

## World in crisis

# Lucky country in denial

The following is the main document of the 2024 SL/A and B-L Fusion Conference. It has been edited and expanded for publication.

The years coming out of the pandemic have marked a turning point for the liberal world order. The world economy is straining and the American Empire's decline has become increasingly pronounced. The U.S. ruling class is scrambling to maintain its hegemony, but in doing so has only further exposed its back. Today, in the face of emerging challengers from Russia to China, the world order is teetering. In turn, American imperialism holds ever tighter to its decaying position—escalating confrontation with its enemies while squeezing its allies for all they are worth.

The war in Ukraine represents the most open act of defiance to the U.S. thus far by Russia, which has been perennially frustrated by NATO's eastward expansion. Defending its world order has led to increasing strain on the U.S. and even more so on its imperialist allies in Europe, who have disproportionately shouldered the cost. In the Middle East, the U.S. is backing Israel's

onslaught to the hilt as part of its strategy to maintain the little Zionist enclave which keeps the region under American auspices.

And then there is China, a significant non-capitalist counterweight increasingly brushing up against U.S. hegemony, in spite of the treacherous and conciliatory Communist Party of China (CPC) program. The imperialists' belief that internal counterrevolution would closely follow economic liberalisation has long since eroded. While U.S.-China tensions are currently at an ebb, this merely reflects the U.S. being stretched too thin defending its hegemony from Ukraine to Israel—a short term pit stop in the drive to war.

This has put the Australian ruling class in an increasingly difficult position. By itself a pitiful power, Australia's place in the sun has always relied on playing henchman to the dominant empire. This has been the defining feature of capitalist Australia

since its days as a British penal colony. And in the post-Soviet period, this has paid off handsomely.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Australian ruling class worked hard to foster economic liberalisation throughout Asia under U.S. hegemony. The integration of China into the world economy, predicated on the false belief that it would soon collapse into the liberal fold, enabled the meteoric growth of Chinese industry demanding increasing mineral imports. This created a boom for the mining industry that it seemed would never stop, enabling Australia to weather the storm of the Global Financial Crisis. All this reinforced the illusion that Australia was somehow fundamentally more stable than the other deindustrialised western powers.

While liberal ideologues chalk this up to an innate ability to keep troubled seas away from Australian shores through “com-

mon sense” policy-making and the larrikin spirit, the truth is that they were simply lucky enough to have a massive state-driven economy next door hungry for resources. As long as their big brother remained ascendant and China continued to grow, the Australian ruling class could coast along with few economic or political troubles. But in this lies the fundamental contradiction behind Australia's stability, the Achilles heel of the strategy of the Australian ruling class. The stronger China got, the more Australia benefited economically, the more China undermined the global political condition which allowed Australia's ruling class to sail smoothly—U.S. hegemony.

The conditions that once promised stability now guarantee crisis. Today it is clear that the luck is running out, the U.S.-led world order is beginning to tear at the seams. As Washington has inflamed tensions against China, the Australian ruling class have been rabid in their support for such moves. Most notably this has been expressed through AUKUS, which will cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Conflict with their biggest trading partner is nothing short of economic kamikaze.

Nevertheless, Australian capitalism recognises that it has no other options. Australia's place in the world order depends on being a junior link in American imperialism's chain of operations. The ruling class's predicament is not its integration with the U.S. world order but that this order is increasingly threatened. This is why Australia has been so rabid in its auxiliary role to American machinations, not just in “our backyard” but anywhere that U.S. hegemony is under threat—from Ukraine to Israel. As the hegemony they've relied on crumbles beneath their feet there are few options other than to desperately clamour to prop it up, to fight until the bitter end.

While war against China would cost Australia their biggest trading partner, and much more, American victory is seen as the only hope for a new lease on life for world imperialism—viewed by imperialists as the *deus ex machina* for the U.S. hegemony which Australia is completely hitched to. All liberal whingeing for Australian capitalism to “change course” amounts to little

*continued on page 13*

photos: U.S. Navy, RB photo, Darrian Traynor/Getty  
Left: U.S. warships, South China Sea. Right: Anti-lockdown protesters shut Melbourne's West Gate Bridge, September 2021. Centre: Outside 2023 ALP National Conference, Spartacists intervene as cracks in liberal order deepen.

## Introducing **RED BATTLER** **Spartacist League of Australia** & **Bolshevik-Leninist fuse**

In March, the Spartacist League of Australia (SL/A) and Bolshevik-Leninist (B-L) held a joint Fusion Conference with the purpose of forging a revolutionary nucleus in Australia. The fusion and documents resulting from it are the consummation of months of joint political work and represent a refounding of the SL/A, Australian

section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). This process was a continuation of the struggle to re-arm the ICL and speaks to the programmatic vitality of our renewed tendency.

The struggle to forge a fighting Australian section was kickstarted by a visit by leading international cadre prior to the

ICL's Eighth International Conference (see *Spartacist* No. 68). This visit was part of the fight to revive the SL/A, which had politically collapsed along with the rest of the ICL in 2020. Visiting comrades initiated discussions with B-L which resulted in the latter's invitation to the International  
*continued on page 2*

## Towards the rebirth of Trotskyism in Australia



RB photo

Singing the Internationale at SL/A and B-L Fusion Conference.

## Intro...

(continued from page 1)

Conference and the joint reorientation that resulted from it (see “Greetings from Bolshevik-Leninist of Australia” in *Spartacist* No. 68, page 15).

Through this reorientation, it became clear that it was necessary to repudiate much of the SL/A and B-L’s historic approach to questions ranging from Laborism to Australia’s place in the world—central questions to understanding the fundamental tasks for communists in this country. This is why the Fusion Conference marks a departure from our old program and a refounding of the SL/A. The launching of *Red Battler* speaks to the need to channel the fighting spirit of the Australian proletariat in a revolutionary direction. It marks a decisive break from the politics of the SL/A’s previous paper, *Australasian Spartacist*.

Fusion and reorientation has truly been two sided, with comrades intervening in each other’s organisations to advance the struggle for a revolutionary program. Comrades from both sides of the fusion were elected to the leading bodies of the refounded SL/A. The following is an edited version of a presentation on the significance of the conference by C. Bourchier to a recent ICL International Executive Committee plenum.

\* \* \*

Hello comrades. Firstly, I should say it is with my deepest pleasure that I am here today presenting as a member of the Spartacist League of Australia. To have reached where we are now, to have forged this small but fighting Marxist nucleus in Australia, has not been a quick and easy process. But it has been well worth the effort. This fusion and the programmatic refoundation of the SL/A, we believe, will serve as a lightning rod to the rest of the left and the workers movement of Australia.

To understand why, it is important to take a step back and look at how international developments have been expressed in the Australian political terrain. The relative stability of the Australian liberal order, even compared to other Western powers, is manifest in the state of the workers move-

ment and the left. In the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union the left, if they did not liquidate outright into Labor or the Greens, flailed around in the orbit of liberalism—each organisation fighting to be the best and fiercest radlib critic.

Much of the left openly gave up the task of breaking workers from Labor, simply declaring the party bourgeois and lobbing liberal criticism a shade apart from the Greens—who they increasingly orientated towards. The left offered little more than a fight to smooth the rough edges. They criticised Labor for the excesses of its pro-capitalist program while never challenging the heart of the liberal order itself. This kept the organised working class solidly attached to their misleaders, who preached that this liberal order was necessary for the prosperity of the nation as a whole. As in many other countries, the workers movement in Australia put up little serious opposition to this course of sawing off its own legs.

With the liberal order crisis free, and the relative prosperity of significant parts of the proletariat and petty bourgeoisie stable if not improving, the political justification for the existence of many left groups seemed increasingly thin. The post-Soviet period saw the Communist Party dissolve outright and the Democratic Socialist Party disintegrate into the “eco-socialist” “broad left electoral bloc,” Socialist Alliance—exhausting themselves within a creation of their own making. The left whittled away, becoming increasingly insular and detached from the working class.

It is no surprise that today the largest nominally socialist group is Socialist Alternative (SAIt), an organisation which survives off drippings from the fringe of campus liberalism, recruiting just enough to cover its losses. This amoeba strategy of growth until a distant revolutionary epoch was the consistent thread among the entire left, the SL/A playing faux-orthodox foil to SAIt’s flagrant opportunism. But if you are unwilling or unable to intervene as a revolutionary factor, to play a decisive role in the class struggle, what else can you do but hope to get a few crumbs of recruitment sitting in the peanut gallery watching as the struggle unfolds before you?

As one can imagine, this has not been a winning strategy—it is the origin of

# Greetings to the Fusion Conference of the SL/A and B-L

We publish below greetings from other sections of the ICL to the SL/A and B-L Fusion Conference.

## Spartacist League/Britain

The Spartacist League/Britain sends revolutionary greetings to the fusion conference of the Australian section with the Bolshevik-Leninist group, which marks a historic step on the way to cohere the forces of Trotskyism in Australia and beyond.

The common work of the SL/A and B-L started as sharp and pointed interventions into the increasing polarisation of Australian society but is now clearly developing into a common fully fledged materialist understanding of Australian society, of its place in the world and of the task of Marxists in it. We welcome the documents submitted to the conference, not only because they are bringing to the fore the urgency of a revolutionary break from liberalism, but because they are bringing this struggle to a new and higher level, which will, without a doubt, contribute to orient the work of many sections and of our entire International.

What is unique in this fusion is that it takes two groups which were both drifting in a sea of sterility and formalism, each in their own way, and under the impulse of political struggles, both internally and in the world itself, welds them together into a nucleus built upon the central task of Leninists in the 21st century. We are confident that the new Australian section of the ICL will become a force to reckon with in the left and labour movement.

Australia has inherited from Britain, both the best and the worst of it. The monarchy, Anglo-chauvinism, liberal-

ism, imperial arrogance and its vulgar hypocrisy, and Laborism, the transmission belt of all this rubbish into the workers movement. But Australia has also been built by Irish, English and Scots rebels, felons and rejects of the Crown, whose defiant spirit has fuelled the powerful Australian workers movement. To free the class which carries the future from these abominable chains is the task of the Fourth Internationalists. The fusion conference of the SL/A and B-L is a modest but clear step in this direction.

We thus say:

*Forward to the fusion of the B-L with the SL/A!*

## Trotskyist Group of Greece

Dear comrades,

The Trotskyist Group of Greece sends revolutionary greetings to your fusion and refounding conference, which is of historical significance. Not only have you jointly struggled to offer a communist path to the Australian proletariat and the oppressed regarding AUKUS and the referendum, but you will now set the basis to ground this program on solid roots. This is of particular importance to the Greek workers, given that hundreds of thousands have migrated to Australia. Your new paper, *Red Battler*, speaks with its name alone to the hearts of Australian workers, and will be an invaluable tool in the fight to rearm and regroup the world proletariat.

*Forward in the fight against imperialism! Forward for the Fourth International!*

Our warmest communist greetings,  
TOE

the small and scattered state of the left in Australia today. Throughout the preceding period, it has split further into dozens of tiny sects, the total number of groups only declining due to the smallest ones dissolving. For those remaining, it became a game of who could tread water best until more exciting times arrived. SAIt love to brag about being the most successful at eking out an existence, gloating at the likes of the SL/A who were seemingly on the verge of aging out.

Recent years have seen a new generation of leftists wanting to break out of the contemporary left’s pathetic state. But they too only sought new ways to position themselves in the hope of one day being lucky enough to ride a predicted wave of impending class struggle. Instead of fighting for a revolutionary opposition to the liberal order—the one thing needed to escape this tangle—they only sought a new niche within it.

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) is one example. It believes that by sharing maximalist rhetoric and a lowest common denominator program, the left can splinter itself, and from there a revolutionary party can sprout. In this sense, B-L was the RCO’s faux-orthodox foil. B-L’s solution was to bring to the working class a combination of orthodox formulations and trade-union militancy, which would magically break the working class from their Laborite misleaders and raise a revolutionary pole. Build it and they will come! But how could this have taken place without driving a wedge between the proletariat and

the union bureaucrats, without demonstrating in practice a revolutionary program for the struggles of today?

Well, those are the very questions that plagued the last two years of B-L’s existence. B-L thought the crisis of the left was largely due to their detachment from the working class. In fact, this detachment is the result of the left’s programmatic impotence—which B-L could not explain. Despite these new groupings correctly recognising the failure of the “established left,” they fell into the same pitfalls and were damned to repeat the same mistakes.

Today American hegemony is increasingly showing its wear and tear. Unsurprisingly, the left, unable to put forward revolutionary opposition to the liberal order in its zenith, is unable to do so as this order is breaking down. The workers movement remains wedded to the Labor Party, which is fully committed to Australia’s role as deputy to the American empire’s war drive. In response, the left can only cry out in disgust at the Labor Party’s belligerency, while playing critic to the left Laborites who remain firmly in a bloc with their war-hawk brethren.

Australia’s stability will end in flames sooner or later. Threatened with this, the left has only held on tighter to the strategy that has brought them to this pathetic state in the first place. This path only provides the union bureaucrats left cover to keep the working class on a trajectory which promises crisis and war. In this context, it is clear that our recent conference stands

*continued on page 16*

## RED BATTLER

Marxist newspaper of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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# How the Whitlam government paved the way for neoliberalism



Sydney Morning Herald, Newspix  
**Left: Sydney, 1973, Builders Labourers union protests for Green Bans, which successfully challenged developers' demolition of buildings such as low-rent inner-city housing. Above: Melbourne, April 1974, Hawke and Whitlam address the media in midst of economic crisis.**

*The following document written by SL/A Central Committee member C. Cunningham was adopted at the 2024 SL/A and B-L Fusion Conference. It has been slightly edited for publication.*

Following WWII, the U.S. emerged as the undisputed leader and most dominant power of the capitalist world. Soon after the war, particularly following the 1949 Chinese Revolution, the U.S. devoted huge military and economic resources to crushing Communist-led insurgencies in Asia and beyond. However, it was not long before their supremacy gradually eroded, and their power weakened. The first clear signs of U.S. overextension came in the late 1960s as they stared down the barrel of imminent defeat in Vietnam. It was this context that triggered massive economic and political instability across the globe. Crises and revolutionary openings broke out from France, to Italy, Portugal and Spain. Australia was no exception.

The period of Gough Whitlam's prime ministership intersected a decades-long crisis the likes of which had not been seen before, nor since, in capitalist Australia. Beginning in the early 1970s Australia's highly protected and sclerotic industrial base was hit by a series of global economic shock waves that activated repeated recessions and runaway inflation. These external shocks showed that Australia's archaic industry, sheltering behind massive tariff walls, was unviable and uncompetitive. Industries began to fail; bankruptcies and unemployment began to increase. To resolve this crisis in their favour and to avoid becoming "the poor white trash of Asia" (per Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, 1980), the Australian capitalist rulers had to urgently deregulate and modernise the economy.

This crisis for the ruling class was compounded by the extraordinary power of the highly organised proletariat whose constant industrial struggles exacerbated the huge pressures building up inside the country. The unions were not about to give up wages and conditions without a fight and were more than prepared to flex their muscles if slighted. For instance, in July 1974, when visiting worldwide celebrity Frank Sinatra launched a broadside against Australian journalists and then refused to apologise, his whole entourage was shut down. The musicians union black-banned the tour, the hotel employees union refused him room service and the Transport Workers Union would not refuel his plane. Before Sinatra finally gave in,

ACTU head Bob Hawke warned, "If you don't apologise your stay in this country could be indefinite. You won't be allowed to leave Australia unless you can walk on water." This example highlights the broad political power of the union movement and their readiness to challenge the bourgeoisie's ability to run things.

For elements within the bourgeoisie, as well as leaders of the labour movement, the initial attraction of Whitlam was that he promised he could extract Australian capitalism from its malaise without any major clash or commotion. His program consisted of social reforms to placate a restive working class and a range of projects to retool Australian capitalism while opening it up to greater international competition. But this class-conciliatorist outlook, captured by his almost evangelical 1972 "It's Time!" election campaign song, projecting we could all go forward to "freedom" together, was doomed from the get-go. It consisted of trying to plaster the infamous social-democratic falsehood that the working class and bourgeoisie have a common interest on to a stormy reality that prevented this at every turn. Furthermore, there was no way Whitlam's social-democratic reforms could resolve the problems, not least when the economic base of the country was falling apart. No manner of tinkering around the edges, band-aid solutions, half measures or more extensive Laborite schemes could resolve the crisis of Australian capitalism. Nor could Australian capitalism revert back to its previous troglodyte existence. The fact of the matter was the economy had to be restructured. This would either be carried out by the bourgeoisie or by the working class.

By 1974 the Australian economy, impacted by the huge OPEC oil price rises, had fallen into a shambles. The crisis shattered any illusions that the government could reform its way out of the situation. Whitlam turned to austerity measures attempting to restrain wages and wind back reforms. This was met with a strike wave of unprecedented proportions. In response the government adopted a wishy-washy anti-strike campaign that resolved nothing. It was becoming crystal clear to the bourgeoisie that Whitlam's indecisiveness and conciliationism was only creating chaos and that there needed to be a showdown to subdue the unions. At the same time, Whitlam's fantasy that somehow the jam of Australian capitalism could be fixed or massaged into place by his reform agenda was

descending into farce. This was exemplified by the so-called "loans affair."

Inspired by rising commodity prices and with the government in deficit, Whitlam and a small cohort of senior ministers started desperately searching for a magic bullet. Led by the minerals and energy minister they embarked on a cuckoo scheme to try to finance the development of Australia's energy infrastructure by covertly borrowing massive funds from a dubious overseas commodity trader. The deal never eventuated. But when the scam got out, it showed in spades that the government was clueless when it came to solving the economic and political crisis. Whitlam's thrashing about creating bedlam and the fact that he had crossed a red line by asking questions about the strategic U.S. spy base at Pine Gap prompted the capitalist rulers to sabotage his regime, ultimately orchestrating his dismissal by the British monarchy's Australian representative, with the connivance of the CIA and British MI5.

However, far from resolving anything, Whitlam's sacking only exacerbated the crisis as the proletariat mobilised to defend their interests and what they perceived to be their government. But unlike the bourgeoisie, who were ready to take decisive action, the working class had no revolutionary leadership that understood what was posed, the stakes involved and the need to resolve the question in the interests of the proletariat. It was in that political vacuum that Whitlam and ACTU head Bob Hawke quickly rallied to defend the rule of capital, directing workers to retreat and trust in the ballot box. Despite massive pressure from their base, the union bureaucracy—with yeoman's service from the Communist Party—then quelled the

outpouring of proletarian anger and outrage. This led to Whitlam's overwhelming defeat at the 1975 election, ushering in eight years of the Fraser Liberal/Country Party Coalition government.

While Fraser came to office promising to curtail union power, he was not successful. Union-busting attacks were frequently met with stern resistance. For instance, in 1981 industrial unrest reached levels that were second only to those of 1974. Despite the fact that Fraser was openly pro-business and anti-union, he was not, however, fully committed to a boots-and-all showdown with the unions. Nor was he fully committed to the reorganisation of the economy that the period demanded. In fact, he rejected radical deregulation, throwing the report recommending he do so into the bin. Echoing the Whitlam government's ill-fated loans fiasco, Fraser thought that a mining boom could miraculously solve the problems of the Australian economy without any major overhaul or restructuring. Thus, leading into the 1983 election, it still remained to be seen whether the bourgeoisie would take complete charge and reorganise the economy or whether it would be the working class.

The tumultuous period from Whitlam to the election of Hawke ten years later threw a spotlight over why only revolutionary leadership could have resolved the situation in favour of the working class and its historic interests. The Australian capitalist order was in crisis. Neither Whitlam's attempts to conciliate the bourgeoisie and to try to make capitalism work, nor left trade-union militancy could solve the predicament. If anything, this lengthy period of industrial struggle highlighted how incapable trade-union militancy is in

*continued on page 6*

## Spartacist League Forums

World in crisis  
**Lucky country  
 in denial**



### Melbourne

**Saturday, 1 June, 3 p.m.**  
 Balit-mil Room, Victorian Trades Hall,  
 54 Victoria Street, Carlton  
 spartacist-melb@exemail.com.au

### Sydney

**Saturday, 15 June, 3 p.m.**  
 Windeyer Room, Sydney Mechanics'  
 School of Arts (SMSA),  
 280 Pitt Street, Sydney  
 spartacist@exemail.com.au

# Albanese: albatross of the Yes campaign



Richard Milnes/Alamy



Robert Wallace/Alamy

## Aboriginal liberation demands revolutionary leadership

Voice referendum engendered rotten polarisation between forces with common interests. SL/A and B-L fought for a revolutionary pole to cut through this. Right: SL/A and B-L placards at Invasion Day 2024 rally after referendum's defeat.

We reprint below an 8 October joint statement of the SL/A and B-L. The 2023 Voice referendum ultimately ended in defeat, crushed under the weight of Labor's misleadership and rotten social polarisations (see "The Voice referendum" in "Lucky country in denial," page 1).

Australian society is polarised to fever pitch over Labor's referendum on the Voice, a powerless parliamentary advisory body composed of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The Yes camp is led by the repressive, warmongering Albanese government backed by big business, the churches and liberal politicians. But it also has the support of a large part of the population, overwhelmingly younger people, who genuinely want to improve the conditions of Aboriginal people. However, the truth is that this cause cannot take a single step forward while it is hitched to the Albanese government, the direct overseer of Aboriginal and working-class oppression.

The No camp is led by the Coalition and a posse of reactionaries who blame Indigenous people for their own oppression and howl against this population—brutally oppressed for centuries—getting even the hint of recognition. However, the No camp also includes many working and Aboriginal people who justly hate the hypocritical tokenism and reactionary policies of the ALP government. The division of the society into these two camps is a disaster for the Aboriginal struggle and for the population as a whole. The way forward for workers, leftists and Indigenous people is to build an independent, communist Yes campaign to defeat the reactionaries and to fight the Labor government.

Carried out in defence of the whole oppressive social order, the No campaign is not just an offensive against Aboriginal people, but targets everybody on the bottom rungs of society. Its victory would institutionalise the reactionary view that Aboriginal people should be kept on the fringes, out of sight and out of mind. This would mark a significant rightward shift in the political terrain and set back not just the struggles of Aboriginal people but also those of the proletariat and all the oppressed.

Support for the No vote has risen in the polls as the result of a backlash against the Albanese government. For the ALP, the whole point of the referendum is to score

cheap points on the Aboriginal question while they grind us all down with rocketing cost-of-living increases, an unrelenting housing crisis and a collapsing health system. Workers and Indigenous people resent Albanese's liberal, hypocritical moralising while Labor keeps the boot firmly on their necks. As for the union leadership, they also contribute to this backlash: while not lifting a finger to defend their members, they gush with servile praise for the empty liberal dogoodism of the Albanese government and Australia's most exploitative bosses.

The referendum takes place in the context of the Australian imperialists being squeezed as the post-Soviet world order unravels. Australia's big brother protector the U.S. sees no way out but to confront Russia and China while putting the clamps on its allies. Today, the Australian imperialist rulers are faced with forfeiting their lucrative trade with China while being compelled to contribute hundreds of billions to the AUKUS military pact as part of the U.S.-led drive to war. To pay for this they are tightening the screws on the population at home.

Under these conditions of imperialist decay, it is not possible to substantially improve the conditions of life for the oppressed. The profit-gouging bosses are not about to just hand over decent healthcare, education and housing, things we all desperately need. These things will need to be taken, requiring a sharp confrontation with the capitalist rulers and their government. Without seizing control of the economy from the capitalists and running things in our own interests, workers and the oppressed will be left to squabble over the ever-diminishing crumbs that fall from the capitalists' table.

The polarisation over the referendum pits two forces with common interests against each other and prevents a unified struggle against the capitalist government, which is grinding both down. For either the Aboriginal struggle or the cause of the working class to advance, it is necessary to break through these reactionary divisions and unite the progressive elements of both camps. Those in the Yes campaign who want to win real gains for Aboriginal people must be mobilised on a program that can actually do this, by fighting against the ALP government and the bosses they serve. The loathing for the



RB photo

Albanese regime fuelling the reactionary No campaign must be given a progressive direction that benefits both working people and the Aboriginal struggle. The Spartacist League and Bolshevik-Leninist have an answer: **build a Yes campaign that fights the Albanese government!**

Of course, Aboriginal people should have a voice! The real question is what that voice should say. We say: use the Voice to expose Albanese's attacks on Indigenous people and on the working class, from the cop/military occupation of NT Aboriginal communities to turning Australia into a base for anti-China operations by U.S. military forces! By using the Voice against the Albanese government to demand what the Aboriginal population and the proletariat need, we can build a fighting alliance to advance both causes against the parasitic capitalists who run this country for their own profits. Let's make Albo regret ever trying to give his government a facelift by turning the Voice against him!

To that end, we offer the following program:

1. The ALP and other Reconciliation liberals claim that a huge part of the Yes campaign is truth telling and addressing the wrongs of the past. OK, Albanese and gang, release the police records! Enough with whitewash Royal Commissions! Let us see the crimes committed during the ongoing reign of capitalist brutality: from the Stolen Generations to lockdowns to deaths in custody! Stop covering up the cops' naked brutalisation of Aboriginal people, striking workers and the oppressed. How can Aboriginal people have a voice if they can't even know the truth!?

2. From western Sydney to Kiwirrkurra, infrastructure is falling apart—if it ever existed in the first place. For massive public works projects under union control! End the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the

working class through union-run training and hiring programs! Electricity, housing and water now!

3. For free, quality healthcare and education! The most basic needs of Aboriginal people and the working class have been slashed. Train hundreds of new doctors, nurses and medical technicians to staff new hospitals! For new schools and literacy classes in Aboriginal languages! For the immediate translation of all books in the curriculum into Kriol! Make them freely available online!

4. Expropriate without compensation the banks, agribusinesses, mining magnates and cattle barons! The workers should control the companies and Aboriginal people should have a say in how the land is used. When the capitalist class is liquidated, it will be easy to ensure mutual agreement on these questions that benefits all the oppressed. Use the property taken from the ruling class to meet our needs!

While many groups claim to represent the interests of Aboriginal people and pose as alternatives to Labor, they have no way to cut through the reactionary divisions over the Voice or advance the struggle against the Albanese government. One of these is Socialist Alternative (SAIt) who are campaigning for a critical Yes in the referendum. SAIt correctly recognise the importance of defeating the reactionary No campaign. However, they reject building a Yes campaign opposed to the Albanese government and its liberal moralising, which is necessary in order to break through the reactionary polarisation in the referendum and undercut the reactionaries. Instead, SAIt just line up behind the ALP's Yes campaign as a lesser evil. Their criticisms simply amount to advising Labor on how to run a more effective campaign.

Then there are those who stand aside and watch the political waves of Australia

Our long-time supporter and friend, Inga Smith, died on 1 September last year. Inga was a member of the Spartacist League (SL) for ten years and remained a staunch supporter of our International throughout the rest of her life. We extend our condolences to her partner, Doug, her family and her many close friends.

Inga grew up in New Zealand. Drawn to the anti-Vietnam War protests in the 1960s, she had a brief introduction to the radical left in NZ. After spending a year in Europe with her boyfriend, living in the radical hotbed of West Berlin and later travelling around Eastern Europe in a Kombi van, they settled in Sydney in 1972.

We first met Inga in 1974 at one of the monthly general meetings of Sydney Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) where we had intervened to argue for a communist women's movement against the feminist notion that only women can liberate women. She disdained the personalism and subjectivism rife in the women's movement. At one "consciousness-raising" meeting, when women complained that their menfolk were all cheating with "the other woman," she exclaimed: "I was the other woman!"

Inga was attracted to the SL by our insistence that the road to women's liberation lay through socialist revolution. She was quickly won to Trotskyism and never wavered in her convictions. After joining the SL, Inga was plunged into the political struggles of our work within the WLM. Always an articulate and powerful speaker, she was in the forefront of our battle in 1977 to successfully beat back an attempt by the CP-backed Scarlet Woman collective to ban us from Sydney Women's Liberation.

Inga moved to Melbourne for about a year in mid-1975. Soon after arriving there, she drew a late-night assignment to bail out student comrades arrested on the picket line of striking *Herald-Sun* and *Age* printing workers. This was the start of Inga's valuable defence work. She took a leading role in party campaigns to aid class-struggle militants and others imprisoned or targeted by the state. A determined and effective spokesperson, Inga was key to securing signatures or statements of support from senior trade-union or ALP officials. Inga was closely involved in the successful international campaign to get exiled Chilean miner and militant union leader, Mario Muñoz, out of Argentina following the 1976 military coup.

Inga cut a striking figure, a tall Nordic blonde with piercing blue eyes and a dazzling smile. Getting around on a motor bike, she was often decked out in her leathers, looking like a Viking shield-maiden, as a friend quipped. She was frequently on the defence team at demonstrations. A great photographer, she was also the party photographer at many events. In the late 1970s, Inga was production manager for *Australasian Spartacist*, then a monthly paper. Her flair for design as well as her administrative skills came to the fore. In those pre-digital days, getting out the paper was a painstaking and highly manual process. It required long hours and hard work, which Inga took in her stride. Inga was also the party treasurer for a period. Her conscientiousness and meticulousness were qualities well suited to the role, which she carried out with the same distinction as she did in all the positions that she held in the party.

## Lynette 'Inga' Smith



Naoli Bray

1945–2023

After resigning in the mid-1980s, Inga continued to support and work with the SL. For example, in late 1991, Inga travelled to Moscow to join comrades stationed there fighting for proletarian political revolution against the tidal wave of capitalist counterrevolution that was engulfing the Soviet Union. While marching with our contingent on Revolution Day, she was interviewed by *Pravda*. Its next issue reported on the front page that an Australian woman representing the International Communist League (ICL) had responded when asked why she had come: "The October Revolution was directed to the whole world. What is happening with you these days is a blow to communists in all countries."

Nursing was Inga's main vocation, later qualifying as a nurse educator and gaining a Masters in Women's Health. When friends had health problems she was on the case, researching the literature, finding doctors, and assisting in every way possible. She was a member of the NSW nurses union, a lifelong trade unionist. One of her last public political acts was standing on the nurses' picket line at Canterbury Hospital in September 2022.

She worked for several years at the Children's Hospital in Sydney. In 1986, presumably at the urging of workmates, she stood for election as the branch delegate to the union's annual conference. An excellent writer, she penned a powerful statement setting out her political views. This included the need for the union "to fight against the [Hawke/Keating government's] Prices and Incomes Accord which the union council accepted." Later, Inga worked for abortion providers, including at one Sydney clinic where clients and staff faced ongoing harassment from anti-abortion bigots. After she brought this to the attention of the party, the SL joined with other left groups to defend the clinic.

Her curiosity and independent spirit led Inga to travel the world widely on her own. She rode a motor-

cycle around the Golden Triangle, travelled all over Vietnam, went trekking in Nepal, visited Laos and toured Egypt, Jordan and other places. On holiday in Vietnam in 1991, she visited the district hospital in Xuan Loc, near Ho Chi Minh City. Noting it was very poor and lacking in basic equipment, Inga spent the next three years scouring Australia for unused or obsolete but still functional equipment and supplies. Overcoming many obstacles, in 1994 she was able to deliver 486 kgs of donated medical supplies and equipment to the hospital. In 1992, while working in Fiji as a volunteer theatre sister, Inga delivered funds that had been collected in Australia to the striking miners at the Vatukoula gold mine. The funddrive to aid their long-running struggle against the Emperor Gold Mining Company was initiated at her urging.

A devoted reader of the ICL's English-language publications, Inga was always happy to socialise with comrades. She was a highly cultured woman who loved talking politics, history, music, art and theatre, often with a glass of wine in hand. A voracious reader, her interests were broad-ranging—from medical journals, to books on the Jacobins, to the plays of Euripides, to the novels of Hilary Mantel, Naguib Mahfouz and many others. Her love of music was just as broad, being particularly fond of classical piano, jazz, and blues (she was a big fan of the Sydney blues band, the Foreday Riders). She loved the fact that, while working in Toronto in the early 1990s, by chance she stumbled upon a live performance by jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela in a bar. Reflecting her intense interest in the history of the workers movement, Inga also joined in a study group with other former SL members to pursue research into the early Australian Trotskyist movement. As a result, two historical studies of this important movement were published in the journal *Labour History*.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Inga was among many supporters dismayed by the silence and evident collapse of the ICL. However, she did not lose confidence in our ability to work things out, knowing that an intense internal re-examination must be underway. When our April 2021 *Spartacist* supplement "Down with the Lockdowns! The Working Class Must Defend Itself" was published, she embraced it wholeheartedly, joining our team at that year's May Day rally in Paramatta to get it around. She was also thrilled that our British comrades led a protest against the monarchy in London on the very day of the Queen's funeral. She worked with our Sydney comrades to help distribute the *Workers Hammer* leaflet "Queen croaks! Labourites crawl" at demonstrations.

In May last year she was pleased to learn about the political refounding of our Mexican section and the launch of their new paper, *El Antiimperialista*. In August she cheered on our SL/A and B-L joint campaign to throw the AUKUS supporters out of the ALP. Inga was re-energised by the rearming of the ICL and we have no doubt that she would have embraced the new edition of *Spartacist*, "The Breakdown of U.S. Hegemony & the Struggle for Workers Power." She will be missed by her many friends and comrades around the world. ■

pass them by, such as the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). The RCO denounce the Voice as a setback for Aboriginal people, characterising it as bolstering the "ideological state apparatus." Filled with slick maximalist verbiage calling for the "abolition of the settler-colonial Commonwealth of Capital," their Resolution doesn't offer any way to advance the struggle for Aboriginal liberation in the here and now.

Instead of the Voice, they offer the vague call for "a renewed struggle for self-determination and a socialist republic." But they don't breathe a word about how to renew this struggle. In fact, they don't even offer a recommendation on how to vote in the referendum! This is typical of the RCO, a group that constantly draws sectarian organisational lines as a substitute for putting forward any strategy of what to do next.

As for the Blak Sovereign Movement (BSM), they oppose the liberal Yes campaign, countering it with a Progressive No. Instead of the Voice, they call for a treaty

*continued on page 15*

# SPARTACIST

AN ORGAN OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

Published in English, French, German and Spanish and included in all subscriptions to ICL press in those languages.

[iclfi.org](http://iclfi.org)

We reprint below a 13 August SL/A statement. “Anti-AUKUS” left Laborites and their motions were ultimately defeated at the 2023 ALP national conference. The reinvigoration of the struggle against AUKUS demands willingness to break from all those lined up behind it (see “From AUKUS to Israel” in “Lucky country in denial,” page 1).

Union-busting ex-Prime Minister Paul Keating is living proof that traitors to the working class can oppose AUKUS. But to support and champion AUKUS, as Anthony Albanese and his gang of Labor Ministers and other hangers-on do, is to *necessarily* be a traitor to the working class. These oily servants of the bosses have no place in the workers movement and must be driven out of the Labor Party. One pacifist internal grouping, Labor Against War (LAW), is calling for a pushback against AUKUS. What that pushback consists of remains undefined. Well, we have an answer. To LAW and the growing numbers who are against this reactionary alliance, we say: You cannot fight AUKUS in league with those who support it! We must fight together now to expunge the AUKUS-lovers from the ALP!

AUKUS portends nothing but catastrophe for workers the world over, from Australia to Southeast Asia, China, the U.S. and Britain. Hell, for Australian workers it can only lead to massive job losses from the breakdown of China/Australia trade and to war, in which the U.S. spy bases in Australia would be an immediate target. Likewise, for Chinese workers AUKUS is a clear and present danger to their very existence.

There is an increasing polarisation within the ALP over the question of AUKUS. It would be a good thing and an act of political hygiene to drive out the pro-imperialist bootlickers currently running Labor. Only spineless sycophants of the Labor machine would oppose this. Although a step forward, a split with AUKUS supporters would not be our split. Our aim is not a cleaned-up/pacifist ALP but a revolutionary party. That said, putting the pacifists in charge would make it easier to show youth and workers that the real obstacle to fighting imperialism and war is not the AUKUS-lovers but the program of left Laborism.

### Opting out is not an option

Following the global pandemic and war in Ukraine, the world today is marked by a quickening disintegration of the liberal order and the decline of U.S. hegemony. The only way out for the U.S. is to heighten reaction: confronting Russia and China while squeezing allies like Australia to

# It's time! Drive the AUKUS supporters out of the ALP!



Alamy

March 2023: U.S. President Biden and sidekicks sell AUKUS war pact at naval base in San Diego.

contribute more as it careens toward war. This is the context for AUKUS, which openly targets China and is increasingly turning Australia into a base of operations for U.S. forces. Today, the American military presence in Australia is on a scale unprecedented since World War II. AUKUS involves the immediate expansion and upgrading of military and spy bases and the future acquisition of a small fleet of nuclear-powered submarines at the cost of hundreds of billions of dollars.

The response of much of the reformist left (Socialist Alternative, the Communist Party and Socialist Alliance) to these developments has been that Australia should opt out of the U.S. alliance. Presumably, they conceive of Australia existing independently and peacefully in their own little corner of the world, free from the crises of a global order in rapid change. In arguing for Australia to opt out, these groups, despite some minor criticisms, trail behind

Keating's “little Australia” outlook. Early on, he became a figurehead for the anti-AUKUS movement, arguing that this pact was against Australia's interests and that ALP leaders should pursue a more “independent” foreign policy rather than attaching themselves even more firmly to a decaying U.S. imperialist behemoth. As a lifelong warrior for capital, Keating is simply championing a wing of the Australian ruling class that sees its future prosperity as being most heavily dependent on trade within East Asia and fears that sabre-rattling against their major trading partner (China) will be bad for business: i.e., their profit margins.

At best, the reformist left promote the liberal fantasy that the Australian imperialist rulers can pursue a different “peaceful” strategic course. This is a utopian, reactionary pipedream. The breakdown of U.S. hegemony has set the stage for new wars of unimaginable brutality. Whatever

bourgeoisie to resolve the situation. These illusions neither recognised the nature of the impasse nor could they solve it. By not attacking the problem at its source, they deepened it. The fact that the SL/ANZ and other left groups called for socialist revolution didn't help the matter either, because despite the radical-sounding words there remained no recognition of what the real tasks were to solve the issue.

The working class needed to take control of the situation by reorganising and collectivising the economy based on a central plan. It was not enough for revolutionaries to simply assert this. But through the whole course of the struggle the task was to guide the working class to develop their own understanding of the nature of the crisis and what needed to be done about it. To carry through this task required exposing that the ALP and trade-union leaders were obstacles to solving the crisis. But again, merely saying so did not constitute a revolutionary answer to the crisis either. This tumultuous period was marked not simply by the crisis of the capitalist system *in general*, nor by the treacherous nature of Laborism *in general*. As described above,

it constituted an entire period marked by the *specific* crisis of Australian capitalism at a *specific* stage of development. Without a materialist understanding of the roots of this particular crisis, it was impossible to guide working-class struggles in their multiple twists and turns, nor motivate the urgency of a revolutionary break with Laborism.

The problem with the SL/ANZ was precisely its total lack of a materialist understanding of what was actually taking place. The SL/ANZ could therefore speak of the reactionary nature of the capitalist system, of the need for a workers government and of the treachery of Labor, but these were generalities invariably disconnected from the material reality and the tasks flowing from that. Amid the considerable proletarian ferment, revolutionaries would have developed a concrete program of struggle to address the actual day-to-day needs of the working class and to drive forward the instinctual strivings of the proletariat to take charge of society, rip the means of production and control of the state out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and resolve the deadlock in the interests of the workers and the oppressed. ■

musings the liberal pacifists might have, Australia will inevitably be drawn into the maelstrom.

Sheltering under the U.S. military shield, the Australian rulers are fundamentally committed to remaining firmly embedded in the camp of U.S. imperialism. For those fake socialists who dream of an independent Australia, it is sufficient to recall the fate of the Whitlam Labor government. In 1975, it was removed by the Australian representative of the British monarchy, with the connivance of U.S. and British intelligence agencies, not least because Whitlam so much as questioned the role of the strategic U.S. spy base at Pine Gap. Whitlam's dismissal stands as a sharp reminder that unequivocal support to the U.S. alliance is a red line that cannot be crossed. The crucial fight to break the U.S. alliance demands a revolutionary program of struggle to overthrow the Australian ruling class, who as a weak imperialist power rely on their U.S. big brother to protect their interests at home and within the region.

### For a communist anti-war movement

To defeat AUKUS will require a gigantic international working-class struggle, including in China, to drive the U.S. and Australian military provocateurs from the South China Sea. Those in Australia who refuse to defend China against foreign imperialist enslavement, like Socialist Alternative and Solidarity, take a side with their own exploiters and will never win the support of Chinese workers. On the other hand, those who cheerlead for the Communist Party of China (CPC), like Trotskyist Platform, hitch the fight against U.S. and Australian imperialism to the CPC's reactionary strategy, which is based on defending its own privileges, not fighting to liberate the workers of the world from capitalist exploitation. A fighting working-class alliance against AUKUS would embolden the Chinese workers to oust the parasitic bureaucracy and take the reins of the largest country today where capitalism has been overthrown.

Most class-conscious workers know that the ALP and ACTU have delivered only defeat after defeat, leading to the evisceration of the union movement and impoverishment. Now, after the horrors of the pandemic and with workers facing huge cost-of-living increases and crumbling public services, the ALP is promising to splurge hundreds of billions on AUKUS! This has rightly sparked outrage and opposition amongst rank-and-file ALP supporters and within the left and trade-union movement. Many are calling for spending on AUKUS to be cancelled and replaced by funding for health, education, housing, etc.

Of course, workers need these things and more. But the bosses are not about to change their priorities and hand over such things on a platter. They will need to be taken. This will require a head-on confrontation with the capitalist rulers and their government, making deep inroads into their profits and property. Only a revolutionary party aiming to put an end to Australian imperialism can advance the struggle for workers' burning needs and build an anti-AUKUS movement that can succeed.

The deepening fissures in Labor present an opportunity. Planting a revolutionary pole against AUKUS inside the ALP will provide a rallying point for opponents of imperialism among its working-class base and drive a wedge between that base and the wretched pro-capitalist leadership. We say that advanced workers should join the Labor Party, the main political organisation of the proletariat in this country, in order to pursue this vital task and to join our struggle to cohere a Leninist-Trotskyist party capable of leading the working class to victory. **Drive the AUKUS supporters out of the ALP!** ■

## Whitlam...

(continued from page 3)

solving the problems of the working class. During this turbulent decade, the unions were able many times to push the capitalist rulers back to stalemate. At different junctures they made the country almost ungovernable. But because they had no political solution to the issues confronting the working class, their strikes and protests served only to deepen the crisis not resolve it. To achieve the latter, the proletariat needed revolutionary leadership.

When Whitlam was sacked, there was an outpouring of calls for a general strike from elements within the unions to the far left, including the SL/ANZ (forerunner to the SL/A). But these calls, including to restore the Whitlam government, were never linked to a political solution based on clearly recognising and resolving the actual crisis of the capitalist order. Instead, the Laborites and left argued that by pushing through a battery of more radical demands the chaos could be reined in. Or more union militancy would force the

# Bolshevik-Leninists fuse, Revolutionary Regroupment splits

On 1 February Bolshevik-Leninist sent the following letter to its fraternal organisations, the Brazilian Revolutionary Regroupment (RR) and the Indonesian Angkatan Bolshevik Revolusioner Internasionalis (ABRI). This letter aimed to clarify key positions in the fight for revolutionary regroupment. In response RR broke relations, doubling down on their current trajectory. The letter is slightly edited for publication. The full exchange can be read at [bolshevik-leninist.org](http://bolshevik-leninist.org) and [rr4i.noblogs.org](http://rr4i.noblogs.org).

\* \* \*

Dear Comrades,

This letter aims to outline what our key political differences are, and to pursue further discussion and struggle towards resolving them. BL [Bolshevik-Leninist] has undergone a lot of political development over the past few months, and it is clear there is also confusion amongst RR comrades on what exactly our positions currently are and why we have them. It is for this reason we think it is extremely important to have something detailed in writing for RR and ABRI comrades so that you can develop a deeper understanding of our reorientation.

Briefly on our account of the ICL [International Communist League]. RR has characterised the ICL as “highly degenerate political adversaries in terms of internal regime and program”. This is a charge that we completely disagree with. Since our invitation to their international conference, we have been given the opportunity to peer into their internal life both through documents and in person. We have found their internal life to be vibrant and healthy, not bureaucratic and certainly not the “depoliticized obedience cult” as described by I/BT. Far from having held onto wrong positions due to “prestige politics”, the ICL has investigated positions that they have held not just since the 90s but from the very start and even preceding the Spartacist tendency. *Spartacist* #68 is a testament to this. As for their program, BL stands with full agreement with the ICL’s reorientation, and regard their renewed program as our own.

On relations with the ICL, we want to be clear and upfront. During and after our recent united front actions with the SLA [Spartacist League of Australia] it has become clear that since SLA’s and BL’s reorientation we have been intervening on a common program, and as such are pursuing fusion with them. As said in RR’s programmatic manifesto “Organise an International Marxist Proletarian Nucleus!”, we believe that “if there is sufficient closeness between organizations in the context of a united front, Marxists would seek to direct the discussion towards a merger or regroupment, without this preventing the joint struggle in the front with other groups from continuing”. A BL-SLA fusion would be a gain for revolutionary regroupment in Australia and internationally. We understand that RR does not have this perspective of ICL fusion. That being said, we are still interested in pursuing discussions with RR and ABRI and seek to maintain fraternal relations with both groups after fusion. BL seeks to improve relations between all three groups, with this letter being a step towards that but further BL-RR-ABRI discussions being another—alongside our offer to fly to Brazil to discuss these burning political questions. To both improve

relations with RR-ABRI as well as pursuing a fusion with SLA we are planning to have a joint BL-SLA fusion conference in Australia at the start of March and both ABRI and RR are invited to attend and participate. We sincerely hope you do so.

As for our political reorientation, it should be said that first and foremost the most significant and underlying change within BL politically is in our conception of the question of revolutionary leadership. To explain this, it is necessary to start with an overview analysis of our history and development. When BL was formed, we



Above: Demonstration in Petrograd, June 1917, raises Bolshevik slogans, including “All power to the Soviet of workers, soldiers and peasants deputies!” (Left) Lenin and Trotsky in Red Square on 2nd anniversary of Russian Revolution.

were not really a group in the proper sense of the word, explicitly dubbing ourselves a “collection of individuals” in reflection of this fact. That is, we recognised that we were not functioning as the Marxist nucleus we strove to create. This was for a myriad of reasons, us being scattered geographically for example, but ultimately it centred around the point that we were not intervening as an active revolutionary factor in Australia. That fact has been true for the bulk of our existence. While at the time we thought this was mostly an organisational question to be organically resolved, as we approached forming a more geographically cohered group it became more and more clear that BL’s transition from a “collection of individuals” to a Marxist nucleus had to be much more than drafting some organisational guidelines and setting up a dues system.

A Marxist nucleus *cannot* mean simply rocking up to events and rallies with abstractly correct Marxist doctrine, growing like an amoeba until we one day become big enough to become an actual revolutionary factor. No, that is not being revolutionary; that is being a glorified discussion circle. That is what BL has been damned to for most of our existence, a fact that was consciously acknowledged but which the steps to break from were unclear, confused and seen as largely organisational in nature. This style of existence was reflected in our propaganda, which while containing plenty of abstractly correct points consistently failed to be a tool for revolutionary action—the central point of Marxism.

A clear example of this was our “Safety or Profit?” article. Documenting the tragic death of a young worker, this document was

the epitome of radlib journalism. It detailed the complete negligence of the bosses, while making the correct point that capitalism is the root cause for his death. But what did we put forward concretely? In response to union misleadership we “counterpose a program of breaking with the ALP and building direct worker power by expanding union/worker control and oversight over production and safety processes”. That is all fine and dandy, but beyond abstract phrases how did anything written actually build and motivate a program of breaking with the ALP and fighting for revolution?

*working class*, a path which necessarily means struggling for revolutionary leadership and smashing the fundamental roadblocks of the working class, most acutely the social-chauvinists and their opportunist left cover. Even at the time there was something deemed wrong with this article, although our attempts to determine what was wrong wound up completely confused.

A future article was planned to actually be used for revolutionary intervention, which we did not produce and could not have without realising what was wrong with the earlier one and our framework more broadly. The problem *wasn’t* that it lacked another sentence or two denouncing the Laborite bureaucracy more vehemently, it also wasn’t that what was said was not formally correct. The problem with the article and our framework as a whole was that it *was not driven by the question of struggling for revolutionary leadership*, to break workers from Laborism. This was seen as something that could be addressed with some additional words tacked on rather than it needing to be the guiding framework behind Marxist work and campaigns.

A similar case was repeated with one of our comrades’ plans to intervene in a rally led by liberal activists in response to growing reaction against trans people. BL comrades recognised that there was a rotten polarisation, fostered by anti-trans rightists and the pro-trans liberals for their own interests. We recognised that we had to cut across such an axis and hoist a revolutionary pole, but we lacked the program for it. Our solutions for what to intervene with wavered from grand sounding declarations (calling for revolution/break with the liberal leadership); to accepting this leadership in the here and now with demands that were perfectly in line with what the liberals were calling for (free trans health care on demand, defeat the right wing reaction against trans people, etc); to sectarian denouncing of the protests as liberal while standing aside and refusing to intervene and actually break anyone from said liberalism. Our planned intervention could be little more than a “Marxist”/labour wing under liberal leadership of the protests. This was our political situation at the end of 2022 and start of 2023. A group entering the left with confusion compounding on confusion with unclear reasons for even existing let alone developing.

With us cohering as a group proper (establishing a small nucleus in Melbourne at the start of 2023) the question of our place in the left and the workers movement cropped up more and more. In the face

In truth, it did not. Well wishes for a break with Laborism (and calling for revolution) are not the same as struggling to actually break workers from Laborism in the fight for revolutionary leadership. What the article amounted to was whingeing that the bureaucracy isn’t doing enough to take care of the working class. The entire article is a complete capitulation to left laborism, with some words against Labor thrown in at the end as if we could say some magic words and a spell would be cast transforming it into an instrument for revolutionary intervention. When it came down to it, in the here and now, we posed no revolutionary road on how to best advance the interests of the working class.

While this particular article is an obvious example, it is by no means the only one. BL was consistently in the framework of trying to be “not opportunist” rather than trying to *advance the struggle of the*

**What Is Revolutionary Leadership?**

**SPARTACIST**

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[icflf.org/en/68/leadership](http://icflf.org/en/68/leadership)

of a weak, scattered and hostile left, we responded with sterile rigidity. The SLA rebounding and IG/LFI potentially popping up as a group in Australia meant our position on the left felt increasingly precarious and our potential to grow and develop in such an environment felt stunted. The political differences between BL and RR, already built on weak organisational bonds and a shallow and untested basis of programmatic agreement, accentuated and culminated in the first exchange of polemics. We say this here so we can be absolutely clear. *We do not defend the original documents produced.* They were confused, sterile, and above all not revolutionary. In our struggle to break from our non-revolutionary past, we must recognise its manifestations in all its forms. This also includes all of our previous articles which were all written in this framework, including the ones translated and approved by RR comrades. This is a serious break not just of the positions that you disapproved which had come to the fore at the start of this year, but of our shared positions in the years before that which were also written in such a framework. The political differences developed since then have centred around this question.

RR's failure to centre the question of revolutionary leadership manifested differently from BL's, but it is a political fault that was shared between BL and RR until recently. The question *must* be: at every step of the way, what is needed to advance the workers movement and how do we demonstrate that fighting for the proletariat as an independent force under revolutionary leadership is needed to do so? To understand why we have undergone such rapid political changes in the past few months it must be recognised that they were precipitated above all by breaking with the centrist politics of BL's history as a tendency—to transition from a discussion circle to a revolutionary organisation deserving of the name Bolshevik-Leninist. In this regard BL's joint work with the SLA has helped immensely, and has marked a qualitative break with our old framework.

### 1) A defence of BL's revolutionary interventions

In stark contrast to our old program, BL in the past months has fought to be a revolutionary factor in Australia. Our two statements published in the past few months have been modest steps forwards to actually struggling to advance the workers movement today.

Our call to chuck AUKUS hawks out of Labor puts front and centre the struggle to clear the obstacles of the working class and to create a revolutionary pole in opposition to the ruling class' war drive. In Australia, the Labor Party has a stranglehold over the workers movement; every union, from the rightist SDA to the left-posing CFMEU are all programmatically Laborite to the core, and they can only betray. These are things that RR comrades are sure to recognise. Laborites have betrayed the working class again and again, and yet, the working class remains almost completely wedded to this machine. In fact, any dissent to them is consistently funnelled back to them via left talking bureaucrats and their cheerleaders on the left. It is clear as revolutionaries in Australia, our goal must be to smash Laborism as a political force, and to expose the left Laborites and their leftist hangers-on as the central obstacle for the working class to overcome.

This sounds simple enough, but how do we actually break workers from Laborism? Right now, backing AUKUS to Israel, the Australian ruling class and their ruling party in the ALP are marching us towards war and misery. This has created a wave of opposition and ruptures in the unions and the Labor Party. The Labor Party and the union leadership stand exposed, but all of this opposition to Labor's belligerency is being funnelled into left Laborites

and pacifists, who voice their opposition to certain machinations while never advancing more than token measures. We recognise that they do this because their program is subordinated to the interests of the ruling class, and that their allegiance is to their war hawk Laborite brothers far above any of their anti-AUKUS pretences. But it is one thing for us to recognise this and another to struggle to get the working class under their leadership to do the same.

Our call to chuck AUKUS hawks out of Labor struggles to do exactly that. Firstly, it is the most elementary step workers must do to advance the struggle against AUKUS—a bloc with war hawks of course stifles any struggle against a drive to war. It also puts the question point blank to the left Laborites and pacifists: “Do you actually oppose AUKUS or do you value much more your unity with the AUKUS hawks?”, exposing the left Laborites' opposition to AUKUS as skin deep. Ultimately, even if political pressures forced such a split it would put such left Laborites in a position where their program could be put to the test and exposed as completely impotent. The only road against AUKUS is a revolutionary one, that much is clear. It is our duty to demonstrate it to the working class. This demand doesn't give an ounce of credence to Laborites, left or right. In fact, it completely exposes them as obstacles for the working class and is above all a call to ferment rank and file rebellion within Labor and the unions against its leadership.

As for entering Labor to follow through with this demand, we see it as purely tactical. It certainly would be the best tactic if one could actually push this through in the belly of the beast, but it has just as much potency if not more when pushed in the unions against the bureaucrats who lead them. To reject this campaign out of some faux principled opposition to the tactics deriving from such a demand would be completely sterile, it would abdicate the struggle to actually fight for revolutionary leadership in the labour movement. We want to smash Laborism, especially when Labor is in power, and especially when they are championing the ugliest social-chauvinist program. We will not be waiting for their program to get more palatable before we struggle to break workers from their misleadership.

Ultimately, RR's opposition to us entering the Labor Party, “especially when they are in government” is a rejection of the 2nd congress of the Comintern where Lenin argued in favour for communists to not just enter but to outright affiliate with the BLP [British Labour Party]. He did so not on some crude accounting the BLP's program to be sufficiently left posing enough, or whether they are in government or not, but rather argued in favour of it based on how to best intervene in the working class who were tied to the BLP. To have a criteria to enter Labor whether they are in government or not has much more similarities to BL's old framework of being “not opportunist” rather than anything to do with Lenin.

Our Anti-Albanese Yes Campaign is cut from the same cloth. The Labor government had created a reactionary polarisation which pitted two forces with common interests against one another. The ALP posed as defenders of Aboriginal people, pitting Aboriginal people and those who supported the Voice against those who were disgusted with the government and the increasing attacks they were waging against the working class. The importance of the call wasn't to say we were voting yes for establishing an Aboriginal Voice in parliament. Rather it was that it recognised that struggling for the smallest gains for the working class and oppressed requires revolutionary leadership, which in this case entails building a revolutionary pole to smash this liberal axis. An effective struggle cannot be waged with Albanese and his rotten Labor government but only against them. The Voice referendum ultimately suffered a humiliating loss, in large

part due to it being seen as little more than a vote of confidence for the Labor government. In the aftermath of such a loss, the country has experienced a right wing shift with rightists on the offensive at the expense of working and Aboriginal people. To overcome the reactionary polarisation that was created and to use that hatred of the government for the service of Australia's oppressed would have thrown a wrench at both the ALP and the Coalition's reactionary No campaign. That is why we struggled for an independent, anti-Labor, Yes campaign.

### 2) Lockdowns

RR comrades have voiced opposition to our support of the “Down with Lockdowns” call and our break from “Workers lockdowns”. Why was this call so important in the context of the pandemic? Why couldn't we just call for lockdowns in the same vein as any other safety measure, say vaccinations? To put it simply, the fight for the working class to advance itself as an independent force during the pandemic necessarily required to break the bourgeois “national unity” campaign which was the ideological core of the lockdowns. Unlike vaccinations, lockdowns were a measure of the capitalists *against* the proletariat. Under lockdowns, the capitalists forced the working class to stay indoors through the means of the police and army, completely stifling

that had to be done to advance the struggle of the workers movement during the pandemic. Therein lies the complete vitality of the “Down with Lockdowns” call.

Not confronting this key question at the critical moment when it was strangling the workers movement avoided the necessary struggle for the working class to fight against the capitalists. And that is exactly what BL and RR did. The lockdowns did not exist as an abstract idea, they existed as a real measure by the ruling class (and in the deformed workers states, the ruling bureaucracy) against the workers. Anyone hearing BL's former line for “workers lockdowns” would be unlikely to understand it as anything more than the working class enforcing the same reactionary measures, or as a call for them to be implemented more humanely with additional welfare schemes. Instead of smashing this reactionary “national unity”, we tried to patch it up with Marxist sounding flair.

As for RR, given the different manifestation of the pandemic in Brazil, with the lack of any serious attempt at a lockdown by Bolsonaro, the relevance of the call to smash lockdowns also manifested differently. Where it is relevant is in the positive program communists ought to have put forward in such a situation. What was needed was to pose the necessary independent tasks of the working class which go against the reactionary call for



David Crosling/AAP

**Melbourne, July 2020: Cops locked down thousands of public housing tower residents, imprisoning them in their apartments for weeks.**

class struggle. It was not some neutral means of safety but a weapon held by the class enemy to bludgeon their opponents.

The bourgeois (to varying degrees) were indeed suppressing COVID-19, but they were doing it through enforcing *their* interests at the expense of the working class. The response for revolutionaries thus is not to egg the capitalists on to perfect their means of stopping COVID-19, against the proletariat. No, the response had to be to struggle for the working class to stand on its two feet, and thus to *fight against the ruling class, their rule and their methods of defending their rule.* The proletariat has their own means of defending themselves, fighting for their safety by struggling for their own interests, at the expense of the capitalists' rule and property; acting to take control of safety in workplaces, struggling for public works programs to alleviate conditions spreading the pandemic, seizing the spacious and unoccupied luxury buildings owned by real estate speculators and using that property for socially useful purposes such as COVID safe schools, etc.

To demonstrate this to the working class, our task as revolutionaries is to drive a wedge between this propaganda of “national unity,” abstract concepts of “public health” based on a “de-classed” science, and shared trans-class interests in “saving lives”. This cannot be achieved with the call for “workers lockdowns” or by treating lockdowns as another tool in the toolbox of defence against COVID-19. To take on the ruling class, their response and their propaganda head-on was the central task

lockdowns. Instead, RR like BL treated the lockdowns like any other health measure joining in with the cry of liberals who were calling for the capitalists to dole out lockdowns against the working class.

This can also be seen in our defence of the CPC's (and other ruling bureaucracies') lockdowns against the working class, giving their reactionary and often brutal measures a complete whitewash as something to be replicated and spread. Instead of struggling to break the bureaucracy's hold in China, Cuba or Vietnam we instead accepted their gag order as a necessary and progressive measure.

### 3) Ukraine

On Ukraine, RR states that their “perspective is that of the proletarian revolution in Europe and Russia, the only one that can actually end the threats of war and begin to demolish the military alliance of the imperialist powers” (“O prolongado conflito na Ucrânia: guerra maquiada da OTAN contra a Rússia” via online translation). Those are fine words which we are the last to dispute in importance. But RR's position calling for military victory [to Russia] completely flies in the face of such a perspective. The only way to unite the working class of both Russia and Ukraine—to struggle for revolution and smash imperialism in the region (and beyond)—is ultimately for both Russian and Ukrainian workers to turn the guns around and overthrow their respective regimes. Calling for Russian military victory does absolutely none of that.



To justify this position, RR argues that “We defend Russian military victory at this moment as a concrete way to avoid a greater evil, which is NATO’s victory” (“O prolongado conflito na Ucrânia: guerra maquiada da OTAN contra a Rússia” via online translation) and as a blow to US imperialism. This sounds logical enough; a proxy regime for imperialism against a non-imperialist power. A win for one would be a blow to the other, and blows against imperialism are a good thing. But every act which is a blow against imperialism does not necessarily advance the interests of the working class, and all Leninists understand that the only way to deliver imperialism a coup de grâce is ultimately through workers revolution. Any strategy to struggle against imperialism must centre this. We must ask ourselves, does this position strengthen the international working class, does it advance the class towards revolution? Asking these questions, the call for Russian military victory falls apart.

This war is currently being waged over who controls Ukraine, the Kremlin or the White House. Neither outcome is progressive in the least, and either side winning would not deal a progressive blow against imperialism. Of course in the case of a Ukrainian victory it would only strengthen the imperialist hold over the country. But in the case of a Russian victory, whatever short term blow to imperialism would be completely negated by the cost of Russia being the oppressor of Ukraine. Such a victory would only bolster Zelensky’s proxy regime, which would continue to pose itself as “defenders against Russian aggression”. It would push nations historically oppressed by Russia into the hands of the imperialists, strengthening their encirclement of the country. Ultimately, it would create a perennial thorn against Russia in the form of the nationally oppressed Ukrainians, which would help imperialists fuel conflict to strengthen their position. The only beneficiaries would be the imperialists.

Even if the conclusion of this war saw NATO broken up this would not necessarily be a gain for the working class. If it was smashed by proletarian revolution, then it would be absolutely a gain. But through Russian victory? Such a breakup would entail little more than a shake up of imperialist alliances. A breakup of NATO in this situation would likely happen in the form of Germany breaking from NATO and entering a bloc with Russia. This would not be in the interests of the working class, in fact it would likely be the start of a new world war. This is no “lesser evil”!

While RR says that they have a perspective of proletarian revolution, in practice their position is a barrier to joint revolutionary struggle between Ukrainian and Russian workers. To call for Russian victory here would be calling for Russian workers to struggle to nationally oppress Ukrainians. It is a call for Ukrainians to support an invading force which promises little more than national oppression. For both Russian and Ukrainian workers, the call for a Russian victory does not rally them for revolution but pushes them into the hands of the regimes for the benefit of imperialism. While RR has some words in favour of revolution, they have surrendered the struggle for revolution in Russia and Ukraine today.

#### 4) Permanent Revolution

RR has voiced opposition to the ICL’s correction on national liberation. But the fact is, in the semi and neo-colonies, to advance the workers movement and to demonstrate the necessity of the working class as an independent fighting force it is imperative to break the proletariat from the hold of the bourgeois nationalists. Without recognising the burning nature of the question of national liberation and championing it like how the ICL (and BL) has now done, there is no breaking the working class from their bourgeois misleaders, there is no revolution. ICL’s old



Markku Rainer Peltonen/Alamy

**Graves of Ukrainian soldiers at Lviv, Ukraine, 2023. RR calls for Russian victory in this reactionary war. Revolutionaries fight for Russian and Ukrainian workers to turn guns against own capitalist rulers.**

program on national liberation, which RR falls into the same pitfalls as, is an obstacle to any serious struggle in these countries and damns the toiling masses to remain fully wedded to the national bourgeois.

Today, the world is divided into the hands of a small number of imperialists, who dominate every aspect of the political and economic lives of the semi and neo-colonies. It is by subjugating these countries that the imperialists maintain their rule. As such, many of the most basic tasks within these countries (national independence, democracy and modernisation; cancelling of imperialist debts, rolling back of austerity, etc) go against the very core of the imperialist system. It is because of this that achieving these tasks requires a front-on confrontation with imperialism, which the national bourgeois of the oppressed nations are unable and unwilling to wage as doing so would require a revolutionary upheaval of the masses that would threaten their own class interests. This makes the national bourgeois a damned class. They can’t fully repress the working class as they lean on this force to resist foreign capital but they can’t break with imperialism as that would require to rally forces that would threaten their very ability to exploit altogether. The national bourgeois of the colonies are forced to straddle a middle position between the imperialist bourgeois and the proletariat, leaning on either at any moment to defend their own narrow interests—weak in character, they are unable to be the ruling class of even their own nation. This perennially frustrated position of the national bourgeois means that they can never genuinely confront imperialist subjugation, it is a class doomed to betray the struggle of national liberation.

At the same time, imperialist subjugation has plunged the toiling masses into the depths of oppression, leaving their most basic demands unresolved. Since the condition of, and every measure doled out against, the proletariat is moulded by the imperialists, the struggle against imperialist oppression is a revolutionary powder keg and remains the most burning question in the neo-colonies. As things stand the masses remain wedded to the national bourgeois who also suffer from imperialist oppression. The working class look to the national bourgeois in the struggle against imperialism, but in defence of their own interests they can only betray. There is no path forward for national liberation but a proletarian one, under the leadership of a revolutionary party willing and able to take on the rotten imperialist order. At the same time, there is no revolution without wresting the proletariat away from the leadership of the bourgeois nationalists who currently have a stranglehold over the working class in the semi and neo-colonies.

There are two trends in the left which attempt to resolve this dilemma, both of them offer no way forward. Firstly there are those who surrender the necessity of the proletariat as an independent fighting force leading the struggle for national liberation, thus liquidating Marxism to tail

the national bourgeois. The Pabloites are the classical example, their program keeps the masses under the chains of the national bourgeois, and therefore betrays the struggle for not just communism but national liberation itself. On the other hand there are those who, responding to the former’s tailism, reject the struggle of national liberation, dismissing it as bourgeois and nationalist and a distraction from proletarian revolution. In this camp fell the historic Spartacist League, who lamented on many occasions that “many so-called Marxists believe that the struggle for the ‘national liberation’ of the Arab countries has merged with or even replaced the struggle for socialism in these countries” (“Turn the Guns the Other Way,” 1968).

The latter trend uses plenty of loud denunciations of the national bourgeois as cheap substitution for the actual struggle to intervene against them and fight for revolutionary leadership. By juxtaposing national liberation with socialism, they only keep leadership of the national liberation struggle firmly in the hands of the national bourgeoisie. Abstract denunciations under this framework become little more than cheap attempts to keep oneself “pure” from opportunism, while in practice they keep the masses with anti-imperialist impulses well away, closing off would-be revolutionaries from any serious penetration into the masses and into the oppressed countries as a whole. For all its revolutionary rhetoric, the latter trend betrays the struggle for socialism and national liberation as much as the former. Ultimately both of these trends are obstacles since they abdicate the struggle to intervene and fight for revolutionary leadership, the only possible path for national liberation and socialism.

So what way forward? In competition with the nationalists for leadership of the masses in the struggle for national liberation the only path forwards is to...compete! We must unmask the inability of the nationalists to realise their own most basic demands (let alone complete and genuine national liberation) and demonstrate that the only way forward in the struggle for national liberation today is to march under revolutionary leadership. Only by being the best and most genuine champions of national liberation can we seek to merge that struggle with the struggle for socialism, the only way of wresting leadership from the national bourgeois and breaking the masses from nationalism. This can’t be done with abstractly correct sounding words but only by getting our hands dirty and actually intervening, not as a glorified discussion group but as a revolutionary instrument. Only then can we utilise this powder keg and use the just national aspirations of the masses as the motor force for socialist revolution that it is.

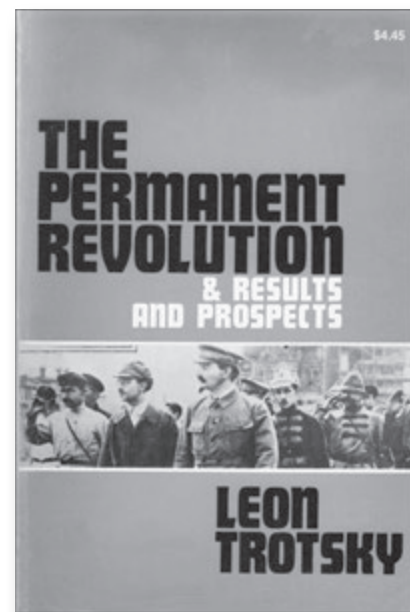
This is the genuine meaning of permanent revolution. Trotsky’s program means the steadfast struggle by Marxists to push forward, in the imperialised periphery, tasks of independence, democracy and development through national liberation



to their ultimate achievement in the proletarian conquest of power; “a revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one” (Trotsky). Trotsky recognised that in the imperialist epoch the tasks of national liberation can only be won through revolution. Instead of writing either off he fought to combine the two—success in doing so being the only way to achieve either. This is a task as important today as 100 years ago. This is the perspective that the ICL affirmed in *Spartacist* #68, which BL stands in full agreement with, and which RR has so far rejected outright.

Like much of the bourgeois “pink tide” in Latin America, the PT [Partido dos Trabalhadores] subsumes anti-imperialist sentiment. Through their rhetoric and professed political goals they present to their base as them “standing up” to the US. In Lula’s first term in government he was part of blocking the offensive of the FTAA. Today Lula talks up a “multipolar” world, BRICS cooperation with Russia and China, calls for a new global currency and more. His betrayals hardly need mentioning, and certainly overshadow any gains won under his leadership. But his “anti-imperialist” postures signal to many that Lula/PT are something beyond comprador—not a pawn of but a fighter against the imperialists. The mobilisation of large swaths of people behind the “pink tide” of bourgeois misleaders like Lula, who can only capitulate, is a reaction to the real conditions of imperialist subjugation which workers rightly view as a genuine barrier to social progress, and source of inequality and backwardness.

Even if Lula genuinely fought for “multipolarity”, this would still be no path to the actual defeat of the imperialist world system. The “struggle” of the “pink tide” against imperialist subjugation is in fact an attempt by national bourgeoisies to avoid confrontation with imperialism. The whole



Leon Trotsky’s *The Permanent Revolution* explains that leading the nation against imperialist domination is the central task of communists in neocolonial countries.

“One and free”?

# Multiculturalism and the liberal order in Australia



RB photo

The following document by SL/A Central Committee member O. Dziga was adopted at the 2024 SL/A and B-L Fusion Conference. It has been slightly edited for publication.

The cornerstone of the modern liberal order in Australia is the program and ideological language of liberal multiculturalism. Liberal hegemony and the multicultural project cannot, in this country, be separated. Their developments have always been entwined, the stability of one guaranteeing the stability of the other. As the Australian ruling class abandoned the program of insular White-Australia exclusionism, which had broken down as a profitable or feasible project, it was a liberal inclusionary framework which necessarily picked up the ideological slack. Wedded to the triumphalist project of reconfiguring Australia's place in the post-Soviet world, centrally under the Hawke-Keating governments, multiculturalism was entrenched as a *hegemonic* core tenet of modern Australian nationalism.

This document will lay out this process, its contradictions and function to Australian capital. It will examine the response of the left as well as white-racist reaction, and how the reinforcing relationship of the two stabilised and strengthened liberalism. It will also make an argument about the future of the multicultural project in Australia and why a communist struggle against liberalism, the principal

barrier to the working class in this epoch, necessitates the struggle against multiculturalism as its central ideological project.

The key fact to get straight is that multiculturalism is hegemonic to the framework of Australian mainstream as well as left politics, and that this is both the result of a stable social order and a key contributor to that stability. Multicultural Australia is a visible reality on the streets of all Australian cities. First and second-generation migrants make up a majority

of the population, among the highest percentage of OECD nations. This is a demographic shift which has taken place with a relatively low level of tension or social conflict and a relatively high level of “integration” into the *bipartisan* Australian “national project.”

The Labor Party, once the most vicious champions of white-racist protectionism, have since the 1970s been multiculturalism's vanguard. But the Liberal/National Coalition too defends the essentials of mul-

ticulturalism and have played as much of a historical role in entrenching the program of “inclusive” nationalism. The Coalition's specific reactionary twist on multiculturalism is to decry minimal gains for groups like Aboriginal people as “divisive” attacks on a “unified” society in which racial oppression and social inequality are solved issues. At the same time, they wage ideological attacks on specific minority groups, such as Muslims, for not sufficiently conforming to multicultural ideals.

How did it come to be that, in a country once defined by its program of brutal white-racist exclusion, the vast majority, when polled, declare cultural diversity a “fundamental feature of Australian society”? The answer to such a question comes down, in the first place, to Australia's position in a globally shifting imperialist system and how this system was navigated by the Australian bourgeoisie. The demands on imperialism's little Anglo-Saxon outpost in the corner of Asia changed fundamentally over the 20th century. When it was wedded to the British Empire, Australia's key task was to foster a limited level of migration which was homogeneously behind Britain's world supremacy—capable of displacing and annihilating the pre-colonial peoples of the continent and cementing a British bulwark on the cusp of Asia. Narrow White Australia-ism served this task well, both before and after Federation.



Frank Wolfe

Coalition Prime Minister Harold Holt with SEATO leaders, Manila 1966. Holt started dismantling White Australia laws and began the swim towards Asia.

## Fuse...

(continued from page 9)

history of Brazil under the PT shows the bankruptcy and limits to this strategy. But when the imperialists have not forced Lula to push through brutal austerity programs, working Brazilians have experienced poverty reduction programs, economic growth, and an international position nominally beyond a US puppet. All this, again, appears to many workers to contrast with imperialist dependency. However, the PT remains a barrier to the struggle against imperialism and to achieving basic gains for the Brazilian working class. Every minimal victory won under their leadership is predicated on avoiding struggle and is therefore ready to break at the slightest pressure. This is evidenced by the drop in the value of the [Brazilian] real following an unhappy response by international capital markets to Lula's “re-industrialisation plan”.

RR recognises as much as BL the inevitability of the PT to betray, and that to break workers from them is one of the central tasks for revolutionaries in Brazil. But the question is, how do we do it? In this regard RR falls well within the trend of the historic Spartacists and poses no way forward.

RR pens plenty of words against the treachery of PT and the need for revolution, correctly stating many times throughout their articles how “there is no room, both from the point of view of the social structure of a country on the periphery of the capitalist system, and from the point of view of the current global economic situation, for significant improvements in the living conditions of the Brazilian working class without break with capitalism” (“Un debate con el PSOL y otros simpatizantes de Lula” via online translation). But this treatment of imperialism is completely divorced from the day-to-day struggle of the working class in Brazil—as just a question to be settled after revolution. In the meantime, RR argues that to break workers from PT and to struggle for revolution “the only possible path is for us to act to convince the people of the need and viability of the socialist revolution, while we build instruments on the front line of struggle” (“Un debate con el PSOL y otros simpatizantes de Lula” via online translation).

But how do we convince people for the need for revolution? Abstract calls for one do absolutely nothing to break the illusions the Brazilian masses have in Lula. The truth is that RR has posed no path forwards to break the masses from the

PT, and thus have no path to winning the working class to the revolutionary road. As a replacement, RR offers little more than formally correct but abstract statements, as if the masses will be convinced of revolution by reading a strong enough denouncement of PT. Revolutionists need to actually intercept their bourgeois program beyond sterile and abstract denunciations of the fact that it is, indeed, bourgeois. We need to champion the struggle of national liberation, to centre and push for the confrontation with imperialism that the bourgeois PT program will never permit. The basic defence, and extension, of existing gains too is continually shown to require such a confrontation. Our task as communists is to show in struggle against the impotence and treachery of the bourgeois nationalists in even this task. Only in doing this can we expose the PT as the barrier to the struggle for national liberation that they are. Only then can we “convince the people of the need and viability of the socialist revolution,” not in words, but in deeds. To do so, and only through doing so, can the construction of an independent proletarian anti-imperialist leadership take place.

RR is absolutely correct in their opposition to PT and its left orbit, and correctly recognise them as roadblocks to the work-

ing class. We see this as a positive and correct impulse against the national bourgeois and its left tail. But that does not constitute a revolutionary road in itself. In fact empty denunciations of the national bourgeois fall into the exact same traps as the opportunists who openly tail them. The imperialists maintain their stranglehold over all aspects of the political, economic and cultural life of oppressed countries such as Brazil. The anti-imperialist struggle is key to liberation. If you are not fighting for revolutionary leadership of it then how will you break the masses away from PT to the banner of revolution? If you say you are fighting for leadership of this struggle, then how are you doing it beyond publishing correct sounding but abstract words?

BL hopes that this letter has a clarifying effect. Our forces are small, and the coming period presents increasing crises. Today, regroupment based on a clear revolutionary program is imperative. This letter was written for this purpose. The task to reforge the Fourth International today is a vital one, we ask comrades to seriously think through the questions and criticisms that we have presented.

Comradely Regards,  
Bolshevik-Leninist

The close of the Second World War saw the structural shift of the Australian bourgeoisie from alliance with Britain to a pact with the triumphant United States. The new world situation shifted the basic calculus for the ruling class. The centrality of Anglo-Saxon ethnic politics was quickly becoming less important. Ideologically central was the more broadly inclusive solidification of national unity around entering the U.S.-led “free world” confrontation with communism. Even more crucially, an increasingly industrialised and labour-intensive economy now demanded greater and greater population growth than ever before.

It was this conjuncture which precipitated the first wave of post-war migration. Controversially this wave was opened for the first time to Southern Europeans on a significant scale. While such a layer of migrants could be integrated into the legal and ideological framework of White Australia, in spite of experiencing serious social discrimination, they were also the first crack in that framework.

By the 1970s “multiculturalism” as a term was entering mainstream political discourse. Whitlam’s Labor government landed the killer blows to formal White Australia, but this was a mercy kill more than any radical act. White Australia was simply no longer a feasible policy for Australian capitalism, a fact understood by Labor and the Coalition alike. By the 1960s this old foundation of Australian nationalism was cracking at the seams under the contradictions emerging out of post-war non-Anglo-Saxon migration. Increasingly clear, too, was that opening the door to Asia would soon be necessary for the same reason.

That the viability of Australian capitalism demanded policy change explains the bipartisan consensus which laid the groundwork for multiculturalism. It was the Holt Coalition government which set into motion the dismantling of White-Australia laws. And it was Malcolm Fraser who oversaw the founding of much of multiculturalism’s basic machinery, from the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs to the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). Fraser was also the first to open the door to Asia, letting in large numbers of Vietnamese “boat people,” whose counter-revolutionary anti-communist bona fides could smooth their entry.

While previous decades had seen the first steps taken in the structural shift from decayed white-racist protectionism, it was the Labor governments of Bob Hawke, and especially Paul Keating, who saw multiculturalism entrenched as a central foundation of Australian nationalism. By the time Hawke took office the Cold War in Asia had thawed, fast approaching was the global epoch of liberal triumphalism and accelerated U.S.-led economic globalisation. The new demands on the Australian bourgeoisie were to act as a tool of this liberal globalisation. Its relationship to Asia was not confrontation but to act as an imperialist instrument of engagement, integration, and cooption. As part of this, the Australian bourgeoisie was entering an Asian trade boom, increasingly with the rapidly opening Chinese economy.

For the first time though, utilising now established multicultural frameworks, this program of Asian engagement was extending deep inward roots into the country itself and its demographic makeup. All this was deeply connected to the economic reordering of domestic political economy—gutting industry and unionised labour. The slow funnelling of the working class into an unstable, casualised job market was greatly facilitated by an expanding labour force of workers happy to fill such positions. The rest of the class, with little direct coercion, could be forced to adapt or perish.

It was this global and national context which made multiculturalism the new



**Union workers celebrate pushback of company attack at Bitzer Refrigeration Melbourne, June 2016. Multiracial working class in Australia has the power to challenge the liberal order.**

ideological cornerstone of Australian bourgeois rule. In an era of liberal triumphalism and globalisation it was a celebration of its enlightened march towards liberal progress. Modern liberal Australia could drape its attacks on the working class in its entry to a lauded age of cooperative, multi-class, multi-racial society. But while these decades had seen a fundamental shift in foundational aspects of Australian nationalism, and in the demographics of the Australian populace, this process was ultimately one of continuity rather than significant rupture. The emergence of multicultural hegemony was at all times guided by the strategy and immediate interests of the Australian ruling class as it navigated new developments in the imperialist world order of which it is a link in the chain. It was a process controlled to *preserve* the stability and viability—both economically and ideologically—of this small-fry imperialist ruling class. It did so profitably and stably because its method was a *shifting*, however significant that shift, of its extant nation-building mechanisms.

Though it had abandoned insular white nationalism, the strategy of Australian capital was *not* the construction of a “big” industrial Australia built by truly mass immigration. Instead, it constructed a tightly managed “multicultural” one; larger and much more ethnically diverse but still (relatively) numerically underpopulated and contained by its tight visa system. The Australian state heavily prioritises the entry of petty-bourgeois professionals able to meet strict monetary hurdles to qualify for citizenship, bringing capital with them. Alongside this population sit those at the opposite end of the spectrum, vulnerable migrants on non-permanent visas filling the gaps in a casualised job market, at risk of deportation if they dare complain or organise. Rural manual labour like fruit picking, for instance, remains especially dependent on this stratum of visa workers. In an intermediate position sits a large international student population. This layer serves a dual role of financing the profitable higher-education sector while filling in the gaps in urban service jobs (often at high levels of exploitation) before a segment remain in the country to join the ranks of the professional petty bourgeoisie. All the while they receive an indoctrination in the values of Western imperialism.

This economic model, wedded to the ideological model of multiculturalism, has been highly profitable for the Australian bourgeoisie. Key to its efficiency is the kind of ideological blackmail it imposes on the immigrant population. As an ideological project it undercuts much potential militancy, telling those allowed to work in Australia, let alone gain citizenship, that they are to thank their lucky stars for such

an opportunity. Keep your head down and conform to bourgeois national unity around “Australian values” and you too can have a slice of paradise in the “Lucky Country.” Meanwhile those who do not—be they striking workers, Aboriginal people or refugees—can be held up as threats to be excluded from this little harmonious multicultural society.

Importantly, much of this ideological conditioning is internally imposed. The chain of ideological multiculturalism is most efficiently transmitted by self-policing *within* ethnically diverse communities, as more settled migrants pull newer ones “into line.” This effectively compels the *community*-level assimilation of these “lucky” migrants behind multicultural “lucky country” Australian nationalism. It is in this way that the layer of Australian society which is, in many cases, the most exploited and overworked also remains among the most stable and reliable for Australian capitalism.

The relationship of the second generation of Australian migrants to multicultural unity is generally less explicit but nevertheless tends to be extremely deep. The stereotypical generational divide sees older generations accuse their children of “taking their luck for granted.” It is true that emerging, more culturally assimilated, generations generally develop a much greater willingness to openly critique the society around them. But the great majority find themselves even more solidly ideologically committed to liberal multiculturalism and their place within it. This cross-generational reinforcement extends the retreat into liberal national unity, and ultimately deepens passivity.

### The reactionary challenge

But how harmonious is this “united” society really? At the tail of multicultural hegemony there has always been a backlash under the flag of white racism and xenophobia. Pauline Hanson and other demagogues mobilise segments of disenfranchised workers, white lumpenproletarians and perennially distressed petty

bourgeoisie behind outfits like One Nation and its xenophobic program of a return to white exclusionism. These same segments have continued to show their faces—at the Cronulla race riots, “Reclaim Australia” rallies, and other wretched mobilisations. Such outbursts, festering out of disenfranchisement with the neoliberal project, have caused significant embarrassment to the “enlightened” multicultural Australian ruling class.

Nevertheless, this style of organised xenophobic politics has thus far remained on the periphery of political life. If anything, among its most significant practical impact has perversely been the liberal backlash engendered in those rallying further around the multicultural “enlightenment” under attack—especially from the organised left which tends to meet the attackers in the streets. The marginality of reactionary opposition to multiculturalism in these decades of liberal stability and consensus is hardly a surprise. The ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, and no segment of the Australian big bourgeoisie has anything to gain from a return to insular little White Australia in present world conditions.

It is also no surprise, though, that the rise of Hanson coincided with the end of the Hawke-Keating governments, and with them Labor’s 1990s program for multiculturalism. John Howard’s subsequent tenure in power epitomised the political stylings of *contained* xenophobia which have remained the ideological safety valves of reactionary pressure on liberalism in this country ever since. Howard presented a program which could speak to the xenophobic dissent of disenfranchised white social layers while also not challenging the basic foundations of multiculturalism let alone actual immigration rates.

The use of the brutal “sovereign borders” anti-refugee detention regime, which Howard pioneered as a political focal point in the 2000s, demonstrates this fact perfectly. Relative to actual net migration, refugee policy always impacted a minuscule number of people totally disproportionate to the political centrality it would acquire. The special brutality of the Australian refugee system served, and still does, an ideological function much more than any practical need by the state to police Australian borders. While ultimately affirming the multicultural society behind those “sovereign borders,” the ALP and Coalition spent decades jostling to prove they were the more cruel, more serious defenders of Australia’s borders—the ones who could “stop the boats.” The nationalism they were defending was multicultural, but its pluralism was reserved for those who did it the “right way,” and who could dance to the tune of cultural-political conformity.

### A prostrating left

The politics of protecting Australia’s borders and the Howard model of multicultural xenophobia demonstrate a key vitality of multiculturalism up to this day: its flexibility to contain ideological contestation *within* the bounds of liberalism. But this form of contestation did not emerge just out of the right but was mirrored by liberalism’s left tail, arguably



**Melbourne, June 2023: Fascists embarrass “enlightened” Australian ruling class, who keep them on the fringe for now.**

Michael Currie/Getty



Richard Milnes/Alamy



ABC

**Left: 2015 Sydney rally against racism. Right: Refugees protest imprisonment on Manus Island, 2017. Liberal embrace of multiculturalism fosters system which engenders attacks on refugees.**

with even greater obedience. The “left” critique of liberal multiculturalism has been remarkably uniform in its confused hollowness and *lack* of a counterposed program. This is true from open left liberals to the “Marxist” fringe. While the far right could look to a real loss of white-racist dominance, the far left, correctly disgusted by this past and in the midst of an internal crisis at the post-Soviet “end of history,” approached emergent multicultural hegemony disarmed. It saw the past and knew it had to fight against its return, but since it did not build its own tools and program to wage that fight it could only remain the left defence of liberalism.

The mainstream left flank of capital, the Australian Greens, raises itself against Labor and the Coalition as the *true* defenders of the multicultural project in Australia. It champions the protection and celebration of multicultural “success” and argues for new acts of government and new institutions aimed at deepening a “socially cohesive Australia.” It criticises the ALP and Coalition for their cruelty against refugees, their dispossession of Aboriginal people, their “inaction” in the face of racialised social inequalities. And it argues that this seeming inconsistency with the enlightened project of multicultural unity proves *their* position as its true representatives.

The far left can seem quite different in this respect. “Critiques” of multiculturalism can be found in most Australian Marxoid publications at varying levels of tepidity or sharpness. But behind all these words, the actual programmatic orientation of the whole left has been functionally the same servility as that of the liberal Greens. The left’s program has been to fight liberalism with liberalism, to counterpose multiculturalism to multiculturalism. The programs of the Australian left have not been guided by a materialist analysis of multiculturalism’s role and reactionary character, but in the first place by those “excesses” or “inconsistencies” of liberalism which show it is *insufficiently* multicultural.

Many on the left continually search for the reactionary project or policy which “exposes” multiculturalism as nothing more than a magician’s trick masking unreformed White Australia just behind the curtain. At

its core, the problem with this analysis is that it doesn’t recognise that multiculturalism *is also* an organising ideological program of the bourgeoisie in its own interests and because of that a reactionary ideological program on its *own* basis, not just as a guise for racism. Functionally, this paralyzes the left, leaving it fighting phantoms of White Australia, making its politics virtually indistinct in practice from the radical liberal fighters for “consistent” multiculturalism. The SL/A cemented this mistaken line when, in 1998, it declared multiculturalism was introduced to “buy off an aspiring bourgeois layer within immigrant communities while undercutting the militancy of immigrant workers” with its “false rhetoric... meant to hide the grim racist reality of this society.” Until now, the SL/A has not published any more serious analysis of the function and development of multiculturalism, continuing to view Australia as a fundamentally white country.

Through its ideological tailism, the liberal anti-racist struggle and fight for *consistent* multiculturalism has become codified as the Australian left’s *raison d’être*. The left has, in effect, largely surrendered the communist task of raising an *independent* pole of proletarian politics *against* the politics of liberal national unity which chain the working class to the bourgeoisie; of organising the multiracial working class around those politics *against* the politics of liberalism, however consistent. Working-class immigrants have no shared interests with the liberal bourgeoisie of this country or any other. They have every interest in united proletarian struggle. Neither do the white working class (as so many raddlibs love to declare) have any shared interest with the reactionary xenophobes who stir up layers of the most disenfranchised among them. Whipped up by demagogues around the perception of their “share” being diminished by an “influx of immigrants,” the divisions within the working class are deepened and solidified in a process dividing the class against itself and ensuring defeat after defeat.

Marxists know the working class has every interest in fighting the chauvinists and reactionaries. It must do so! But it will never win this fight under the bankrupt liberalism which is *driving* polarisa-

tion and defeat. Fostering an orientation to multiculturalism, consisting of vacuous liberal moralist arguments that never connect to the real and urgently pressing demands of the multiracial working class, reinforces the same hegemonic ideological system which creates the bourgeois social polarisation we need to be fighting. It is a strategy which paves the road for the next defeat.

For decades “revolutionary” organisations have posed no fundamental *programmatic* challenge to the liberal, often Church-connected, leadership of the major refugee protests which have been fixtures of left-wing Australian political life. At most, groups like the SL/A demarcated themselves on the basis that they supported full citizenship rights for all refugees whereas protest organisers advocated only amnesty. Other groups have raised abstract and disconnected slogans around utopian demands for the immediate abolition of borders. No group touched the core of the issue, the organising principles of Australian bourgeois society. For the left, the competition was over who could be the most radical, most moral, most consistent liberals.

In fact, Marxists need to approach the question with a clear understanding that to defend the refugees on Manus and Nauru we have to motivate a *break* from multiculturalism, the liberal moralist cornerstone of the refugee movement. The detention regime is *not* a reactionary aberration from this ideology but the result of its internal functioning. To fight the attacks on refugees what is needed is *not* more impotent liberal moral outrage but to undercut the political basis for the attacks. Only the working class has the capacity to do this. And it can only win such a fight if it is organised not on a program of abstract liberal solidarity but on a program of struggling for its own concrete interests—as an independent pole cutting against both unifying multicultural nationalism and xenophobic polarisation.

### The future of multiculturalism

Socialist groups, while upholding a practical orientation and political subservience to it, on occasion pose political critiques of multiculturalism. In one *Red Flag* article Socialist Alternative correctly notes that multiculturalism is an “established part” of Australian national identity, owing to its economic importance to Australian capitalism. It concludes from this that “the racist rhetoric emanating from Hanson and her ilk is highly unlikely to result in any major shift away from the multicultural status quo.” This is entirely true in present conditions, but it draws the wrong conclusions from an analysis of how multiculturalism was built in this country. It assumes the uninterrupted vitality of liberalism precisely at the point that it is entering the era of its global breakdown.

The relative stability, thus far, of the social order in Australia *will* break down as the instability of the world order shatters its social pillars here. That multiculturalism is entwined with the Australian liberal order means that it is entwined with the stability of the whole imperialist social order.

Its whole history has been determined by the navigation, by Australian capitalism, of that social order. The conditions of multicultural *hegemony* are the conditions *only* of liberal imperialist hegemony, and those conditions are imploding!

Marxists must understand this and be prepared for its breakdown. Already splinter points are clear. The genocide in Gaza has exposed one, awakening massive and justified anger especially among Australia’s large Muslim population. This has been directed against an ALP government doing its duty in backing U.S. imperialism. It has renewed, in many corners, the reactionary ideological attacks on Muslim “non-assimilation” with multicultural unity. This is one small crack in multiculturalism in the face of Western imperialist barbarism. The most decisive splinter point is, and will increasingly be, China. As Australia follows its U.S. big brother into escalating confrontation with the Chinese deformed workers state, the “Yellow Peril” hysteria which is already a growing force in this country will escalate until it explodes. What will the impact of this be on the millions of ethnically Chinese people living in Australia? However such a crisis plays out, non-Chinese Asian communities can hardly hope to be spared by an explosion of anti-Asian xenophobia. Already, discussion of the fifth-column internal threat posed by ethnic Chinese is well within the mainstream of political discourse. An argument to this effect is put forward in liberal language by Greens-aligned academic, Clive Hamilton, in the book *Silent Invasion*.

The left, without a program capable of raising a real proletarian pole, shows no signs of being able to respond to a breakdown in multicultural liberal hegemony with anything besides increasingly hysterical liberalism. But the retreat into that hegemony at the precise moment it loses its bourgeois social basis will only ensure cataclysm. Such a path *will* fuel stronger polarisation in Australian society and in the working class. As the liberal ideological safety valve breaks apart, the same processes which once reinforced liberal stability will deepen its crisis. Unless Marxists can put forward a program which *cuts through* this process *now*, the crisis in liberalism will be seized by reaction, provoking deeper divisions in the multiracial working class in Australia and leading only to new cycles of increasingly violent defeats.

### For proletarian internationalist leadership

The historical development of multiculturalism, the bankruptcy thus far of the Marxist left, and the future crises in the making demonstrate in no uncertain terms the need for a new course. Multiculturalism is the central ideological program of liberalism in this country, the communist orientation to it cannot be one of criticism—it must be of opposition. Marxists need to fight for the organisation of the working class in its own interests not in the interest of abstract liberal solidarity. Only through this process of struggle can it be made clear that the only “lucky” ones in this country are those with the luck to be in the position to exploit a working class conditioned into pliancy; not the “privileged” white working class, and certainly not the first and second-generation migrants working right beside them in casualised positions.

This program, of rupture and defeat, not extension, of liberal multicultural social chauvinism, can be nothing but the program of proletarian internationalism. There is no substitute. The strength of this program, Marxists understand, is not derived from an abstract liberal “moral superiority” which so many capitulate to. Its vitality is that it is the result of the scientific analysis of the basis for the proletariat’s conquest of global power, the struggle for which is the only factor of true social progress for humanity. ■

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# Lucky Country...

(continued from page 1)

more than pious wishes for the ruling class to cease defending its interests. Their strategy is not a bug, it is a feature.

That being said, Australia is not yet in crisis. While the economy is gloomy, it has not yet begun to spiral towards the levels of de facto recession seen in countries such as Germany and Britain. The increasingly explosive social polarisations gripping much of the world still remain, for the most part, in powder-keg form. Internationally, the wars in Ukraine and Israel are incurring an increasing cost for America and their allies though they are still without signs of immediate escalation. This has stretched the U.S. imperialists thin, putting the anti-China war drive on the backburner and enabling the Australian ruling class to temporarily warm up relations and keep the good times going just a bit longer.

While the world is increasingly unstable, the ruling class still sees Australia as an oasis exempt from world crises. This is aptly personified by Prime Minister Albanese, who presents himself as a banal, business as usual “consensus-based” statesman. Elected in the aftermath of the pandemic, Albanese and his Labor government reflect the futile attempt of the ruling class to keep “the lucky country” lucky—pathetically clinging to any semblance of “normal” post-Soviet stability as this “normality” breaks down across the world; attempting to keep the deep polarisations seen in other countries bubbling away beneath the surface; maintaining the delusion that Australia’ll be right in the coming war with China. But as time goes on, this sham will become increasingly untenable. The period we are now in is little more than a calm before the inevitable storm.

The fault lines of liberal Australia have already begun to show. Fallout from lockdowns and support to the genocide in Gaza has fostered deep discontent amongst young people at the liberal order. With unionised industrial jobs devastated, chronic casualisation and spiralling cost of living pressures, there is less and less hope of any palatable future under the status quo. That is without even mentioning prospects of war with China, which promises nothing but misery and suffering. As conditions worsen, liberal moralising over how grateful everyone should be to live in this multicultural paradise rings ever hollow. There is increasing distrust and dissatisfaction fuelling the already percolating opposition to liberalism. Eventually, the discontent of the past three decades will explode from beneath the surface.

Ruptures against the liberal order have already begun to materialise. Insofar as they have outward expression, they have

been in large part seized by rightist forces. Otherwise, outbursts of resistance, such as in reaction to the Labor government’s support of AUKUS and Israel, have been kept within Labor’s orbit or likewise within the framework of liberalism.

For their part the left have remained radical critics of the Labor Party, refusing the necessary task to combat head-on and break the working class from the social-chauvinists and their conciliators. Pursuing the same path that has damned them to their contemporary small and motley state. None pose a way forward. As the American Empire sinks, the Australian ruling class is desperately trying to drag the proletariat down with it. The situation is untenable and the question is posed yet again, will it be solved in the interests of the capitalist class or the working class?

## Lockdowns in Australia— Totalitarian return to penal colony

COVID posed point-blank the first serious threat to Australia’s liberal order in the post-Soviet period. The slowing down of international trade, especially from China, caused massive strain on the Australian economy—contributing to the first recession in almost three decades. The virus spreading en masse would have crashed the decrepit and slashed healthcare system. If things were not put under control, working-class frustrations, accumulated over decades, could explode. Whether the ruling class liked it or not, trouble was fast approaching Australian capitalism, posing a serious threat to their interests.

Then came the lockdowns, a measure that best corresponded to the defence of bourgeois interests. By keeping everyone locked indoors, the ruling class could kill two birds with one stone. On one hand it was the easiest and cheapest way to lower viral spread without any serious renovation of the healthcare system and unsafe COVID death-trap workplaces—which would have demanded serious inroads upon capitalist property relations. On the other hand tying the working class to capitalist interests through ideological blackmail and strict lockdown laws would represent a massive barrier to class struggle. “Breaking the rules” meant you were a threat to the entire nation, you were to blame for not only the lockdowns but for thousands if not millions of lives being lost. This blackmail was to be the most effective measure for the ruling class, the ideological groundwork of which was laid in preceding decades of liberal stability.

The ideological core of the past three decades of lucky country liberalism has been that, with the right amount of tinkering and “sensible policy making,” Australia would keep all trouble an ocean or two away. For all the bickering between the Liberal/National Coalition and Labor, this was a bipartisan venture—which junior



“She’ll be right mate”—lucky country liberalism in denial.

parties such as the Greens critiqued from the perspective that they were not being sufficiently liberal in their tinkering. And in the post-Soviet period, this ideological framework was quite effective. Opposition to liberalism was completely cordoned off to the fringes, while the ruling class presented Australia as unperturbed and isolated from the political and economic outbreaks overseas. Australia was the liberal city on the hill, and all who lived here ought to be grateful to be shielded from international worries.

COVID represented a rude awakening for anyone caught in the “Australian Dream.” The liberal self-lauding of isolation from international crisis took on a hysterical and defensive character. Liberalism exerted itself to the furthest reaches thus seen in Australia, having to exert immense pressure on the working class to morally blackmail them into accepting the suspension of any semblance of civil liberties. It effectively did its job of smoothing over class contradictions, championing the interests of the ruling class as the interests of the nation.

These measures at the expense of the working class were purported to be for the sake of “public health” and a “lesser evil” to what was happening throughout the rest of the world—whose (often still horrible) conditions were exaggerated to doomsday proportions in order to justify dystopian measures. This “national unity” campaign turned into national hysteria, with the ruling class stoking a cabin fever-induced Stockholm syndrome. “Unity” served the purpose of one thing only—keeping the working class subservient before the capitalist state in a time of crisis.

Lockdowns had consensus all the way down the political pipeline. For one they had bipartisan support, with then-prime minister, Scott Morrison, leaving state premiers of both major parties, from the Coalition’s Gladys Berejiklian to Labor’s infamous Daniel Andrews, to run lockdowns as they saw fit. The trade-union leadership, loyal to the Labor tops doling out many of the lockdown measures, cheered them on as necessary, tying the proletariat to the draconian dictates of the ruling class. The organised working class, already disarmed and disoriented, were completely pacified.

As for the Greens, they criticised major parties for both not making lockdowns palatable enough for the working class as well as criticising them for failing to “lockdown to zero.” The left scarcely differed. Criticism varied between either complaining about the lockdowns’ worst excesses, that they were inconsistently applied between classes (duh!) or that they were not severe enough to suppress the virus. Socialist Alternative (SAlt) called for even stricter and longer lockdowns. Meanwhile Bolshevik-Leninist wavered between advocating for more humane lockdowns and dreaming of a far-

off imaginary “workers lockdown” which in practice did little but offer a fig leaf to the liberal moral blackmail campaign. No one dared to actually challenge the sacrosanct lockdowns. At every link in the chain, from the major parties to their armchair critics on the left, the workers were rallied behind COVID national hysteria.

All these factors contributed to why lockdowns in Australia were expressed in some of the most severe of measures in the world—unrivaled in the West and comparable only to Stalinist China. The capitalists needed an out, and they had the backing of the entire political mainstream and left, as well as a completely subdued working class. They had every reason to “lockdown to zero” and no roadblocks to this goal. Australia was to be a liberal oasis in the desert at any cost.

Like a castle under siege, Australia pulled up its drawbridge, closing its borders so tightly that even Australian citizens abroad were restricted from returning home. Even states within Australia returned to penal colony formation, with interstate travel almost as difficult as the almost non-existent international travel. Single-digit outbreaks of COVID would be declared a “cluster,” putting entire cities at risk of endless weeks of further lockdowns.

Australian lockdowns became a demented, everlasting game of whack-a-mole. Many cities had strict radiuses drawn up limiting how far you could leave your home, which you could only do in the first place within strict curfews and for the government-approved reasons of “shopping, exercise or outdoors recreation.” Under Dictator Dan’s regime in Melbourne, the most locked-down city in the world, restrictions were even tighter as exercise was only permitted for up to an hour a day while police were directed to patrol children’s playgrounds to make sure they weren’t being used! The heavily immigrant and working-class suburbs of western Sydney were put under army occupation. For residents living in Sydney tower blocks this even involved police rummaging through deliveries and confiscating alcohol and tobacco. It wasn’t long before initial COVID welfare payments dried up; workers became increasingly financially strained. The working class was being squeezed with no end in sight.

What was necessary was to break the proletariat from this liberal bind. This could not be done by having the working class sacrifice its interests for the “greater good” of lockdown insanity, nor by pretending the virus didn’t exist and returning to COVID-hothouse workplaces. The question was: who would determine safety—the workers or the bosses? Workers needed to struggle for their own class interests, their own safety, at the expense of the capitalists.

The first step for workers fighting to implement their own measures, such as



James Ross/AAP

Melbourne, September 2021: CFMEU workers attack union office after CFMEU head Setka’s acceptance of government’s anti-worker COVID measures. To clean own house workers need to dump Laborite traitors.

union control over safety in the workplace, was to struggle against the reactionary lockdowns which kept them penned indoors. Furthermore, to develop the necessary productive forces and infrastructure for a working-class response to the crisis required public works projects which would go up against the core interests of the ruling class and their property. It would require the occupation of unused luxury buildings and their conversion to socially beneficial purposes such as COVID-safe schools.

The capitalists were not going to give up these things without a fight. What was needed was to take the ruling class and their “national unity” campaign head-on, which the entire left failed to do. With the left and the trade-union bureaucracy joining the liberal howl, this guaranteed that legitimate hatred of the reactionary lockdowns was harnessed by rightists and conspiracy theorists. And so it was.

The backlash against the lockdowns and the massive protests that came as a result represented a turning point for liberalism in Australia. This is not because of the size of the demonstrations. They were significant but completely dwarfed by those who swallowed the lockdown blackmail. Neither was it because of their longevity—open opposition to liberalism soon dwindled away. It was significant because it represented the first serious rupture in Australia’s liberal order. Opposition to liberalism broke from the formerly irrelevant fringes, albeit in a fashion limited in scale and time.

Most notably, in no other country did the organised working class openly protest against their traitorous leadership in the way CFMEU construction workers did outside their union leader’s office. There are not many unions as loyal to their leadership as the construction workers, within or even outside this country. The fact that these protests broke out at all, let alone by members of the CFMEU, is a harbinger for what is to come from the percolating opposition to the liberal order. The left in large part followed the trade-union bureaucrats in denouncing rightly outraged workers as fascists and supporting state repression against them.

Pushed toward conspiratorial and rightist leadership, these protests ultimately came to naught, posing little threat to the ruling class and their interests. But as much as the liberal order and their left tail would like to forget the lockdowns ever happened, they will not disappear so easily. The national hysteria that once dominated the country is beginning to be a distant memory, but the lockdowns will not be so quickly forgotten. A new generation of workers who had years of their life taken away from them have tasted the bitter fruits of liberalism. Bitterness and distrust in the status quo and its left critics has only begun to set in.

### The Voice referendum—tokenism backfires

The Aboriginal Voice to Parliament was pushed by Albanese since the time of his election campaign as a cheap way to give his milquetoast “business as usual” program a progressive varnish. Albanese calculated that this would be an inoffensive but visible reform which would garner little opposition, forcing the Coalition to support the referendum outright or risk political suicide. It was to serve as a unifying force boosting his government and ensuring Labor could keep their boot firmly on the neck of the working class. Or that was the plan. Why then did the Voice come to raise polarisation to fever pitch? And why did the supposed shoo-in referendum suffer such a humiliating defeat?

Initially, the referendum campaign went as planned. Albanese was able to tap into people’s positive aspirations to improve the paltry conditions of Aboriginal people. Early polls even indicated that upwards of 70 percent of the population supported the Voice. But initial eagerness quickly waned. The Labor government continued to over-

see the plummeting of living conditions for the working class, while Albanese and his liberal reconciliation posse soapboxed about how the government was doing good for Australia’s downtrodden.

The referendum was thus set up as a vote of confidence and the message was clear: line up behind the Labor government or you don’t care about Aboriginal people. The backlash to this was definitive. Many working and Aboriginal people resented the Labor government and big corporations’ hypocritical tokenism and reactionary measures, which the Coalition was able to channel into their bid to defeat the referendum and bloody Labor.

The polarisation around the Voice was disastrous for working people and all the oppressed. The referendum pitted two forces with common interests against one another, both camps being shackled to the interests of the very ruling class doling out the reactionary measures. This not only crippled the struggle for greater gains for Aboriginal people but even for winning the Voice itself, which had become associated with the hated Albanese government. It was only by using the justly felt working-class outrage to whip up reaction that the Coalition’s No campaign was able to emerge out of the political wilderness, threatening to embarrass Labor by stamping out this minor gain for Aboriginal people and weakening the Aboriginal movement.

What was imperative was to break the progressive elements away from the pro-capitalist leadership of both sides of this polarisation, uniting working and Aboriginal people on the basis of opposition to the government and the ruling class it represented. It was only by smashing, not deepening, these polarisations that both the Aboriginal and the workers movement could advance. This is why Bolshevik-Leninist and the Spartacist League of Australia called to fight for an anti-Albanese Yes campaign.

To those behind the liberal Yes campaign who sought to advance the conditions of Aboriginal people, we said this movement is crippled by being in a bloc with the Labor government, which is an enemy of working and Aboriginal people alike. There could be no mobilising the broader sections of society for the Aboriginal movement under the banner of the very government kicking them in the teeth. We explained that it was this very reason that the referendum was heading to defeat.

To those who were backing the No campaign out of justified hatred of the Labor government, we said that supporting the defeat of the referendum would only embolden reactionary forces looking to make things even worse for Aboriginal people and the working class as a whole. Their hatred for the tokenism of the reactionary Labor government must be given a progressive direction to advance the position of Australia’s

oppressed against the ruling class which Labor serves.

A strong anti-Albanese Yes campaign would have mobilised the progressive elements of both the Yes and No campaigns to push forward both the Aboriginal movement and the struggle against the Labor government. And a successful campaign was not out of the realm of possibility. While the state of the left is currently meagre and pathetic, even these limited forces working together for this goal could have been a serious factor in tipping the scales of the referendum. Doing so would have sent the rightists packing, exposed Albanese’s tokenism, humiliated the Labor government and its schemes, and given a serious impetus to the fight against the ruling class. Instead, the left could not wage an effective struggle against the pro-capitalist ALP leadership, only aiding the referendum’s defeat and emboldening reactionary forces.

One such example was SAlt. While they correctly saw the danger of the victory of the Coalition’s campaign, they lined up to play left critics to the liberal Yes campaign, accepting Albanese as a lesser evil. But it was that “lesser evil” which was driving the backlash against the Voice and fuelling the No campaign in the first place! SAlt did not pose any way to break the progressive elements away from their liberal leadership, nor did they have any way to break workers away from the No campaign, which was necessary to actually win the referendum.

In fact, their criticisms amounted to liberal bleatings that Labor did not call out “the racism of the Liberal Party and the broader No campaign.” That is, Labor did not moralise hard enough to guilt trip more working people into their fold. These criticisms, a degree apart from the Greens, could have only deepened the reactionary polarisation.

Some groups saw that rotten polarisation but did nothing to overcome it or advance the Aboriginal and workers movements, thus they stood aside incapable of being a revolutionary factor. Those that remained in the peanut gallery included the likes of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), who sneered at the struggle for Aboriginal liberation as a distraction from class struggle. Other groups such as the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) called to renew Aboriginal struggle but in practice did little but use Marxist sounding phrases to justify twiddling their thumbs, denouncing the Voice without even recommending any specific way to vote!

Groups such as the Blak Sovereign Movement (BSM) put forward a “Progressive No,” juxtaposing the Voice with a treaty. They correctly saw the liberal Yes campaign as a dead end, but in its place posed no way forward to actually struggle for a treaty or to advance the Aboriginal movement more broadly. In fact, a Pro-

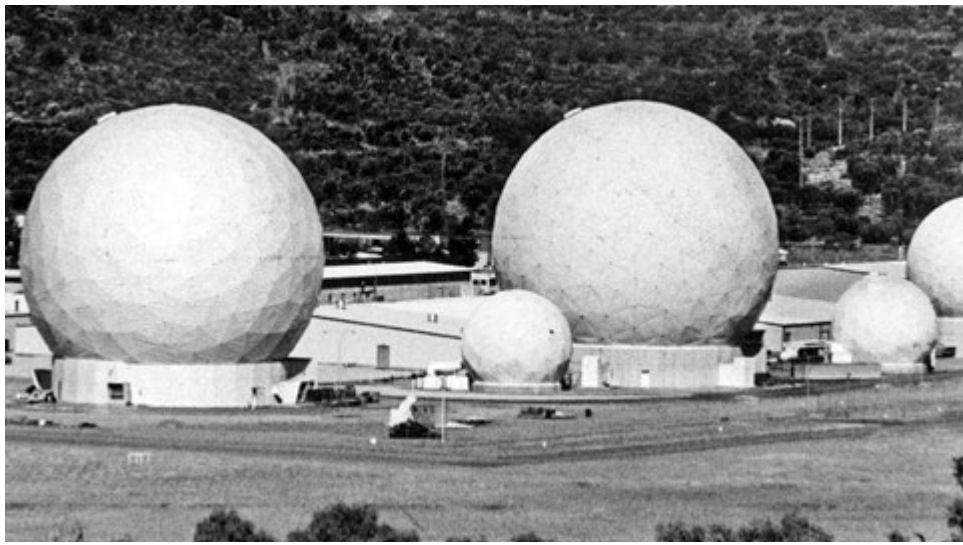
gressive No could only aid the reactionaries who promise to make the struggle for a treaty even harder. Today, this is exactly what has happened. Conditions for the Aboriginal movement’s struggle have worsened. Albanese has already distanced himself from the referendum and has recently shot down any potential for even a tokenistic national treaty. Instead he has opted to pursue an even emptier “truth telling” process which may itself run into political roadblocks. To this, black nationalists have only responded with defeatism, denouncing the bulk of the country as hopelessly racist and privileged, making the struggle for the smallest gains a near impossibility.

We predict this will further reinforce their broader defeatist attitude rejecting to fight for gains through uniting with the proletariat in struggle against the ruling class. Instead of a fight against the very capitalist system that is the cause of Aboriginal oppression, they turn Aboriginal people’s strongest would-be ally into an enemy by denouncing non-Aboriginal workers as “settlers” who must “pay the rent.” Such a perspective closes off the prospect of struggle for not just small gains but Aboriginal liberation in general, damning Aboriginal people to immiseration without a way out.

Meanwhile, Reconciliation liberals are feeling guiltier than ever, reinforcing their writing off of workers as hopelessly stupid and backward. If they are not begging the Labor government to give the Voice and treaty another go they are eschewing tangible gains for Aboriginal people altogether and doubling down on empty liberal gestures like rescinding sales of Australia Day paraphernalia from the shelves of Woolies. Ultimately, the cause of the Voice’s defeat was the inability of the left to actually struggle for a break with liberalism. Without changing course this will only be the starting point for future defeats.

### From AUKUS to Israel—Break the American connection!

As pressures mount on the American Empire, Australia’s capitalists have faithfully played lackey, defending U.S. imperialism at every step. For its part, the Labor government has more than demonstrated its eagerness to assist in shoring up U.S. hegemony. Labor has backed Israel’s genocide to the hilt and doubled down on AUKUS, turning the Top End into a glorified U.S.-Australia military camp. This has generated intense backlash. In the lead-up to the ALP National Conference last August opposition to AUKUS ballooned in the unions and within the ALP itself—including left Laborites and even former prime minister, Paul Keating. This opposition was mirrored some months later following Israel’s assault on Gaza—with protests for Palestine in Australia drawing tens of



Newspix

**Northern Territory, Australia: Pine Gap spy base strategic to U.S. imperialist marauding around the globe. Revolutionaries fight to smash the U.S. alliance as part of the struggle against Australian capitalist rule.**

thousands. But in both cases, not a single concrete thing has been done to advance the struggle against the Australian government's pro-imperialist belligerency.

In fact, the opposite has been the case. The momentum of the movement against AUKUS has almost ground to a halt since the left Laborites manoeuvred themselves into defeat at the Labor National Conference. Meanwhile, in spite of ongoing popular support to Palestine, protests in opposition to the genocide have been left to dwindle with little to show. The question remains, why has this been the trajectory for both movements and how do we change course?

For the ruling class, support to the U.S.-led world order is a red line they are not going to cross. Disrupting their position as a junior link in the chain of American finance capital would be catastrophic for Australian capitalism. To consider defying American dictates the interests of the Australian ruling class would have to be seriously threatened. That is, they will only listen if their flow of capital was crippled, and property and rule was at risk.

The only force with the capacity to bring this pressure to bear is the organised working class. If workers were mobilised in opposition to the Labor government's support to AUKUS and against Zionist terror, they would have the capability to cripple Australian capitalism and stop them right in their tracks. But none of this has happened. Why is that?

The answer is simple: opposition to

AUKUS and Zionist terror has been kept firmly saddled to a union leadership ultimately beholden to Labor and their U.S. alliance. The pacifist and liberal opponents within the ALP, trade-union bureaucracy and the left refuse to split with the pro-imperialist leaders running the Labor government. Instead of the head-on confrontation needed, under their pro-capitalist leadership the strategy of the movement has amounted to begging and pleading for Labor and the ruling class to change course on something they are fully committed to. Maintaining and spreading the illusions that Australian capitalism could peacefully opt out of the U.S. alliance and transform into an independent peace-loving power.

To break from this course, what is needed is to expose this leadership as impotent. Demonstrating that despite left Laborites' nice-sounding opposition to Labor's belligerency they pose no threat and function as a safety valve for the status quo. There needs to be a struggle to break from the social-chauvinists and their left-talking conciliators. This is the context for the Bolshevik-Leninist and Spartacist League of Australia campaign to "Chuck the AUKUS hawks out of the ALP."

This demand begins with highlighting the simple fact that you cannot advance the struggle against AUKUS in an alliance with AUKUS lovers. In doing so, it put the left Laborites on the spot—do they actually oppose AUKUS or are these pretty words to cover for their alliance with open social-

chauvinists? The left Laborites could either advance the workers movement by breaking with the AUKUS-hawk Labor leadership or be exposed as skin-deep opponents of AUKUS and bona fide class-collaborators. If political pressures did force such a split, communists would be in a much better position to give these left Laborites a platform to expose their toothless pro-capitalist program. In short, this call separates the wheat from the chaff, the genuine opponents of AUKUS from the slick phrasemongers.

The SL/A's call on the Palestine solidarity movement to break the U.S. connection in the workers movement has similar aims. The key questions posed are: "are you willing to oppose the core reason Australia supports the genocide? And if you do, will you break from the bloc with those who support the U.S. alliance?"

The left have remained nothing more than liberal critics. SAlt for one has mirrored the left trade-union bureaucracy's strategy of begging for a pacifist Australia that will peacefully drop out of the U.S. alliance and renege on AUKUS. Far from raising a revolutionary pole against imperialism, within the movement they can only look for the more consistently pacifist wing of left Laborism, lauding at one meeting the likes of Wollongong union top Arthur Rorris against Victorian AMWU leader Tony Mavromatis. In addition to their hairsplitting between left-talking trade-union bureaucrats, SAlt calls for a "broad movement to challenge the march to war." Similarly, Solidarity promotes the "anti-AUKUS coalition" and their liberal pacifist program—integrating themselves well into left Laborism and their fruitless strategy. For all their bombast against the Labor Party, RCO concurred, describing this thoroughly pacifist coalition as akin to building a movement outside of Labor!

To be sure, we need a broad movement against AUKUS, absolutely! But a movement with a Laborite program will only end in defeat. Instead of struggling to break the working class from Laborism, they merge into their left flank amounting to little more than radical-sounding counterparts to their left bureaucrat brethren.

The same thing has been happening with the protests over Palestine. While the leadership of the Palestine protests proclaim hatred of Albanese and Penny Wong, they nonetheless praise the Laborite MUA bureaucracy as "friends of Palestine." Groups from SEP to SAlt hail the ZIM

blockades as effective struggle for Palestine while the bureaucracy continues to use these "community pickets" to eschew an actual struggle to black-ban war materiel to Israel or any actions to confront the capitalists where it hurts. For all their bombast and professed opposition to the Labor government's pro-imperialist policies, there remains a conga line from the "socialist" left to the left Laborites to the very top of the Albanese Labor government. Without struggling for a break from the social-chauvinists and their conciliators in the fight to raise a revolutionary pole there can be no talk of a serious opposition to the ruling class's war machinations.

The popular support for Palestine has remained but the lack of concrete action has caused the movement to shrink and become demoralised. It is clear that what is needed to defeat the Labor government's belligerency requires a completely different strategy—breaking the bloc which subordinates the workers movement to the Labor Party which is completely devoted to Australian capitalism and their U.S. alliance.

### The tasks ahead

After three decades, the post-Soviet stability that the ruling class has long enjoyed is coming to an abrupt end. While this trajectory pushes the working class towards revolution, by itself this promises nothing. The preceding period has seen the union bureaucracy and the left lead the workers movement to its current juncture. As the basis of the liberal order withers away they have only responded with further confusion, deepening this immiseration.

The coming period will present revolutionary opportunities, but it must be seized by a conscious vanguard. For this purpose, what is imperative is to plant a revolutionary pole in opposition to the liberal order and its left critics. The fusion of B-L and the SL/A represents a modest but significant programmatic step forward. In the context of a splintering and dwindling left, it is a much needed regroupment of forces. The program forged during the fusion arms the SL/A with the capacity to intervene as a revolutionary factor in Australia's disintegrating liberal order. While the revolutionary forces in this country remain small, we march forward confident that this fusion of Bolshevik-Leninist and the Spartacist League of Australia represents the first step of many towards political consolidation in the struggle in the coming crises. ■

## Aboriginal...

(continued from page 5)

that recognises the sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples, but they have no strategy to achieve this. Instead of struggling against the ruling class and capitalism, which are the sources of Aboriginal oppression, their approach targets all non-Indigenous people, who they describe as "settlers" who must "pay the rent" or presumably leave the country where their families have lived sometimes for generations. This utopian reactionary fantasy turns Aboriginal people's strongest potential ally, the working class, into an enemy and thus cripples the struggles for even the smallest gains for Aboriginal people.

BSM and other black nationalists cannot liberate Aboriginal people because they have no program to defeat the ruling class. This is encapsulated in BSM's Progressive No campaign. They recognise that the Voice and the bleeding-heart liberals offer no way forward, but their campaign only helps swing the vote to the rightists who will push through even worse measures against Aboriginal people. If the No wins, the result will be a more reactionary climate where openly anti-Aboriginal forces dominate, and it will be harder to

advance any gains, including a treaty. It's better to have a microscopic step forward than a gigantic leap backwards.

The decay of the imperialist system has only accentuated the oppression of Aboriginal people. The bosses have long benefited from Aboriginal oppression and dispossession, not least by driving Aboriginal people off the best lands so they can make fabulous profits while Aboriginal people are kept powerless and in miserable conditions often under state terror. In cities they are pushed into homelessness and a fringe existence. But it doesn't have to be this way.

In fighting for a communist Yes campaign, we are fighting for genuine freedom of development for Aboriginal people, entailing a social, cultural and linguistic renaissance. We are fighting for economic development and reversing Aboriginal marginalisation, bringing Indigenous people into the working class while delivering the fullest political autonomy so they can finally have a voice over their own lives and livelihoods! In order to secure these gains, the alliance between the Indigenous population and the proletariat must culminate in a workers government with complete political autonomy and freedom of development for Aboriginal people from the cities to the bush! ■

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# Intro...

(continued from page 2)

in stark contrast. The fusion has laid down, for the first time in decades, the groundwork for planting a revolutionary pole in Australia: revolutionary opposition to a liberal order in decline.

## Towards collision

Let us start with the "Lucky country in denial" document (see page 1) which roots Australia in the world order described in "The breakdown of U.S. hegemony & the struggle for workers power" (see *Spartacist* No. 68, September 2023). That is, it demonstrates that Australian capitalism is heading towards the same essential crisis as the rest of the world. And that in spite of all the liberal rhetoric of being able to avoid trouble overseas, Australia is on track to be plunged right into it. The document does this not through abstract assertion of capitalism's inevitable collapse but by laying out precisely how the global crisis is being refracted in the Australian context.

Key to the document is that it approaches the society around us from the perspective of how to intervene as a revolutionary factor, and is thereby rooted in the changing class forces. Only by doing this is it able to materially demonstrate *how and why* Australia's stability is built on a foundation of sand. That stability is contingent on two forces which are fundamentally at odds and heading towards collision: the success of Australia's big brother and the growth of China. Thus, the document demonstrates that to pursue its interests the American and Australian ruling classes must intensify the war drive against China. Such a path promises nothing short of ruin for Australian capitalism.

And why are the Australian capitalists seemingly so happy with this course? Viewed in isolation, Australia's role in the war drive against China appears almost bizarre. Why is a country, whose prosperity is due to mineral trade with China, not only willing but eager to pursue economic kamikaze in a war against its biggest trading partner? The reason is simple: playing lackey to the U.S. is the foundation of Australian capitalism. The Australian ruling class is a prime benefactor of U.S. hegemony and in fact has everything to lose with its decline—it is completely *dependent* on the U.S. alliance. *This* is why it has been so rabid in its defence of the American empire even in decay, from AUKUS to Israel and Ukraine.

If you are not clear on this, you can only respond with confusion to Australia's war moves. Many little Australian nationalists on the left use the prospect of economic kamikaze to argue that it is irrational for Australia to play this role. This forces them into the position of pathetically begging the Australian capitalists to realise that they are somehow acting against their interests. At its extreme, the position classifies Australia as some kind of semicolonial oppressed by the American boot, with the Australian ruling class needing to overthrow their Yankee yoke.

Then there are those whose confusion results in an inverse response, changing reality to fit their analysis of Australia as an independent, ambitious imperialist power. Solidarity, for example, make the bizarre argument that Australia is dragging the U.S.

to war against China. B-L and the SL/A both bent into similar contortions. They used a rigid one-dimensional understanding of Australia as an ambitious imperialist power to transform "the main enemy is at home" from a revolutionary call to a moral dogma.

To be sure, the SL/A did on plenty of occasions denounce the U.S. alliance, spout off against the jackal nature of Australian capitalism and mock the impossibility of a "non-aligned" little Australia. But far from approaching a struggle against the U.S. alliance as the *core* of revolutionary opposition to the Australian bourgeoisie, the SL/A in practice treated the two as juxtaposed. In the 1970s when the CIA overthrew Whitlam, the SL/A polemicised against others on the left by arguing that stating this simple fact was a capitulation to Australian nationalism. While the SL/A later dropped this specific polemic, it doubled down on this trend throughout the 80s and onwards. For a long time it was an unwritten rule that writers of *Australasian Spartacist* had to combine the simple call for "U.S. bases out of Australia" with "not one person not one cent to the Australian military". As if an additional demand was needed to give you sufficient revolutionary cred to permit criticism of the U.S. alliance.

All this left the SL/A completely disarmed to deal with the central pillar of Australian capitalist rule. Treating opposition to the U.S. alliance as separate to opposition to the Australian ruling class, and crying nationalism if this demand was ever centred as a key point of struggle, only put us in the camp of not just the American imperialists but of our own ruling class, whose foundation is a lackey relationship with U.S. imperialism.

In truth, the only way to challenge the Australian ruling class and its strategy is to make the struggle to smash the alliance central to our program. Such an orientation is vital not out of a moral obligation to denounce imperialism but out of the fundamentals of the fight against the enemy at home. In this sense, the main document's approach to Australia as a "junior link in the chain of American finance capital" should be seen as a break from our old framework, one which has allowed us for the first time to put forward a revolutionary challenge to the foundation of Australian capitalism.

Only by having these pieces in place is the document revealed as a polemic against Laborism. The course of Australian capitalism is clear. The liberal order is heading toward catastrophe, but it is core to the Australian ruling class's interests that it continues to fight to prop up U.S. hegemony. This is why the Labor government implements the policies it does. To keep capitalism afloat, Labor will do anything to keep the lucky country lucky, which means defending American hegemony to the bitter end. Labor aren't doing bad things because they're mean cartoon villains, they are simply pursuing the interests of a ruling class which increasingly has only one path to solve its woes.

Thus, at every turn, the utterly reactionary policies of the Labor Party arise from its commitment to the interests of capitalism. From here the necessity of revolutionary opposition to the ruling class becomes clear; also clear is the utter futility of the reformist strategy of pleading for the ruling class to change course. Only by rooting ourselves in the material reality of this country, not just of capital-

# What a good fusion looks like

Chuck AUKUS Hawks out of Labor!

Australia approaches crisis. The US led order ruling class. As for Labor's hangers-on like... Alternative, they... ing of how "social... ted while... main crux... most anti... going for... peddle... We are the first to demand... resources for social services, by... achievement and safeguarding of... in an era of social decay will ut... require revolutionary leadership... problem with Laborist "Welfare... Warfare" budget tinkering is that it... the "necessity" of the ruling... armament. That AUKUS itself is ex... their rule and properly is untouch... program is not merely insufficient but... a roadblock to the Australian work... struggle for their independent... Thus, at every step of the way, they... shyne opposition to AUKUS by the... class - the only force capable of... AUKUS as well as the Australian... increasing weakness of the Australian ruling class which sees no path out other than... strangle the living conditions of workers at... home while playing second fiddle to the US in... their pillage of Asia and direct confrontation... with China. It is in this climate of increasing... pressures and desperation that the Labor Party... leadership's position is weaker than it has been... for decades. We call for the Australian working... class to show their strength, to oust these... openly chauvinist lackeys from the Labor Party. AUKUS hawks have no place in any party which... claims to be in the interests of workers. Chuck 'em out!

August 2023

Spartacist League

It's Time! Drive the AUKUS Supporters Out of the ALP!

Union-busting ex-Prime Minister Paul Keating is living proof that traitors to the working class can oppose AUKUS. But to support and champion AUKUS, as Anthony Albanese and his gang of Labor Ministers and other hangers-on do, is to necessarily be a traitor to the working class. These city servants of the bosses have no place in the workers movement and must be driven out of the Labor Party. One pacifist internal grouping, Labor Against War (LAW), is calling for a pushback against AUKUS. What that pushback consists of remains undefined. Well, we have an answer: To LAW and the growing numbers who are against this reactionary alliance, we say: You cannot fight AUKUS in league with those who support it! We must fight together now to expunge the AUKUS-lovers from the ALP! AUKUS portends nothing but catastrophe for workers the world over, from Australia to American military presence in Australia is on a scale unprecedented since World War II. AUKUS involves the immediate expansion and upgrading of military and spy bases and the future acquisition of a small fleet of nuclear-powered submarines at the cost of hundreds of billions of dollars. The response of much of the reformist left (Socialist Alternative, the Communist Party and Socialist Alliance) to these developments has been that Australia should opt out of the U.S. alliance. Presumably, they conceive of Australia existing independently and peacefully in their own little corner of the world, free from the crises of a global order in rapid change. In arguing for Australia to opt out, these groups, despite some minor criticisms, trail behind Keating's "little Australia" outlook. Early on, he became a figurehead for the anti-AUKUS movement, arguing that this pact was against Australia's

Chuck AUKUS Hawks Out of the ALP!

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Joint forums, Sept/Oct 2023

For an Anti-Albanese Yes Campaign!

Joint statement, October 2023

# RED BATTLER

ism in the abstract but Australian capitalism in this historical period, can we demonstrate to the working class that the coming crisis can either be solved in the interests of the capitalists or the workers.

The second part of the document shows how utterly reactionary the COVID lockdowns were in this country. For Australia's liberal order they were a crisis measure in the interests of the ruling class. The left, unable to grasp the class interests behind the lockdowns, completely capitulated to liberalism and were unable to put forward a working-class perspective against them.

Understanding why the lockdowns played out the way they did in Australia is not just for the historical record. Australia's lockdowns were among the most draconian and long-lasting in the world, a testament to the ideological strength of this style of nanny-state liberalism. But liberalism pushed through these measures at significant cost to its ideological capital. Today, post-COVID entropy has begun to set in. Explaining exactly what unfolded in Australia during the pandemic, and why it did, serves as an important weapon against liberalism, and against the left which completely capitulated to the capitalists' response and have drawn no lessons.

Later sections of the document demonstrate how B-L's joint interventions with the SL/A were a stark break from the incapacity of the left to challenge the liberal order and its Laborite lackeys. These sections demonstrate how the seeds of the SL/A's refounding were already planted in the months preceding it. The importance of both the "Chuck 'em Out" call (see page 6) and the anti-Albanese Yes campaign (see page 4) was that they were

able to pose a way forward for the workers movement while exposing the liberals as roadblocks. Our interventions on AUKUS and the Voice laid the groundwork for the conference of the refounded SL/A. Before it, we could only understand the dynamics and class interests at play as they applied to specific episodes. Our refoundation generalises and broadens the lessons of those interventions, and vindicates them as examples of how to advance the workers movement at critical moments.

## Whitlam to Keating and beyond

Important strides have also been made in our understanding of the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating governments. Beginning with "How the Whitlam government paved the way for neoliberalism" (see page 3), and to be continued in an additional document on Hawke and Keating, we are mapping out how the trajectory of the ruling class has led to the present juncture. These documents serve as thorough polemics against left Laborism both in power and on the streets—demonstrating how the neoliberalism of Hawke/Keating was a direct result of the unresolved crisis of the Whitlam government.

The Whitlam document provides a revolutionary account of what actually was at stake during the 70s and into the early 80s. It shows how a militant proletariat was able to bring the country to an impasse, but under Laborite misleadership were not able to resolve it on their own terms. The left trade-union militancy of the period provided no solutions and could only exacerbate the crisis. Unable to seize power in its own right, the stalemate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat continued until Hawke's Labor government provided a political solution in

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favour of the capitalists, coopting the organised working class through the Accords. The document ultimately demonstrates the bankruptcy of Laborism, especially the left Laborite trade-union militancy of the Whitlam era and beyond. The core problem with Whitlam wasn't that he was insufficiently militant and encouraged workers to stay at home after he was deposed. Even if he did mobilise the working class this would have solved nothing. Without a revolutionary program the organised proletariat would have remained stuck in a stalemate as it was in reality throughout the Fraser years, until Hawke's election.

The SL/ANZ of the time was unable to recognise this, and as such its ability to intervene as a revolutionary factor was totally incapacitated. *Australasian Spartacist* advocated for general strikes, raised transitional demands, and called for revolution and a revolutionary party. But the SL/ANZ program was abstracted from the specific dynamics of capitalism and the class struggle at this particular time and place.

If you read the articles of the time with this in mind the SL/ANZ's confusion is clear. It could preach against Labor in the abstract, against capitalism in the abstract, but when it came to demonstrating to the working class Laborism's utter bankruptcy as the crisis unfolded, it failed—not just in the critical moment of Whitlam's dismissal but in the decade afterwards. Unable to comprehend the crisis, let alone lead the working class towards a political solution to it, the SL/ANZ could only fight to be the most militant wing of economist trade-union Laborism.

A prolonged period of revolutionary opportunity passed the SL/ANZ by without a fuss, and the conclusions it drew from this were profoundly deforming on the organisation. Drawing the correct lessons from this period arms us going forward, in stark contrast to the rest of the left which repeat mistakes of the past.

Everyone on the left can rant and rave about how bad Labor was under Hawke and Keating. From SAIt to the SL/A, they all loved to mouth off how bad Labor was and is. But none of them could grasp the fundamental continuity between Whitlam and the neoliberal Laborism he paved the way for. Neither could they understand exactly how Hawke solved the crisis of Australian capitalism in the interests of the bourgeoisie. The left could not offer a way forward for the working class, their criticism amounting to little more than nostalgic reminiscing over the good old days of the Whitlam era stalemate. Hawke was able to point to the untenable Whitlam/Fraser period and use it as blackmail to gain working-class compliance with economic reordering and the Accords, which dramatically increased union subordination to the state.

Hawke and Keating's program presented itself as the only alternative for a working class which would otherwise need to face an Australian Reagan or Thatcher. And so the proletariat, exhausted by decades of trade-union struggle resulting in diminishing gains, remained hitched to Laborism—which the left, the SL/A included, had no response to.

As for the SL/A, allowing an entire historical period to pass it by in the previous decade manifested in a defeatist and insular program which dismissed the Australian working class as a bunch of wife-beating white racist pigs. This was conceived of as a way of being hard on Laborism, but in practice completely surrendered the task of breaking its grip on the working class. Intervening with such a program could only repel the bulk of the working class, reinforcing the SL/A's assessment.

Failing to seize on a key period of revolutionary intervention, and drawing all the wrong lessons from it, the SL/A concluded that due to the "piggish" nature of the working class there was little potential for revolutionary awakening—barring massive external shocks such as untold eco-

nomical catastrophe or the loss of a hypothetical counterrevolutionary war against a socialist Asia.

The importance of correcting this course cannot be lost. Taking on the Accords required confronting the whole ruling class and the neoliberal regime which is dependent on tying down the organised proletariat. Defying the Accords with trade-union militancy alone could only leave you exposed, like the BLF, to repression and smashing.

### "Enlightened" imperialist nation building

The "Multiculturalism and the liberal order in Australia" document deals with a key plank of modern Australian liberalism (see page 10). It demonstrates not just in abstract phrases but in materialist analysis the utterly reactionary nature of multiculturalism. This document shows how the development of Multicultural Australia out of White Australia did not happen as the product of some moral awakening but as a result of changing capitalist demands as the ruling class became increasingly dependent on Asian immigration and trade.

Multiculturalism arose out of the necessity of the Australian ruling class to "engage" and "enmesh" with Asia internally and externally—providing it an ideological framework to strengthen the grip of the liberal world order. The document makes a powerful case not just for the need to oppose multiculturalism, but for the fact that this fight can only be waged with the positive counterposed program of proletarian internationalism.

As immigration increased, the ruling class wielded multiculturalism to ideologically cohere new strata of immigrants behind the bourgeoisie. In this sense they could have their cake and eat it too—new imported labour which would in fact compete with the non-immigrant population to be the most loyal to the bosses' cause. This is the reactionary nature of multiculturalism. It is a weapon of the bourgeoisie, not to divide the working class as the old SL/A used to say, but to unite the working class behind Australia's liberal order!

Today liberal multicultural hegemony is beginning to break down alongside the decline of U.S. hegemony. Unable to pose a revolutionary break with multiculturalism, the left can only respond with even more hysterical liberalism, a path which promises disaster for the working class.

It is clear that what is needed is not a constant campaign to smooth multiculturalism's rough edges but rather to drive a wedge against its ideological cohesion. Isolated arguments exposing the "hypocrisy" of multiculturalism (from the unequal treatment of minorities under lockdowns to attacks on refugees) amount to arguing that the bourgeoisie is insufficiently com-



no credit

**Australian delegates along with other members of the Eastern Bureau of the Communist International, Moscow 1922. In the aftermath of the Comintern's degeneration Trotskyists continued the fight for a revolutionary opposition to Australian capitalism.**

mitted to multiculturalism. But far from "exposing" the inconsistency and falsity of multiculturalism, racist inequalities are not only reconcilable but are fundamental to liberal multiculturalism—the ideological axis conditioning passivity and acceptance of oppression.

### Forwards!

In the SL/A, alongside all sections of the ICL, we must continue the struggle to break from old frameworks and fight to be a genuinely revolutionary factor. Doing this requires that the section continues to intervene as a revolutionary force on the left. Already in the months preceding our conference we have made serious headway. Our struggle to plant a revolutionary pole in the Voice referendum had to cut through the false polarisation of society at large but also the false polarisation that existed within the SL/A for years on the question of Aboriginal land rights. One side supported land rights by tailing liberalism, while the other attempted to reject liberal tailism by renouncing the struggle altogether. Our Fusion Conference represents a significant step towards forging ourselves as a revolutionary weapon, but is only one of many steps we will need to continually take.

Since the Conference this revolutionary framework of the reformed SL/A has already been put into action with our statement on Palestine and united-front effort (see page 20). We could not seriously grasp the necessity of centring the fight to break the American connection until we had gone through the struggle of producing these conference documents. The initial reaction of a supporter of the League for the Fourth International to our united front is testament enough to this—

denouncing us as little Australia nationalist anti-Americans. But is the alliance with the U.S. not the axis which ties Australia to the Zionist onslaught? Is struggling to break the American connection not central both to advancing the Palestinian movement and to striking at the heart of Australian capitalism? By trying to paint themselves as "oh so revolutionary," the opponents of this call put themselves in the opposite camp, alongside the liberal defenders of U.S. imperialism and its Australian lackeys.

As for the united-front campaign itself, we have already drawn interest from broader sections of the Palestinian movement than we'd previously been able to reach. People are frustrated at the movement dwindling; many of them are well aware that the alliance is the reason for Australia's support to Israel. Our united-front campaign provides a strategy to break through this impasse, to put up a counterposed program to the liberal speechifying on stage week after week. Furthermore, our revolutionary pole within this united front provides a path to achieve this demand, demonstrating the necessity of a break from the U.S. lapdogs in parliament and those who maintain a bloc with them.

Of course, this is just the beginning. As the situation for the Palestinian movement becomes increasingly dire, the necessity of our call shows itself more clearly. There are plenty of avenues to push forward. As U.S. hegemony enters deeper crises, and when Australia's liberal order finally does get that rude awakening, we will be in a good position. We have hit the ground running, and in times like this will definitely need to keep at it. We are now well equipped to do so. This is the significance of our Fusion Conference. Thank you. ■

**Australasian SPARTACIST**

Number 90 Summer 1981/82 30 cents

**Smash Re NUCLEAR**

**SL/ANZ National Conference - Defend Vietnam, USSR! The Main Enemy is at Home!**

Regime's done its worst against the Soviet Union has taken steps to... anti-Soviet hysteria. And now... their stepping-stone to... with the workers and oppressed masses of Asia. The ALP in the party of... "White Australia" racism has always... pillars and premises of the liberal... of the Whitlam, Fraser, F... cause of local Asia... the social-democratic dream of... working class has through... Australia's natural resources. The... of the majority... masses of Asia in their hundreds... with apartheid South Africa, except... the... "national character"... that Australian "national character"... which is not only white racist, but... and bestial male chauvinism—a glorification... internationalist and socialist program... with the membership of... After the Asian victory in China... of revolutionary ferment in Asia... "new wave" which revealed... following the... PKI in 1965 and the... and its labor... means that "independence" from... imperialist power is not an option... as a privileged white... against... is completely counterposed to...

**White racism is a critical part of that Australian "national character", so dear to the hearts of Laborite nationalists, which is not only white racist, but proud of its parochial philistinism and brutally male chauvinist—a glorification of the culture of "white pigs".**

—*Australasian Spartacist* No. 90 Summer 1981/82

**SPARTACIST**

NUMBER 47-48 14 SPARTACIST

and fearful. Rising winds of trade-war protectionism have... brother U.S. "protection." This contradiction will give... of Asia, Japanese and American imperialism are... for the only realistic solution—a socialist federation of... Australia is a willing and ambitious jackal regional power, from sending troops... U.S. presence in the region and on its own shores (U.S. bases) while lording over its deeply exploited and oppressed Pacific neocolonies.

**More than just a lackey partner, Australia is a willing and ambitious jackal regional power, from sending troops to aid the U.S. war on Vietnam to dispatching "UN peacekeeping" troops to Cambodia today. It is angling for greater U.S. presence in the region and on its own shores (U.S. bases) while lording over its deeply exploited and oppressed Pacific neocolonies.**

—*Spartacist* (English edition) No. 47-48 Winter 1992-93

**Having no perspective to fight for revolutionary leadership of the immense class battles of the '70s, by the '80s the SL/ANZ despaired at being unable to break workers from the grip of Laborite nationalism and backwardness. Attempting to draw a hard line against Laborism, the SL/ANZ dismissed the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, as well as exaggerating the role of Australian imperialism, downplaying the centrality of the U.S. alliance to the survival of the ruling class.**

# Down with U.S. support to Israel

## Defend Palestine! Defend Iran!

The following statement is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 1181, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

APRIL 15—As we go to press, the conflict between Israel and Iran is rapidly escalating. On April 1, Israel flattened part of the Iranian embassy in Damascus, killing two Iranian generals. Iran retaliated by launching 300 drones and missiles toward Israel, most of which were shot down with

the help of the U.S., France and Britain.

At the moment, it is not clear where all this will lead. What is clear is that the situation was provoked by Israel to further rope the U.S. and its other imperialist allies into the genocide in Gaza. A war right now between Israel and Iran would be an extension of Israel's national war of oppression against the Palestinians. Liberal cries for "de-escalation" and respect

of international law are pacifist dead ends. It is urgent for the working class in the U.S. and beyond to oppose all imperialist maneuvers and block military aid to Israel. **Defend Palestine and Iran against the imperialist-backed Zionist onslaught!**

It is also a dead end to look to Hamas and the Islamic Republic of Iran to defeat Israel and the imperialists. Hamas's strategy of provoking the Israeli slaughter to

compel the Arab regimes to do something on behalf of the Palestinians has led to the utter devastation of Gaza. As for the Iranian regime, it is balancing between superficial support to Palestine and conciliation of the U.S.-dominated world order. Only a revolutionary working-class strategy can lead to the liberation of Palestine and to the final defeat of imperialism.

### Palestine...

(continued from page 20)

of their plunder to Australian finance capitalists. The latter get to be overseer of their own little Pacific bailiwick as long as they work under the U.S. umbrella, including hosting U.S. bases and forces, joining U.S. military incursions, and supporting other outposts like Israel.

As a token of its commitment to the imperialist world order Australia's rulers have long supplied troops to UN missions whose job is to help guard Israel's border with both Egypt and Lebanon. More importantly Australia has militarily joined every key U.S. assault on and occupation in the region. Today, as U.S. hegemony breaks apart, their Australian junior partners are more desperate than ever to try and hold it together. When the U.S. sent warships to back Israel as it prepared to invade Gaza, Australia leapt to contribute planes and ADF personnel. Clinging ever tighter to their big brother protector, Australia's rulers unconditionally embrace the AUKUS pact which ties Australia into U.S. war moves against their main trading partner, China.

Major force must be brought to bear to break this link in the imperialist chain supporting the Zionist killing machine. The only force with the social power and objective interest to do this is the organised working class. Tens of thousands of workers have mobilised in mass protests, but they have not been organised through their unions. Trade unions representing hundreds of thousands, from the Victorian AMWU to the MUA, have perennially declared themselves Friends of Palestine. But words of solidarity need to be translated into concrete action against the government's political and material support to Israel's mass murder. Victoria's Labor

government has turned Melbourne into a regional hub for Israel's biggest military contractors from Elbit Systems to Rafael. Unionised workers build, transport and ship components for various war platforms and systems supplied to Israel.

The size of protests in defence of Gaza guarantees that a strike against the government's support to the slaughter or a black ban of military cargo to Israel would be immensely popular. So why hasn't the anger been translated into action? Because union action to impede Australia's support of the Israeli offensive would immediately run up against the ALP government and its allegiance to Washington. Union leaders, both left and right, are beholden to the ALP who today run point for Australia's support to Israel. This is simply part of the job for the party occupying the government benches in Canberra, which requires enforcing the needs of the Australian capitalist rulers including their U.S. alliance.

### U.S. imperialism's lapdogs out of the workers movement!

After 7 October, word came down from Washington to Canberra that there could be no dissent from support to Israel. All statements had to condemn "Hamas terrorism" and uphold Israel's "right to defend itself" (read: right to annihilate Palestinians). This memo was immediately forwarded to ALP headquarters who ensured every union got the message. A red line was drawn. Every federal Labor MP dutifully lined up to vote for the mandatory parliamentary resolution in support of Israel's war. State Labor MPs were also required to pledge their allegiance. The ACTU was silent. Expressions of solidarity with Palestine evaporated. The NSW Labor government threatened to ban all pro-Palestinian protests as a vicious witch-hunt was unleashed to tar defenders of the Palestinians with the label of anti-Semitism.



RB photo

10 March: Anti-Imperialist United Front and Spartacist banners at Melbourne Palestine protest.

The main guard dogs in Australia of this U.S.-sponsored genocide are PM Albanese and Foreign Minister Wong. Albanese is a co-founder of Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, and Wong has long been considered an ally of Palestine within Labor. This shows that what really counts in the ALP is the U.S. alliance. Politicians can say all sorts of nice things and conferences can pass all sorts of pacifist motions, but when Labor is in power it will serve the interests of the capitalist rulers and their Uncle, Sam. This is facilitated by its liberal talk about the need for "peace." Thus the government's weasel words about Israel needing to "respect humanitarian law" and its eventual UN vote for a ceasefire are used to more easily sell its backing of genocide. Albanese and Wong pontificate that Israel should allow aid into Gaza while also joining the U.S. in cutting off aid funding, and as the bombs keep falling.

As the body count in Gaza grew, several Labor politicians distanced themselves from Israel's industrial murder. Right-wing minister Tony Burke's comments made clear that if he didn't defend the local council flying the Palestinian flag his western Sydney constituents, 25 percent of whom are Muslim, would be waving him a goodbye flag at the next election. Of course, not all Laborites are simply concerned for their career. Forty ALP branches are reported to have opposed the government's position, including Albanese's own branch. Before last year's national conference the Victo-

rian branch voted for the Labor government to recognise a Palestinian state. But those claims of political affinity with the Palestinians merely deceive supporters because they are not based on a break with the U.S. alliance which ensures the ALP's unwavering support to Israel's slaughter.

For their part the Greens have grand-standed on Palestine. Knowing they will never be at the helm of the good ship *USS Canberra*, they can wax all they want about ending the occupation of Palestine. This sounds good. But the Greens' program will never challenge the fundamental interests of Australian capitalism. They uphold the U.S. alliance—only wanting to renegotiate it on more favourable terms. But to really fight for Palestinian liberation means fighting to break the chain that ties Australia to the U.S. empire, an issue the Greens are not about to touch.

What sets the ALP apart from the bourgeois Greens, giving their stance strategic importance, is their control of the unions. The utter subservience of the trade-union bureaucracy was illustrated by their silence for weeks after 7 October. Until right-wing cabinet ministers dissented from unconditional support to Israel, no union, with the sole exception of the CPA-led Sydney branch of the MUA, dared raise a peep in defence of Palestine. This was a reprise of the reaction to AUKUS. Union motions against AUKUS were cheap as chips when it was "Morrison's baby," but as soon as Labor was running the show you could hear a



Daniel Waidling/AAP

20 January, Foreign Minister Wong embraces Israeli president during friendship tour of Israel, as bombs rain down on Gaza.

pin drop—until right-wing union-buster Keating broke the cone of silence. Of course, the Labor left's cowardice over Palestine has been reinforced by their humiliating defeat over AUKUS, followed by their having snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory in the Voice referendum.

Those union leaders who could not come out openly for Israel without alienating many of their members, were either silent or, like the Victorian AMWU, issued liberal handwringing statements condemning violence "from both sides." The CPA-led Sydney branch of the MUA were allowed to maintain their paper support to Palestine, so long as they didn't rock the boat by calling out the whole pro-imperialist edifice.

**"Block the boat, don't rock the boat"**

With the left bureaucrats looking like the whipped dogs of imperialism that they are, the leftists of Solidarity rushed to throw a lifeline, initiating a "unionists for Palestine" petition. Eventually thousands signed on. Masses of unionists registering their opposition to the Zionist onslaught could be a good thing. But without the intention to turn paper declarations of solidarity into union action, this is worse than useless. In fact this liberal call for "Peace, Justice and Solidarity" was used by left bureaucrats precisely to hide their inaction in practice. Naturally it said nothing about the Labor government's support to Israel's mass murder. But as the toll in Gaza mounted even this was not enough to cover for the union tops' betrayal.

Enter Block the Boat. Many who took to these community "pickets" against the working of Israeli ZIM ships undoubtedly did so over a felt need to take some sort of direct action. Braving cop attack, a number have been arrested in Sydney and Melbourne. A united front needs to be built to defend them and demand the dropping of all charges. Some activists may also have seen these protests as a way to reach out to the working class, particularly when Solidarity crow that these actions were initiated with the support of the MUA. But these blockades do not seek to mobilise the working class as a force conscious that its interests include defence of Palestine. Those interests run up against the same ruling class that is driving down the conditions of all workers in the service of propping up a fading U.S. empire. The obstacles to an effective struggle are union leaders that say they want to fight, but are committed to Labor and its undying fealty to the U.S. alliance.

The reality is that delaying a couple of Israeli ships for a few days has done nothing to stop the bombing or advance the fight for Palestinian liberation. But even worse, in trying to substitute for dock and transport workers, these blockades potentially set up individual workers—who must decide whether to honour a community "picket"—for victimisation. The net effect is often to divide the workforce and create hostility to the activists' cause. When Solidarity and other leftists have tried to sell these blockades as union actions, they in fact provide a cover for the left bureaucrats' refusal to mobilise their base. Instead, these actions are conducted in the framework of the liberal BDS campaign whose whole strategy comes down to relying on Israel's imperialist patrons to pressure their Zionist clients to "end Apartheid."

The so-called socialist groups perpetually gravitate around "left" union bureaucrats. Rather than attempting to break workers from their Laborite grip they bolster their left credentials, seeking to ingratiate themselves with these poseurs who oppose AUKUS and defend Palestinian rights in words only. Thus Solidarity praise unions from the ASU to the MUA for supporting Palestine. But all these union tops are welded-on Laborites who refuse to violate the bounds of capitalist acceptability. They are committed to upholding unity with the open pro-imperialists and backers of Israel who dominate the union movement and run the ALP. The ALP leaders in turn are committed to faithfully serving the core interests of Australia's capitalist masters including their alliance with U.S. imperialism.

It is this political bloc of "socialists" and working-class leaders with the capitalist rulers that subordinates the working class to its "own" bourgeoisie and consequently the U.S. alliance, paralysing any class struggle for workers' most immediate interests including against Israel's onslaught. The desperately needed working-class struggle to force the imperialists to yield will not happen while also trying to influence and maintain unity with their defenders. To fight for Palestinian liberation the left need to build a revolutionary anti-imperialist pole against the current misleaders of the workers movement. A line must be drawn in the unions against all who support or conciliate the alliance with U.S. imperialism. There can be no unity with the supporters of imperialism! There can be no unity with the murderers of Palestinians! **Pro-imperialists out of the workers movement! Break the American connection in the workers movement!** ■

**Partisan Defence Committee**

**Defend pro-Palestinian protesters from state repression!**

**Mobilise against the Zionist witchhunt!**

There is an urgent need to mobilise against the attacks on supporters of Palestine in this country. A campaign is being waged by police, employers, and ALP governments against those opposing genocide. The government is showing its utmost allegiance to the U.S. alliance. The Zionist witchhunt is escalating. We need a united campaign of defence.

Just last week, Port Botany protesters, including the MUA's Sydney branch secretary and other union members, were arrested and are now set to face court. Demonstrators at VICT's Melbourne dock were attacked with rubber bullets and stun grenades. Following pro-Zionist media pressure, the Australian government said it would deny Leila Khaled, member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a visa

and reportedly she will be banned from even speaking online at a Green Left conference. Green Left's Facebook page was shut down after publishing interviews with her.

These attacks and arrests represent a threat to trade unions, the oppressed and the right to protest, picket and advocate Palestinian liberation. The unions, in particular, have a responsibility to exercise their industrial power to defend their members and organisations from attack. It is in the interest of all supporters of Palestine and of the working class as a whole, to mobilise against this witchhunt. There needs to be united, co-ordinated defence of all victims. We welcome any proposals for common defence work.

PDC  
31 March 2024

**The following are protest letters sent to authorities by the PDC.**

**Drop the charges!**

The arrest, under anti-protest laws, of nineteen demonstrators at Port Botany on 24 March is an egregious act of state repression against supporters of Palestine and represents an affront to the right to protest in Australia. We demand that all charges against these protesters be dropped immediately and unconditionally!

**No to anti-Palestinian witchhunt!**

The government's stated intention to refuse Leila Khaled a visa and the threatened ban on her even appearing online at Green Left's EcoSocialism conference in Perth is a blatant act of political censorship. We demand that she be let in and allowed to speak, whether in-person or online. End the escalating anti-democratic witchhunt of pro-Palestinian activists!



The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian defence organisation, championing causes in the interest of the working class, associated with the Spartacist League of Australia.

Contact the Partisan Defence Committee at [pdc.melbourne@exemail.com.au](mailto:pdc.melbourne@exemail.com.au)

**Spartacist supplement, 10 October 2023**

[iclf.org/spartacist/en/2023-10-10-palestine](http://iclf.org/spartacist/en/2023-10-10-palestine)

**Workers Hammer: Throw the Zionists out of Labour & TUC!**

**Workers Hammer: Dump Starmer to defend Palestine!**

**Workers Vanguard: Support to Democrats is Support to Genocide**

**Workers Vanguard: From DSA to UAW: Support to Democrats is Support to Genocide**

**Workers Vanguard: Down with US/UK support to Israel! Defend Palestine! Defend Iran!**

**More on Palestine: [iclf.org/t/en/palestine](http://iclf.org/t/en/palestine)**

## To defend Palestine: Break the U.S. connection in the workers movement



Mahmud HAMS/Getty, Jonathan Ernst (inset)

Right: Khan Younis refugee camp in rubble after Zionist strike, October 2023. Above: Albo pledges allegiance to genocide Joe at Quad Summit in Tokyo, May 2022.



We reprint below a 7 March statement of the SL/A.

The Palestine solidarity movement is at an impasse. Having had no impact on the escalating slaughter, protest leaders have doubled down on liberal appeals to the moral compass of politicians and the “world community”—begging Israel’s imperialist

sponsors to lean on their Zionist client to grant any sort of temporary halt to the killing. Mass protests have dwindled. Increasingly frustrated activists take to desperate and ineffectual small-group actions against arms manufacturers or Israeli ships, making them easy prey for state repression. And the movement leadership in Mel-

bourne has begun tearing itself apart with recriminations against “too many whites” amongst the organisers, including a former IDF soldier.

How did this come to be? The imperialist ruling classes have a material interest in maintaining Israel as a crucial outpost, one whose basis is the denial of Palestinian

national existence. The U.S. pours billions of dollars a year into Israel to maintain it as a pivotal base to project their power in a volatile region. The existence of Zionist Israel guaranteed the Middle East would be poisoned by Arab-Jewish enmity, leaving the imperialist robbers greater freedom to plunder the oil-rich region. Israel is a strategic component of the U.S.-dominated liberal world. Now more than ever, as U.S. imperialism’s grip is challenged, from Eastern Europe to China, the capitalist powers cannot afford to abandon this strategic foothold.

Many have been shocked at Australia’s hardline support to Israel. Some liberal commentators put Australia’s embrace of Israel down to its affinity for another white colonial-settler outpost. They often note Australia was one of the first to recognise the state of Israel, and that it was under the leadership of Labor Party grandee H.V. Evatt that the UN voted to partition Palestine in 1947. This is true but the Australia-Israel relationship can only be understood through the prism of the U.S. alliance.

Australia was born an outpost of Anglo imperialism in Southeast Asia. It was established to function as deputy sheriff of the British Empire. When the baton of world policeman passed to the U.S., from then on orders were handed down from the Oval Office rather than Downing St. As Labor PM Gough Whitlam learnt in 1975, these orders were not up for discussion. The quid pro quo is that the U.S. polices the liberal world order, throwing some of the profits

*continued on page 18*

### Call for a united front

**Join us to mobilise a united front under the following demands:  
Defend Palestine! Break the American connection!**

The Palestinian movement is paralysed. Israel’s war on Gaza and the Labor government’s support of this Zionist terror has been met with tens of thousands on the streets in protest week after week for almost five months. But the slaughter continues, and the situation of Palestinians becomes more dire by the day. Today the Zionist rulers

threaten to unleash even greater death and destruction on the last pocket of refuge in Gaza. With each protest the numbers decrease, with little concrete impact against the onslaught. The simple fact is, the movement will continue to dwindle unless it is organised on the basis of opposition to the U.S. alliance—the very thing which

ensures that the ruling class and their Labor servants in Canberra will continue to back the genocide to the hilt. To revive the Palestinian movement it is urgently necessary to mobilise the broadest possible forces to break the Australian link in the U.S.-led imperialist chain supporting the Zionist killing machine.

**We encourage all who agree to join us under this banner at upcoming protests, with full independence to argue for their strategy to defend Palestine and break the U.S.-Australia alliance. Please contact us if you would like to fight for these demands to advance the Palestinian movement. See page 12 for contact information.**