

Trotskyist Platform and Syria

Trotskyist Platform split formed when a leading member of the Spartacist League of Australia resigned when his proposal for a demonstration in solidarity with the Palm Island uprising was rejected by the majority. The majority argued that such a demo would not be “labour movement centred”. Since then differences have widened. Trotskyist Platform is accused of playing down the need for political revolution in China in TF propaganda and at rallies against counter-revolutionary attacks on China. We actually agree with the accusation. Nevertheless, Trotskyist Platform fundamentally agrees with the Spartacist tradition.

As serious internationalists, TF are obliged to publish analysis of international questions and this they do. Overwhelmingly, the Australian left has been enthusiastic about the Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. In Libya, Trotskyist Platform supports those who supported Qaddafi known as “the Resistance” and opposed the uprising arguing that the TNC had imperialist backing. In Red 94 Communist Left pointed out that this meant effectively backing a military dictatorship which would probably physically smash down the working class. Yes there was imperialist intervention. Libya was bombed. Promoting a dictatorship was not the way to counter it.

In Syria TP are much more explicit. They support the military forces backing Syrian dictator Assad. They don't like the guy but consider blocking with him necessary to counter the imperialist offensive. They reject not only those backing the Free Syrian Army but those who are neutral (like excomrades the Spartacist League) which they argue, means that you are indifferent to an imperialist take-over. They acknowledge differences amongst the resistance but consider these to be of no consequence as all oppositionists are fighting under the same flag and their guns are pointing the same way. Fighting for a better society in Syria they argue must be effectively postponed until Assad is victorious.

Yes there is a lie machine. The Australian media sees events through the eyes of the opposition. They whitewash atrocities committed by the opposition and they suggest that the Syrian military is guilty when it is unclear. This gives us a totally false picture. Yes Free Syrian Army has collaborated with imperialism and this must be more than opposed, condemned. Yes there are sinister Muslim fanatics such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The point is to fight these forces. The issue is how these reactionary forces should be fought and who should fight them. In war as in peace, Revolutionaries want to draw class lines now. TP want to wait until Assad is victorious until a revolutionary intervention is made. Incidentally the Assad regime bears some responsibility of promoting Islamic reaction by repressing Sunnis who are the majority of the population.

As in Libya, the way to fight imperialist collaboration is not a military dictatorship. What has TF got to say to those who deserted due to Syrian Army brutality acting against dissent such as graffiti? Should these deserters have copped it sweet? What has TF got to say to those who went on strike last December? Should these Syrians submit to Assad brutality and surrender? Some may not have the option of surrender, if it was desirable as they face the prospect of torture or death. Ordinary Syrians should not have to endure death by the Syrian army. But nor should they have to endure being sold out to imperialism by the Free Syrian Army. The Assad regime, if it holds onto power, would be as brutal and bloody as that of General Pinochet in Chile. Waiting until the end of the war is not a revolutionary option.

For revolutionaries, the point is not to accept either side as it is constituted but to mobilise the working class for revolution. There are decent workers peasants and oppressed fighting with the Free Syrian Army. Unfortunately this means selling out to imperialism. This must be stopped. Workers and peasants must fight to smash the Syrian state, for proletarian revolution.

It has to be pointed out that Assad is not consistently anti-imperialist. In fact he was part of the Allied war against Iraq when that country invaded Kuwait. He has also co-operated with Israel. However The Free Syrian Army is imperialism's preferred option and imperialism will gain morale if Assad is overthrown. But it has to be stressed that the FSA is an indigenous movement and not an invasion even if imperialism is assisting the process. Many on the left are sort of indifferent to the Free Syrian Army collaboration. We mustn't be. **Neither Assad nor the Free Syrian Army but working class to power!**

Revolutionaries understand that popular fronts are death traps for the working class. The Free Syrian Army is such a death trap. Fighting for Assad or allowing him to remain in power is a death trap also. If they don't want to be party to the death TP should seriously rethink their position.