

Socialist Alternative: “Little Australia” Anti-Communists Imperialists Hands Off North Korea!

AUGUST 12: In their drive to destroy the North Korean bureaucratically deformed workers state, the U.S. imperialists, backed by Japan and Australia, are taking the world to the brink of nuclear war. On 8 August, U.S. president Donald Trump threatened North Korea with “fire and fury like the world has never seen.” U.S. Defense Secretary James “Mad Dog” Mattis chimed in that North Korea risked the “end of its regime and the destruction of its people.” While Trump’s bellicosity and unpredictability raise the prospect of nuclear Armageddon, former Democratic Party president Barack Obama also threatened to attack the North, including with nukes.

Washington’s war rhetoric is no idle threat. The U.S. has almost 25,000 troops across the border in South Korea, and another 50,000 in Japan. Later this month, U.S. and South Korean forces are planning massive military exercises in yet another provocation against North Korea. On 10 August, U.S. and Japanese troops began an 18-day live-fire military exercise in Hokkaido. This follows on from Talisman Sabre war games between U.S. and Australian forces off the coast of Queensland in July. Australia hosts top secret U.S. spy bases such as Pine Gap, which would be key to any strike on North Korea. Responding to reports that the U.S. was drawing up a hit list of targets in North Korea, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declared Australia “joined at the hip” with the U.S. As proletarian internationalists we say: Down with the U.S./Australia alliance! All U.S. bases and Marines out of Australia now! Not one person, not one cent for the Australian imperialist military!

The U.S. and its allies paint North Korea’s development of a nuclear arsenal as a dangerous threat. In fact, the real danger to the world’s masses are the U.S.-led imperialist warmongers. The U.S. is the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons, with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Washington’s current threats come only days after the UN Security Council unanimously voted to approve crippling new sanctions against North Korea after it launched two intercontinental missiles last month. The sanctions, criminally supported by the Chinese Stalinist regime, are themselves an act of war and aim to cut off a third of North Korea’s export revenue.

There is much that is bizarre and unsavoury about the dynastic, mythologised, bureaucratic rule of Kim Jong Un and his predecessors. But Pyongyang’s drive to secure nukes is a rational, essential policy of self-defence, not least against the U.S. which openly threatens a nuclear “first strike” against its perceived enemies. Indeed, from the moment landlord-capitalist rule was overturned, the North Korean deformed workers state has been in the gun sights of the imperialists. They have tried through war, nuclear brinkmanship and a starvation embargo to overturn the social revolution that freed North Korea from imperialist

domination and established collectivised property forms. Today it is welcome that the North has gone some way toward developing a credible nuclear deterrent. If not for such a deterrent, the U.S. might have already bombed North Korea, as it has so many countries in the Middle East and elsewhere.

We Trotskyists of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), say it is the duty of the working class internationally to defend the workers state in North Korea, despite the deforming rule of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, and every other country where capitalist rule has been overthrown—China, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba. That means opposing all sanctions and defending North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

This elementary, internationalist class defence of those countries where capitalism has been overthrown is anathema for what passes for the “left” in Australia. Fear of and hatred for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the one true article of faith for the pro-capitalist ALP and its reformist left tails. One such group which stands out for its visceral hostility to defence of the deformed workers states against U.S. and Australian imperialism is Socialist Alternative (SAlt).

SAlt’s Shameful History on Korean War

In late July, the escalating U.S.-led imperialist military provocations against North Korea finally elicited a response from SAlt after months of silence. In an article signed by one Kaye Broadbent, entitled “Why North Korea has every right to hate the US” (www.redflag.org.au, 20 July), SAlt covers up its own despicable history on North Korea and amnesties Australian imperialism.

SAlt’s political origins go back to the late Tony Cliff, a renegade from Trotskyism. Cliff and his followers in Britain fled Trotsky’s Fourth International in 1950 at the beginning of the Korean War when the British Labour government of Clement Attlee sent troops as part of a UN “police action” against North Korea. Bowing to anti-Communist hysteria, Cliff abandoned the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Soviet, Chinese and North Korean workers states against imperialist attack.

Cliff’s claim that the Soviet Union was “state capitalist” (promoted by earlier social democrats who had opposed the 1917 Russian Revolution) was the “theoretical” justification for his cowardly capitulation to the British Labour Party and through them to the British capitalist rulers who, along with U.S. and Australian forces, were attempting a scorched earth annihilation of the North Korean workers and peasants. Why doesn’t any of this sordid history of their tendency appear in the SAlt article?

Cliffites Spit on Korean Worker and Peasants' Struggle

Pushing the bogus "theory" of state capitalism, the Cliffites' grotesque position is that there was no side to take in the war between the North Korean workers and peasants, backed by China and the Soviet Union, and the brutal capitalist South Korean puppet regime, backed by the U.S./British and Australian imperialist powers.

Capitalist/landlord rule was overthrown in North Korea by guerrilla forces acting under the protection of the Soviet Army following liberation from Japanese colonialism at the end of World War II in 1945. This ultimately led to the formation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) under the Kim Il Sung regime. The working class were denied political power under Kim's regime, a nationalist bureaucratic caste resting atop the collectivised economy. Despite the rule of this Stalinist bureaucracy, the overthrow of capitalism in the North was a historic defeat for imperialism and a victory for the working people of Asia and the world.

In the south of the peninsula, a brutally repressive capitalist state was cohered under U.S. military occupation. In October 1945, the butcher Syngman Rhee was flown into the South Korean capital by the U.S. to put a Korean face on what was an American occupation. Rhee reconstructed an anti-Communist police state. This was based on Korean quislings who had served in the previous Japanese colonial administration and armed forces. Now serving American imperialism, the same forces viciously suppressed militant labour struggles and peasant uprisings. When the North Korean army advanced below the 38th parallel in June 1950 they were welcomed by the masses as liberators. The North's advance represented an opportunity for social revolution in the South.

In response to the North's successes, the U.S., with the support of Australia, Britain and other capitalist powers, invaded North Korea under the umbrella of the UN. However, the Chinese People's Liberation Army came to the North's aid and together Chinese and North Korean forces cleared the North of UN/imperialist troops. The U.S.-led military attack on the North was an attempt to smash social revolution on the peninsula and to "roll back" the Chinese Revolution of 1949. During the Korean War (1950-53), the imperialists devastated North Korea and saturated the country and its population in napalm. They killed more than four million people, including nearly one million Chinese. Washington seriously considered nuking North Korea and China but was deterred by Soviet military might, including its newly developed nuclear arsenal. Following heroic resistance by the North Korean and Chinese military the U.S.-led imperialist forces were fought to a stalemate in what was widely viewed as a defeat for U.S. imperialism and its capitalist allies.

On the Barricades of Capitalist Counterrevolution

In typical SAIt style, Broadbent's article avoids addressing the class forces involved in the Korean War and completely disappears the role of Australian imperialism.

This is a conscious amnestying of the reactionary role of the Australian imperialist military then and now. Far from viewing their own bourgeoisie as the "main enemy," the article does not take a side with North Korea against "democratic" Australian capitalism or any capitalist state. Rather than stating that North Korea needs nuclear weapons to defend itself, the bourgeois pacifist SAIt can only whine that, "The spread of nuclear weapons is not desirable."

We in the ICL demand U.S. troops out of South Korea as part of a broader proletarian revolutionary program to defend the North Korean and Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist attack. The struggle for this perspective begins "at home" against one's own bourgeoisie. We seek to mobilise the working class in struggle to overturn the capitalist system through workers revolution. Unsurprisingly, there is no such perspective in SAIt's article. Their appetite is to fall in behind the blood-drenched campaigns of their own "democratic" imperialist rulers. In the last few years alone SAIt have been enthusiastic press agents for thoroughly reactionary forces backed by Western imperialism from Libya to Ukraine, to Syria.

Indeed, the entire history of these "little Australia" nationalists has been to side with their own bourgeoisie, promoting liberal, anti-Communist prejudices while sneering at and deriding defence of those states where capitalism has been overthrown. Throughout Cold War II in the 1980s, long-time leaders of SAIt cheered anti-Soviet counterrevolutionary forces under the rubric of "Neither Washington nor Moscow." They lusted for the bloodying of the Soviet army in Afghanistan at the hands of the anti-woman, CIA-backed *mujahedin* cut-throats. To this day they continue to write articles championing the "trade-union" credentials of Polish Solidarność, which in the early 1980s spearheaded capitalist counterrevolution at the behest of the Vatican and Western bankers. Along with capitalist rulers the world over, they were in raptures when the USSR was destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92 with devastating effects on the Soviet people and world's proletariat. In contrast, in the face of the imperialists' anti-Soviet war drive, we stood four-square in defence of the USSR and the deformed workers states against imperialism.

Our unconditional military defence of the deformed workers states against the capitalist enemy is the necessary precondition for the fight for workers political revolutions to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes based on workers democracy and a program of working-class internationalism. Based on the anti-Marxist lie that socialism can be built in one country, the nepotistic regime in Pyongyang is an opponent of the struggle for socialist revolution in South Korea, and everywhere else. We call for *revolutionary reunification* of the Korean peninsula through workers political revolution in the North and socialist revolution in the South. This proletarian internationalist program, premised upon defending the gains that workers have already won, is integral to the fight for socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, including Japan, the U.S. and Australia. Vital to the success of this fight is the creation of Leninist-Trotskyist parties as sections of a reformed Fourth International. ■

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