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Bali 12/10/2002 The price of imperialism.

Like millions of people throughout the world, we feel for the victims of the Bali bombing. In no way did those innocent people deserve to die in that way. No one knows the precise reason for the attacks yet. It is suggested that it could be another action by the followers of Osama Bin Laden, or perhaps the fanatical Muslim grouping such as Jamah Islamiah (J.I). But there could be other possibilities.

The attacks were not merely on Australian and international tourists. But as well as that it was an attack on the Balinese and their economy, many small business people there face an uncertain future. Bali has been an Indonesian cash cow. It has supplied billions of dollars to the Indonesian economy from international tourists. Indonesia is being hit economically. No doubt the bombing will be used to expose the weakness of President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Indonesia is a country facing internal conflict, perhaps even a nationalist conflagration. Indonesia has lost the secessionist war with Timor (thanks to Australia which now controls Timor economically). It is fighting internal conflicts in West Papua, Aceh, Moluccas. Indonesia is a prison house of nations. Could any of the radically nationalist groupings have been responsible for the bombing? Perhaps!

Whatever the cause of the brutal bombing, Australians should realise that the Australian government is no innocent. Certainly Indonesians have good reason not to perceive Australia as such. Many Indonesians regard Australia's role in East Timor as forcefully removing and taking over a small piece of their country.

Australia is blamed for other interventions in Indonesian affairs. Australians have, for example, supported West Papua. From the Indonesian nationalist point of view. Australia is in no way an innocent by-stander. And Australians holidaying in Bali represent a symbol of western decadence. In no way was the terror raid supportable. But Australians should not be surprised if radical Indonesian nationalists take their vengeance out on this country or Australians. Australia plays a significant role in South East Asia - a reactionary role. Australia economically, militarily and politically facilitates super-exploitation, Even in the case of Timor, Australia is making the Timorese pay by ripping off their oil. All Australian intervention in the region must be opposed - unconditionally

Of course, it is possible that Howard and Megawati are right in blaming El Qaida and their Indonesian allies. In this case Australia is paying the price of being a loyal accomplice of American imperialism. The wholesale takeover of Afghanistan and the threatened war against Iraq are totally unjustified. Of all the world leaders only Tony Blair of Britain has gone all the way with the USA as much as John Howard. So isn't it understandable that El Qaida would view Australia as an enemy almost on a par with "great Satan" USA? Australian working people have no interest whatsoever in allying themselves to the US war drive against either Afghanistan or Iraq or anywhere else for that matter..

So what does this horror bombing mean? Well of course it means grief and mourning to those who survived and all their friends and relatives. Our heart goes out to them. We also mourn for those victims from other countries. This includes the Balinese. Bali as an island has been devastated. The economy for many including humble workers has been shattered. And there are serious political consequences for Australia both nationally and internationally.

First there has been an upsurge of racism directed against those who appear to be of the Muslim religion. This has included both verbal abuse and physical attack. The governments, both state and federal have been careful to disassociate from and in fact condemned this. But the state attacks from ASIO against "suspects" has been brutal and vicious and barbaric.

Attorney General Daryl Williams justifies these raids as essential for security etc. But since when is it

justified to surround the house with paramilitary forces and put a gun to someone's head. And what about the trauma to children when are forced to endure the horrific experience of seeing this happen to their parents. There has been no suggestion that the occupants of the homes were armed or threatening. No one has been charged. Aren't people supposed to be innocent until proved guilty?.

once again come out of the woodwork The government of course verbally condemns overt racism. But these ASIO attacks are playing a vanguard role in attacking ordinary Muslim people.

This reactionary campaign has bipartisan support. In fact both Liberal and Labor are only competing with each other in terms of who can be the most reactionary. While Howard flaunts the power of ASIO. Carr in New South Wales boasts he will introduce legislation modeled on America's Patriot Act which has been attacked by civil libertarians. Between the two major parties there are only minor tactical differences. Internationally, Labor wants a closer relationship with Megawati than Howard.

Arrogant Howard is demanding that Megawati clean up against terrorism. This is easier said than done. Basheer is a revered cleric. Extremist Muslims have the support of millions of Indonesians. They have support within the armed forces. They have support amongst the Muslim Amb-one-e who are fighting the Christians. Basically, if she takes the ultimatum seriously risks the stability of Indonesia

The attacks in Bali has forced Howard to think locally. It is realised that Australia cannot on one hand participate in Bush's aggression campaign and deal with the threat closer to home. This is a debate not about opposing imperialism and/or Australia's participation. It is a debate about imperialist priorities. It must be stressed that any Australian intervention anywhere is reactionary.

We, the workers movement in this country must unconditionally oppose any Australian interference in any country rationalised by "war against terror". We also must oppose the offensive against Muslims both by ASIO the state police and by white reactionary racists.

Abu Bakar Basheer may be a terrorist leader. But he is also revered by some as a Muslim cleric. This includes

Muslims opposed to terrorism. Of course the line between the two may not be clear. Some may be unwitting dupes or agents without realising what they are doing. But. "contact with Basheer" association with Basheer" is the governments rationalisation to crack down innocent Muslims. In no way must we be party to it. In fact the legislation rationalised as "necessary to deal with terrorists" will be used against the left and workers movement in this country. "Terrorism" is basically what the government defines it to be. Muslims are also facing harassment and physical attack from white racists. Since the Bali bombing, these have

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Defend Iraq! Smash imperialist intervention!

Big bad Bush has calmed down a bit. Invade at all costs was his line not so long ago. The Republicans have been victorious in a recent election campaign in the US. Bush won support, travelling around the country rallying support for action if the United Nations fails to come up with a satisfactory resolution. Well he is talking about the UN in rhetoric. Before he claimed that the US had the right to invade anywhere. In the United Nations, Bush has received some opposition from France and Russia. Bush has altered his approach as a result. But make no mistake, the US imperialists still mean war and the opposition is based not on whether the US has the right to dictate to Iraq but the way it conducts its operations. All intervention against Iraq, by whatever means, is reactionary. Only one major world leader has been totally in the camp of US imperialism (Howard doesn't count) and that is Tony Blair of Britain. The Blair Dossier has been the number one piece of evidence in the warmongers arsenal. But its information is superficial and often false. On ABCTV current affairs shows, weapons inspectors who had inspected Iraq last time deny even as a theoretical possibility that Iraq has some of the arsenal claimed. Correctly the French and even Putin of Russia denounce the document as propaganda. Blair Labour is so degenerate that it is even more imperialist war mongering than many more liberal Tories.

Anyhow the whole framework is reactionary. There is no basis for considering Iraq, in any way an expansionist power. Many countries definitely have weapons of mass destruction. There is a much greater potential threat from Russia India, Pakistan Turkey and Israel. Basically you are welcome to have "weapons of mass destruction" as long as you are America's friend. Of course America has "weapons of mass destruction". It has a nuclear arsenal which can blow up the world at least ten times over.

US imperialism is the world's number one terrorist!

Bush is using September 11 to promote hysteria and rally support. Well there has been some contact between Hussein and El Qaida. But this has been minimal. In fact it has been a lot less than other Muslim regimes. Defeating Saddam will not prevent El Qaida style terror raids. If anything it will promote them as USA is once again exposed as "great Satan". We think it is pretty perverse the idea that it is worth killing up to one million Iraqis in order to save USA from an attack which only killed thousands.

The reason Iraq is being victimised is that Saddam's regime represents a minor obstacle to America's unfettered control of the middle East. Bush and his Republican imperialists want to use Iraq as a scapegoat, in order to control that state but to keep others in the region under wraps. They fear economic consequences of Arab states

ganging up and demanding high oil prices This is the real reason for their warmongering.

We revolutionary communists are no friends of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. We give military support to the Kurds in their struggle. We strongly oppose the suppression of basic rights there. We call on the organised working class in that country to overthrow him as soon as possible.

The only people to whom we can entrust the overthrow of Hussein are the Iraqi working class.

War is very much on the agenda. How much Howard will commit Australia's armed forces is unclear. The only reason Howard may not commit totally is that to do so might mean vulnerability with regards to a terrorist attack originating from East Asia. But there is no doubt Howard is fully with Bush. There is also no doubt that Crean Labor would fundamentally join Howard making only minor tactical criticisms. In short there would be bi-partisan support for the imperialist war drive.

We of the workers movement must take a different side. We must be for the defeat of imperialism - unconditionally! We must be for the victory of Iraq in any imperialist war. We must oppose any war whether its unilateral or under the banner of the United Nations. We must oppose war by other means namely trade sanctions. Many ordinary Iraqi's have been killed courtesy of a UN blockade which hasn't really effected Hussein.

US imperialism is 1,000 times more reactionary than Saddam Hussein !

Imperialism has a class interest in attacking Iraq. There is one force which has an interest in smashing the war drive, and that is the working class. A workers movement to smash the imperialist war drive must be built as a matter of urgency. How we recruit workers to take a principled stand? By showing them that to accept the war drive means accepting the ruling class offensive against their class. Howard is using this issue to build support for this government and his agenda. And that agenda *is* union smashing. Is Labor any alternative? No! Last Federal election Kim Beazley boasted that he was minister for defense and no wimp last time Bush Senior invaded Iraq. Indeed Labor led the war drive. Simon Crean boasts his close friendship with Tony Blair. In short a Labor government would mean no change.

Such a workers movement would take direct action against the war effort. It would not subordinate itself before bourgeois allies such as Greens or Democrats who sometimes make apparently anti-imperialist statements but who reject the only class who can act decisively against imperialism - the working class. Unity with those bourgeois forces is suicidal for the movement.

Cunningham by-election: a new shoot for the Greens; the dead rot of Labor

Cunningham is centred around the industrial city of Wollongong on the South Coast of NSW. This should be ALP heartland. It is hard core union territory. There would be no way that the Liberals could have won. They didn't even officially stand. An independent who identified with them did. The Cunningham by-election is of historical significance. For a start it is the first seat won by the Greens in any lower house chamber, state or federal. This will give them money from the government and perhaps free television coverage from the ABC. They are now mainstream and not fringe. This will boost their efforts throughout Australia as mainstream people will think of them as winners and not protesters

Of course, they pick up votes from protesters also. Many ALP leftists will vote for them hoping that Simon Crean will listen to their desire for a more principled and humane Labor – a Labor which differentiates from Howard on principles and not just on technicalities. They also pick up the support of old communists. They may be right wing with their support for Tibet and the Dalai Lama. But they identify with the old Stalinist peace campaigns and popular fronts. They are a comfortable milieu for old Stalinists to move into in their old age. Within the Green movement are remnants of left radicalism, Maoist and proMoscow Stalinism, Pabloism and even anarchism.

Bob Brown has done a lot of things right. He has been far more effective than the Democrats in tapping into disaffected Laborites. He has been clear and unequivocal on the refugee question and in opposing the imperialist war drive against Iraq. He has made these central issues. The rank and file exLabor could vote Green and feel comfortable that they stood in opposition to Howard and that Bob Brown would stand up against Howard in Parliament.

Revolutionary communists acknowledge Brown does genuinely oppose Howard on key issues. But his Green alternatives are inadequate and the basis of his opposition remains within the capitalist system. There are some progressive demands within their list of demands. They support a shorter working week and oppose antiunion legislation. There are also some reactionary ones such as their support for gun control. Communist Left takes issue with the Greens on the programmatic level.

But far more serious is our opposition on the philosophical level. The whole Green outlook is reactionary in the literal sense. They oppose the development of technology and want to go backwards - literally. They see the existence of industry as the cause of the crisis of the pollution and the environment they want abolish mass production and factories. They don't see that it is the development of the productive process that will liberate humanity and defeat the crisis of the environment. With genetically modified food, we could easily feed the planet using far fewer resources. Of course with every experiment there is risks. It was risky when vaccination was first developed. And capitalism fouls things up. There is no denying that capitalism could use technology (any technology) in a disastrous way. But that is the fault of capitalism and not the technology. The Greens by failing to realize this take society backwards. Greens are winning support in their own right through fear of technology and the crisis in the environment. Basically by their antitechnologic philosophy they let capitalism off the hook.

The vote was, very much a repudiation of Simon Crean style Labor. Noone really likes the heavy handed machine style of ALP head office. Simon Crean comes over (and is) colourless and a bit of a little sir echo of John Howard. On every issue Labor and Liberal come over as one. Occasionally Labor wants to things a little different but there is no challenge to the fundamentals. Labor supports the war on terror, the war on Iraq and putting refugees in concentration camps. Labor is perceived as and is a bureaucratic rump committed to the status quo.

There is an idealistic generation coming through. They see problems with the world and want answers. But what does Labor offer to confront these problems? Nothing really! Labor is so bureaucratic, right wing and cynical that it doesn't even have a left cover to offer. The idealistic younger generation will certainly not be looking to Simon Crean.

The Greens have idealist points on the board. They have consistently opposed Howard on immigration and refugees, the war against terrorism and are confronting the problem of the environment. They will certainly pick up the support of many idealistic young people as well as ALP Left and those in tune with Stalinism.

In short, the Cunningham by-election could be the first of many Labor seats which may be lost to the Greens. Labor is so compromised that it is powerless to reverse this trend. In many ways this is a swing to the left. But it is a swing away from the working class and any identification with the workers movement. We are paying the price for the defeats of reformism and Stalinism. We are also paying for the inability of the left to put forward an alternative to Labor. The Greens are filling the vacuum.

DSP liquidation: a crisis for Socialist Alliance

The Socialist Alliance has always been an unstable formation. As someone said from the floor at a public meeting "We have been lucky that there hasn't been another Timor crisis." Such a crisis would have found the partners within the Alliance on different sides. Last time the DSP supported Australian troops to Timor. Given the political diversity of those in the Alliance it is only a matter of time until some similar crisis will tear the shaky rotten block to pieces.

The current crisis of the Alliance is not so much one of politics but organisation. but it is an organisational manoeuvre by the Democratic Socialist Party which has massive consequences. They plan to call themselves the Democratic Socialist Tendency, liquidate any public presence and concentrate all effort into building Socialist Alliance. They also want the SA to utilise the DSP's considerable property.

Many rank and file non-aligned SA members are quite sympathetic. One such rank and file at a public meeting described the various organisational affiliates as "comfort zones". Well given that they all have roughly the same electoral minimum programme why do the various groupings exist? It appears that they are making themselves redundant. If the philosophical and political differences have no programmatic basis then why have an independent organisation?

The DSP has been met with distrust and suspicion from the other organisational affiliates. For a start the social weight of DSP will be increased. As GST will be concentrating on alliance building they will have more influence over new members and increase hegemony within the Alliance.

Other groupings fear being swallowed up. But more than that they fear a change of character for the Alliance. What has come to the surface is different understandings of what the Alliance means to the contending groups. For the DSP the Alliance has been a regroupment outfit, something transitional to a communist party.

For the ISO the Alliance is seen as a halfway house between reformist Labor and revolution. ISO plan to build a formation which is not revolutionary though clearly to the left of the Labor Party. They want an organisation in which Left Laborites may feel comfortable in joining. The next step is getting them to join ISO which they consider to be revolutionary. But first steps first.

The DSP is known to be anti-Labor. Many of its politics, political habits and its reputation, the ALP left, official or otherwise, find unpalatable. The ISO have to cooperate with the DSP. But they fear that DSP hegemony or perceived DSP hegemony will swamp the operation. This response exposes ISO Laborism. But hostility to the DSP is understandable even if, as they claim, the DSP is acting in good faith. DSP deny they are changing the political

complexion of the Alliance.

Communist Left has opposed the Alliance for one basic fundamental reason: if revolutionaries stand for parliament they do so to expose parliament and counterpose revolution. This must be made clear by revolutionary demands - a revolutionary programme. We do not stand on the basis that parliament can be utilised for the people with "progressive" demands. Basically parliament is a tool of the ruling class and must be exposed as such. Socialist Alliance argue for a set of demands which remain totally within the parliamentary framework. They are a left variant of reformism.

What working people need is the programme of revolution. This is not our system. This is not our state. Political power must be transferred to the organised proletariat organised as a new ruling class - the dictatorship of the proletariat. Behind the banner sections of the middle classes such as small farmers can be won over. But they must be won over on our terms. We must not capitulate to middle class privilege.

Communist Left rejects this swamp because we believe revolution must be put on the political agenda for working people. As for the ISO they are paying the price of having the same electoral programme as the DSP and having roughly the same programme for demonstrations also

Howard's clever maneuver on gun control

There is no doubt that John Howard is a clever man. He knows how to utilise an issue for maximum political gain for either himself or the Liberal Party. Recently there were some brutal shootings in Victoria. These posed the question of wither or under what conditions, the public's right to carry guns. Howard made a clear and unequivocal statement - more guns should be restricted.

This achieved two things. Firstly it took the initiative and wooed sections of anti-gun liberal public opinion. Secondly it put Labor premiers on the spot. Damned if they do or damned if they don't. Gun legislation is a state issue not a federal one. Howard can say what he likes because he is out of the firing line. State Labor premiers are. John Howard has his eye on Steve Bracks and Bob Carr.

If Labor Premiers don't act many middle class supporters might support alternative parties, the Greens and the Democrats. Perhaps even the Liberals. However if they do act there are other dire consequences.

Bracks won office by targeting rural electorates as well as provincial towns and small cities. Bracks can't afford to lose any of them. These are precisely the electorates which value their guns and would be inclined to move back to the coalition now that it has overcome Kennett excesses. For Bracks there are many electorates where this is a key issue. Bob Carr also has electorates threatened in this way.

Communists do not believe in electoral horse trading. We believe in class principle. We also do not believe in liberal moralism. Gun control must be opposed because it leaves guns under the control of one force - the capitalist state apparatus. Violence is forced on oppressed minorities. Black people faced with the prospect of Ku Klux Klan or similar obnoxious racists, need guns to defend themselves. It may also be technically illegal for the Klan or fascists to carry guns also. But cops, especially in redneck and racist areas have a tradition of turning a blind eye to those possessed by the right. They will, of course, arrest those on the left found in possession of weapons. Those who call for gun control to fight the right are seriously deluded. Gun control only disarms the oppressed and exploited

Argentina: Factory occupations

As we have reported the situation in Argentina is desperate and remains desperate. It is estimated that thirty five million are unemployed officially or otherwise. Millions are also owed their wages and are effectively working for nothing. In Argentina this means starvation as there is no social security system. Desperate measures include sorting through rotten food to sort out the odd bit which might be edible and going to the country to rob some farmer of a cow or two.

People are fighting back. Militant picketers are blocking highways and more important factories are being occupied. Workers at the Grissinpoli bread stick factory have occupied, when during the factory's planned closure, the workers were offered ten pesos each and asked to leave. They didn't. Instead they occupied and formed a 24 hour picket to protect the workers. The City legislature basically expropriated the factory and placed it under workers control.

Also in Buenos Aires, the Ghelco factory is being run by the workers after they took over. Ghelco makes flavoured powder used in ice cream. The workers were owed thousands of dollars from the bankrupt company. Workers picketed and prevented the removal of equipment

Workers have occupied the Brukman factory. With the support of neighborhood assemblies unemployed and other activists, the riot police were forced away.

According to Luis Caro, a lawyer who represented 40 occupied factories at least 100 have been occupied and expropriated nation wide. Workers at Grissinpoli, Brukman and Gelco are running their factories very efficiently indeed.

All this is pretty heady stuff. It does indeed show the capacity of working people to organise and fight. And it points to the future. One day we will have a society based on workers control, in Australia as well as in Argentina.

But the problem is that this is merely a holding operation and capital still rules. Occupations must be generalised

and linked to a programme which confronts and smashes the capitalist state. The workers are running their factories but under capitalist rules. And this can only be a dead end. A revolutionary party in Argentina is a matter of urgency.

Brazil: working class president elected.

Social democracy has gone a long way from the days when decent unionists entered parliament to get a better deal for working people. These days social democracy is a well oiled bureaucratic machine, a straightjacket committed to containing and strangling working class action.

Lula, the new President of Brazil is different. He is a true believer who aspires to fight for his class but within the framework of the system. In this, he is a breath of fresh air. No doubt millions of Brazilians think so.

The problem is that capitalism will not allow it. Basically Lula will be forced to govern on capitalism's terms - or not at all! The capitalist state is not a neutral instrument. but committed to the maintenance of capitalist power will dispense of any dissident leader when they see fit. The moderate reformer Allende President of Chile was dealt with by brutal and bloody force by General Pinochet despite the overwhelming support of the Chilean masses. We fear a similar fate might await Lula.

Meanwhile he can be used to head-off class struggle. The bosses know that the economy is buggered. They know that the Argentine collapse will spread to Brazil. It is spreading there already. So they are getting a working class representative to their dirty work and run the Brazilian economy. To stay in power Lula will have to maintain order. Meanwhile Brazilian workers will be suffering just like their Argentine class comrades.

Workers in Brazil must put class interest first. They must not listen to Lula's appeals for order. In Brazil a revolutionary party is a matter of urgency. Lula's attempts at class compromise must be fought. The alternatives are either Argentine style austerity or Chile style state repression.