

Bougainville Back to work but crisis remains

On August 1 workers at the Conzinc Rio—Tinto Australia (CRA) copper mine went back to work. The New Guinea state has assured that workers would be safe to work there. There is however a curfew and large police reinforcements in the area. As well, two people, including one Australian (a consultant For CRA) have been threatened by the Panguna rebels. The conflict is not resolved and fighting will probably break out again. The Panguna people, who are peasants, are demanding self-determination for Bougainville and adequate compensation from CRA, and therefore not a proletarian movement. The PNG government has taken advantage of a serious antagonism between the Panguna rebels and the workers to project itself as defending these workers. The rebels did, unfortunately, attack the workers as well as CRA and the New Guinea state. They are talking about Melanesian socialism as being the non-antagonistic system idea for Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Revolutionary communists, however, must reject this and advocate proletarian power as the road to socialism. Nevertheless, the Panguna people have legitimate grievances which must be taken up the working class movement.

The Panguna copper mine was opened on August 1 1969. Its establishment can only be described as an armed expropriation by the CRA imperialism backed up by the armed force of the colonial administration. Troops with tear gas and batons enforced the take—over. New Guinea was the an Australian colony so therefore the Australian government was directly responsible for enforcing the interests of finance capital. The Panguna people received solidarity. It came from the Australian working class. Industrial action was supported by the B.W.I.U. , the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, the Western Australian and Queensland Labour Councils, the Newcastle Trades Hall Council, the A.M.I. E.U. (meatworkers' union), amongst others. The action involved not just protest and paper resolutions. It included real industrial action with teeth. CRA increased its compensation from its initial offer of \$20,000. It is only thanks to this industrial muscle that the amount c compensation was increased.

When it was opened the life of the Panguna mine was expected to be thirty years. This means that in ten years from now the people will be paupers. There will be a massive hole in the ground where the mine was The top soil will be eroded. The pollution from the mine, flowing from the river is killing off the fish. Understandably. the local farmers want massive compensation, but they are using tactics which attack the workers as well as CRA. The working class of Bougainville have a militant class struggle tradition. The Bougainville Mine Workers Union was the first industrial union established in PNG. In both 1969 and 1974 this union carried out significant strike action against low wages and unsafe conditions. The Union, however, faced strong opposition from both the Australian colonial administration and after formal independence, the Somarie government. Pangu Pati emerged as liberal-national bourgeoisie party pledged to gain independence and support union and progressive struggles such as the Matangan Association. However, on administering the PNG state, Pangu has dumped any progressive component to its policies. It has taken a strong stand including supporting repression against union struggle in the name of national unity.

Naturally the current Prime Minister Namlau who is also of the Pangu Pati also takes a string stand against the Panguna people. But it is not as strong as that demanded by Pius Wingti, the former Prime Minister who is on the extreme right. The difference between the two is one of degree. The hue and cry of course concerns the PNG trade balance and its massive foreign debt. Papuans and

New Guineans have an interest in keeping this mine open, they argue. What they are doing is letting CRA get away with robbery. Over 80% of the wealth generated from the mine goes into their pockets. The workers get low wages and the people of New Guinea, as a whole, get minimal compensation for CR digging up their wealth. The reality is that the Papua New Guinea state is acting as an agency for British and Australian imperialism. Formal independence has only meant semi-colonial status for PNG.

In Bougainville the working class is divided from small farmers. To defeat CRA and imperialism unity between the two must be achieved. Bougainville, as elsewhere, it is only the working class that is consistently revolutionary. It is the only force that can consistently defeat imperialism. But the working class must win over the small farmer Panguna movement by taking up the progressive demand raised in their struggle. If they controlled production they could work out a work rate which could minimise land destruction and prolong the working life of the mine. EXPROPRIATE CRA ADEQUATE COMPENSATION TO THE PANGUNA PEOPLE.

The struggle of the Panguna people is a national struggle. They feel a massive cultural gulf between themselves and the authorities in Port Moresby who, they claim, do not relate to their religion. They point out that Conzinc Riotinto of Australia, with the government's consent have bulldozed a burial ground of religious significance to their people. They feel closer to the Solomon Islands Republic whose capital is Honiara. Working class people and the Panguna should have the right to join whatever country they wish. It is to be hoped that the Bougainville struggle transcends nationalism and fights for a revolutionary workers' and small farmers' government. However in Papua New Guinea it is important for the revolution that the right of the Bougainville people be recognised. Before formal independence support for the rights of the Bougainville was widespread amongst the Left. However after independence the interest of the economy came first and the Bougainville people are now accused of being greedy. The boundaries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands were drawn up by imperialism. Why shouldn't it be the Solomon Islanders who get the benefit of the mine? Meaningful unity of the people of the area would be based on mutual respect and consent.

Papua New Guinea is a time bomb. Like the rest of the colonised world its massive foreign debt creates economic chaos. The ruling class endeavour to put the burden of this onto the back of workers, unemployed, small farmers and other exploited and oppressed. It is understandable that cities and towns have a law and order problem with youths who have no future except poverty fighting back in a lumpen way. Homeless people have turned to squatting. It's now a mass movement. It is our task to channel this anger into a coherent struggle against the Papua New Guinea state for a revolutionary workers' and small farmers' government. The umpteen realignments of parties and individuals trying to find a formula for a stable bosses' government shows the crisis within the Papua New Guinea bourgeoisie.

It is no accident that Professor Blayney, that notorious racist, expresses concern that any destabilisation of Papua New Guinea could threaten Australia. He's right — and it's for that reason that revolutionaries in Australia have every interest in supporting a revolutionary upsurge there, as well as because of our desire for that country to break away from the chains of capitalism and imperialism too. The Australian imperialists are well aware of what is at stake. It was no accident

they deliver to the government Iroquois helicopters. If we want to oppose the Australian state in this country we must oppose their participation in the imperialist exploitation of Papua New Guinea

Formal independence is limited by political infra structure [including a governor general] to guarantee that the imperialists maintain both economic and political control. In Papua New Guinea consistent democracy can only be achieved simultaneously with the establishment of a revolutionary workers' and small farmers' government which will make democratic demands redundant. We, the class—conscious working class must be -Fully aware that our interests lie against Australian imperialism and with the emerging Papua New Guinea proletariat.

Bloodshed in Beijing

The bloodshed at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, put to rest the liberal democratic image of the Chinese Stalinist regime. China has been in the Western imperialists good books over recent years for two reasons: firstly, for its overt support for U.S. Foreign policy, especially against the Soviet Union and secondly, for opening up the country for imperialist penetration. The ruthless bloodshed at Tiananmen Square showed that behind the liberal facade the bureaucratic teeth are ready to bite. The bureaucrats' military lackeys, like cornered rats, had no answer to the movement students were generating but naked state repression. The movement had created divisions in the army and the Communist Party and had stimulated the growth of an independent trade union movement. #Had the working class politically taken the initiative; a political revolution was on the agenda for China. The students were demanding democracy. Many of their demands for free speech were progressive. However, democracy is a class question. The question of democracy is linked to material interest. Rupert Murdoch has the democratic right to publish his ideas because he has billions of dollars. The working class cannot raise this sort of money. Democracy is a form of bosses' rule which is the most progressive because the real inequality in society, the class system, lies exposed, not covered by political protection.

It is understandable that when the system is in acute crisis, the bosses don't permit it. It is true for most capitalist countries in the world. Consistent democracy is a luxury only a few countries are allowed to have. What the students in China were demanding was more rights -For their own self-expression. Students in China, as elsewhere, are in a position of privilege. Many of them aspire to be bureaucrats. The students were not calling for the restoration of capitalism. Their movement could be accurately described as a Stalinist reform movement. In May the Singapore paper the Straits Times noted banners of former Maoist leader Chou En Lai. Someone who defaced a portrait of Mao Tse Tung was reported to the authorities. has recently been sentenced to life imprisonment.

The decisive question for China was — what role for the proletariat? The protest was led by students. There was some participation by workers, but a reticence to join in. For some it was because their long memory of the cultural revolution and their opposition to the role students played then. Others supported the upsurge but for economic reasons were happy to allow students to play the leading role. However, on the whole, the students did not address the fundamental questions facing the working class. What is fundamental is — what rights and what power the working class and the poor will have. The students gave no indication that the bureaucracy would be overthrown. They were just demanding its liberalisation. The upsurge was very much influenced by the Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (economic restructuring) movements in the Soviet Union. China had the economic changes towards free markets without democratic freedoms. The students demanded the latter. The

economic re-Forms instituted by the Chinese bureaucrats are anti—working class. They have created unemployment and undermined living standards. It was not accident that the protests began during the visit of Mr. Gorbachev. The working class had every right to be suspicious of a movement of the privileged which only considered secondary the repression an-F the economic burden they were suffering. The role of Trotskyists within China would have been to fight for proletarian leadership for the political revolution. Those such as the Socialist Labour League who call the existing struggles in China political revolution seriously denigrate the struggle for the leadership of the working class.

The bureaucracy is putting its foot down; activists in the upsurge for democracy are being hunted down and tried. Some are being executed. Along with this is the propaganda campaign to re-write history. They are assisted by their agents in Australia — CPA(M-L) and more notably the pro-Moscow SPA. In May, before the bloodshed, the CPA(M-L) talked about the unique relationship between the army and the people. It was a relationship that didn't last. Since then they have been telling us that what counts is class struggle here in Australia as if what the Stalinist parties do is of no consequence. Whereas the victories of the Stalinist parties have inspired the working class, the gross degeneration has demoralised it. The third Indo-China war has helped the swing to the right in Australian politics. A successful political revolution in China would stimulate revolutionary movements throughout the South East Asia. Their crushing will retard the revolutionary movement.

The pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia has become the most craven apologists for the Beijing bureaucracy. Their logic is that if you are against socialism, even in its bureaucratized Stalinist form you must be pro—capitalism. And if you can't believe the capitalist press you therefore have to believe what is, in reality, the Beijing lie machine. The Beijing bureaucrats have finally discovered foreign agents among t students. However, you cannot manufacture a movement o-F millions even

if agents did provoke a premature confrontation. The reality is that the students had no arms and were no immediate physical threat. The Beijing bureaucrats are well aware of the issues at stake. They must scrub out the memory of Tiananmen Square lest the spirit flare up again. The Stalinists, are unable to make a serious Marxist analysis of what happened, because such an analysis would challenge their interest both in China and Australia. Proletarians must make such an analysis so that the next upsurge goes all the way to political revolution and not stopped dead in a blood bath.

CONSENSUS IN POLAND

Consensus is being reached in Poland. General Jaruzelsky is president with the acceptance of the independent trade union SOLIDARITY, although not with their active approval. He led the military crack-down against toe Polish working class in 1981. He has jailed many Solidarity leaders including Lech Walesa. However more remarkable is the coalition government between Solidarity and the Peasants' Party who previously had blocked with the Stalinist ruling party, toe Polish United Workers' Patty PUWP). For the first time since the Second World War, since the Red Army occupied and nationalised the economies of Eastern Europe under the gun. has a non—Stalinist Party been allowed to administer a post - capitalist state. This marks a first for the Stalinist block although there are moves in Hungary for greater participation by non-Stalinist parties. Poland now has a Solidarity Prime Minister.

The situation reflects the utter desperation and bankruptcy of both the Stalinists and Solidarity. Poland is a bankrupt society. parasitic and reactionary bureaucracy has strangled the progressive

gained of a nationalised economy. Thanks to the inefficiency of Stalinism, Poland cannot deliver OdEic goals and services for its people. The Stalinists have also tied Poland to the International Monetary Fund. As a result Poland has a massive foreign debt. The PUWP has been committed to servicing this debt which has resulted in near starvation conditions for the Polish working class — longer and longer queues for less and less sausage bread and potatoes. The result has been an increasing combativity of the Polish working class. This was met with military repression. The Polish bureaucracy has now found a way to contain the Polish workers - through their Solidarity misleadership. The combativity of the Polish working class has been in stark contrast to its ideological and political weakness. For this it is suffering. Sections of solidarity have illusions in the western Capitalist class including Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Whilst these imperialists have made full use of this propaganda value they have been unwilling to trust the Polish working class. It has been mainly the German and French imperialist who have most to lose should Poland default on paying its debt and these imperialists trust the bureaucracy as the most reliable agency for their repayment. In 1981 solidarity stood formally for repudiation of Poland's debt. Today in 1989 both solidarity and the bureaucracy are united in repaying the bankers' at the expense of the working class.

Poland is a bureaucratic economic mess. It's a mess which the Stalinists are unable to resolve. It knows that as long as it remains a mess there will be anger and resistance from the working class. Having no answers they have handed over the reins to Solidarity who have now the honour of administering the economy. The solution proposed by Solidarity is market orientated reform. This is supported by the Stalinists. In its bid for economic efficiency food prices are no longer subsidised. This meant since August 1 an inflation rate of 200/.. Forecasters say that by December the rate will reach 300Y.. The working class is angry. Strikes in Gdansk and Silesia are demanding 130% rise in wages. Now it's Solidarity who has the job of administering the economy and containing strike action. They have so far been successful in getting swift settlements. They point out that bad Stalinist economic policies can only be solved in the long term. How successful the Solidarity movement can be at containing class struggle remains to be seen. The workers, are demanding bread and can only be stalled so far. The solution in Poland is not market socialism which has, once again, shown to be anti-working class, but political revolution. Revolutionary leadership must be built within the Polish working class to channel the struggle in that direction. Solidarity is being allowed to have its key demands carried out — namely market reforms and parliamentary multi-party democracy. This does not constitute capitalism in Poland and the Spartacist League who argued that Solidarity threatened Capitalist restoration have been shown to be wrong. The Spartacist League even supported military repression against the Polish working class to stop Solidarity. Equally wrong have been those who uncritically hailed Solidarity. The Communist Tendency has consistently opposed the leadership of Solidarity but argued that it had to be fought from within the working class, not by bureaucratic repression. We are confident of the exposure of solidarity. However, the problem is that unless a revolutionary alternative is built the workers will look backwards wanting a Stalinist system which though bureaucratic and inefficient could at least give them a slice of bread.

Whither the International committee?

The International Committee of the Fourth International (I.C.F.I.) whose Australian section is the Socialist Labour League has written volume concerning the degeneration of their British section which was led by Gerry Healy. The message they give us is this: the internationalism of the I.C.F.I.

defeated Healy's British chauvinist nationalistic deviations. In fact they use the final demise of Healy to boost the credentials. But why if the I.C.F.I. was a revolutionary International did it take twenty years? and why was there no record of any opposition to serious betrayals from any of the sections of the ICFI? Nevertheless the S.L.L. will claim the ICFI won through in the end and is continuing its glorious tradition of internationalism.

They have quite rightly written volumes about their history. There has been one book by Dave North entitled 'The Heritage We Defend' and an issue of Fourth International (The ICFL theoretical journal) called 'How the Workers' Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism, 1973 - 1985'. Both of these, to say the least, skip over one part of their history — Healy's work in the British Labour Party around the paper 'Socialist Outlook'. This omission is not trivial. The Healy tendency crystallised within the Revolutionary Communist Party (which was the British Trotskyist organisation in the forties) by arguing for an orientation towards the Labour Party. This orientation deserves scrutiny.

It is well known that in the late forties the secretary of the International Secretariat, Michel Pablo, argued that there was a 'new world reality' in which he predicted "centuries of deformed workers' states". His conclusions were explicitly liquidationist. Pablo argued that revolutionaries must operate 'from inside these tendencies to amplify their left centrist ripening and to contest for leadership. This required them "not to come out as Trotskyists without a full program not to push forward programmatic and principled questions". But in Britain there was no left centrist current in the Labour Party so therefore one had to be created. In order to create one, Pablo recommended an orientation to the left reformist leader Bevan. However he had a problem in that the British section constituted itself as the Revolutionary Communist Party. This problem had to be dealt with and Gerry Healy was the man to do it. In 1947 under direction from the International Secretariat the Healy minority joined the Labour Party. In 1948 they established their paper 'Socialist Outlook'. This paper had on its editorial board Tom Braddock, M.P. This paper was virtually uncritical in its attitude to Bevan. BEVAN GIVES THE LEED THE WORKERS WANT went one headline. "Only through the defeat of the Right and its policies will a real Labour government be elected" was its general thrust. This paper did not demand that the left expel the right wing socialist policies. 'Socialist Outlook' adapted to the Bevanite left it was. The lauding of Bevan continued even after he became Minister for Labour and responsible for jailing workers. A key component of Pabloism was, and is, adapting to Stalinism. 'Socialist Outlook' did that too, its articles were uncritical of the Tito bureaucracy and the Maoists in China. In 1953 the Healy tendency and the Lambert tendency in France and the U.S. Socialist Workers' Party (which could not affiliate) declared themselves the International Committee. They made orthodox criticisms of the International Secretariat and Pablo. But did this change the practice of Healy and 'Socialist Outlook'? Not one iota! The same old Bevanite refrain continued. The Labour Party leadership eventually prohibited 'Socialist Outlook' but in no way did Healy and his cronies press the issue. No one got expelled. Healy instead sold 'Tribune', the overtly moderate reformist Left Labour newspaper published by a group of M.P.s, including Tony Benn. Healy's supporters were instrumental in establishing the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) which was, of course, established through the Labour Party. It was then as it is now, a popular front.

In 1961, Gerry Healy and supporters established the Socialist Labour League. This was entirely organisationally separate from the Labour Party. It was the predecessor to the Workers' Revolutionary Party. Naturally its liquidation was not so gross or so blatant as Socialist Outlook's. However their main slogan was LABOUR GOVERNMENT PLEDGED TO SOCIALIST POLICIES. The

initiator of this slogan was Michel Pablo who saw it as part and parcel of his grand plan to liquidate Trotskyism. The Socialist Labour League was always a centrist attempt to give reformist politics a revolutionary cover. To sound revolutionary it would call for a general strike. But the general strike was only linked to the election of a Labour Government “pledged to Socialist policies’. They’d call for a new leadership but all their demands for example nationalise, would remain within a reformist frame work.

The question is: Why hasn’t there been a full account and Marxist analysis of Healy’s role in the Labour Party by the International Committee? The answer is — it would challenge the authority of the International Committee. At no stage did the ICFI constitute the continuity of Trotskyism. For a start, it was not a consistent international tendency. Even while they were formerly united, the SLL, SWP & OCI held different public positions. For example, George Novack openly advocated Marxist humanism. The ICFI did make orthodox criticisms of Pabloism. But its gross deviation have shown that this is simply not good enough. The deviations since 1973 have been accounted for in International Committee publication. They involve selling out to such third world leaders as Gaddafi, Khomeini and Hussein of Iraq. These sellouts involve selling out Iraqi Stalinists to the bourgeois Baathist government. It cost them their lives. These are extremely serious betrayals. “But our internationalism overcame them and defeated the nationalist deviation” is what the ICFI chorus. But the reality is that there is no record of any serious opposition within any of the sections of the ICFI. The fact is that the ICFI was not a revolutionary International.

Their covering up the history of ‘Socialist Outlook’ is of consequence. What it does is to legitimise rotten tactics and opportunism and give them orthodox credentials. The demand currently raised by the Socialist Labour League in Australia “Force the Left to expel the Right wing from the ALP” has its origin with the Healyite orientation to the Labour Party. The SLL hangs on to this demand. The difference between Left and Right within the ALP is of no consequence to the working class. What the SLL was doing was re-orientating the working class back towards a bankrupt reactionary party in the name of a non-existent faction fight. It is the Left that initiated the Accord and Australia Reconstructed. Both of which the SLL consider reactionary and we agree with them. The point is to attack the Left outright and not merely because they accommodate Hawke and Keating.

There may be some readers who think So what about the history of the SLL. What counts is what they’re doing today. The SLL values its record despite this critical section being glossed over. Such views which show contempt for history are at variance with Trotskyism. Trotsky’s views were succinctly expressed by his secretary N. Braun [Erwin Wolfe] who put it as follows.

The Commune people preferred to present a full balance sheet and they thus proved their bureaucratic dishonesty. Such methods are intolerable in our ranks. A REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION WHICH SUPPRESSES ITS OWN PAST OR TRIES TO LIE ABOUT ITS SERIOUS MISTAKES OR CRIMES HAS NO FUTURE. IT WILL NEVER BE THE PARTY OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE PARTY OF WORLD REVOLUTION. [emphasis as in original N. Braun ‘The mass Paper’

Appendix 1 to L. Trotsky ‘The Crisis In the French Section’]

This gaping omission from ICFI history is alone sufficient to expose the authority of the International Committee. Members and supporters of the Socialist Labour League should demand a full balance sheet. If they fail to get one — draw up their own. The only serious conclusion that can be drawn is

that the ICFI in no way organisationally or politically represents the continuity of Trotsky's Fourth International.