

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 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 are 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 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 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!*

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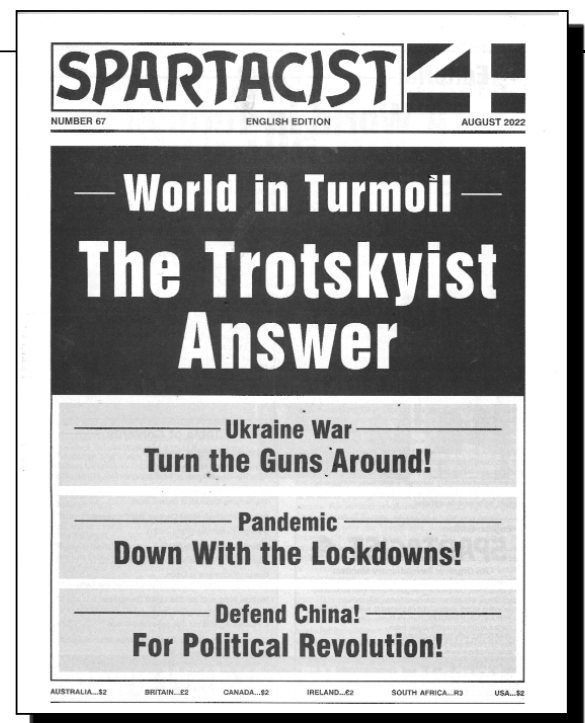
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