

Red 8 dec '89

bulletin of the communist tendency

East Germany: Stalinism in Crisis!

The pulling down of the Berlin wall made spectacular television viewing. What could be better for the capitalist class than to witness hundreds of thousands of East Berliners, denouncing Communism and praising the West as they team across the once brutally imposed barrier? All they have to do is point the finger subtly, show concern and offer to assist the East Europeans to find their new, freer society.

What the West is really looking forward to is investment. They want to profit from the freer economic environment that the bureaucrats are already offering. Politically, they want to retard the revolutionary movement throughout the world by showing that the fruits of Marxism Leninism are bureaucratic failures, plagued by inefficiency and scarcity.

It is Stalinism that has failed in Eastern Europe and not Marxism or Leninism. What's now occurring in East Germany is a direct consequence of the strategy of Stalin and the parasitic and counter-bureaucracy he represented. This bureaucracy is still in power in the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy did not establish capitalism, but it did put itself in a position where it could cream off benefits for itself within nationalised property relationships. Proletarian power was, and is, a threat to its position. Since the thirties, the bureaucracy played an active role in strangling revolutions in Germany, Spain, France, China and Vietnam. Elsewhere it dragged the revolutionary traditions of Marx and Lenin through the mud of chauvinism. The so-called Communist Parties acted as its willing agents. During the Second World War the Communist Parties supported their imperialism's war effort. The Soviet bureaucracy knew that it was surrounded by a hostile world imperialist system so it armed themselves to the teeth. Their highly successful military not only defended the Soviet Union against Hitler but marched into Eastern Europe. The Red Army established post-capitalist states under the gun. Local bureaucratic regimes, all ultimately dependent on the Red Army, were imposed on the people of these countries.

Germany was eventually divided into quarters by the occupying powers as a measure to stop any possible resurgent German nationalism. The Soviet portion became the German Democratic Republic. Just as socialism cannot be established in one country it cannot be created in the artificial GDR. The fact that a wall had to be built to hold the population in testifies to that. The GDR needed the wall to prevent technicians, doctors, nurses and skilled labour from deserting to the West. The GDR is now forty years old. It can boast some achievements — industrial growth and a high standard of living. According to some figures the GDR is in the top ten countries in the world for living standards. These figures should be understood in the context of shortages, queues, bureaucratic interference and the lack of freedom that the people have to endure.

West Germany (the FRG) has a higher standard of living. It is a world imperialist power. Unlike East Germany, it has a world empire based on finance capital. West German capitalists have extensive investments in the rest of Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. The West German working class gain marginally from these investments. It is on this basis that West Germany's high standard of living is maintained. West German imperialism is thoroughly and utterly reactionary. Imperialists

have their eyes on East Germany. They want to exploit its labour and utilise its markets. They talk about a united Germany. This appeals to the families who have been split up by the Berlin wall. But what imperialists want is unity on their terms. This unity is thoroughly and utterly reactionary.

Nationalised property relationships in the GDR, whilst they were established in a reactionary way, can become organs of working class power. That is, if the working class overthrow the bureaucracy through a political revolution. The Communist Tendency advocates for the Eastern bloc, not classless democracy, but working class power. This requires the organisation of real workers' democracy. The Stalinists are making 'planning' a dirty word. This is partly because their attempts to plan from a position of privilege don't serve the needs of working people and partly because encouraging the market place will create more wealth and power for the yuppies of Eastern Europe. Working class power requires a democratic plan under full workers' control. The Communist Tendency believes in the leading role of the party. But we oppose imposing this leadership by administrative methods. Any Communist Party must earn its right to lead. All representatives of the working class must be elected and subject to right of recall within it.

The market mechanisms that have been introduced in Eastern Europe have further attacked working class living standards. Unemployment is now becoming a fact of life. Inflation is rampant in Poland and Yugoslavia. In Poland, the freeing of prices from state control this year had meant an escalated inflation rate, recently estimated at 500%. Yet there is no relief from these shortages of basic commodities. Political revolution is the only way forward for the Polish working class. Whilst other Eastern European states may not be as badly off as Poland, the market economy is a danger in those states too.

The imperialists welcomed the changes in the Eastern Block for several reasons. They want to penetrate with their investment. They want to weaken their military opponent, the Soviet Union. But most important, they want to degrade the name of Marx and Lenin in the eyes of the exploited of the world. What is being exposed is not Marxism Leninism but Stalinism. A Marxist analysis must be made of Stalinism and the Stalinist states and the lessons learned. German unification on imperialist terms would be a major blow against the international working class and would ease capitalism's restoration throughout Eastern Europe.

What next for Thatcher 's Britain

For ten years now, the working class, the poor and the unemployed have been suffering from hard Thatcher. The capitalist system under her direction, has reduced whole areas particularly in the North of England to industrial wasteland. Once thriving there is now as much as fifty percent unemployment there with no foreseeable prospect of jobs returning. Savage cuts in housing, health, social services and transport add up to a very bleak picture for a Britain with now has one of the worst health services in Western Europe. One thousand old people died of cold during the winter of '86. There is officially estimated one hundred thousand people homeless. Most British housing is publically owned. Construction has been dramatically reduced. In 1979, there were 66,000 new houses built. In 1986, there were 18,000 new houses built. Public transport has been attacked ruthlessly with fares raised and services cut. For all this there is deep ingrained hatred for Britain?

Thatcher the Snatcher.

Margaret Thatcher has held tight to the reins. Last October, for the first time in nine years, opinion polls showed Labour winning had the percentages been translated into parliamentary seats. Many will feel relieved that the agony of Thatcher could be coming to an end. However Kinnock has made it clear that the fundamentals of Thatcherism will remain. In the name of the national interest, he is promising to re-nationalise power and water supplies and to compensate share holders. Many of the industries that have been denationalised will remain so. These include British Telecom, British Airways, British Aerospace, British Rail Hotels and ferries. Most cuts in public spending will be retained and he promises there will be no sweetheart deals with the unions.

Kinnock is offering a more humane version of Tory policies — so much so that Thatcher doesn't bother to stir up the fear of socialism in Labour's manifesto — instead she challenges Kinnock's sincerity in espousing her very own principles. At the Tory conference she stated that she did not believe that her opponents stood for strong defence home ownership (meaning selling of council houses) and personal rectitude". She also points out that Kinnock does not espouse the virtues of wealth. This is true but this counts in Kinnock's favour. Given that the system offers nothing to working class people. Thatcher's confrontationist approach is hardly appropriate in persuading them to accept the system. The political advantage for the Labour Party for the system is that it can co-opt the working class. The problem for the ruling class before was that Labour was too radical and advocated "alternative strategies" that, whilst not being socialist interfered with their plans. Now according to Mr Kinnock, Labour is "ready to govern". This means Labour is thoroughly respectable from the point of view of the British ruling class.

Over the past ten years, Mrs Thatcher has transformed the terrain of British politics. She's turned "socialism", "welfare state" and nationalisation" into dirty words. At the start of her priministership, in 1979 and in 1980, she was greeted with hostility from an ascendant Left in the Labour Party and a growing Wet movement in the Tory Party that feared the possibility of a coalition government (Labour, liberal and Social democrat). The Wets thought she had better soften her stand Labour Left were growing by attracting the Far Left (groups such as Workers' Fight, Workers' Socialist League and International Marxist Group) like moths to a light globe.

Thatcher's hard line Imperialism

One event in 1982 changed the course of British politics dramatically — Thatcher sent the fleet to reclaim the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands which Argentina had just claimed back. The British fleet won. Thatcher was made a great stateswoman, a decisive politician of action. From British imperialism's point of view, her course of action was entirely appropriate. Her critics' approach wasn't. They believed in imperialism and in Britain's right to the Malvinas, their proposed method of action was less effective (they supported United Nations' intervention). When they argued that imperialism should be defended by inefficient means, they were ruthlessly exposed by Thatcher and the efficient media machine backing her. This set the direction of British politics. One British trooper, on arriving home in the midst of a rail strike threatened "call [it] off or we'll send in an air strike". The ruling class had successfully exploited loyalty to imperialism to smash the working class at home.

For revolutionaries, there can only be one reaction to Thatcher's aggression and that is revolutionary defeatism. Britain is a world imperialist power penetrating throughout the capitalist world. Argentina is a semi-colony. It has formal independence but an economy dominated by finance capital from world powers such as Britain the USA and Europe. The main role of the Malvinas was,

and is, as a military base to ensure that the interests of British capital are defended by force. Any attempt to remove this imperialist preserve is progressive. The Malvinas are Argentine! General Galtieri of Argentina must be criticised for not doing the job properly. The inability of the Argentine bourgeoisie to fight effectively imperialism should not be confused with Britain's imperialist domination. We must be revolutionary defensive towards Argentina and revolutionary defeatist regarding Britain.

From then on Thatcher with her intransigent imperialism took the initiative. Her Labour and Liberal/Social Democrat opposition, even her Tory critics, looked weak and inconsistent. Inevitably, the Labour Party and most of the Left failed the political test the Malvinas war posed. It is in no way surprising that the Left failed this test. For decades they have failed to oppose Britain's occupation of Ireland.

At the beginning of this century, Ireland was a British colony. In 1921 it was partitioned into the southern 26 counties who were given formal independence and the northern six counties which were placed under the direct control of Westminster (in the name of Protestant self-determination). The six counties have been known as Northern Ireland. In 1969, the Wilson Labour government sent in the troops who have been there ever since. Both Tory and Labour have a bipartisan approach to the Irish question. They support partition and the brutal suppression of the Republican forces.

The Left responses vary. Some in the Labour Party argue the imperialist oppression can be negotiated away. Some claim to oppose the war but equivocate. Some claim to oppose the war but reject class politics as the way to do it. These fake anti-imperialists formed the Troops Out Movement. All classes do not have an interest in opposing imperialism (contrary to TOM) and a perspective that aspires to pressure governments must sell out Irish freedom— no way will the government put moral argument before the interests of the system. For revolutionaries, the Irish question can only be resolved by revolutionary class struggle. Industrial action against the war must be organised in England. A revolutionary defeatist position must be fought for. The military struggle of the republican forces must be defended unconditionally.

Today, the Irish question is as crucial as it was in Marx's time for establishing a class conscious working class. Opposing the British State in England means rejecting its domination of Ireland.

Thatcher has succeeded by intransigently defending her class. Imperialist Britain requires immigration controls and Thatcher's Nationality Act is just what the system needs. The Left complains about the way immigration controls are policed. This only shows that they believe in imperialism but don't think it should be fought for properly. Despite different rhetoric, both Labour and Tory practice towards immigrants (especially black ones) has been the same. Revolutionaries must put migrant workers before nation and oppose all immigration controls.

Thatcher's policies don't take place in a vacuum. Capitalism throughout the world is in crisis. Britain is an imperialist power in decline. To resolve the crisis, welfare and other non-productive (from capital's point of view) areas of the economy and workers' living standards and conditions must be attacked. Whilst in as many ways during the post war boom, trade unions held workers back from demanding higher wages, today they are a barrier to pushing wages down even lower. Thatcher has stood for shackling the unions. During the early eighties Ronald Reagan took a hard line stand

against the Soviet Union. Mrs Thatcher in Britain was in full agreement and there was no way that the ruling class would allow a weakening in the cold war drive. Labour was also pro- imperialist but at the time made concessions to the peace movement.

taming of the Labour Left

Important lessons can and must be drawn not only from Thatcher's taming of the Labour Party but also from Kinnock's defeat of the Labour Left. Many of the Labour Left tendencies proclaim the name of Trotskyism. In reality, they drag Trotsky's name into the reformist mud. These include Militant, Labour Herald, London Labour Briefing, Socialist Organiser, Socialist Outlook and Socialist Action. They are by no means insignificant. Militant can organise public meetings that fill the Albert Hall. Militant actually believes that Labour can be transformed into a revolutionary party which will be elected to parliament, nationalise basic industry and establish socialism. They have been part of Labour since 1956. The others, at least, initially (before they got stuck in the reformist mud) had a more tactical orientation. Every year they adapt their politics more to accepting Labour reality.

Revolutionaries have entered the Labour Party at various stages to fight for a revolutionary opposition and intersect a leftward movement within the working class reflected in the Labour Party. Whether this was appropriate to enter in the late seventies is a tactical question. The fundamental criticism is that these tendencies represent no political break from Labourism. They fight for programs which instead of posing the need for proletarian power as such as a (revolutionary) workers' government and expropriation. They fought for alternative's policies for Labour government to administer the capitalist state e.g. for full unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament; for a Labour government which raises peoples living standards; for full employment for women's rights:

against Tory Immigration laws.

Much of the Left that entered the Labour Party was part of the middle class protest movement and have brought its politics into the Labour Party. The so-called radical Trotskyists are now trying to give peace, radical feminism and green politics a Labour Party framework. There are differences between the tendencies. In one debate, Allan Freeman (Socialist Action) argued that demands should be raised 'not [as] an alternative campaign but as a drive to influence the official campaign John O'Mahoney (Socialist Organiser) countered through the official campaign as much as possible.. .but unofficially where necessary". Real revolutionaries would have nothing to do with the official campaign.

A main lure to the Labour Party was the Benn for Deputy campaign of 1981. They backed him despite the fact that he was an overt reformist. In fact, his alternative plans for Britain were chauvinist and nationalist. Benn considered he was fighting to defend Britain against deindustrialisation and US intervention. Of course, the radical left differentiated from him on these questions. But their differentiation was of no practical consequence when it came to "building a broad left...for Labour Party democracy". In reality they were adapting to British chauvinism. The point is to fight Tony Benn's "alternative strategies" and not see them through rose-coloured glasses. For the Left, what was fundamental was democracy. Well, they were successful in gaining accountability of the leader to the membership. This was too much for the right wing gang of four,

Jenkins, Owen, Rodgers and Williams who left to form the Social Democrats. However, to get this the left had sold out its (albeit minimal) independent policies.

Not only was the left captive of the Labour Party politically, it was captive as part of the capitalist state apparatus, as part of local councils. In 1981, Ken Livingstone (known as Red Ken) was Lord Mayor of London. He established semi- governmental authorities to deal with local needs. These quangos were established for all sorts of issues including women, black people, homosexuals, housing as well as general social welfare. The Left politically identified with these as gains from the system. Some of them got jobs as social workers. The problem was they were funded courtesy of the system and therefore were forced to act on its terms. One women's group aimed to make the "male dominated" police force "sensitive to the needs of women". This only helps to project the police as political allies for women. The radical councils also policed black people. Lambeth Council (whose area includes Brixton) helped suppress the black people who fought the cops in 1981.

In the past the Tories had used local councils to counter unpopular Labour governments. In the, early '80s left Labour tried to do the same. They failed. The Tories had one simple weapon, they withdrew funding. They could then watch as the councils struggled to balance their budgets by cutting services or raising rates and rents. You can't build socialism or even a local welfare system by occupying local government. The left entered the capitalist state as its captive and paid the consequences. Mrs Thatcher, through her minister, Mr Hazeltine had victories over both the Greater London Council and The Militant-led Liverpool Council.

The working class and the trade union bureaucracy hate Thatcher. But the ruling class made it clear that Labour will only be allowed to govern only on the system's terms. The Left had to be defeated. This was a long process. A key step to victory was the defeat of Peter Tachell in the 1983 Bermondsey bi-election. Tachell, a radical social worker, was set up as a "loony leftist" and labelled a homosexual communist. Eighty year-old Independent Labour Party veteran, Fenner Brockway described it as the most vicious campaign in his memory. The prejudice was disgusting. The problem was that Tachell being a prisoner of the Labour Party could not challenge the prejudice in a class conscious way. Labour lost Bermondsay to the Liberals for the first time in this century. Following the defeat of Labour in 1983, Mr. Neil Kinnock then thought of as in the centre was elected leader. As Tony Benn lost his seat the Left were without a strong candidate so dependent were they on Benn's campaign! Socialist Action supported Mr. Kinnock against Hattersley after the Left's candidate was eliminated - a poor third.

The year-long British miners' strike was a heroic inspiration to the British working class. They fought bravely against state attack. however, it was a case of excellent rank and file unionists, rotten leadership and rotten politics. The coal miners' strike is used as an example of how class politics don't work. The strike failed because it remained within the framework of Plan for Coal (British government plan) and because Scargill based himself on the more militant Yorkshire miners and counterposed them to the less militant Nottinghamshire miners. This as well as lack of solidarity from other unions. For Kinnock and his left advisers (notably the Stalinist professor Hobsbawm of Marxism Today). The failure of the British miners was merely the failure of class struggle. Instead, according to them, you mean coalition politics. This means appealing to the sort of electorate who previously voted Social Democrat. Today Kinnock is so much in ascendency that Ken Livingstone,

who several years ago declared himself not in opposition to Kinnock, was forced off the national executive.

what's Labour's alternative? The Communist Tendency thinks that Kinnock will win the next election for several reasons. Thatcher has always considered it her priority to defeat inflation and ignore growth and unemployment. Fight inflation no matter what. Now you are getting both unemployment and inflation. Interest rates are high and the value of the pound low. People will accept hard economic medicine as long as they think that it's making them well.

Secondly because Thatcher's blatant pro-wealth attitude is hardly good for social stability. Kinnock will be far better at promoting social consensus. No doubt, like Hawke, he will pretend to stand for everyone whilst making the poor pay. Third because Mrs. Thatcher's cold war attitude to the Soviet Union is no longer appropriate. Through perestroika, the imperialists are making inroads, not to mention the gains made in Hungary, West Germany and Poland. Kinnock is more appropriate to soothe the Stalinist states into imperialism's orbit. Thatcher's hard lines might turn them off. In six years, Kinnock has created a Tory-Labour party fit to govern on the system's terms.

From Kinnock's Labour government, the working class can draw important conclusions about Labour. But these can be drawn in a constructive way only if a revolutionary party is built to challenge the Labour Party. Most of the radical Left has been sucked into the whirlpool of Labour. Little better is the Socialist Workers' Party (International Socialists) who call for united fronts" with the Bennites but ignore the fundamental political essence of Bennism - British chauvinism. The most serious alternative is the Revolutionary Communist Party. This organisation has taken some principled stands on questions such as the Malvinas war, immigration controls, racism and Ireland (Communist Tendency has some criticisms on the latter issue). Although they have tended to put their opposition to Labour as an ultimatum, this is far healthier than the radical left. The Communist Tendency is also critical of the block they formed last election called The Red Front which forgot about revolutionary demands.

after Thatcher?

Thatcher has kept fascism at bay with her hard line right wing policies. But should Kinnock fail, the fascists might once again come out of the closet to offer their services to save a dying system - by physically smashing the organised working class. In the late 70s, the National Front were so prominent that there was talk of them replacing the Liberals as the third party. This didn't happen as Thatcher won over their constituency with hard right wing policies. As Thatcher's star wains, this layer of the lower middle class could, once again find the National Front appealing. The working class must act decisively with clear independent politics. They must fight the chauvinism fascism breeds off. They must be prepared to physically fight them. The building of a revolutionary alternative might therefore be a life or death question for the British working class.

CPA liquidation:

the philosophy for an exploding Communist Party, or a false Communist Party exploded!

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) has its Thirtieth Congress in December. At that congress, should the draft resolution be carried (and this seems probable), the CPA will liquidate its presence as an open organisation. It wants some insurance against lest the whole New Left Party plan falls flat

on its back. Its members don't want its organisation to interfere with or inhibit the development of the new party. Some members such as Hal Alexander are extremely angry at this betrayal of over seventy years of tradition. Yes, there are individual motives involved. But the final organisational dissolution is only the consequence of its liquidation of Marxist method. Just as Stalin liquidated the Comintern by abandoning revolutionary internationalism for socialism in one country the CPA liquidates itself-because it has realised that the name of Communism is a barrier to what are its real politics, trying to pressure the Hawke government and popular front mass movements.

In the '70s the CPA projected itself as an independent party relevant to Australian reality, the old Stalinist jargon and dogma. Its subsequent degeneration has shown that it is Marxism and not impressionism that offers any revolutionary understanding of the crisis of Stalinism and the militant upsurges in the West during the late '60s and early 70s.

The Philosophy for an Exploding World is a book by Eric Aarons (a leading CPA member), published in 1973 and purporting to break new ground. Instead of what the author called 'old fashioned deterministic' views such as dialectical materialism, the author introduced "the values revolution". Instead of ideas being linked to material relationships and class interests we were told we are tied to the system by hegemonic bonds, values and the law in general ("the cop within our head"). These were all to be challenged by "counter hegemonic mass movements". The class struggle was seen as merely one component, one movement against bourgeois hegemony.

For Eric Aarons the struggle against bourgeois ideology was devoid of the struggle for material interest. In fact he argue that the middle classes were more progressive because during the '70s they were challenging the bonds of bourgeois consciousness whereas workers were not as apparently socially radical.

The reality was that during a period of economic boom and a degree of social dislocation due to Australia's and the United States' defeat in Vietnam, sections of the middle classes discovered that some of the more restrictive aspects of capitalisms' social relationships cramped their style. Marriage denied their desire to sleep with more than one person or explore their homosexuality. Restrictive educational courses (for example, in economics) denied them the right to learn economics in a meaningful way in terms of its social context. The radical middle classes challenged capitalism's social forms (at least to some degree) from a position of material privilege. While they identify with this privilege they are not revolutionary- no matter what they claim in their rhetoric. The demands they raise are often progressive (for example, free abortion and against sexism). Revolutionaries also raise these demands but in the context of mobilising the working class to challenge the totality of capitalist relationships - for socialist revolution. Through its adaption to the radical protest movements of the 70s the CPA was merely updating the strategy of the Stalinist movement since the thirties-the popular front. Aarons raised this to the philosophical level, drawing out its anti-Marxist consequences, stripping away the formal adherence to Marxism.

Opponents to this were many. They included the Socialist Labour League and Kelvin Rowley who was then a dissident CPA member influenced by the French philosopher Louis Althusser. However, the most promoted critic was W.J. Brown, then a leading member of the Socialist Party of Australia. He wrote a counter pamphlet called A False Philosophy Exploded Aarons and Brown debated the merits of their two philosophies on ABC radio with Brown defending the classic Stalinist position. He attacked Aarons' view on the values revolution as not having a class basis and as "petty bourgeois

ideology" in the CPA including Trotskyism. He considered talk of socialism with a human face as an insult to the socialist countries".

The differences appeared to be irreconcilable. Yet in 1989 Brown and Aarons joins with ecologists and independent leftists to form the New Left Party. An analysis reveals volumes about character of this Party. Some will say that their unity is merely a question of getting the numbers. This is only part of the answer. The New Left Party is a degeneration product of both the radical middle class and the bureaucratic, pro- Moscow wings of Stalinism.

Brown was not as opposed to humanism as it might have appeared. As a proud leader of the peace movement he argued that all classes had an interest in disarmament. Now if this is so, why can't it be argued that all classes have an interest in the liberation of women or the environment? Of course it isn't so. The ruling class will not stop its quest for world domination by the logic that by doing so it threatens the whole planet. Only revolution can stop war! A revolution requires class interests to be established and lines drawn.

Aarons was merely generalising the philosophy of the peace movement and drawing out its anti-Marxist consequences. This, of course, offended Brown's sensitivities. But what Brown really objected to was Aarons' explosiveness. The movements of the late '60s seemed radical and militant. It was a period of massive social upheaval internationally. Aarons and the CPA wanted to be relevant to it. This meant dumping much of the old Stalinist baggage. They didn't do it in a Marxist way and as a result deviated further to the right. Their attempts to replace it tended to be eclectic. What emerged was a variant of Stalinism which was in some ways more liberalised and in others more militant and less respectable. Within the world Stalinist movement the CPA identified with the Yugoslavs led by Tito and with the Vietnamese led by Ho Chi Minh. The Vietnamese were in military conflict with U.S. imperialism and could not afford to be as pacifist as their Soviet counterparts. Their slogan, "detente is relative, struggle is absolute", became the slogan of the CPA.

What also offended Brown was that Aarons challenged the values of the Soviet Union. Whilst Brown could admit that the Soviet Union could make the occasional mistake, fundamental criticism was not on. However had Aarons not been consistent concerning the lack of these values in the Soviet Union he simply would not have been taken seriously.

In 1968 the Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia. In 1969 there was a border dispute between China and the Soviet Union which almost led to war. As well as these dramatic events, the Soviet Union was exposed concerning its treatment of dissidents, its failure to liberate women, its censorship and its lack of democracy generally. Australia was then an affluent country by world standards. The radical middle class who Aarons identified with found the Soviet Union dowdy and unattractive. Had the CPA identified with the Soviet Union's model, they would have found the CPA unappealing also and not genuine in the struggle for human liberation.

In his own way Aarons covered for the Stalinist bureaucracy. For him bureaucracy could be "overcome by values". He therefore denied its material counter-revolutionary interest which can only be overcome through political revolution.

The CPA was militant both in the protest movements and within the working class. But it always depended on sections of the Labor Party for support. As the ALP went right, so did the CPA. CPA

union militancy could not withstand the economic crisis. For example, in the construction industry, the building boom came to an end and this made it more difficult for builders' labourers to support green bans as they had to worry about their jobs. The CPA-BLF leadership had no adequate programme for jobs, making it easier for the union to be smashed by an alliance between the bosses and the Maoist Norm Gallagher.

Similarly in the metal industry, the CPA leadership was the pace setter in wage rises. When the threat of restructuring came, the Carmichael/Halfpenny leadership had no alternative apart from crawling to the government to 'keep industry in Australia'. This required working class sacrifice. An agreement for this sacrifice was encapsulated in the Prices and Incomes Accord. Whilst the unions honoured the sacrifice, the government reneged on the trade-off s.

The Accord created a major schism within the SPA—a majority who opposed it and a minority of bureaucrats, including W.J. Brown, who supported it. The latter group split to form Association for Communist Unity. The bureaucrats needed the Accord to maintain their positions of privilege.

After the liberation of Vietnam, the Vietnamese stalinists mended their bridges with Moscow. The Vietnamese needed this alliance with the Soviet Union to counter border conflict with China and to support their invasion of Kampuchea. This brought the CPA and SPA closer together as the CPA were loyal to the Vietnamese. The CPA was also feeling isolated within the world Stalinist movement.

Reconciliation was, however, hampered by the events in Poland. The SPA supported the military crackdown. The CPA supported the independent trade union Solidarity. They urged national reconciliation between Solidarity and the bureaucracy.

It has been the policies of the Gorbachev leadership in the Soviet Union which has given the reunification impetus. Mr Gorbachev deserves credit for honestly confronting the Soviet bureaucratic mess. He realised that it couldn't go on without change. They've chosen change—change to the right. Market socialism has been disastrous for the working class of Yugoslavia. It will be disastrous for the working class of the Soviet Union as well. Internationally, Gorbachev is selling out what limited support the Soviet Union gives to national liberation movements, including those in South Africa.

In 1989 even Gorbachev attacks bureaucracy. Criticisms of the bureaucracy can hardly be for Moscow's favourite son W.J. Brown, a barrier for reunification with the CPA. Gorbachev has realised the significance of the ecology movement and therefore his supporters must also. So despite all previous criticisms of the CPA and ecologists' "antimarxist approach", Brown has fallen into line.

The New Left Party currently in formation can best be described as the party of the popular front. Middle class radicalism is combined with the perspective of pressuring Labor government to plan the system better.

Representatives of the NLP actively disown any talk that they might be an alternative to Labor. They actively defend the spirit of the Accord and put forward practical immediate reforms. Naturally, they repudiate revolution!

The bureaucrats have now realised the significance of the women's movement. A successful popular front cannot be built without acknowledging it—not that this acknowledgement is of much consequence:

Recently at the Building Trades Group meeting, delegates were addressed by Marie Bignold of the Festival of Light and formerly part of Fred Nile's Call To Australia team. She was invited by the CPA and ACU bureaucrats. Not only is Marie Bignold bourgeois, she's extremely reactionary especially on social questions such as homosexuality and women's liberation. She is anti-working class and should have no place at workers' meetings. Even inviting her for "exposure" gives her too much legitimacy. But the bureaucrats sought her as a limited ally!

The swamp-like structure within the NLP will assist the bureaucrats. Hard clarification becomes bad karma. The ecologists and the feminists, on one hand, will do their thing, leaving the bureaucrats to be bureaucrats. Some, on reading this article may object to this analysis that the NLP is a degeneration product of stalinism. They consider themselves as independent activists and that the NLP merely reflects their ideas. They point out that there no manipulation and former CPA members are now acting independently. What this shows is just how unexplosive the radical middle class is. The bureaucrats are blatant about their reformism. They get no opposition from the green radicals.

The greens may appear radical but is only an attempt to persuade someone like David Lange to see some wisdom and adopt some token or reformist measure such as banning nuclear shipping. The old New Left of the sixties, such as Abbie Hoffman in the USA and Brian Laver in Australia wanted to fight the ruling class to the death. The problem is they rejected class politics- the only way to do it. The old New Left is dead so the New Left Party takes name-only to bury its radical tradition!

The Thirtieth Congress of the Communist Party being held in December is to say the least, a very discrete occasion. Reading Tribune you would hardly know it was on. There is no open debate. Even internally, the amount of pre-congress discussion is limited. There is a draft document and an alternative motion submitted by Bob Boughton and Ben Bartlett

Whereas the majority want to liquidate the CPA outright, although they want some insurance lest the new party fails, Boughton and Bartlett believe in both the CPA and the NLP. The New Left Party they argue, will give Hawke some parliamentary opposition 'for a broad and electorally significant party capable of acting within the progressive movements' interest within the limits of bourgeois parliamentary politics within capitalist Australia". This is necessary according to them because of the inability the ALP Left to implement progressive policies. Boughton and Bartlett appear oblivious to the fact that the Left has failed even within their modest objectives, because of the limits of the "limits of parliamentary politics".

If you want to administer the capitalist system you must sell out progressive demands. This is what capitalist realism means. Boughton and Bartlett have not drawn revolutionary conclusions. They just argue for another parliamentary party to do it better. They seem to be impressed by the fact that 'policies on workers' living standards, environmental protection, Aboriginal land rights and social justice were adopted by the ALP as a result of progressive movements". Communist Tendency considers these demands totally inadequate. They were adopted to head off the left, only to be sold out either deliberately, or as a result of Labor accepting the system, either way the result is the same. These are incidentally, the demands that they are raising as programmes for the CPA!

So why have the CPA? Boughton and Bartlett can only point to the ultimate aim being different. They quote the CPA as being 'a Marxist party [working] for the revolutionary transformation of Australia' They quote the Time To Act document calling for a party which "stands for social justice, human rights....and the goal of a democratic socialist Australia". Yes, this looks a difference. However the "ultimate aim" of the CPA is of no practical consequences. The Twenty-ninth Congress of the CPA stood for reforms which would open up the possibility for a shift in economic power from bosses to workers. No! You do not open up a redistribution of wealth by reforms. The reality is that the CPA has forgotten about socialism, raising very minimal demands indeed. The CPA is a slave to capitalism. Won't the struggle for reforms be more successful in a party whose name is not a barrier to unity like "communist" is?

The CPA majority, point out that the praxis of the New Left Party will be little different to that of the CPA's current practice. The Communist Tendency agrees with them. We believe in a real communist party, a revolutionary party because it represents the objective interests of the working class. There is no solution to poverty and unemployment under capitalism. Capitalism will never give Black people meaningful self-determination. None of these questions can be resolved under capitalism through parliamentary reforms. Communists must show in action and not by ultimatum that a revolutionary programme serves working people's needs.

The Communist Tendency does not mourn the death of the CPA. We mourn the death of a living Marxist internationalist tradition. The blatant opportunism of the New Left Party is the logic of the opportunist method that the CPA has applied for decades. It is this method we must attack and not lament the CPA adjusting its name to fit its politics.

Reject Popular Frontism

Return to Marxism!

Reject Minimalist Nationalist Reformism!

Return to Proletarian Internationalism!

published by

the Communist Tendency p.o. box 119

erskineville 2043

Page 8