategic industries — to workers whose work has a direct bearing on the war effort. STOP WORK TO STOP THE WAR should become a meaningful slogan. Special attention should be paid to explaining why the workers concerned should strike.

#4. Organise rallies around the slogan BUILD A WORKERS’ MOVEMENT TO SMASH IMPERIALIST INTERVENTION. Rallies to be open to all working class tendencies with an open platform and genuine rank and file participation. All left wing tendencies would be welcome to put forward their propaganda.

#5. Organise smaller rallies throughout working class suburbs.

#6. Lobby and picket trade union and Labor Party meetings. A consistent struggle against the war requires opposition to the Hawke government.

This is only a start. We are open to suggestions. And new tactics will be suggested as the front is opened up to working class people. We do not need the Bring the Frigate Home Coalition. A working class united front appeals to workers with a class interest and not as people, part of humanity. The popular front is not even popular. Of the less than a hundred people who attend the teach-in, over a half were members or supporters of International Socialist Organisation, Spartacist League, Socialist Alternative or Communist Tendency. In the name of mass influence”, I.S.O. and S.A. are selling out their class principles. The SL and SLL are too sectarian. So therefore the Stalinists dominate the action.

East Timor fifteen years of Indonesian occupation

THE COMMUNIST TENDENCY whole-heartedly agrees with East Timor leader Shanana Gusmao’s pointing out of Australian Government complicity in the genocide of the East Timorese people. Under Indonesian occupation, 200,000 East Timorese (out of a population of about three-quarters of a million) have been murdered. Australian Governments, Labor and Liberal, have not merely done nothing — they have actively supported Indonesia.

In 1975, there was a near revolution in Portugal. During this period three colonies — Mozambique, Angola and East Timor — rebelled. For a brief month in 1975 East Timor was an independent nation. No way would Indonesia allow it to remain so. Whilst independent, the party governing East Timor was Fretilin. The other two main parties were the U.D.T. and APODETI. The U.D.T. represented plantation owners and APODETI supported Indonesia. Fretilin, with the overwhelming support of Timorese workers and peasants, started off as a trade union party. It deserted its class roots to become a nationalist party. It wasn’t long before it showed how it could betray that struggle as well.

As soon as the Democratic Republic of East Timor was under threat, Fretilin's response was to appeal to Portugal to again take control to supervise elections. The Portuguese Government didn't do it. Their reappearance would have been a danger to the East Timorese people. Fretilin also crawled to the Australian government (the Prime minister was then Gough Whitlam), Andrew Peacock, the United Nations and the Pope. None of them would assist. An Australian presence would, of course, be reactionary.

Fretilin had betrayed both the class struggle and the national struggle. Proletarian communists could never be in solidarity with Fretilin. This would mean solidarity with betrayal. In East Timor, Australia and Indonesia we have every interest in preventing the Timorese people from being crushed by Indonesia's brutal aggression and in defending their national rights. A victory in East Timor could have a major destabilising effect throughout Indonesia. It is important though that the proletariat take the initiative and transcend the national struggle by fighting for proletarian revolution. Fretilin's betrayal shows once again that it is only the proletariat in this epoch who can consistently carry out the bourgeois democratic revolution — by fighting for the socialist revolution.

The Australian radical left's response to East Timor's independence and to Indonesia's threat was to establish the Campaign for an Independent East Timor (C.I.E.T.) known in some cities as the Australian East Timor Association. This organisation involved a number of political tendencies, trade unionists and individuals, Christians and Labor Party members. But within it, the driving force was the Communist Party of Australia and notably, Denis Freney. The C.P.A. acted as Australia's agents for Fretilin's pursuit of respectability. C.I.E.T. supported a degree of working class action — but only in this context. C.I.E.T. hoped to emulate the 'success' of the Vietnam Moratorium. In 1976 they launched the Timor Moratorium. Within this Moratorium the same divisions emerged. Some wanted the Moratorium to be militant and even argued that demonstrators should physically confront the police. Others thought that militant demonstrations were an obstacle to making them broad and therefore successful. Some wanted the main slogan to be SOLIDARITY WITH FRETEUN arguing that the demos should take a side and identify with Fretilin's perspective. Others wanted the broader slogan INDONESIA OUT NOW! in order to include as many as possible in their broad campaign.

There was no denying the diligence of the campaign: C.I.E.T. put out a regular newspaper and numerous local bulletins. Thousands attended their main demos and there was a multitude of smaller pickets and lobbies. They were sponsored by numerous trade unions, Labor Party branches and of course, most of the radical left (I.S., Communist League, S.W.P., C.P.A., S.P.A., etc.) After a few years' demo's and activism became more spasmodic. C.I.E.T.'s failure to build a movement and change policy was a failure of political perspective. For a movement based on public opinion to be successful, the support of the bourgeoisie is needed. Occasionally on nonfundamental questions they allow the A.L.P. to adopt a few minor policies that they may not like. These may be needed to placate a hostile rank and file so right wing policies can be pushed through. The New Zealand bourgeoisie allowed Lange, for example, to pursue a ban on nuclear shipping. They understood that precisely such a policy was needed to prevent a mass disillusionment when Labour was carrying out their right wing "Rogernomics" policies. There was no way however that they'd allow Labor to destabilise Indonesia — even if it wanted to. Without Labor Party support C.I.E.T. could not get mass support.

And so the pickets, meetings and lobbies became less frequent.

The only movement that could stop Australia being an accomplice of Indonesia's brutal occupation was one based on the mobilisation of the working class. The only reason that the Vietnam Moratorium appeared to work is that the imperialists were being defeated and needed a rationalisation to get out. From the failure of the Timor Moratorium we should learn that the only movement that could defeat imperialism involves the mobilisation of the working class against the state — not relying on public opinion. The fighting in Timor is still going on. The workers and peasants could sure do with some Australian assistance.

The Australian ruling class also have a direct interest in the Timor Sea — oil. The Australian government has just made a deal with the Indonesian government to divide up the seabed. The Timorese people are deprived of their resources which will be exploited by the multinationals with no benefit to the local population. All this exposes the hypocrisy of Australia's 'concern' for the people of Kuwait. When, there is oil to be defended in the Persian Gulf the ruling class cry blue murder in defence of poor Kuwait' and proclaim themselves as champions of independence and democracy. In contrast, when there is oil at stake in the Timor Sea they are happy to arm a brutal dictatorship and help it to murder hundreds of thousands of Timorese.

After the elections

* Reprinted from Redletter 68 November 90

THE CRUSHING DEFEAT of Labour at the elections on October 27 shows that workers had had enough of "their" party collaborating openly with the bosses. Many stayed away, particularly in

Maori seats. Many failed to register, and many more voted in protest for the Greens, the N.L.P. and Mana Motuhake. But workers just as firmly rejected National as an alternative. It was elected as an open bourgeois government with only 48% of the vote (and 36% of the eligible vote).

The defeat of the Fourth Labour Government brings to an end the period since 1984 in which the bosses were able to use a increasingly right-wing bourgeois-workers party to impose draconian solution to their crisis on to the

working class. The massive deregulation and privatisation cost over 200,000 jobs. The result of this move to the right was the disintegration of the Labour Government as the centre and left were purged or split off, breaking the organic links to the labour movement and the working class and leaving the government as an openly bourgeois rump. With its rejection by the working class as "their" party Labour also exhausted its usefulness to the bosses. It could no longer con workers into accepting the most rapid and vicious attacks made on any working class in the capitalist world as in their interests. The divisions in its ranks showed the ruling class that it had exhausted its ability to complete the task of restructuring started by Roger Douglas.

Though the working class firmly rejected Labour, Douglas and his cronies like Michael Bassett still claim that had the leadership remained staunchly behind his policies, Labour would have retained the confidence of the bosses and the middle-class and have been returned as the Government. But there is no evidence that even a united Labour Government could have overcome the huge defection of 250,000 working class voters. As it was National was returned by a mere 66,000 votes over its 1987 total.

The outcome is the return to power of a right-wing bourgeois government, openly hostile to the working class, to complete the task of restoring capitalist growth the profitability at the expense of the working class. National has given plenty of notice of its impending attacks. Before the election, it announced that its Xmas present to workers would include the re-introduction of Voluntary Unionism. Ruthless Ruth has lost no time in detailing the cuts coming in social spending, and her planned work-for-the-dole.

Inevitably, workers will resist this new round of attacks on trade union rights, welfare, wages, and jobs. Having tossed out Rogernomics, there is no way that they will sit back and take Ruthernomics. And while the union leadership is busy trying to sew up trade-offs with the National leadership in a desperate attempt to keep their jobs, the question is, who will lead the fightback?

In the aftermath of Labour's defeat we can draw some conclusions and make some predictions about what is in store for the working class. The verdict of the working class against Rogernomics saw most of the "right-wing" cabinet and MP's tossed out of their seats. But most Labour MP's seen to be untainted by Rogernomics managed to survive, showing that the swing was against Rogernomics, not Labour as such.

Under Moore's leadership in opposition the remaining left leaning 29 Labour members will set about re-establishing organic links with the workers, trying to convince them that the hi-jackers have been dealt with. To help them restore their credibility with the workers they will have the willing assistance of the radical left serving the self-interest of the labour bureaucracy and the sectional privileges of the labour aristocracy. The National government will not introduce proportional representation. With only 48% of the vote it would never get a 40 seat majority under PR. This will drive most N.L.P. members back into the Labour Party, though the Greens will probably exist as part of an international pressure group. The survivors of the radical left will regroup around a new 'democratic socialist' party made up of the left of the N.L.P, Andersen's Socialist party of Aotearoa, and the CPNZ's increasingly populist "United front of Labour".

Like stalinists the world over, the radical left in NZ are responding to the changes in the Eastern bloc and the deepening economic crisis by talking about the defending bourgeois democracy against the threat of fascism. They accept that the so-called "socialism" in the East has been rejected in favour of "democratic socialism" and the mixed market state economy. In the west their programme is to unite all "progressive" forces into electoral popular fronts to defend their "democratic" national states against fascism.

In New Zealand, it is inevitable that an upsurge of working class resistance to a new round of attacks by the state, will be deflected into a popular front contesting control of that same state Just as in the popular front period of the 1930's, straight-jacketed working-class struggle within a national chauvinist electoral alliance, will lead to its defeat at the hands of the class enemy.

In the absence of a revolutionary party to guide working class struggle, many workers will find their spontaneous fight backs held back and sabotaged by the popular front. It is vital that revolutionaries have a clear view on how to fight inside popular fronts. So long as workers are attracted to either a reconstituted Labour Party, and/or a regrouped "democratic socialist" party, it is necessary to intervene to break workers away from the popular front.

The tradition of revolutionary Trotskyism has a rich experience to guide our actions. The main lessons are that in the name of defending capitalist democracy, the popular front will use any force necessary to smash revolutionary challenges to their leadership. In doing this they are preparing the ground for the violent destruction of the working class at the hands of fascist bands and state forces. The chauvinism of the popular front lines up workers in their so-called “democratic” states behind their national flags against workers in “fascist” states

The main lesson to be learnt from the general election and its aftermath is that the working class in the period ahead must build organisations independent of the bourgeois state. The need for a Trotskyist Party and Trotskyist programme which guides workers struggles from their immediate demands through to the seizure of state power, was never more urgent than today.

petty bourgeois socialists celebrate ‘market’ socialism

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AT THE RECENT Socialist Scholars Conference in Sydney the Communist Tendency (with which Communist Left is in solidarity) put out the leaflet reprinted below. It warned of the dangers of abandoning revolutionary Marxism for some middle class melange of “market socialism” and environmentalism, in the face of the so-called crisis of “socialism”.

These warnings were right on target. “The future Is Red”, it said. “As in Marx’s day it is the proletariat that holds the key to the liberation of humanity. Today there Is chaos and pessimism. Thanks to Stalinism, Marxism has been totally degraded in the eyes of millions of workers. The re-establishment of Marxism as a living tradition requires a ruthless exposure of Stalinism a materialist explanation for Stalinism. if the participants of this conference can make one small step toward the regeneration of Marxism as a living force, then we are part of the movement that will liberate humanity. The alternative is degeneration and despair.”

The conference banner raised-up behind the speakers’ dais summed up the mood of the conference. On a grey background, (the merging of Red and Green no doubt), the lettering was in black and white. The phrase “The Future of Socialism was in black; the “Socialism” associated with “scholars” was white — drained of all revolutionary blood. This socialist future was clearly not red!

And so the conference went. The organisers, the Democratic Socialist Party, left Trotsky behind decades ago and are today apologists for “progressive” Stalinism in the form of the left-bureaucrat Gorbachev. The DSP and the remnants of the Eurocommunist CPA are engaged in a “project” to build a new popular front for Democratic Socialism. This new middle-class brand of socialism is the direct descendant of Stalinism and Pabloism. It doesn’t see the Stalinist bureaucracy or the bourgeoisie as counter-revolutionary and having to be forcibly overthrown, only some of them — the rest will peacefully volunteer to empower the working class out of sheer humanity.

This, you might think, sounds familiar. Isn't it just the latest born-again model of social democracy? You would be wheeled out now? Well the answer is that the middle-class intellectuals (and the labour bureaucrats — East and West — who are their allies in the labour movement) are in a state of terminal despair. Socialism has failed! of course, this is a slight exaggeration. It is only their nerve that has failed.

Behind all the noise about "defeat" is merely the defeatism of the petty-bourgeois and their bureaucratic allies. But as usual this requires a tactical retreat from the working-class and revolution, into the arms of the bourgeoisie. This is nothing new. In every crisis the petty bourgeois intelligentsia mince towards their paymasters, renouncing their former communist" or Marxist" sympathies.

How to keep the "socialist project" alive? Simple. The Russian revolution went off course at some point, making the failure of "communism" or "socialism" inevitable. A number of theoretical heresies are discovered along with necessary "academic" corrections. (This after all is the role of "socialist academics"). Perhaps the Bolsheviks were justified in revolting (thanks) but they went wrong immediately. Rosa was right, Lenin was a dictator, the party substituted for the class (it doesn't matter that the class was being smashed by its fellow class-mates in the name of bourgeois democracy), and the revolution became totalitarian. Socialism failed, go back to Kitschy and Marx, and get it right next time!

Or, slight variation. The Bolsheviks got it right. They knew socialism in one backward country was impossible, they were justified in substituting for the class while trying to defend the revolution and activate the German revolution. But they should have stuck with the NEP and flagged away forced collectivisation. Socialism failed, back to Bukharin, Trotsky even! The market was the missing link!

Talk about reading history backwards. Today's "democratic socialists" want to endorse Perestroika and the reintroduction of the market to overcome the crudities of the plan, and Glasnost, as the "democracy" that Stalin trampled on. Therefore we must trace back the deformation of socialism to the point where the "market" and "democracy" ceased to exist and construct a "correct" model of the transition to socialism. Academically corrected, we can now proceed: bourgeois democracy + the market = "democratic socialism". This was self-styled "Marxist businessman", New Left Books boss, Robin Blackburn's task. Blackburn takes the view that Stalinism equals the suppression of worker democracy and of the market. He cites Trotsky's comments on the plan of the market in 1932 in support of the current "reforms".

In 1932 Trotsky still hoped that the Stalinist "centre" could be overthrown by a regenerated workers' movement internationally. His view that the market was necessary to "control" the plan, pre-supposed independent trade unions, and workers' control of industry. The market would function as a transitional measure, under the control of a healthy worker's state, for allocating social labour in the isolated, backward state until economic scarcity had been overcome. In 1936 in *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky re-iterated his view of the market as a transitional mechanism, but now it pre-supposed a workers' political revolution to overthrow the bureaucratic caste, before it could be implemented.

Blackburn, of course, given his background in the Pabloite Fourth International, regards the Stalinist bureaucracy, not as counter-revolutionary, but part good, part bad. The good part is the left bureaucracy under Gorbachev which is responding voluntarily to workers' demands for democracy,

political pluralism and independent trade unions, and at the same time re-activating the market mechanism as the check to centralised planning. Thus the “good” Trotsky is frozen in time as of 1932 (avoiding the earlier and later “bad” Trotsky who doesn’t agree with Blackburn) and paraded, along with right-wing economists such as Alec Nove and von Hayek, as the “theorist” of the demise of Stalinism and the rise of “democratic socialism” in the USSR.

If the Stalinists and Stalinist apologists see the petty bourgeois as the historical agents of the socialist transformation, the ISO, the International Socialists, must credit the bourgeoisie with this role. After all, for them the USSR and the East German states are State Capitalist. Apart from the revision of Marx on the nature of capitalism, how can they explain the relatively peaceful handing over of power by state capitalists to rival national capitalists? How is it that the East German “state capitalists” have united with the West German capitalist class? This means that the ISO revises Lenin on imperialism. How is it that the “state capitalists” facing economic crisis renounce bloody repression in favour of bourgeois democracy and popular fronts where they share power with workers’ parties? Trotsky revised.

Are any of these recent lessons in ISO “Marxism” applicable to Western capitalist states too? Perhaps the Imperialist ruling class may hand over power to their rivals. Or as crisis deepens in the US economy, will Bush demobilise the army, pull back from the Gulf and offer a popular front with the Democrats, the Labour unions and Greenpeace?

The fact is that the Stalinist bureaucrats are not and cannot act as a capitalist class. But as Trotsky predicted they must, given their failure to develop the economies of the workers’ states, attempt to turn themselves into capitalists to retain their privileges. Those “academic socialists” who see the “left” bureaucrats (whether they are recognised as bureaucrats or capitalists) as progressive, voluntarily sharing power with the working class,

rather than being forcibly removed from power by the working class, are the agents of capitalist restoration inside the working class. They must be exposed and thrown out.

Marxism the future!

If you want a belly laugh, try going to Eastern Europe, look someone in the eye and try telling them about the virtues of state-owned monopoly”. This comment from Bob Hawke at the recent Federal A.L.P. conference was effective in scoring a point against the A.L.P. Left-wing on the issue of privatisation. The ruling class is cock-a-hoop. Thanks to the very real failure of stalinism (which they call socialism) the capitalists now have the right to penetrate Eastern Europe with their investment. As well as this they now consider that they can call their right to plunder the authority of “rational economics”.

“Capitalism works and socialism doesn’t” is the lesson they hope to draw for the world in order to rationalise their world-wide exploitation. Millions face no future under this system apart from austerity. The ruling class want to ensure that they see no real alternative. They are backed by millions of ex-”so-called” communists who are happy to disown their past. In Britain the Sunday Times declares “COMMUNISM R.I.P” and this bosses’ rag is backed up by Gareth Stedman Jones in the publication Marxism Today. This academic renegade informs us that the only aspects of Marxism

worth preserving are those insights which” have long ago been absorbed into the mainstream of social democrat and liberal thought.”

In Australia we have witnessed the debate in Australian Left Review in this year’s February issue between Paddy McGuinness, writer for the Australian, and Brian Aarons, former leader of the now dormant Communist Party and now of the New Left Party. For Paddy McGuinness capitalism is economic rationality:

“To me it is clear enough that if one is genuinely committed to environmental issues, for example, it is but dangerous and stupid to rule out from the beginning analytical approaches or policy measures which might help tackle problems just because these are not in accord with the kitsch”.

He brands socialism as just rhetoric “kitsch” and real economics means capitalism.

The problem is that to a degree he has a point — for too many leftists rhetoric does not have a scientific basis and socialism is posed as merely a moral ideal. Take as an example: the Communist Party used to give out idealist models of socialism while their practical measures amounted to trying to make capitalism operate better. It was Marx who demonstrated the bankruptcy of capitalism and the economic basis for communism. Today, thanks to the bankruptcy of Marx’s proclaimed adherents it is the capitalists who raise the banner of economic rationality and precisely when their system faces the biggest crisis since the great depression.

So what does Brian Aarons counter this with?

“Similarity, there is no reason why a socialist economy should not have a market or even private enterprise.

“Where to now for history? Who knows?! The lesson of history is that it is foolish to expect anything except the unexpected. In this situation there are various possibilities. For what it’s worth, my own feeling and bias, is that any real progressive possibility latent in the late 20th Century lies in the creative merging of the socialist, social democratic and liberal tradition together with the new ideas of the green feminist and multicultural movements, to provide the ideological basis for a new social system beyond all which have been tried.”

This ideological dog’s breakfast hands the debate to Paddy McGuinness, game, set and match!

No, Brian Aarons! You cannot maintain a socialist society with capitalist economic relationships! Let’s look at what Lenin had to say on the question:

“I shall sell and make my bit; the more I make the less I shall save and the more others will’ This is the accursed legacy of private property which left the people to starve even when there was enough food in the country when a measly minority grew rich both on wealth and on poverty That is the economic law that says that when there is a food shortage, frantic profiteering is engendered by every step toward what is called free trade, all attempts to encourage it are utterly pernicious and are a step back from the work which the Food Commission is doing amidst incredible difficulties in the fight against millions of profiteers whom we inherited from capitalism with its old private property maxim. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’. If we cannot root out this evil then we shall never build socialism.”

Speech at a joint session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet and All-Russia Trade Union Congress, January 17, 1919.

Collected Works Volume 28 page 396.

The New Economic Policy introduced by the Bolsheviks appears to be contradicted by this. However when they introduced it as a temporary measure they were well aware of the potential for counter-revolution. They urged the strengthening of the organised working class organisation to fight the counter-revolutionary threat. In their article in *Socialist Worker* September '89 entitled *Human Values and the Future of Socialism* leading

members of the Democratic Socialist Party, Jim Percy and Doug Lorimer justify perestroika by placing it under the same banner as the N.E.P. Well! There are some similarities. It is the differences, however, that are crucial. First, there is no indication that perestroika is merely a temporary measure. There is no strengthening of proletarian power to combat what reactionary tendencies that may emerge. On the contrary — for Gorbachev it is a principle to strengthen precisely the nonproletarian sectors. For Gorbachev, the market is the principle. He has rejected planning outright!

Fighting bureaucracy for Lenin was not a question of promoting human values as opposed to bad models. Both Lenin and Trotsky saw the struggle against bureaucracy in terms of fighting alien class forces — those with a material position at the expense of the working class. Gorbachev hates many aspects of the bureaucracy. But he fights this by promoting precisely those sectors antagonistic to the proletariat. Under Gorbachev inflation and unemployment have become features of society in the Soviet Union. So has small scale profiteering. Nationalist tendencies, bureaucratically suppressed under Stalin, have been exasperated.

If you accept the post-capitalist stalinist states as socialist then it is clear that socialism does not solve the problems of the environment or the liberation of women or the question of nationalities or even qualitatively improves the conditions of the working class. Well there a few many countries super exploited by imperialism where workers would be happy if their conditions were improved to the level of those in Eastern Europe. But Eastern Europe is hardly a shining example of what the new society should be like. We have a responsibility to the working class to explain the degeneration of these states. If we cannot explain this degeneration in terms of material forces then, as Paddy McGuinness points out, we descend into kitsch.

To consider these societies to be socialist and to draw conclusions about socialism equating it with bureaucratic degeneration, is to do the cause of socialism a gross disservice. The planning that doesn't work within the Soviet Union is not the planning of proletarian power. It is an attempt to plan through a bureaucratic command system. This lacks both the discipline of the market and the discipline of workers' control. The result is gross inefficiency. Through planning we will ensure the material comfort for all and protect the environment.

Karl Marx understood that capitalism would destroy the environment but he saw the destruction as a product of a particular economic system. From the stalinist degeneration it appears to many that the problem is not economics but technology itself. This is the conclusion drawn by the Green movement in its various forms. As a result Green strategies involve token guerrilla actions, the personal politics of trying to buy ideologically sound products and even promoted ideologically

sound capitalists. The Greens welcome support from the Australian Democrats. Despite proclaiming a fundamentally radical vision of society in terms of its real immediate programme they cover for capitalism. They are often anti-working class when they blame working class consumption and not the bosses' profits.

Whilst some of the issues they raise are supportable there can be no concessions made to Green ideology (as made by the DSP). Gorbachev argues that all classes have an interest in defending the planet. The DSP rationalise this by pointing out the Comintern argued that it is permissible to make a limited bloc with the national bourgeoisie when it fights imperialism. The circumstances are totally different. For a start even a limited block involves ruthless exposure of the inconsistencies of the national bourgeoisie. In no way is it to be conceded that all classes have an interest in fighting imperialism. But second, the defence of the environment requires the destruction of the bourgeoisie. To invent a criterion of universal values, involving all including the bourgeoisie seriously degrades, in fact, sells out the struggle to expose the capitalist system.

The future is Red. As in Marx's day it is the proletariat that holds the key to the liberation of humanity. Today there is chaos and pessimism. Thanks to Stalinism, Marxism has been totally degraded in the eyes of millions of workers. The re-establishment of Marxism as a living tradition requires a ruthless exposure of Stalinism — a materialist explanation for Stalinism. If the participants of this conference can make one small step toward the regeneration of Marxism as a living force, then we are part of the movement that will liberate humanity. The alternative is degeneration and despair.

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