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## About Partisan:

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia, and an organ of independent, communist journalism.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states. ■



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## Who is the "RCO"?

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) is a pre-party formation that works towards the re-unification of the socialist left in Australia into a single, mass communist party. We come from diverse political backgrounds and schools of Marxist thought, yet we are united by a common program.

We welcome rigorous debate and disagreement and are open to factions, yet act as one organisation. We are guided by the principle of diversity of thought, and unity of action. The capitalist mode of production is at the root of every social, environmental, and economic crisis today.

We fight for the liberation of queer people, Aboriginal people, and women, a liberation which can only be achieved through the destruction of the capitalist system. We are united by our determination to fight the capitalist mode of production at every turn, and our total commitment to its abolition. We are communists, unapologetically and without reservation.

We engage in every form of proletarian activity, whether protests or union drives, yet do not trail social movements; we aim in every instance to build the base for a mass workers' party, necessary to intervene in the class struggle and advance the communist movement. ■

**PARTYISM:** That section of the communist movement which sees the re-unification of communist forces into a single party representative of the movement as its primary task.

We do not reject the rest of the left - instead, we aim to work through the existing left to build a communist party. Such a party is united by a shared Marxist program, that is, a program for leading the working class to power and overthrowing the capitalist system.

For this reason, we eschew the malignant sect labels which are often thrown around amongst the left. We view all communist organisations as being "sects" - factional organisations which recruit to a particular tendency and viewpoint, as opposed to a Marxist program.

We aim to unite the sects into a party, being an organisation representative of the movement as a whole, and the political weapon of the working class. ■



# Parliamentary road to nowhere

Much debate is had across the Left over electoralism and the viability of the ballot box. This is a historical debate that goes as far back as the time of Marx and Engels. This debate was one of many that would cause a near irreparable split between the reformist socialists (social democrats) and the revolutionary socialists (and communists). That, and the former's wishy-washy support for imperialism abroad.

Can the working class take power by the ballot box? Sure they can - but history has shown that these parties soon collapse the workers movement in pursuit of coalitions with the bourgeois and liberal/conservative parties. While they can usher in sweeping reforms, their long term viability is questionable at best. Either these parties burn out quickly, losing to their conservative counterparts, or they collapse into becoming another liberal reformist party (see: PODEMOS or Syriza).

In the historical case of Chile, where a reformist socialist won power through elections, the socialist and workers movements were smashed by reactionaries in the armed forces. Allende's short tenure as President of Chile provides many lessons for the contemporary Left: that taking power too early is a path to disaster, that trying to form coalitions with bourgeois parties is a path to disaster, that trying to recuperate the bourgeois class while leading as ostensibly workers government is a path to disaster, and that not abolishing the armed forces is a path to disaster. Many paths to disaster.

Allende brought about many positive reforms, such as welfare programs for the workers and toilers of Chile. But he also made numerous fatal political mistakes: he did not arm the working class against the (now

obvious) threat of a coup by the army, he attempted to make peace with the capitalist class (who opposed him), and he believed that the institutions of liberal democracy would be on his side.

11<sup>th</sup> September 1973 shattered any and all illusions that the bourgeois class would sit idly and allow Allende to continue running the country. A coup was spearheaded by Augusto Pinochet, who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean army by Allende himself. This coup smashed the workers movement in Chile, and ushered in a military dictatorship lasting almost seventeen years. Thousands of workers, socialists and militants were executed - tens of thousands more were tortured and interned in detention centres. To this day, Chile continues to suffer the indignity of Pinochet's disastrous economic reforms, and conservative constitution.

This issue of Partisan addresses the "parliamentary road", which we describe as a "road to nowhere". We (as always) put forward our perspective: that only a mass party armed with a communist program can lead the working class to power. This road, the revolutionary road, is the road to emancipation - only by overcoming the bourgeois state and the capitalist class can the working class free itself.

We continue to encourage comrades and militants to join The Socialists in their state, as part of the fight for workers power.

After the horrifying events of August 31<sup>st</sup>, the need for a mass party of the working class is greater than ever.

**In solidarity,  
Max J on behalf of Partisan Editorial.**



# Defend Palestine Action!

The legislative recommendations made by special antisemitism envoy Jillian Segal are antithetical to democracy, extensions of bourgeois state repression, and will do nothing whatsoever to bring an end to rising antisemitism. In fact, the purpose of these changes has nothing to do with antisemitism, and everything to do with ensuring that the Palestinian solidarity movement be crushed as swiftly as possible. Through this movement, demagogues of bourgeois state power have found at long last the road to workers further disempowerment.

The contradiction between the basic reality of the situation in Gaza, the state repression and brutality against the Palestinian liberation movement at home, and the myopic focus of the state on rising antisemitism is profound. While protestors such as Hannah Thomas are blinded by police weapons, arrested, blacklisted, and threatened with jailtime, while Israel starves the population of Gaza into submission or extinction, the great crisis of our society and culture is, according to the state and its media apparatus, antisemitism. Antisemitism, while Israeli officers and US private military personnel shoot down aid

seekers, antisemitism, while protestors are brutalised, shot at, and jailed. The rhetoric surrounding a crisis of antisemitism promulgated by the respectable aspects of bourgeois society is a rhetoric intended not to bring an end to rising antisemitism (to do so would require staunch action against the Israeli state, the greatest ideological threat to Jewish people in the anglophone world) but to bring an end to the Palestinian cause. To mute the Palestinian struggle, extend state capacities, return to a stable rule of law, and to bring politics back into the fold of the administration of an existing state of things instead of a rupture with such a state.

In attacking the corpse of the academy and the home of the tatters of the socialist movement – the universities – and repressing nongovernment organisations, cultural institutions, and media outlets, the Australian state seeks to extend its ever-encroaching hegemony over the few remaining pockets of emancipatory politics behind enemy lines. Central to this is the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) vague, abstracted definition of antisemitism to the level of policy – the





sweeping semantic justification for sinking the state's political teeth into the above institutions.

Segal's antidemocratic demands parallel the decision of the British government to criminalise Palestine Action, and support for the direct action organisation, under section 12 of the Terrorism Act, punishable by up to 14 years in prison. What should worry communists about this, beyond the fact that it is a blatant criminalisation of Palestinian solidarity itself, is that it marks a real increase in the application of political repression by the UK state. The justification for its criminalisation is that Palestine Action "is a pro-Palestinian group with the stated aim to support Palestinian sovereignty by using direct criminal action tactics to halt the sale and export of military equipment to Israel." This is markedly distinct from the justification provided for any of the other 71 groups on the banned list. It is vague, sweeping, and provides no attempt to cover itself through an appeal to public danger or safety. Quite clearly, this ban is about preventing damage to private property and criminalising a political movement.

The moves, then, of criminalising Palestine Action in the UK and attempting to elevate the IHRA definition of antisemitism into law in Australia, are two aspects of a singular political substance: an attack upon even the meagre existing democratic freedoms. It was the working class who won democratic battles, it is the working class that benefits from these concessions of state power, and it is the working class that must defend them without reservation. The struggle for class power is a political struggle, and it is, necessarily, a democratic one. The majority of society must govern society.

Clearly, a ruling bourgeois class are inept and unwilling to defend existing democratic freedoms, let alone carry forward democratic struggle in any meaningful way whatsoever. They, increasingly paranoid and fractured, see enemies in every shadow, in every crowd, in every potential locus of class power. They resent the Palestinian omni-cause, despise its effect on the tatters of 'civil society,' and wish nothing more for life to return to a false stability. To do this, to maintain the imperialist world system and force the great mass of society back into its place, they are more than willing to roll back anything that facilitates 'trouble-causing.' Certainly, they will not stop there. If these recommendations are acted, on if the Palestine Action decision is effectively enforced, further attacks on the last vestiges of formal class power and the informal

possibilities of class power – unions, working class organisations, the sects of the socialist left and their electoral projects – will ensue. Legislative decisions cascade as the 'rule of law' is revealed further as the rule of capital. The farcical display of bourgeois democracy assumes an ever more farcical form, and the supposedly 'neutral' state wields repression like a hammer against all that disturb an exploitative international order at home or abroad.

What must communists in Australia do? Place ourselves back in the throng of democratic struggle, fight for our unification for and through this struggle, and reclaim our place as the leaders of such struggle. The Revolutionary Communist Organisation calls:

- **For solidarity against state attacks on political freedoms in the United Kingdom, for unity against those taking place here.** Communists in Australia must organise and cohere themselves as the strongest possible, most effective opposition to attacks on democratic freedoms. In the long term, this requires programmatic unity, a cohered, unifying strategy for worker's power. In the immediate term, we must look to cooperate wherever possible to re-centre communist political power as democratic power.
- **For unions to defend democratic freedoms.** Unions must once again become defenders of democratic liberties, of the political freedom of workers to engage in struggle and international solidarity. Through agitation and practical action against attacks on democratic liberties, only working class power can defend working class freedoms.

**In solidarity,  
Central Committee of the Revolutionary  
Communist Organisation (RCO) ■**

# What is sectarianism?

*Sectarianism is endemic to the left, to the degree that it is often caricaturised. Porco writes on the history of sectarianism, what it is and isn't, and how communists can 'abolish' it.*

## Sectarianism

A religious sect is a minuscule group of dogmatic worshippers. They have broken away from a larger tradition, refining their own beliefs into far more rigid and isolated conceptions of God or enlightenment. For the socialist left, sectarian is a word often thrown around to insult and belittle other socialists and competing organisations in the broader movement. We use the term to mean groups who are difficult to work with, weird cliques, or dogmatic ideologues. But sectarianism is also a structural phenomenon. It indicates a weak class struggle. If sectarian organisations are the norm, they define the capacity and limitations of the socialist movement as a whole. A critique of sectarianism goes all the way back to the Manifesto of the Communist Party, where Marx wrote of utopian socialists:

“...although the originators of these systems were, in many respects, revolutionary, their disciples have, in every case, formed mere reactionary sects. They hold fast by the original views of their masters, in opposition to the progressive historical development of the proletariat. They, therefore, endeavour... to deaden the class struggle and to reconcile the class antagonisms.”

It has been 178 years since the Manifesto of the Communist Party was written, and the Communist Party is in no better state than the utopian socialists were. The originators of Marxism were revolutionaries, but the disciples of Lenin and Trotsky formed mere reactionary sects. This problem of deforming into sectarianism was noticed by Trotsky in his 1935 piece, *Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International*:

“Every working class party, every faction passes during its initial stages through a period of pure propaganda... The period of existence as a Marxist circle ingrafts invariably habits of an abstract approach to the problems of the workers' movement. He who is unable to step in time over the confines of this circumscribed existence becomes transformed into a conservative sectarian”

This definition from Trotsky lays out the problem of sectarianism. Sectarianism manifests as a dead end in the development of

any ‘working class party’. This tendency towards theoretical dogmatism also structures the kind of organisation that is sustained and reiterated in the socialist movement. The sectarian left reproduces the sect, and nothing more. Trotsky continues to describe the pitfalls of the ‘sectarian’ Marxist:

“Though he swear by Marxism in every sentence, the sectarian is the direct negation of dialectic materialism which takes experience as its point of departure, and always returns to it... A sectarian does not understand the dialectic action and reaction between a finished program and a living, that is to say, imperfect and unfinished mass struggle.”

Trotsky was critiquing sectarianism in a period of considerable class struggle throughout the world. But what is sectarianism when the class struggle is diffused and obscured by a flailing union movement and an immature left? It is the primary symptom of a disoriented political sub-culture that cannot identify a united way forward for the international working class. In this way, even organisations like the Labor Party are sects, as they do not represent the working class, but rather the sectoral interests of ‘Australian workers’.

## A mass party is not a sect

In his 1909 essay, *Sects or Class Parties*, Karl Kautsky summarises the sectarian nature of French socialism in Marx's time:

“In France he found ... much Socialism, but only in the form of sectarian societies. There were many Socialist ‘schools,’ each swearing to the genuineness of its own patent pill for the cure of all the ills of society, and each trying to rally the workers round itself. The various schools were at war with one another, and were thus instrumental in splitting the working masses rather than uniting them.”

In our time, it is just as common to ignore the existence of other sects as it is to feud with them. The sectarian socialist movement consists of organisations who all claim to be the true ‘Marxists’, as if Marxism is some pure uncontested political doctrine. The tendency to simplify and filter out what Marxism is and is not then becomes the central work of a sectarian organisation. The sect determines what is ‘revisionist’ or ‘reformist’ in Marxism and refuses to acknowledge or validate those blasphemous aspects. This ideological sectarianism arises out of the structure of a fragmented socialist movement. The former



cannot even be engaged, without the latter being addressed. This is why the urge to be 'non-sectarian' leads to an opportunistic reformist socialism, while the 'purity' of a 'revolutionary' sect leads to isolationism, dogma and bureaucratic centralism. Kautsky continues by addressing the complexity of building an independent socialist party:

"It is... a mistake to think that the principal thing is to organise an independent working-class party, and that once such a party is in existence, the logic of events will force it to adopt Socialism..."

One is apt to forget that that Socialism, which is alone capable of keeping the proletariat permanently together, and which alone can lead them to victory - namely, the Socialism of the class struggle - is not a thing which lies on the surface"

A mass workers movement cannot just be a Trotskyist or Stalinist party. While

sectarianism can be characterised by a fixation on ideological purity, isolationist political activity, and petty squabbling, its deeper root is a workers movement that is at odds with itself. The fragmentation of the international workers movement foreshadowed the fragmentation of socialist ideology into sectarian dogmatism. The communist movement has proven not to develop in a linear fashion, but through spirals that can disorientate and reconfigure the 'left' as we know it. This is why Kautsky regarded the role of socialist parties as 'comprehending' the class struggle and capitalism.

"... a good deal of theoretical knowledge is indispensable in order to attain a deeper comprehension of the capitalist mode of production... Without such a comprehension it is simply impossible to create a really independent permanent class party of the proletariat, independent not only in the sense that the workers are organised separately, but

## Thousands march for Palestine

Marches took place across the country on August 24th, with demonstrators coming out in droves to support Gaza, which remains under attack by Israel. With Israel's military and government clamouring to formally conquer Gaza, the situation for the Palestinians could not be any more dire. Organised by the UoN Students for Palestine group, and endorsed by unions (such as the NTEU) and activist organisations (such as Rising Tide), Newcastle's march and subsequent rally saw upwards of four thousand demonstrators march down King St.

Much of the renewed energy in activism related to Palestine in Newcastle comes off the back of a three-hundred-thousand strong rally held in Sydney, which managed to cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Palestine activism in Newcastle had hit its peak in the first half of 2024, renewing briefly with the UoN Students for Palestine encampment at the University of Newcastle, but simmering slowly after activists were defeated by the university.

Newcastle's fledgling Socialist Alternative branch, alongside the Newcastle branch of the NSW Socialists, were present at the rally. Many Socialist Alternative members were also involved in organising the rally – activist Lily Campbell is a leading organiser in Newcastle Socialist Alternative. Socialist Alternative members distributed leaflets and held a stall at the post-march rally at Civic

Park, and hosted an event afterwards.

Recent demonstrations have shown a renewed energy in Palestine activism in Newcastle and across Australia, but with Israel escalating its assault against Gaza, and a general unwillingness by the liberal-democratic countries to restrain Israel's war capacity, it is unclear whether a political solution to the Gaza genocide will be on the table. Despite on-paper recognition of "Palestinian statehood", the Albanese-led Labor government refuses to take action against Israel.

It is also unclear which direction the movement will go, with the assault on Gaza nearing its second year. While socialists participate widely in the movement, socialist leadership is startlingly lacking. Participation in the Palestine movement has heightened the disunity in the socialist movement, with the sects split between different activist groupings.

Socialists must continue to support the Palestine movement, and aim to organise in the workers movement for a clear break from imperialism and Zionism. This cannot be done when the socialist movement remains disunited and split – or when the socialist movement maintains their splits against the interests of the workers and peasants of the world. ■ **Max J for Novocastrian Partisan**

that their mode of thinking is distinct from that of the bourgeoisie.”

Kautsky's formulation can also be reversed. Without a class party of the proletariat, comprehending the capitalist mode of production and the class struggle is impossible. This is why the 'socialist' project must be a partyist project.

### **The road forward**

Sectarianism is not just an issue of bad ideas, or wrong action. It is a structural predicament that the socialist movement finds itself in when it has lost its connection to the workers movement, which in turn has been crushed. The class struggle continues but it cannot be transposed into a socialist politics because there is no such thing. There are many socialists, and many political organisations, but they are more in conflict with themselves than they are with the forces of capital. For Marx in the Manifesto, communists could not “mould” the proletarian movement with sectarian politics:

“The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.”

The RCO does not oppose sectarianism because we believe that all ideas are created equal, or that authoritarianism, opportunism and reformism are not threats to the development of communism. On the contrary, we believe these threats, and false consciousnesses, must be faced directly, in the context of a mass organisation that includes all revolutionary socialists working together to build a party that is united around a revolutionary program.

This program is also not a “finished program” in the words of Trotsky. It is a document of unity among the socialist movement. It must be debated and developed by the working class through the process of mass political involvement inside and outside of the socialist movement. It is a positive vision of socialism, in contrast to ‘anti-capitalist’ resistance to the system. It is a strategic document that must unite factions who may

not agree on all things, but accept the necessity of international socialist unity.

Socialist unity is necessary because working class unity cannot be achieved without it. Splits are not to maintain the political purity of the movement, but rather to uphold the greater unity of the working class. A split on the question of war, like Lenin's position against the SPD, was not because of an ideological rejection of ‘reformism’, but rather a recognition of the international nature of the working class. Inter-imperialist war, if supported by socialists, is actually a sectarian position that divides the working class. Splits may be necessary to defend the international nature of the working class as a whole. But confused sectarian splitting has become the tendency of a disoriented and aimless socialist movement.

Socialist politics, then, can only be refined through struggle and democracy. We cannot know what works without engaging our interlocutors and comrades in a project to unite. The party project is necessarily a process of adjudication. We would all have to make concessions to democratic procedure, and hold the unity of the socialist movement above our ideological squabbles. Communists who do not believe this are sectarians. They believe that history will prove them correct in time. It is a religious impulse, in a sense. It is superstitious and utopian. It is everything Marx and Lenin fought against.

Political efficacy cannot be measured by an organisation's membership, social media reach, theoretical prowess, the argumentative abilities of its members, its international network or its connection to the ‘working class’. The political success of the socialist movement will be measured by its ability to unify into a political weapon of and for the working class. If communism is the movement to abolish the present state of things, it must necessarily abolish the present state of the sectarian socialist movement. A workers' revolution aims to abolish the working class. A socialist party aims to abolish sectarianism. ■

## **Wanted: You**

Partisan is constantly on the look out for radicals, militants, and left-activists who are capable and willing to hit the streets and report on what the unions, the left, and the social movements are doing. Are you interested in writing articles, taking photos, somewhere in-between? You could be a correspondent for Partisan Magazine. Get in touch for more info.



# Road to Party, a Reply to the RCO

A reply to the RCO

## Road to party



*The **Spartacist League of Australia** replies to Anthony Furia's article "Party first, then split the class".*

We appreciate comrades of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) taking the time to respond to our criticisms laid out in Red Battler No. 2 (Summer 2024/25). Anthony Furia's article ("Party first, then split the class," Partisan! No. 7) is correct to highlight many of the real and deep problems that have plagued the left for decades. In particular, we concur with his assessment of the left as "a fragmented, disorganised mess" whose combined social weight is dwarfed by the Laborite behemoth. For decades the left has dwindled and splintered and now, on the precipice of major world shocks, stands confused and isolated. To repel further blows it is imperative that there is a fight to, as Furia says, "[clean] up our own backyard" and change course. The question is, how?

Breaking down the sectarian barriers that exist on the left is critical, from struggling for united-front efforts to engaging in discussion and debate for the sake of programmatic clarification. Fundamentally, however, breaking the left from its fractured and weak state requires breaking with the strategy that has led us to this juncture. As Furia's article puts it, it requires a fight for the "reunification of the communist left on a revolutionary program" (our emphasis). We agree. Only on

this foundation can we build a party capable of breaking the working class from Laborism. However, the RCO fails to live up to these words. While recognising the crisis facing the left, the RCO fails to put forward a program that can fight for a way out. In fact, they repeat many of the same mistakes that have haunted the rest of the left, including our own tendency until recently. This is the "stark distinction" between our strategies which this exchange illuminates.

So, what is the source of the disorganised state of today's left? The past three decades have been characterised by the hegemony of the American empire, with its ideological bedrock in post-Soviet liberalism. The Australian ruling class adopted this ideology as its own, using it to justify their attacks on the workers movement—further putting the unions in a straitjacket while overseeing the continued deindustrialisation and privatisation of key industries. Far from fighting this course, the Laborite union leaders were firmly hitched to it. Dragged through the mud by "leaders" incapable of fighting for their interests, workers began to leave the unions en masse. The resulting state of the workers movement is self-evident.

The left too adopted this liberalism. Most of them tailed the "left" wing of the labour bureaucracy. Often they went even further, colouring themselves Green in their pursuit of alliances with liberal elements. Others on the

left clung to empty revolutionary rhetoric and doctrinal purity while doing nothing to break the working class from this trajectory (as was the case with our tendency before reorientation). Thus, the left tied themselves to forces subordinate to the ruling class or had nothing to offer in counterposition. Consequently, workers repelled by the liberal order and its labour lieutenants did not see the left as an alternative but rejected them along with it. The rump of the workers movement remained solidly shackled to the Laborite misleadership that allowed this to happen in the first place.

The result of all of this is a fragmented left, cannibalised over the course of decades. This trend has only accelerated in the face of a rapidly changing world in which right-wing populism is in ascendance. The disorganised and splintered state of the left is not the result of mere sectarianism (although that is certainly a big contributor), neither is it just an organisational question. It is a symptom of programmatic bankruptcy. “Cleaning up our own backyard” means fighting for a break with the leaders who have dragged us down this path. This will not and cannot be achieved with high-sounding words against Laborism but by putting forward, at each juncture, a strategy and perspective to advance the interests of workers and the oppressed, demonstrating concretely the superiority of our revolutionary strategy to that of the Laborites. This demands a program that facilitates just this, that acts as a guide to action—assimilates the lessons of yesterday, assesses the balance of class forces today, outlines the obstacles and puts forward tasks accordingly. In other words, a revolutionary program. It is this we have sought to put forward in “The Breakdown of U.S. Hegemony & the Struggle for Workers Power” (Spartacist No. 68, September 2023) and the programmatic documents included in both issues of Red Battler.

This doesn’t mean, as Furia argues, that we have illusions that the workers movement will magically flock to our banner en masse by virtue of a “sacrosanct ‘correct line’ and program.” Neither does it mean “putting the cart far before the horse,” ignoring the rest of the left in favour of going “directly to the masses”—or doing “entryism into Labor” for that matter. In fact, the fight for revolutionary



**Members of the RCO, Spartacist League and Red Ant.**

regroupment (as with the SL/A and Bolshevik-Leninist fusion) and engagement with others on the left has been central to our recent work, as we are sure RCO members will recall in light of our recent joint united-front actions. What we are arguing is that it is only on the basis of struggling to advance the interests of the class and break it from its liberal-Laborite misleadership that we can cohere the forces in the left and workers movement necessary to do so. It is precisely because the RCO rejects this perspective that they see-saw between grand (but empty) proclamations against the Laborite leadership and latching on to these very leaders when offering a “concrete approach.” The two examples comrade Furia takes up—the 2024 Queensland elections and the takeover of the CFMEU—are indicative.

Take for instance the state takeover of the CFMEU. The RCO and the SL/A both recognised that the union needed to be defended. Both were also quick to criticise the CFMEU leadership. But where we diverge is precisely on how we took on said leadership. In the face of openly union-busting moves by the state, most militant workers believed that the CFMEU leadership would “shut the city down” and fight to the bitter end. The SL/A sought to demonstrate that confronting the Labor government was contrary to the very core of the CFMEU leadership’s Laborite program, and that in fact this leadership constituted the main obstacle to defending the union. Not only did we say this, we fought for CFMEU workers to take the initiative and fight for a class-struggle defence of their union, which could have drawn a line and exposed which side the union bureaucrats were really on. This offered a path



forward to advance the class and dispel in practice the illusions workers had.

In contrast, the RCO penned plenty of fine words calling to defend the CFMEU and declaring their desire for revolution. But when it came to showing why revolutionary leadership was critical at that moment to defend the CFMEU? Nothing! Instead, the RCO substituted little more than a wagging of the finger at the CFMEU leadership for being corrupt and class-collaborationist. That is all fine and dandy, but CFMEU militants do not have illusions in their leadership because they think they oppose class collaboration, or because they see them as being squeaky clean. They have illusions that the strategy of the CFMEU leadership is one that can advance or at least defend their conditions. At the critical moment that meant believing Setka, Ravbar and Smith would defend the CFMEU as a whole from state attack. If you do not fight to expose these beliefs, you are leaving CFMEU members in the hands of the very bureaucrats who handed the union over to the state administration.

As for last year's Queensland elections, in which the RCO called for "preferencing the Greens and Labor ahead of all other candidates" (Partisan! No. 3), Furia opines "why the fuss when we offer a concrete approach to the election?" The answer is simple. The federal Labor government backed by their Queensland counterparts had just enacted one of the biggest attacks on the working class in generations. They showed themselves to be open servants of the bosses, prepared to go after their own base to prove their subservience. In response, much of this base reacted in outrage and was looking for a (genuinely) working-class alternative. To call on workers to vote for Labor in this context was to do the union bureaucrats' job of dragging the working class kicking and screaming back to the Labor government that had just betrayed them. To call to vote for the Greens was a call to direct working-class anger back into the hands of the liberals. Instead of being seen as an alternative, this strategy keeps the left discredited as little more than hangers-on to the liberal order that is kicking workers in the teeth—which ironically has paved the way for a Liberal/National government in Queensland and perhaps nationally.

It would be remiss if we did not address the central argument throughout Furia's article—why the hell does any of this matter without a revolutionary party? To argue this, he says: The SL/A's forces were too small to break the CFMEU base from its tops at that moment. The

RCO is too small to really have an effect on the Queensland elections. The left is small, we can't split the class without a party. All true. But our difference with the RCO is not that we reject the centrality of the struggle for a revolutionary party. As Trotsky wrote of Lenin: "The struggle for the independent political party of the proletariat constituted the main content of his life." But it is precisely this fight, for the "conscious construction of such a party" as Furia says, that we believe the RCO rejects.

The RCO talks a lot about "refounding the communist party." How did Lenin forge them in the first place? In the wake of the betrayal of the Second International in WWI, Lenin fought tooth and nail for a split not just with the open traitors of the workers movement but most especially with the centrists who fought to maintain unity with the former at any cost. Centrists such as Karl Kautsky talked a big game on the fight for socialism, but sought unity on the basis of "mere words," in practice trying to "reconcile" the masses with their opportunist leaders. For all the principled demands in Kautsky's *Road to Power* (1909), without directly taking on the social-democratic roadblocks to this goal they would remain nothing more than words. Maintaining unity with these opportunists meant maintaining unity between the proletariat and "its own" capitalists—that is, submission to the latter and a split in the international revolutionary working class! In contrast, Lenin built the Bolshevik Party of revolutionary fighters and "iconoclasts" through an unrelenting, principled struggle against the Menshevik, social-democratic and centrist obstacles, not because he thought that at that moment he had the social forces to win, but because cohering and uniting the forces necessary to forge a mass revolutionary party could only be done on this basis! As Lenin put it in "Opportunism, and the Collapse of the Second International" (1915):

"We do not say that an immediate split with the opportunists in all countries is desirable, or even possible at present; we do say that such a split has come to a head, that it has become inevitable, is progressive in nature, and necessary to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, and that history, having turned away from 'peaceful' capitalism towards imperialism, has thereby turned towards such a split. *Volentem ducunt fata, nolentem trahunt.*"

This was the strategy that enabled Lenin to forge the Bolshevik Party and build the Communist International, which was united on the basis of struggling against the social-

chauvinists and their conciliators. It is this, not abstract dogma or socialist phrases, which separates revolutionaries from all manner of poseurs and opportunists. As Partisan! editor Mila Volkova wrote: "...being a socialist is not a matter of self-identification, theoretical principles or vague aesthetics. To be a socialist is to be proactively committed to a revolutionary political program for working class rule and the transition to communism" (Partisan! No. 6). This means being proactively committed to the struggle against the central obstacles to this in the workers movement!

Of course, many things have changed 100 years on. Furia is right to say that today the left's social weight is pathetic, and that our capacity to intervene and change the course of class struggle is objectively limited by this. Like the RCO, we think that in this context it is of

especial importance to engage with and cohere as many forces on the left as possible on a revolutionary basis. That struggle can only be waged in opposition to the Laborite obstacles standing in its way. It has been the left's failure to wage this struggle that has resulted in the weak and splintered miasma we see today. We ask, if not on this basis, on what basis does the RCO fight for unity? For all the high-sounding words in the RCO's program praising socialism and denouncing Labor, it means nothing if not based on struggling against, and in irreconcilable opposition to, the social-chauvinists and all who conciliate them. Otherwise it is little more than unity on the basis of "mere words." Yes, we need a communist party to split the class, but this party can only be built on the basis of fighting for this split. ■

## Allende walks the tightrope.

TWELVE MONTHS AGO the presidential election in Chile was won by a 'left winger', Salvador Allende. Immediately all manner of people claimed that he would be able to prove wrong the classical teachings of Marxism and introduce socialism 'peacefully', by parliamentary means.

Communist Parties, like the British one, greeted his victory as confirmation of their own doctrine that talk of 'violent revolution' is out of date. And the professional parliamentarians of the Tribune variety reacted in the same way.

At first glance it might seem that the last year has born out these optimistic predictions. For all sorts of reforms of immediate benefit to the mass of Chilean people have been granted. Wages have been increased by about 30 percent (although to some extent this is to compensate for price rises of 30 percent in 1970). House building plans have been stepped up enormously.

Every child gets a minimum of one pint of milk a day. So far 100,000 peasants have been given land that previously belonged to Chile's 600 big landowning families. And revolutionaries imprisoned under the previous government have been freed.

For the workers and peasants of Chile such reforms are to be welcomed. But they do not mean that the Chilean ruling class's power has been quietly done away with. Throughout history ruling classes have been prepared to grant reforms to the masses – particularly when faced with movements that might threaten their own power.

Central to Allende's strategy of 'peaceful change' in Chile is the idea that nothing needs

to be done to alter the basis of control of the state.

Before his election as president was ratified by parliament, Allende signed an agreement with the middle class Christian Democrat Party in which he undertook not to change any of the key personnel running either the civil service or the armed forces. He has kept scrupulously to that agreement.

Both Chile's 40,000-strong army and its 20,000-strong heavily armed police force have a long and bitter record of viciousness against the mass of the population. For instance, when there were strikes in 1967 six people were shot dead and dozens wounded by the police. Yet those responsible for such actions remain in control of the forces.

The only change introduced by Allende in this area was to disband the 1,000-strong special riot police – a mere twentieth of the total police. When top army officers were implicated in the murder of one of the few leading generals who sympathised with Allende, the president allowed the supreme court to stop him taking any action. The court is stacked with representatives of the old order.

Instead of attacking the power of the generals, Allende has sought to persuade them that he is acting in their interests. The level of arms spending – 20 percent of the total government budget – has not been reduced. And army officers have been encouraged to participate in the running of the economy.

While easing the fears of the representatives of the traditional ruling elite, Allende has done nothing to increase the real power of the working class in Chile. He has steadfastly



Join us for our first general conference!

- We will hold elections for leadership positions and discuss the future for our organisation
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With students & youth united with the people of Australia & the world, imperialism is nothing but a paper tiger!

Location: Gallery at Addison Road Community Organisation, Marrickville NSW

Start time: 1pm

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**SHOW UP FOR OUR STUDENT!  
SHARE TO YOUR STORY, FRIENDS  
AND FAMILY!**

September 12<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am at Parramatta Local Court (NSW).

A WSU student was arrested for peacefully protesting in support of Palestine. He was charged with assaulting security, but video evidence shows these are blatant lies. Meanwhile, he himself was violently assaulted by police, resulting in concussion, joint pain and leg bruising. We need as many people as possible to support him at his legal appeal. Public pressure will have a real impact on his case and his life. We will show the government and WSU that they cannot get away with arresting people peacefully fighting for the truth. ■ **Revolutionary Organisation of Students and Youth (REVOSY)**

resisted all demands that the workers be given arms. Workers are allowed to 'participate' in the management of nationalised concerns – but only as a minority, with majority control firmly in the hands of the old state officials.

The police have been used to prevent moves by peasants to divide the land of the rich themselves. Allende has spoken out on several occasions against workers' takeovers of factories or offices. And under the so-called socialist government 'the authorities have passed legislation that increases the penalties for violation of property rights'.

All this means that even if Allende wants to, he cannot take any action that goes beyond what the middle-class Christian Democrat Party and the old controllers of the state machine want. That is why in recent weeks he has made promises to them that he will leave considerable sections of the economy under private control and will keep a close watch on the actions of the 'extreme left'. He has also made it clear that the period of reforms that favour the workers is past. At a rally to commemorate his first year in office he called upon the workers to show 'discipline' and to 'limit wage claims', and he criticised workers who have been occupying the premises of a US-owned bank.

A situation is being created in which Allende can no longer hope to satisfy the owners of industry (including those middle class democrats who exercise their ownership collectively through their control over the state) and the working class. He will have to choose to side with one or the other.

But one side is armed, the other not. And

Allende shows no inclination at all to break his pledges to the middle class of a year ago not to 'interfere' with the state machine.

There is only one way in which that sequence of events can be prevented in Chile. A strong, genuinely revolutionary force has to be built up among the workers that is prepared to fight to smash the state machine and to overthrow Allende from the left.

The revolutionary groups in Chile – in particular the largest, the MIR – are beginning to see this. The leader of the MIR, Miguel Enríquez, has spoken out publicly in support of such a perspective.

The trouble is that in the past Chile's revolutionary groups have directed their work towards the poor peasants, the students and the unemployed slum dwellers, while leaving the organised working class in the factories to the almost exclusive control of the parties that support Allende. But in a country like Chile where 60 percent of the population live in towns, it's the organised working class that can hold the key to the future. ■ **Chris Harman, Socialist Worker, 20 November 1971**

# Albanese, Son of the Century

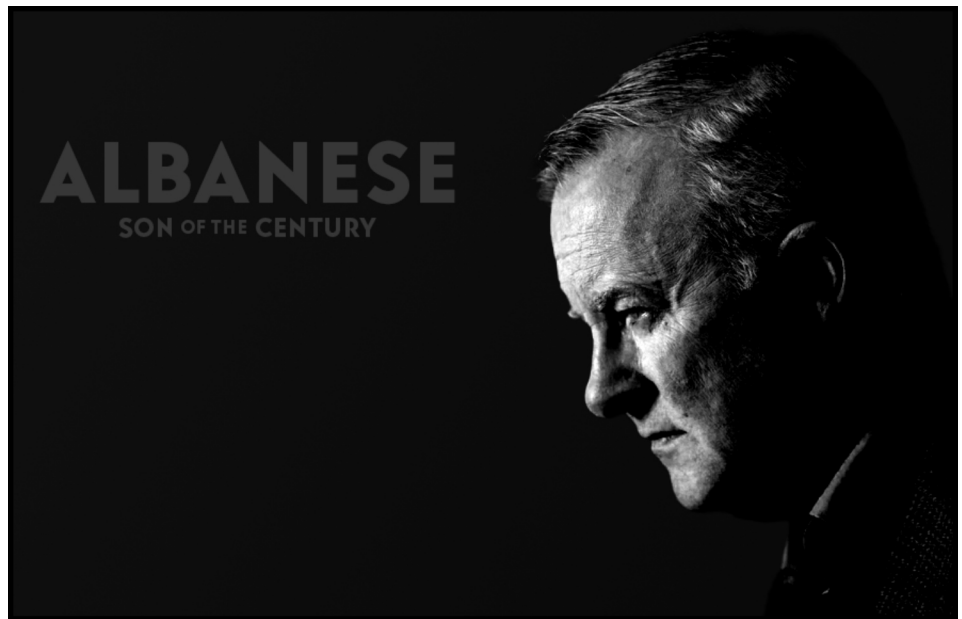
*After smashing the Liberal-National Coalition in the 2025 federal election, Labor is poised to take its place as the dominant party of Capital in Australia. **James Eisen** writes on Labor's victory and the myth-making around its leader, Anthony Albanese.*

An adoring crowd screams with joy as a well-dressed woman takes the stand. "Thank you for believing in the power of this great nation," she says. The crowd continues to build in libidinal frenzy before she reaches the climax of her speech. "And friends, our Australian story is embodied in our Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese!"<sup>1</sup>

As the embodiment of the Australian volksgeist took the stage, articles were hastily written about the "historic" victory of Anthony Albanese. After the dust had settled, the leaders of both the Greens and the Liberals had lost their seats. The Labor party seems well prepared to rule for the rest of the decade. But just what does Labor represent? In order to answer this question, which has troubled the Australian Left for so long, it is necessary to return to the history of Australian capitalism and the Labor Party.

After the long catastrophe of 1914-1945, Australia emerged stronger under Ben Chifley's Labor Party. Chifley implemented national infrastructure projects, like the Snowy Hydro Scheme, and increased migration to relieve post-war labour shortages. He saw the total mobilisation required to win two World Wars as something to be learned from, using the administrative state to bring about prosperity and class harmony. However, his push for national control of banking, repeated conflicts with private banks and state governments, and refusal to end unpopular wartime rationing led to his defeat to Robert Menzies in 1949. Labor would not win again until 1972.

Menzies however, did not bring about a return to the laissez-faire economics of the pre-war Gilded Age, instead, what is remarkable



about Menzies is how little he challenged Labor's core economic achievements. Both parties agreed that high tariffs, centralised wage fixing, and financial regulation were the necessary foundations of a prosperous Australia. To quote Menzies himself, he recognised that the government had the responsibility to implement "social and industrial legislation to provide a high degree of economic security and justice for all its citizens".<sup>2</sup> The situation Australia found itself in going into the stagflation crisis of the 70s was one of remarkable bipartisan consensus.

After over two decades of coalition rule, Gough Whitlam came to power in 1972. This was short lived. Whitlam is interesting only as a tragic figure, a man out of time, whose efforts to reconstitute Fordism proved to be in vain. The economic crisis of the 70s buried the Whitlam government, but once the treasury had returned to Liberal oversight, the political situation left behind made any sort of sweeping changes regarding the status of labour impracticable. Nonetheless, something had to be done to restore profitability and dynamism in a stagnating economy. It was in this time of impasse that Bob Hawke came to lead Labor, a man who saw both the necessity of drastic reform, and that he was uniquely positioned to carry it out. After his victory in 1983, he was able to do just that.

The Hawke government, followed by the Keating government, implemented deregulation and privatization across the whole

<sup>1</sup> Wong, Penny. 2025. "Speech Introducing Anthony Albanese: Federal Election 2025 Victory - Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club - 03/05/2025."

<sup>2</sup> Switzer, Tom. 2023. "Liberalism Applied? Policy Shifts in the Transition from Chifley to Menzies." The Centre for Independent Studies. November 16, 2023.

of the economy, restoring the profitability of the ailing Fordist machine. Hawke's masterpiece was, of course, 'The Accords', which has been a punching bag on the Australian Left since they were implemented. By taking advantage of the weakening position of organised labour in a deindustrialising economy, as well as economist tendencies within the union movement, Hawke was able to usher in a uniquely corporatist form of neoliberalism. As Elizabeth Humphreys has rightly pointed out, this corporatist model of industrial policy does not make the Hawke government any less neoliberal, but rather shows how the Left's Fordist nostalgia often blinds us to the fact that neoliberalism was not anti-Fordist but post-Fordist.<sup>3</sup> In each crisis, it has been Labor, not the Liberals, that has broken from orthodoxy to rescue Australian capitalism from itself, a precedent that would resurface in the 2020s.

The next three decades of Australian politics were less a break than a consolidation. Howard tried in vain to take Australian unionism off life support. Rudd and Gillard tried to weather the storm of 2008, but spent more time weathering the storm of caucus votes. All the while, the Liberal Party managed to become a successively less responsible steward of Australian capitalism, degenerating from Abbott, to Turnbull, to Scott Morrison. Over the course of the early 21st century, the Liberal Party began to lose both the basic competence required to govern, and its enduring relationship with capital, as Guy Rundle has eloquently explained.<sup>4</sup> It was in this context that Anthony Albanese was elected Prime Minister. As is so often the case in capitalist politics, it is the grotesque mediocrity who plays the hero's part.

Albanese quickly disappointed the Left. Far from the neo-social democracy that the Millennial Left hoped his election would bring, Albanese merely lifted the crown of Australian capital from the gutter and placed it on his head, without even taking the effort to clean it first. The Australian Left was starved of a moment *à la* Corbyn or Bernie where they could choose to liquidate into capitalist politics or not, in many ways that decision was made for them. You either join Labor, and become a philanthropic technocrat, or join the Greens, and ask the philanthropic technocrats to be more philanthropic. The question of working class self organization, of the distinction

between proletarian socialism and progressive reformism, were abdicated in favour of more pressing concerns.

So if Albanese's Labor isn't the neo-social democracy the Left wanted it to be, what is it? We could hear from him ourselves. Even from his "first day" as party leader, he wanted Labor to be "the natural party of government". He wants Labor to be able to represent "working people", but also engage with "business" and "civil society".<sup>5</sup> To "get this decade right", to "set up Australia for the many decades ahead", Albanese has achieved his dream of making Labor the natural party of government. Does he realise what it means to govern? What does it mean to be a "natural party government", in the era of capitalism?

To govern is to direct the capitalist state, which consists of the police, the military and the titanic bureaucracy and administrative state that assists them in maintaining order. Lenin called the state "special bodies of armed men placed above society and alienating themselves from it".<sup>6</sup> But this self-alienation was not always the case, the state was not always towering above society. The state was once torn from the heavens in the great bourgeois revolutions of the 18th and 19th century, where the role of government was defined as being subservient to civil society, the realm of free exchange and free association. But in the crisis of post-1848 capitalism, the state is transformed. Marx observed the polarisation of society into two great classes, one of labour and one of capital, the result of a contradiction between bourgeois social relations and industrial forces of production. In order to manage this class divide and prevent dissent and class struggle, the state must now raise itself above society. It must provide welfare, it must prevent crime, it must now choose the winners and losers.

This form of governance is what Marx gave the name "Bonapartism", not as was commonly used to refer to the supporters of Napoleon Bonaparte or his nephew Louis Bonaparte, but to characterise the new form of government that emerged with the advent of industrial capitalism, coming out of the crisis of the 1848 revolutions. This phenomenon was expressed perfectly in the rule of Louis Bonaparte. Louis Bonaparte was elected the first president of France in 1848, appealing to the disorganised masses of peasants and small producers while positioning himself as above the class conflict.

<sup>3</sup> Humphreys, Elizabeth. 2012. "Still Stuck in the 1980s? The Unions and the Accord." *An Integral State*. October 14, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Rundle, Guy. 2025. "Australia's Right Tried to Copy Trump. It's Been a Disaster." *Jacobin.com*. 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Albanese, Anthony. 2025. "Press Conference - Canberra." Prime Minister of Australia. May 5, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Lenin, Vladimir, and Robert Service. 1992. *The State and Revolution*. London ; New York: Penguin.





He oversaw the crisis of the Third Republic, and eventually resolved it with his coup of 1851. He proclaimed himself as Emperor, with universal male suffrage as his mandate. The original Bonaparte once remarked that “in fifty years Europe would be Republican or Cossack”. His nephew fulfilled this prophecy, by bringing about the “Cossack Republic”.<sup>7</sup> It is just that Cossack Republic that Albanese now rules.

Louis Bonaparte called himself a socialist, as does Albanese. Of course, they are both right in some sense. Labor will use the state to discipline both capital and labour, to bring about a new era of compromise and collaboration. In some instances it may be that the interests of one section of the bourgeoisie may be at odds with the continuation of capital. It may be necessary that bourgeois fanatics for order be shot down in the name of order.<sup>8</sup> When it comes to the preservation of capital accumulation, it's as Tony Burke says, “no one's above the law”.<sup>9</sup> Student debt may have to be cut, Palestine may have to be recognised. The banner of “socialism” will be unfurled, joyfully by the progressives, derisively by the conservatives. But the result is the same. Such is the way of reformism. Means become ends, and the rhetoric of class struggle is replaced by the administration of class harmony. We are left wearing the “uniform of order, in red breeches”.<sup>10</sup>

The dictates of order are subject to change. Hawke saw the necessity of neoliberalism, today Albanese sees the necessity of post-neoliberalism. During the campaign, Labor accused Dutton of being the Australian

incarnation of Trump, the original post-neoliberal. Neoliberalism, fanatic privatisation and free trade have run their course. Trump wants to reorganise global capital to America's benefit, decouple from dependence on China, reassert national sovereignty, and bring about a new industrial base to ensure national security. Albanese has pursued much the same ends. He has reasserted Australian nationalism and sovereignty, under his banner of “progressive patriotism”.<sup>11</sup> He is aiming to build up Australia's industrial base through “Future Made in Australia”. When it comes to picking sides between America and China, he has been coy, but his ultimate intention is to remain loyal to the US, as his commitment to AUKUS has shown. Labor is once again proudly leading Australia into a new era of capitalism. Perhaps it was not Dutton, but Albanese, that was Australia's “Temu Trump”?

What can there be apart from Bonapartism? Marx had an answer, it was the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is not just control of the state by the working class, but the working class using the state to bring about its own self-abolition. Under Bonapartism, the state manages the crisis of capitalism, and this continues in the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, in one instance to service capitalism's continuation, in another to service capitalism's overcoming.<sup>12</sup> Is there still an opportunity for the overcoming of capitalism? Perhaps there was, in the crisis of Fordism or in the crisis of neoliberalism. However, both times the Left was immobilised by ideological spectres, unable and unwilling to build working class self-organisation, and ultimately abdicated the task of socialism in favour of the task of progressive capitalism. Will we behave any differently next time?

So, what is the Labor Party? It is Bonapartist, that is all it can be, and no one embodies that more than Anthony Albanese. Bonapartism may be expressed more or less clearly, from fascism to liberalism, but the ends are the same. The fleeting moment the Left failed to grasp has now fallen into Albanese's hands. Will there be a future for socialism in Australia? That remains to be seen. But until then, if such a day may come, Anthony Albanese will be the undisputed Son of the Century. ■

<sup>7</sup> Marx, Karl. 2010. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.” In *Surveys from Exile*. Verso, p 235.

<sup>8</sup> Marx, Karl. 1852. “18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.” Marxists.org. 1852.

<sup>9</sup> Godsell, Oscar. 2025. “‘Nobody Is above the Law’: Labor Reacts to Former Greens Candidate Injured in Protest.” Skynews.com.au. Sky News Australia. June 29, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Op cit. Marx. 2010. p 171.

<sup>11</sup> Aly, Waleed, Scott Stephens, and Sinead Lee. 2025. “‘Progressive Patriotism’ — Is It an Idea Whose Time Has Come?” ABC Listen. May 27, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Cutrone, Chris. 2025. “Bonapartism Is Not Bonaparte.” Platypus1917.org. 2025.

# Comrades report back: NSW & Canberra Socialist Party launches

Comrades **Claire** and **Dylan H** report on the launches of the NSW Socialists and Canberra Socialists (respectively).

The NSW Socialists Sydney Launch was held on an overcast day at the Petersham Town Hall. Making their presence known, members at the front of the venue distributed upcoming event flyers for the Socialism Conference and chatted with other attendees before we headed inside. Before moving inside the main hall, attendees signing in were given name tags to help party members mingle and break the ice with each other.

## RBTU Speaker

The first major speaking spot was headed by Emma Norton, a member of SALT and the RBTU. She railed against (no pun intended) Chris Minns' NSW Government, and rightly attacked Minns' atrocious track record with unions, healthcare, and general budget hawking, particularly in regards to the government's craven attempts to gut worker's compensation to balance the budget.

The speaker then moved on to attack Sydney's privatised roads, and called for expropriation of private assets. Notably, Norton explicitly called for expropriation without compensation, which is not only illegal under the Australian Constitution, but also sidestepped any tactical considerations surrounding compensation to guard against capital flight (which date back to Marx's time). Tactics fell to the wayside of moralist totem-thumping about whether compensation was 'deserved.'

## Rising Tide

Two members of Rising Tide spoke next, emphasising the necessity of mass action and, more importantly, mass politics to secure change. This was surprising, considering how calls for 'mass party politics' had been handwaved at many previous Socialist Party branch launches in favour of building an 'activist party.'

This surprise turned to confusion, when the speakers also felt the need to lionize Gandhi, decry the spectre of 'capitalist mindsets' (???), and wrapped their speaking spot up with



## NSW Socialists launch

statistics from David 'Rocketman' Shoebridge's favourite trust-busting think-tank; the Australia Institute.

Rising Tide felt out of place as a group close to the core leadership of the Socialists, because of their appeals to mass politics. Despite our skepticism, hopefully these calls for mass politics amount to real changes within the structure and strategy of the NSW Socialists.

## Palestine & Activism

The final major speaking spot was taken up by Shovan Bhattarai of SALT. Her speech focused on activism and the genocide in Gaza.

Before the speech started in earnest, Shovan called for 'people at the back' to move toward the front. These people were almost exclusively members of Socialist Alternative. Throughout Shovan's speech these members peppered her talk with supportive callouts and the classic SALT shibboleth of 'shame!' far more than previous speakers. We are not trying to suggest this was done deceitfully, as the tried-and-true tactics of Megachurch Socialism were quite obvious to pick up on and, as always, very funny to watch.

Much of the content of Shovan's speech was focused on reinforcing calls for an activist party, and getting an activist MP in parliament. The significant focus on Gaza mirrors the broader strategic pivot in the Socialist Party nationally toward a political platform focused on Palestine. This reorientation has, in places like Canberra, resulted in state branches of the

Socialists dropping planned campaigns on housing following the turnout at the Sydney bridge march for Palestine, and de-emphasising campaign focus other issues like healthcare.

### **Purple Pingers**

After a noticeable lack of Jordan Van De Lamb (PurplePingers) on the stage during the previous speeches, we were informed that PurplePingers couldn't attend due to an urgent family matter. Instead, we were treated to an encouraging video from 'VirtualPingers' where he expressed his support for the NSW Socialists, and jokingly stated "[NSW Socialists] might be bigger than [Victorian Socialists] soon, which is a bit scary!"

After the speeches, RCO members in attendance intended to question various aspects of the speeches during the open mic section, which every launch thus far had held. These questions were left to weigh on our minds at the pub, when we were informed that where we'd be going, with no open mic section scheduled.

### **Unanswered Questions & Conclusions**

In the absence of speaking time at the launch, we wonder if the Socialists have made any considerations surrounding compensation for expropriated assets. While we may agree on moral grounds that firms don't 'deserve' compensation for the socialisation of private assets, we would argue that the actualisation of control over the commanding heights of the economy is far more important than rebuffing any uncomfotability that may come with securing it. This is the tactical dimension of affecting the widest possible social expropriation; in contrast to what would be partial expropriation curtailed by capital flight.

If, however, the Socialists are dead-set on expropriation without compensation, and assuming they're serious about the party heralding political change, then the Socialists would know to amend the constitution through a referendum to make this possible. If constitutional amendments are sought for this narrow purpose, would the Socialists also advocate to overturn the entirety of the current constitution to be replaced by a democratic, republican, socialist constitution? We would very much hope so.

From the speakers on the day, it seems as if the core of the NSW Socialists are still committed to tying the party to the tail-end of activist spontaneity. The lack of explicit focus on concrete policy at the launch was also apparent, further reinforcing the core of the

Socialist Party are, to an extent, disinterested in the Socialist Party being anything more than a parliamentary auxiliary to support activist movementism. How the NSW Socialists and the Socialist Party federally aims to take Palestine activism into election season successfully, (while the Greens and Fatima Payman's political project attempt to do the same) remains to be seen. ■ **Claire**

"Alright everyone, take your seats, alright, quiet down and listen up. Okay? Alright, listen, here's the thing, okay, listen in. Here we go. Alright, did you guys know that, okay, capitalism, get this, is actually pretty bad, alright? Listen. That low down rotten dastardly dog capitalism has really been getting under my skin. Really grinding my gears, y'know? Okay, now does any one else here hate capitalism?"

Now just do that for another 90 minutes and you have the general vibe of the Canberra Socialist launch party.

The Canberra Socialists launch was held on a blustery June afternoon, where about eighty or so of Canberra's most stalwart communists, socialists, anarchists, union members, general lefties and others piled themselves into the Canberra Polish Club. We all awaited with great anticipation and bated breath as the panel took their seats to herald in this fantastic occasion and then... not that much happened. Our three panellists condemned the evils of capitalism for an hour and a half, with a big lingering unanswered question: what are we going to do about it?

To be fair, the whole thing felt a little ad hoc, because it was. My favourite niche internet celebrity and personal disgrace to Anthony Albanese, Purple Pingers AKA Jordan van den Lamb, had to pull out of the launch due to personal reasons. This was unfortunate as not only would it have been great to bounce questions off Pingers but it clearly left the Socialist Alternative panel scrambling to fill time. Even with acknowledging the set back I can't help but feel the event was a bit lacklustre.

There was a brief flash of colour and brilliance when the communists, socialists, anarchists, union members, general lefties and others actually got their grubby little hands on the mic! After "week one of uni" style class introductions, some audience members were given a chance announce themselves. We were regaled with stories of grass roots activism, first awakenings of class consciousness and tales of solidarity from the workplace. The raw stuff that movements are made from. But then the





**Canberra Socialists launch. Photo: Trent Callahan & Aveline Cayir.**

peanut gallery were put back in their box, since the Q&A was cancelled, which just added to the “meet & greet” feel of the whole occasion. It added a little extra credence to concerns about democracy within The Socialists (a snazzy pro party democracy pamphlet was even handed around).

This was a shame considering the Canberra Socialists accomplished the Herculean task of getting all the communists, socialists, anarchists, union members, general Lefties and others all in one room together. It was legitimately exciting! Finally, a party to bind together some of these frayed leftists. But as the panel went on, the dreadful thought took root in my mind: “We could definitely squander this”. I don’t want to be presumptuous, but I feel like most of the people in that hall know how cooked capitalism is. It’s why we’re here? Little more than five minutes was dedicated to what the party aims to do outside of electoralism. One of the panel members even

said that they want a “left wing Pauline Hanson”; someone who’s a real fire cracker in Parliament and can really shake things up. This is a super cool and definitely not a completely insane thing to say. Maybe after we manufacture the “left-wing Pauline Hanson”, they can collab with the ever elusive leftist Joe Rogan.

I’m far from being a true blue, blue collar, salt of the earth, fair dinkum Aussie battler, but I’ve been fortunate to be around them enough to know that a prevailing mode of thought about politicians is that most of them are insincere, lying dogs that only look out for themselves. Which is mostly true - they also look out for the interests of their corporate backers and the owning class as a whole. The point is you don’t need to have read Marx to know that electoralism isn’t a tool made for the working class. I feel most average working class Australian knows that, to borrow a technical term from the worksite, “shit’s fucked”. The only way to connect to the working class and for The Socialists to live up to any revolutionary potential is to get a little rowdy outside of the walls of parliament.

Purplepingers could be a good example to look at. I genuinely like Jordan, but Pingers isn’t popular because he’s some unstoppable force of personality. He’s popular because he is very publicly seen doing something, like helping people meet their material needs while being authentic, and a pest to the owning class.

Anyway, I’m just some guy who was there. ■  
**Dylan H**



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# Venceremos







**TRABAJO PERSONAL**

**RESPONSABILIDAD COLECTIVA**





# Struggle for a Partyist International

**Revmira** writes on the history of socialist and communist international groupings, and makes the case for an international conference of Partyist organisations.

The distinctions of the Marxist and Anarchist tendencies was settled in the split within the International Working Men's Association (the First 1864-1876); the degeneration and betrayal of the Socialist and Labour International (the Second 1889-1914) saw the historic bankruptcy of reformist exposed, the Communist International (the Third or Comintern, 1919-1943) is proclaimed to have been the best of the Communist movement and yet it degenerated and warped into a tool of Stalinist foreign policy until it was no longer useful; the Fourth for a brief period carried on the most open and revolutionary fight for the continuity of Bolshevism, but the Second World War broke it, and the failure of James P. Cannon to live up to the mantle Trotsky's murder placed on him shattered it into a million myopic pieces. Whilst the syphilitic remnants of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International stumble along barely united, no longer a Secretariat and seemingly only keeping the international around due to the hassle that abolishing it would take, the idea of the Fourth International as the ongoing political current of world revolution as begun by Lenin is long dead and rotted. Whilst a few small groupings scramble around proclaiming the need for a Fifth International, the link is broken. The historical continuity of revolutionary internationalism is shattered; it will not be reformed by any one sect or national grouping. No singular political theory or tradition will reunite the World Communist movement.

The Bolsheviks knew this. When they proclaimed the Communist International in 1919, they rallied masses of the global proletariat to their banner, but they did not merely proclaim themselves and wait for the masses to rally to their banner. The Internationalist fight at Zimmerwald and elsewhere represented the first stirrings of the movement towards the Comintern. This movement was done through regroupment of internationalists, not all of whom were Revolutionary Defeatists. The Comintern was founded by those who would become Council Communists, Marxist-Leninists, Trotskyists, Left Communists, Reformists, Centrists, and even some Anarchists.

The Comintern was not perfect, it was infected with the optimism of those early years when the world proletariat seemed that they were finally completing their task and as such it could never truly take a long-term patient strategy. Nonetheless it remains the height of Communist organising. We do not look to it for the Zinovievite myth of the "general staff of the world revolution" nor do we look to it for the degenerated ruin it became under Stalin.

We look to it for what it was, the International of the revolutionary proletariat. United against capitalism, reformism, and centrism. Nothing since has been able to replace it. MacNair's claim that the Comintern's "failure was about the inability of Comintern to think of international tasks except either as immediate civil war, which called for a general staff, or making the national communist parties copy the Russians as the road to victory in a single country"<sup>1</sup> is essentially correct. This oscillation between either rabid optimism or bureaucratic nationalism crept out to infect the myriads of groups claiming themselves to be internationals, although some manage to achieve both. The Trotskyist movement is rife with this, with groups slavishly following the tactics of a grouping in one country and generalising it out as a world tactic. The pre-split Committee for a Workers International (CWI) was a key example of this, with every section following the strategy laid down by Ted Grant, of entryism into the largest 'left' group in the relevant country and building up their presence there.

The detritus of 'official' Communism follows a similar pattern. Slavishly maintaining the line laid down ninety years ago at the Seventh (and final) world congress of the Comintern of support to the 'left' bourgeois in the fight against fascism and monopoly capital, the questions of a genuine struggle for power are forgotten. Instead the decaying memory of the Comintern, and the heroic struggles of 1917-1923 are used to prop up a politically bankrupt necrophiliac Stalinist program.

The illegal dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 represented the final victory of the Stalinist project of the subordination of the world revolution to the interests of the Soviet state. The Fourth International could not claim its mantle, and indeed never could. For all its strengths, for all the honour and glory of the

<sup>1</sup> MacNair, Mike. *Revolutionary Strategy*. (November Publications, London, 2008), 146.



**Revolutionary Communist International's 2025 World Congress. Photo: marxist.com**

Bolshevik-Leninists, they were a sect; a grouping defined by loyalty to the program of Trotsky and doomed by it. Despite the existence of groupings that in many cases often agreed with Trotsky's critiques, the Left Opposition was never able to truly develop beyond a faction around Trotsky as a person. The International left was isolated, and withdrew into sectarianism and isolation, as the Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (Communist Workers Party in Germany, KAPD) during its decline shows.

The Comintern was the only force that could ever unite the Communist movement, allow it to deliberate on a mass level and refine a global strategy, and program of World Revolution. Its destruction shattered any chance of a global strategy, instead a myriad of pathetic groupings has emerged across the world basing their unity around allegiance to certain tactics and select theories, the capacity for genuine internationalist organising and perspectives has been destroyed.

The need for an international is paramount. Communism is an international movement, that is not up for debate. We need an international body, one that lives up to the tasks and duties required of it. One that can live up to the title of the World Party of Socialist Revolution. The question is how do we fight for it?

The Communist movement is shattered, in Australia alone, there are roughly 19 or so groups proclaiming themselves to be communist to one extent or the other, though in practical terms, only half of them have any even vague levels of influence. All of them claim to have a certain amount of international connections, and all of them make a mockery of the basic principle of Internationalism, let alone the claim to be the revolutionary

international of the world proletariat.

The International Socialist Tendency (IST), the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the Committee for Revolutionary International Regroupment (CRIR), the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) (ICL (FI)), the International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organisations (ICOR), the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP). To say that the international left is a shadow of its former self is an understatement that reveals the masterful ambiguities of the English language.

Some of these groups are self-aware enough to not claim to be the International of the working class rather they are tendencies fighting to reforge it. Perhaps the group with the best honour in that sense falls to the ICL (FI) who for all their many faults seem to be seriously reckoning with the problem and process of Communist regroupment. Partisan! #12 outlines the most concrete example of that reckoning<sup>2</sup>. But groups like the ICFI (operating under the banner of the Socialist Equality Party), IMCWP, the IST, all represent the worst tendencies of what Mike MacNair has delightfully termed "Oil-Slick Internationalism".

That is a proclamation of an international with remarkably wide reach and no depth. They're mirages, a group may be able to claim sections on every continent and be able to issue heart-stirring proclamations on the need for world revolution, but a sect is no less a sect if it is merely confined to the borders of one state or if it stretches out across the world.

The recently proclaimed Revolutionary Communist International (RCI) is a good example of this, claiming to have twenty-four sections and nineteen groups building towards becoming one, the loyal followers of Ted Grant and Alan Woods proclaim that they are the International. The first group since Lenin's Comintern able to truly take on the mantle.

They also in their own words currently have 7,127 members worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

The Comintern, even during its degeneration, represented millions - entire mass sections of the proletariat looked to for it for leadership, for strategy, and for the road forward. Seven thousand is the size of a branch in a major city, not the size of an international, and whilst numbers alone do not determine right, politics is a numbers game, communist politics even more so. We seek to represent the

<sup>2</sup> See the Spartacist League of Australia's letter to the RCO

<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary Communist International. "Forged amid global turmoil: the first World Congress of the Revolutionary Communist International"

vast majority of the human race, to organise and lead them into taking political and social power to liberate humanity. That requires masses of the proletariat as members of your party and even greater levels not merely being aware of your party but believing in it.

No group today has that. The only one with any material capacity to do so would be the Communist Party of China, and their shamefaced proclamations of Internationalism are barely worth the paper they're printed on.

We need a World Party.

A party in the sense that we in the RCO and in the broader "Partyist" movement have long defended. A democratic organisation united and based around the classical principles of Leninism, with membership based off acceptance of the program and an acceptance of unity in action around that program. This party cannot be limited to state borders. The world party is the International, it is the hegemonic revolutionary force of the international proletariat. "The Proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority"<sup>4</sup>. The fight for Communism is the fight for the working class to fight for their own abolishment through first taking power into their own hands, and through that the conscious construction of Communism. This can only be done if the class is aware of their world historic task.

This cannot be done without a party.

The basic principle of the Partyist tendency formed over the past seven was best summed up by Donald Parkinson, "Without a Party, We Have Nothing".

Now the class struggle does not end without the existence of a party. 1991 did not herald the end to social conflict in Australia, class struggle continues unrelentingly until the abolishment of class itself. But the capacity to fight in it, to further it, deepen and intensify it, that was severely undermined by the dissolution of the Communist Party of Australia, which for all its myriads of flaws (Stalinism, Labourism, constant vacillations and betrayal, helping implement the accord) was the Vanguard party of the Australian proletariat. Now of course the party is not the Vanguard, it never will be. "The vanguard is not a single organization but a layer of the class that exists both within and outside party organizations."<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the party represents a key part of the class struggle, in the sense of the struggle for power.

The party is the weapon and the organisational form through which tactical and strategic manoeuvres can be made, it is also the means of transforming the proletariat from merely a class in itself, to a class for itself. A crucial part of Marx's political thought was the need for the proletariat to be self-aware of their fight for Communism. This consciousness is not one that will emerge spontaneously from the aether. That is the task of the Communist Party.

If we accept this logic, then we must also accept the immediate logical follow-on, if this is an international fight, then we should co-ordinate our struggles on an international basis with international methods. The fight for a reunified mass Communist Party must operate on the same logic.

We could reconstitute the Communist Party in Australia tomorrow, rally wide swathes of the proletariat to our banner, and send bourgeois politics reeling in shock. If this struggle did not extend beyond Australia, it would be useless.

Capital can tolerate much greater stresses than the resurgence of class struggle in one country, it tolerated the proletariat taking power in Russia and indeed managed to incorporate the USSR into its own structures and base operations, even as it strove successfully to tear down the gains of October and crush any chance of Proletarian resurgence.

The task before us is clear.

A "Partyist" tendency exists within International Marxism that an established fact. It is one that has only begun to hit its stride and is increasingly collaborative with each other across national lines. The orientation of this movement is towards the reconstitution of mass workers parties united around a program. These parties have a scientific name. They are Communist Parties, sections of the World Party in the international fight for Communism.

International regroupment is increasingly being put on the order of the day for the Communist movement as the threat of war and crisis draws nearer. The annual (from 2022) Meeting of Internationalist Forces demonstrates this, these meetings however reveal nothing more than the stale repetitive debate of the sects<sup>6</sup>, whilst some small regroupment efforts have emerged from them (see the ongoing merger of the League for the Fifth International, the International Trotskyist Opposition, and the International

<sup>4</sup> Marx, Karl, and Engels, Friedrich. "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in *Selected Works Volume 1*. (Progress Publishers, Moscow, Sixth Printing, 1989), 123

<sup>5</sup> Parkinson, Donald. *We need a World Party*. (Partisan Press, Brisbane, 2024), 3

<sup>6</sup> See Internationalist Correspondence Bulletins at [internationalistbulletin.com](http://internationalistbulletin.com)



Socialist League<sup>7</sup>) nothing concrete has developed. The RCO and the broader Partyist movement should aim to intervene in these meetings with a perspective on the need for Communist regroupment and the solidification of key programmatic questions of the world movement.

This must be combined with the solidification of the International Partyist movement as a formalised body with organisational connections, discussion, and support. This should not be an oil-slick international subordinating the world movement to the dictates of whichever clique manages to secure leadership. Rather it should be what it is, a tendency within the world Communist movement with a joint strategy, and a joint conception of our tasks and perspectives. Experience, strategies, publications these must be exchanged and debated upon in a more formal setting, with a aim of establishing a method of both intervention as well as discourse and clarification in the world Communist movement and internationalist regroupment.

We should also fight for the development of continental level Communist politics. The stillbirth of the Comintern's regional Bureaus stagnated any hopes of building up practical local internationalist action, as well as any chances of developing continental level Communist politics. As capitalist politics has developed and the EU has consolidated itself the failure of the Communist movement to move alongside it has been a fundamental failure, and a concession to short sighted bureaucratic nationalism. But even outside of the EU, the political realities of capitalism mean that it is impossible for a struggle on a national level to truly advance the proletariat. The fight for the Communist Party in the European Union is perhaps one of the most obvious areas for struggle, but it is vital to fight for the Communist Party in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia, a world party must be world-wide.

"The struggle for an international is a present, concrete task of communists. It is clear, however, that this struggle cannot be carried on by creating yet another micro-'international'. It has to be carried on by fighting, on every occasion that allows, against bureaucratic centralism and the nationalism that goes hand in hand with it, and for the concrete tasks of an international: the global struggle for solidarity in the immediate class struggle, for the symbolic unity of the working class as an international class; and the

<sup>7</sup> For a regroupment of Revolutionaries – League for the Fifth International

continental struggle for working class political unification and political power."<sup>8</sup>

The capacity to wage this struggle is on a much higher footing than in 2008. It is time that we begin it. By posing the opposition to global sectarianism and forcing the question of regroupment and unity on a world scale, we place the struggle for the Comintern as a key part of our revolutionary activity, and deepen the struggle we wage for Communism, and against the division undermining our movement.

As such I argue that the RCO should aim to organise an international conference as soon as possible. This conference should seek to gather the international Partyist tradition with the aim of electing an international steering committee authorised to publish joint statements, the establishment of an international theoretical journal, and a perspective towards deepening and solidifying our ties. This cannot be an international based off tactics, after all the details of the fight each group wages is different and one tactic can't be generalised. But lessons can be shared between groupings and discussions can be had on both international tactics, as well as national and local level tactics, these discussions currently aren't happening, and this is to our own detriment! We lose out from the lack of these discussions, "[t]he question comrades must ask is whether we are nationally bound socialist movements with international connections, or an international socialist movement with national sections"<sup>9</sup>. Our struggle is the same in every country, we are fighting to rebuild the communist parties that we need as a section of the world party. The proletariat knows no country, nor do communists. So why should we?

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses—no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International"<sup>10</sup> ■

<sup>8</sup> MacNair, Mike. *Revolutionary Strategy*. 146

<sup>9</sup> Hall, Roxy. *Their Internationalism and Ours*. In Cosmonaut magazine April 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Trotsky, Leon. *The Death Agony of Capitalism, and the Tasks of the Fourth International*. (Bolshevik press, London, 1993), 68.

# The Australian Labor Party remains an important site of struggle against imperialism

*The Australian Labor Party remains an important site of struggle against imperialism, against Zionism and against the US military alliance, writes ALP member **Marcus Strom**.*

The Australian Labor Party is a liberal-bourgeois workers' party. It governs in the interests of capitalism but does so on the base of the organised working class, and the electoral support of most workers in Australia. Given the class nature of the union bureaucracy, even the non-affiliated unions look to Labor in government to deliver piecemeal reforms.

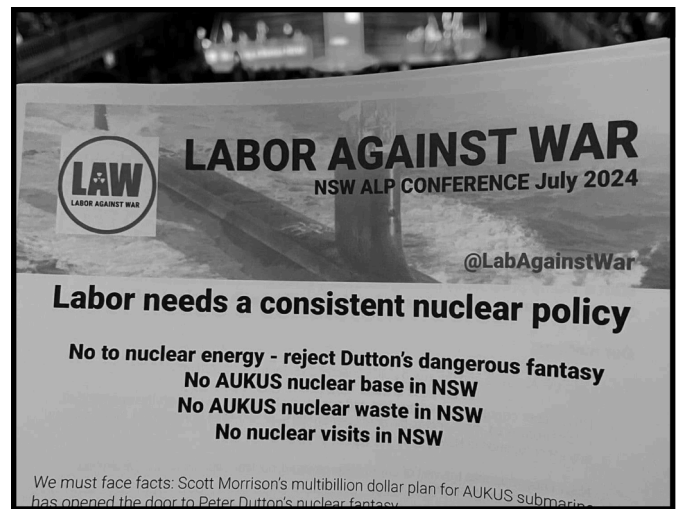
In its rules, the ALP describes itself as a 'democratic socialist party' and has as its first objective the socialisation of means of production, distribution and exchange. This means the Labor Party is a strange beast – a contradiction born of the needs of the working class to organise but dominated by the ideology of the capitalist class.

This makes it an important area of struggle. While the mass of the working class presently has no vision of a socialist future, it seeks a better life within capitalism through the ALP. To the extent the working class mobilises for socialism, this will in part manifest within the ALP.

The re-election of the Albanese government was a partial class expression of the atomised workers and the trade unions. With no communist party of its own to fight for its direct and objective interests, the working class voted (again) for the only tool available to defeat a Trump-lite, Dutton-led conservative LNP opposition.

While the character of the ALP has ebbed and flowed since its foundation, in essence it remains a bourgeois workers' party, the pro-imperialist nature of the Albanese government notwithstanding. The ALP leadership has always been in favour of Empire (first British and now US); it has always ruled in the interests of the capitalist class.

As the size, scale and intensity of the class struggle shifts, the expression of working-class politics within the ALP changes. Given the workers' movement is at present at a nadir, the proletarian pole within the ALP is also at a low point.



**Labor Against War at the 2024 NSW ALP Conference. Photo: Labor Against War FB**

However, unless the contradictory class character of the ALP changes, as the working class re-emerges from political slumber this will no doubt find expression within the ALP as much as outside it. We see this even today in the fight for Palestinian solidarity and in the campaign to oppose AUKUS.

That is why for Marxists, working in a bourgeois workers' party is as relevant as working in the trade unions or working in the broader movement as part of our fight for a workers' party that is organised around a revolutionary and democratic program.

Marxists, communists and socialists should seek to shape the political nature of the ALP's left wing – from within and without – and not just leave it to spontaneous formation. We fight for the ALP to be an open, democratic united front of the working class where socialists and communists can openly argue for their politics.

## Palestine

For the mass movement in solidarity with Palestine to impact beyond protest, it needs to find the form of ongoing political expression. Mass demonstrations clearly impact society, but they cannot in and of themselves affect lasting change.

It is tremendous that Palestine solidarity in Australia has broken into a mass movement. On August 2nd, more than 200,000 people demonstrated on the Sydney Harbour Bridge in one of the biggest mobilisations ever seen in Australia.

Three weeks later, hundreds of thousands marched in cities and towns in a Nationwide March for Palestine. From Tathra to Geraldton, Alice Springs to Townsville; in 40 locations across the country, Australians turned out in solidarity with the people of Palestine and in disgust at the genocidal Israeli regime raining terror on the people of Gaza.

Trade union banners were more present than previous demonstrations as were some union leaders, including leaders of the ACTU and Unions NSW.

The question now is what political expression can such a movement take? If it returns to simply holding weekly demonstrations, it risks fading into the background.

People are understandably disgusted at the weasel-words and both-sideism of the Albanese government. Yet for the mass movement to have a political expression beyond demonstrations, this will take some form in the Australian Labor Party itself.

Soon after Israel launched its onslaught on Gaza, elements around the NSW 'soft left' faction (which is hostile to the Albanese 'left'), mobilised in ALP branches through Labor Friends of Palestine. It continues to do so, passing motions calling for sanctions on Israel in branches across the country. ALP members and 'soft left' MPs in NSW have marched in the Palestine demonstrations from the very beginning. On August 3rd they were joined by Ed Husic, Bob Carr, and Tony Sheldon from the ALP right.

A united front for Palestine needs to organise both within and without the ALP. For the Palestine Action Group leaders, under influence from Socialist Alternative sectarians, to ban pro-Palestine Labor MPs from speaking at demonstrations is to shoot the movement in the foot. It seems some protest organisers and Albanese share one thing in common – a desire to keep ALP MPs off the speaking platform.

There can be no illusions that work within the ALP alone can transform the attitude of the Albanese government – that would be opportunist idiocy. But likewise, thinking that treating all ALP members or ALP affiliated unions as haram would be sectarian idiocy.

Inviting pro-Palestine ALP MPs such as Anthony D'Adam onto the platform does not mean you withhold criticism for him voting for the anti-democratic protest laws in NSW. A united front is not a diplomatic peace agreement. But our aim is surely to increase the space to organise for Palestine within the ALP, not narrow it down.

## Mass Line

The fact that so many people are now marching can be partly attributed to the determination of the Palestine Action Group for marching, week in week out. But that is not a strategy. The new and welcome 'mass line' came not from this approach, which limited the movement, but was forced on PAG by events of mass starvation in Gaza itself, by the intransigence of Netanyahu and his Washington backers and the anti-democratic instincts of the NSW Labor Government and NSW Police seeking to ban the demonstration over the Harbour Bridge.

The Queensland Police repeated this on August 24th, and while they successfully prevented the demonstration over Storey Bridge, the police intervention no doubt spurred people to attend.

As it has shifted gears from the few thousands on the streets to the hundreds of thousands, the mass movement is having an impact. The Albanese Labor Government has said it will recognise a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly in September. While this is in concert with European imperial powers such as France, Britain and Germany – and falls far short of what is needed, which is isolating the Israeli regime – the fact it has been dragged to this position reflects the pressure from below, in Australia and in Europe.

This is a victory of the Palestine solidarity movement and is due to ongoing pressure against the ALP leaders by the mass movement and from within the ALP, led by Labor Friends of Palestine.

Recognition of Palestine with Gaza in ruins, amid Zionist pogroms in the West Bank, all while Australia maintains diplomatic and trade support for Israel will not satisfy the mass movement. And nor should it.

Marxists should fight to transform the emerging mass movement in Australia into an ongoing democratic political campaign.

For starters, the 'ad hoc' organising committee that called the August 24th national marches needs to be democratised. A national conference should be planned for to elect the committee; recallable delegates from community groups, socialist groups, ALP branches, union branches should attend and vote at such a conference. The organising committee needs to be accountable and authoritative.

A unifying and militant action program should be agreed, which could include demands:

- Sanctions against Israel



- Expel the Israeli ambassador
- Australia to exit the F35 program
- No arms export licences to Israel
- Support ICJ moves to indict war criminals
- Investigate Australians returning from active IDF service for war crimes.

While an essential part of the movement, the expression of Palestine solidarity within the ALP has its faults. Labor Friends of Palestine continues to advocate for the long-lost two-states solution and has a worrying faith in 'international law'.

While nominally independent, international law has never been enforceable and rulings against the US and its allies flagrantly ignored. It was always a fig leaf for imperialism in the final analysis.

To hanker today for yesterday's assurances of the 'international rules-based order', a mantra of pro-imperialist politicians, is a counter-productive strategy.

Ultimately, this is a 'state-loyalist' and reformist approach, which must be challenged. But to do this effectively, Marxists need to be active within and without the ALP.

### AUKUS

While Palestine has rightly received most attention, given the ongoing daily atrocities and genocide livestreamed before us, the Albanese government's attachment to the United States through the AUKUS agreement is, in many ways, the more insidious.

What should have been thrown into the furnace of bad Scott Morrison ideas after the 2022 federal election, was not only kept but moved to the centre of the Albanese foreign policy agenda.

An agreement that clearly is in the economic, strategic and military interests of the United States above all, now has Uncle Sam unsure if Australia will come to the (war) party in any conflict between the US and China. We now have the unedifying spectacle of the Albanese government bowing and scraping to avoid offending Donald Trump lest he dump the AUKUS agreement.

The fight against AUKUS has yet to become a mass movement. Those forces outside the ALP fighting it are, in the main, veterans of the 1990s and 2000s anti-war movements against George W Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard and their bloody folly in Iraq.

Understandably, young leftwing activists are drawn to campaign against the horrors happening now in Palestine and not against the much greater horrors that could come if Australia is dragged into a war between the US

and China.

Yet, AUKUS is a more fundamental representation of Australia as junior imperialist partner of the United States.

For that reason, the work of Labor Against War has been vital in keeping the struggle against Albanese's capitulation to the US war agenda.

Labor Against War in 2023 forced a debate at the ALP National Conference about AUKUS, one that the ALP leadership tried to avoid.

That debate showed the potential shape of an anti-AUKUS coalition in the labour movement, from ALP branches to unions like the Maritime Union of Australia and the Electrical Trades Union and even federal MP Josh Wilson spoke out against AUKUS.

More than a hundred party units – including the Victorian and Queensland state branches – have passed resolutions opposing AUKUS. That fight will continue up to the ALP National Conference next year.

A united front of working class and community organisations should work to oppose AUKUS and the further enmeshing of Australia into war planning by the United States. AUKUS has been revealed as nothing more than US and Australian imperialism seeking to contain the rise of China, Australia's main trading partner.

### Anti-Imperialism

What this provides is raw material to build anti-imperialist sentiment and organisation across the labour movement. The fight against Australian support for Israel and against the Australian military alliance with the United States is connected.

As Marxists, we know that only the eclipsing of the constitutional order through a working class led democratic revolution for socialism in concert with workers across the world can remove Australia from the imperialist world order. It is not a question of changing the policy of the government of the day.

That fight needs us to challenge Laborism within the ALP.

Historically – from the White Australia policy onwards – the labour movement in Australia has been awash with reactionary and ruling class ideas. This is the very nature of Laborism, one of the main strategic barriers blocking the development of a mass democratic and revolutionary workers' movement.

To abstain from organisational engagement with the ALP is sectarian folly and a sure way to keep Marxist ideas on the fringes of the workers' movement and society as a whole. ■

## Student General Meetings Censure the Australian Government for Complicity in Genocide

University Student General Meetings took place around the country this week and last, calling on universities and the Australian Government to cut ties with the genocidal Israeli regime.

On August 28, the University of Melbourne Special General Meeting was opened to loud cheers, with the announcement by Student Union General Secretary, Luv Golecha, that quorum had been reached. Golecha then promptly handed over the microphone to Bella Beiraghi from Students for Palestine (S4P) who led the meeting throughout.

The six hundred students assembled at Melbourne University were one of eleven Student General Meetings taking place around Australia. One organiser, Emma Dynes told the crowd 600 students had gathered at RMIT, 300 at Monash, 250 in Adelaide, 500 across Perth, 400 in Brisbane with others still to come. Later, 500 met at the University of Sydney.

Speaking to the first motion in Melbourne, Aidan Hawe, explained that S4P had attempted to hold an SGM last year but were blocked by the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) executive which bureaucratically manoeuvred to ensure that meeting was not officially recognised and could not direct UMSU policy. This year, he argued, UMSU, is “currently shirking its duty... students have to take matters into our own hands... that is what this motion is today”.

The first motion passed stipulates that UMSU must “campaign for the end of the repression of Palestine activists and to defend free speech and protest on campus. This includes campaigning to overturn the protest regulations the University passed in March” and “demanding that the University reinstate the Palestine activists who have been suspended or expelled”. Speakers condemned the crackdown on activists by Melbourne University following the successful encampment action.

The second motion – a model used across the country – reads, “students censure the Australian government for its complicity in the genocide in Gaza. We demand an end to all weapons sales to Israel by Australia and Australian companies, and call for sanctions on Israel.”

Students also called “on all Australian universities to end their complicity with Israel’s genocide by ceasing all partnerships with weapons companies.” The Melbourne

University meeting condemned University’s construction of a new Fisherman’s Bend Campus, “which is facilitating an unprecedented collaboration between the defence sector and the university”.

Speaking to this motion another S4P activist pointed out that part of the F35 design takes place at Melbourne University, and that the Fisherman’s Bend military-focused campus has a budget of \$2 billion. An additional motion was passed directing UMSU to budget \$7000 for a fundraising event supporting the Freedom Flotilla Coalition.

All motions were passed unanimously – reflecting the overwhelming dominance of pro-Palestine sentiment over whatever pockets of Zionist students there are on the campus.

It is unclear, at least at Melbourne University, which of these motions will be binding on UMSU or what further manoeuvres the right-wing, ALP-aligned students in UMSU will attempt in order to frustrate the growing campaign. Regardless, hundreds (nationally thousands) of students authoritatively demonstrating that student opinion is with the Palestinians is a very useful step forward – both for the authority and confidence of the movement.

This student campaign contributes to the growing momentum of the Palestine solidarity movement since the historic Sydney Harbour Bridge march and the largest ever Australia-wide mobilisation for Palestine that followed it on 24 August.

The coming September 10 day of union and worker action – still two weeks away – will test whether this momentum can continue to build. There is also a possibility of a national strike of university and high school students on the same day. If that can actually be organised over the next two weeks it would not only be a massive street mobilisation, it would be the first large scale Palestine action on a working day in Australia.

That would turn up the heat even further on the ALP federal government. S4P and the Socialist Alternative members who lead it are the only organisation active in Palestine Solidarity with the national spread and strength to take such an initiative. If they assess the September 10 union organising has a strong enough basis, they should seize the moment. The whole of the Palestine solidarity movement would surely come behind such an initiative. ■ **Sam King for Red Spark, August 29<sup>th</sup> 2025 (red-spark.org)**

# National road to disaster

*The following article was written by **Mike Macnair** for the Weekly Worker on the event of the 50th anniversary of the military overthrow of the Allende government by the Chilean military. In light of this tragic event, much of the socialist movement has failed to learn the correct lessons. In light of our own discussions of the parliamentary road to socialism, we are reprinting Macnair's article for the Australian audience. - The Editors*

September 11 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1973 military coup in Chile, which overthrew the government of Salvador Allende and ushered in a regime of terror against the left and trade unions. Chile was also the site of an early experiment with the 'Chicago Boys' and their shock therapy of privatisation, deregulation and so on.

The history is well-known, and whoever wrote the Wikipedia page on the coup has done a good job with thorough use of relevant materials (some only declassified this year).<sup>1</sup> The USA was, from the moment that the election of Allende as president looked possible in 1970 (when he won the largest minority), determined that it should not happen, and if it happened there should be a coup. And, once CIA efforts to persuade the Chilean Congress - where Allende's Unidad Popular coalition government did not have a majority - to go for a stop-gap president who would hand over to the right failed, the CIA embarked on a destabilisation programme, including external financial and economic pressure, and mobilisation of the middle classes. Allende and his UP coalition attempted to placate the military after the failed coup attempt of June 1973, but this policy did not succeed. August 1973 saw calls for action against the government by both the Supreme Court and the Chamber of Deputies - and September 11 saw the coup led by general Augusto Pinochet.

The Chilean coup was a severe defeat for the competing strategies of the left. This was not only true of the strategies of the advocates of people's fronts, like Unidad Popular, and 'national roads to socialism' (Chile was until 1973 believed to be a stable parliamentary-liberal regime). It was also true of the strategies of the advocates of extra-parliamentary action. The Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) had about 10,000 members in 1973, which, since Chile's population at the time was around 10 million, would be comparable to a party in



**Augusto Pinochet (right) meets with Henry Kissinger (centre)**

Britain of around 67,000. By way of comparison, the Communist Party of Chile had, according to US estimates, 27,500 members in 1968. I have not been able despite fairly extensive web searching to find membership figures for the Socialist Party of Chile, but from the various literature about it, it seems likely before 1970 to have been significantly smaller than the CPC, though in the same range of electoral support, so probably in the same size range.

The MIR gave critical support to the Allende government, and (though active in attempting to construct a party military wing and in intervening in the army ranks) was effectively politically helpless in the crisis of 1972-73. MIR attempts to conduct guerrilla resistance to the post-coup regime failed - yet another nail in the coffin of the strategy of 'prolonged people's war', as applied to Latin America.

Meanwhile, the Chinese People's Republic displayed the real meaning of Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing, when it was one of the few governments in the world not to (temporarily) break diplomatic relations with Chile after the coup. China thus aligned itself with US policy in Latin America (and globally); so that Maoism began to fall into crisis - though this was a gradual process through the mid-late 1970s.

At the time of writing, only two September 2023 versions of left comment on this strategic defeat are out, and both of those are reprints of older texts (Tony Saunois from 1998 in *Socialism Today*, and Daniel Bensaïd from 2008 on the *Anti-Capitalist Resistance* website). However, so little has changed in the



stories the left tells itself in the last 50 years that it is probably fair enough to assume that there will be nothing radically new this week. Thus in the *Morning Star* a book review by Carlos Martinez in 2013, and in 2018 Kenny Coyle's introduction to a reprinted 1978 collection of articles by Chilean CP leaders, tell us much the same story as each other.<sup>3</sup> The Socialist Workers Party has told its version of the story, beginning in 1973, and repeated in simplified versions in 2003, 2013 and 2020 (the last being for the 50th anniversary of Allende's election). *Socialist Appeal* in 2013 reprinted a long 1979 article by Alan Woods.

Largely these are actually stories of failure to learn lessons from the experience of the Allende government. On the one hand, UP was the sort of 'broad democratic alliance' which the *Morning Star* continues to promote as a strategy for British politics (as its sister parties promote such alliances elsewhere). Allende's overthrow is not just a story of military action, but of a political battle fought by US financial and economic warfare against Chile and of US (and British and Australian) disinformation operations. The British left has recently (in 2017-19) lost a similar battle, thanks to US and British security apparatus disinformation operations. Just as the Chilean Christian Democracy deserted its partial alliance with UP in 1972, so the Labour right preferred to see Labour lose in 2019. And so on ...

On the other hand, the far-left versions reassert the strategy of building soviets. They play up the cordones industriales, which were in effect shop-steward combines on an industrial-estate-wide basis aimed to defeat the capitalists' (and USA's) economic sabotage operations, none having the level of city-wide control of production of the 1905 Petrograd soviet (let alone the effective halfway sovereignty of the 1917 soviets). Conversely, the significance of the MIR is underestimated. Birchall and Harman, writing in 1973, took the MIR fairly seriously, as did Bensaid; subsequent SWP authors ignored it, as did Woods (and as do the *Morning Star* writers); Saunois provided only glancing mentions. Not taking the MIR seriously is a route to not considering the possibility that a 'strategy of extra-parliamentary action' might be worthless in an acute crisis, even when applied by quite a large organisation.

Some 'official communists' in the period after the coup blamed 'ultra-leftism', meaning the MIR and other far-left groups which supported strike action, demands for expropriation of 'sabotaging' firms, etc, for the defection of the Christian Democrats from

their initial passive support for Allende, the middle classes taking fright, and so on. But US documents have trickled out, making clear that the US administration was determined from the outset that there should not be an Allende presidency (and, if there was, it should be made to fail). No amount of increased caution on the part of UP and the workers' movement would have stopped the US destabilisation campaign or prevented some kind of coup - even if it might have been different from the one which actually happened.

### Framework

The problem of failing to address the role of US economic and disinformation/political mobilisation warfare is common to both sides of the debate. It arises because both the 'official communist' views about the Chilean defeat and the far left operate within the framework of 'national roads to socialism'. This is unsurprising from the 'official communists', but more than a little surprising from groups of Trotskyist origin, like the Mandelbrite Fourth International, the SWP, SPEW and *Socialist Appeal*.

For Carlos Martinez, "... what the fall of Allende does show is that revolutions do not exist in isolation and that sometimes the prevailing regional and global conditions simply do not allow them to survive." But neither he nor Kenny Coyle, nor the Chilean communists in 1000 days of revolution, can offer a strategic line for the defeat of the USA's war on the revolution or, hence, any ground for supposing that future attempts along the same lines will not result in a similar disaster. Some 60,000 were killed, large numbers fled into exile and the parties of the left were banned.

Birchall in 2003 had the merit of addressing the question - but only to argue that the weakness of the US's situation in the period meant that it could not have intervened if a strong line had been taken by the Chilean left: But the point should not be overstated. The US could only intervene on the basis of the balance of forces inside Chile. They were disentangling themselves from defeat in Vietnam, and direct intervention was out of the question.

But the US's economic and disinformation/political mobilisation warfare, starting in 1970, created the "balance of forces inside Chile". And all through the 1950s-60s, US-sponsored coups had been far more common in Latin America than actual cases of "send the marines".

Tony Saunois argued that a revolutionary party with a precise programme and correct tactics was needed to direct this energy towards



**Trade unionists march in support of Allende.**

the completion of the revolution and the overthrow of capitalism and its state machine. But no such party existed in Chile.

Had it existed, the revolution could have emerged victorious and would have opened up the prospect of a socialist revolution throughout Latin America and beyond. Even the election of the UP government with its 'Marxist' president and the revolutionary process that developed amongst the working class had an electrifying effect on the masses in Latin America and Europe. It coincided with a rising struggle against the Franco dictatorship in Spain.

The spreading of the revolution to any of the Latin American countries, linked with a direct appeal to the working class in the USA, would have decisively checked the ability of US imperialism to intervene.

Less elaborately, Alan Woods after a long history of Chile and a long and wildly unrealistic assessment of Chilean politics in 1979, wrote:

"The socialist revolution in Chile would be an example for the working class and all the oppressed peoples of Latin America. With a workers' government in Chile, how long would the military dictatorships in Argentina, Uruguay, etc last?"

The problem with these arguments is that they fail altogether to address the USA's economic warfare operations and their effects on the Chilean economy and, in consequence, the ability of a revolutionary Chile to feed its people: after World War II, Chile became increasingly dependent on food imports, which made it dependent on the copper, and so on, exports which the US by financial sanctions from 1970 interrupted.

The result is that the 'isolated socialist state', far from being a beacon for the peoples of the world or even of the region, and leading to a

spreading revolution, becomes an awful example to them, leading to reaction not only in the country targeted by economic warfare, but also in its neighbours. Both the Nicaraguan revolution, created by an actual insurrectionary overthrow of a military dictatorship in 1978-79, and the Venezuelan Chavista regime, created by an electoral victory in 1999 of a movement led by an army officer and with significant army support, provide more recent examples.

The Russian Revolution is a standard counter-example. But this counter-example is wildly unrealistic. The revolution took place under conditions where open war between the major imperialist powers had already radically disrupted the economy; and, this apart, the revolution took place across the former tsarist empire, which was peasant-majority and before 1914 a food exporter. (The Bolsheviks promised self-determination to Russia's dependencies, but were actually forced, in order to survive, to reconquer all of them during the civil war - except for the Baltics and Finland, which were held by German troops.)

All subsequent cases of countries added to the 'socialist camp' by 'national roads' depended on the prior existence of the USSR. Breaking with the US-controlled world capitalist order to join the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) would be a feasible strategic option, if the USSR leadership was willing to take the country on board. Most cases (North Vietnam included) were immediately post-World War II; but the USSR was willing to back Cuba because the contemporary Sino-Soviet split and the recent struggle with the 'Anti-Party group' made a left posture advantageous to Nikita Khrushchev; and to back South Yemen because the cost was low and the Aden naval base advantageous to the Soviet navy. This was not a generally available option, because the Soviet leadership was not willing to trigger a general confrontation with the US: even Cuba threatened general crisis, though the deal made was not a simple Soviet backdown, as it was presented in the western media.

Birchall is right that the general position of US imperialism in 1970-73 was relatively weak, after the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the British scuttle out of Aden, and so on. But that did not mean that it was not massively stronger than any single country in Latin America. If the global left had consistently through the 1950s and 60s characterised US financial and commercial 'sanctions' as acts of war, and promoted the idea that they should be met by seizure of US assets and repudiation of debts to

US institutions, not only by the country affected, but by other countries, it is possible that the US response to the election of Allende could have triggered a general crisis of a sort which would force the US to back down.

Equally, if the US left had been unambiguously disloyalist and had - again, from 1945 on - recognised sanctions, etc as acts of war in violation of US constitution, article I, section 8, clause 11 (which requires a declaration of war by Congress, in the absence of a direct attack on the US), it might have been possible to build a movement in the US itself, alongside the subsisting anti-Vietnam war movement, against US economic warfare on Chile.

But promoting either idea would be inconsistent with the basic idea of 'national roads to socialism'. Thus the party programme of the Communist Party USA, 'Road to socialism USA', is decidedly 'soft' on the US constitution. 'National roads' here produces accommodation to the very common US constitutional patriotism.

Perhaps more immediately relevant to the coup of 1973, 'national roads' up till 1973 produced the illusion that Chile's long 'democratic' (ie, liberal-constitutional) tradition would mean that a military coup was unlikely, in spite of the frequency of US-sponsored military coups across Latin America in the preceding period. Thus Birchall and Harman quote Chilean CP general secretary Luis Corvalan in 1971:

"... the army is not invulnerable to the new winds blowing in Latin America and penetrating everywhere. It is not a body alien to

the nation, in the service of anti-national interests. It must be won to the cause of progress in Chile and not pushed to the other side of the barricades."

The same Luis Corvalan commented in 1978 that:

"Since 1963 the party had been giving its members military training and making efforts to acquire enough arms to defend the government that we were confident the people would set up, but this was not enough, because our activity in this direction was not accompanied by the main thing: namely persistent and sustained propaganda to give the popular movement a correct attitude to the military."

What the "correct attitude" would be remains utterly unclear in Corvalan's account.

This is just a part of the question of the illusions which UP had promoted in the workers' movement when Allende came to office (we should not say 'to power', since this would be misleading). Thus Allende said in 1972:

"My government maintains that there is another path for the revolutionary process that is not the violent destruction of the current institutional and constitutional regime.

The entities of the state administration act today not at the service of the ruling class, but at the service of the workers and the continuity of the revolutionary process; therefore, one cannot try to destroy what is now an instrument to act, change, and create for the benefit of Chile and its labour masses.

The power of the big bourgeoisie is not based on the institutional regime, but on its economic

Today shows the far right can mobilise very large numbers, and needs to be treated as a serious threat. The left needs to have a united approach to facing them- it was an important step that thousands of anti fascist activists came out to face them down today.

They're unlikely to rest at one demonstration. In the US, Europe and the UK they are now one of the main political forces. This could happen here if we don't organise to defeat them. The left has to and ready to stand against them again.

It's important that we had such big numbers today marched to confront them, and that so many people were willing to directly confront them. Everyone who did should be proud. If we hide from fascists or don't confront them, it makes them even more confident. We can't ignore them and hope they will go away: We have to show that

those who stand against racism and hatred are confident to take on the fascists when they mobilise.

The police aimed their weapons at the left the entire time, faced us, and attempted to block us at every turn. They pepper sprayed activists on our side. This is despite the fact that a literal cop killer is part of the opposing far right group. The cops will always side with the fascists, but we can't let it stop us from coming out.

Thanks to everyone who mobilised today to stand for refugee rights, migrants, Palestine, queer rights and against fascism. We stand in a long lineage of antifascist movements, and we're determined to defeat them together. ■ **Campaign Against Racism & Fascism (CARF), 31 August 2025**



resources and on the complex web of social relations linked to the capitalist property system.

We do not see the path of the Chilean revolution in the violent bankruptcy of the state apparatus. What our people have built over several generations of struggle allows them to take advantage of the conditions created by our history to replace the capitalist foundation of the current institutional regime with another that is adapted to the new social reality.

The popular political parties and movements have always affirmed - and this is contained in the government programme - that ending the capitalist system requires transforming the class content of the state and of the fundamental charter itself. But we have also solemnly affirmed our will to carry it out in accordance with the mechanisms that the political constitution has expressly established to be modified."

The claim that the "power of the big bourgeoisie is not based on the institutional regime, but on its economic resources and on the complex web of social relations linked to the capitalist property system" is widely believed to be orthodox Marxism (in the sense that similar comments can be found from Engels and Kautsky), but it is straightforwardly wrong.

### Regime

The institutional regime of the rule of law and separation of powers, together with the tradeable-debt-funding of state activities, the free market in legal services, the advertising-based media and so on, delivers the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie: that is, that capital in the money form (at the two ends of the circuit M-C-P-C'-M') is above the law and dictates what the law is. In countries outside the US, but having broadly liberal constitutions, because the dollar is the global reserve currency, that institutional form delivers the dictatorship of US capital over the laws of the UK, France ... and Chile.

These institutional forms have created the basis of the loyalty of the armed forces (including the police) the civil service, the judiciary, and so on, and constitute them as a state rather than a mere temporary kleptocracy or protection racket. In consequence, Corvalan's idea as of 1971 of winning the army as a whole to the side of the people was delusional. But it was equally illusory to imagine that the judiciary would not - as they did in August 1973 - call for a coup. Illusions in judges are more widespread than illusions in generals ...

In this context, the workers' movement needs, before it takes office, to pose the question of radical constitutional change. Usually, the 'push-back' inherent in the state officials' loyalty to the constitutional order will knock down radical aspirations long before reaching the point of a 1970-73-style crisis (as was visible in the UK in the 1924 Zinoviev letter and its current equivalent, the 'anti-Semitism' smear campaign).

### Expose

Posing the question of radical constitutional change requires not just consistent work to expose the corrupt character of the existing regime. It is also necessary to pose, concretely, a positive alternative. That implies, for example, proposing the abolition of the standing army and its replacement with a people's militia, and the necessary corollary of that: the right to keep and bear arms. It implies also the defence and extension of trial by jury; the belief among non-Anglo leftists that this is an odd-ball Anglo phenomenon is a matter of these leftists being duped by what Engels called (of France) "the empire of 1799 without the emperor": ie, the capitalist class's adoption of the judicial methods of late feudal absolutism as a bulwark against the working class. It implies institutional forms to reduce excessive trust in judges.<sup>14</sup> It implies the rejection of directly elected presidencies and other monarchical forms, of second chambers in parliaments and congresses. And so on.

As delusional as Allende's loyalism towards the Chilean liberal constitution is the belief of the SWP authors and Saunois that it is possible to counter the problem of state loyalism by two steps. The first is in propaganda to argue that the state must be as a matter of Marxist theory a class instrument - in a completely abstract or dogmatic way, without addressing concrete issues of state form. This argument, because it is abstract, can have no serious political purchase. The second step is to argue that in revolutionary crises the workers will necessarily throw up institutions of self-organisation (like the Chilean cordones industriales) and that these can form the basis of a counter-power. This is a fantasy version of the Russian Revolution, which leaves out the role of mass parties in creating and leading the soviets.

It also leaves out Leon Trotsky's judgment in 1923 and again in 1931 of the fetishism of soviets.<sup>15</sup> That is, there were workers' councils (Räte) in Germany and Austria in 1918. But the leadership of these councils remained with the majority Social Democrats in Germany, with



**Fidel Castro (left) with Salvador Allende (right).**

the Social-democratic Party in Austria. As a result, the Räte could not serve as a counter-power. The same is true all the more of the Chilean cordones industriales, which never approached being a counter-power.

When push came to shove, the problem in September 1973 was that the armed forces were not split: hence the fact that there were no rival aircraft, or anti-aircraft missiles, to defend the presidential palace against the coup-makers. For the armed forces to be split needed enough of the junior ranks to be convinced that their seniors' intervention in politics amounted to treason. That, in turn, required that the left should have been exposing the constitutional order and proposing an alternative for years, not just months, so that the electoral victory of the UP would then reflect an actual belief among broad masses that it was time to be done with that order. Such a belief would then stretch into the ranks of the armed forces.

Trotskyist authors place great emphasis on the fact that UP was (as its name tells us) a popular front. But the question posed is: would a united front government, of the SP and CP alone, have been any better? The answer is quite plainly not. I have quoted above the delusions in the Chilean constitutional order promoted both by Allende and Luis Corvalan.

The essence of the problem is that UP formed a minority government, on the basis of wildly unrealistic expectations about the willingness of the other side - the USA and its local political clients - to play by the constitutional rulebook. The price they, and the whole of the Chilean workers' movement, paid for this choice was tragic.

But the idea was already long established that workers' parties should not participate in government unless there is a majority for the implementation of their minimum programme - a minimum which consisted chiefly of

constitutional proposals. It was already Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' critique of Louis Blanc for participating in government in 1848. It was a critique which Engels repeated to correspondents in Italy and elsewhere in the 1890s. It was repeated as a principle by the Second International in response to then-socialist Alexandre Millerand's participation in a 'government of republican defence' in France in 1899.

Since 1900 we have had many, many examples of left parties wrecking themselves by minority participation in governments (recently, Rifondazione Comunista in Italy springs to mind) or forming minority governments (eg, Syriza in Greece). Chile 1973 was a tragedy. But it was a tragedy arising from strategic mistakes which the left still clings to, and which are still disastrous - even when the results are banal demoralisation rather than tragedy. ■

## **Demand Freedom for Leftist Political Prisoners**

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners. Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phony "anti-terrorism" charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotyuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow's imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

We must not forget the tens of thousands of Palestinians who languish in Israeli prisons and detention centres. We encourage communists and militants of all kinds of agitate for the release of all political prisoners, be they communists, militants, activists or other kinds of radicals. ■ **Partisan**

# Letters

## Support national self-determination against Russia's czarist aims

David McMullen, Online

Simon Blow in Partisan! 12 (LETTER: Red Specktarian) accuses me of being "behind this or that capitalist nation in its conquest for domination of the world market". Let's get clear about what is happening in Ukraine. Firstly, in pursuit of a restored Czarist empire, a nation is denied the right to self-determination. Secondly, we have a tyranny fearful of contagion trying to snuff out a burgeoning bourgeois democracy next door. And for the individual Ukrainian success of the invasion would mean being subject to vengeful murderers best avoided by fleeing to Poland. There is no comparison between being under the boot of the new Czar and being an independent bourgeois democracy freely choosing to join the European Union.

And as I have pointed out on various occasions, bourgeois democracy is far more fertile soil for the emergence of a radical left and the working class movement generally than tyranny. There are some excellent historical examples. First we have the Bolsheviks. They were only able to get out and about freely because of the bourgeois democratic revolution in February 1917 and, furthermore, their actual existence was due to the Czarist regime's relative lack of ruthless efficiency. Then there is Germany in 1933 when fascist efficiency ensured that the left simply ceased to exist. The main "exceptions" to the rule were China and Yugoslavia where the communists were able to escape to the mountains. These will be less of an option in the future because of far better communications and more advanced military technology available to counter-revolutionary forces.

There is no need to subscribe to "a bizarre offshoot of Maoism". You just have to support the Lenin/Stalin line on the national question and the right of nations to self-determination, and take a similar united front position to the Comintern in the late 1930s. Then the major powers were divided into the war-shy bourgeois democracies and the fascist powers primed for conquest. We have something similar now, with Russia and China being in the latter category. They need to be defeated or deterred, and everything possible done to

New Message ✕

To partisanmagazine@proton.me CC BCC

LETTER: [Letter title]

[NAME]

I enjoyed the article *Article Name* in *Partisan #number*, but have questions about the author. The author says this thing, but I think a different thing.

Something to think about, comrades.

Send

encourage and facilitate their overthrow by bourgeois democratic revolution. ■

## The Red Anti-Imperialist Collective has decided to formally withdraw from the Communist Caucus.

Red Anti-Imperialist Collective, Online

The Communist Caucus was launched by the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) in swift response to the announcement that the Victorian Socialists (VS) would be expanding nationally earlier this year. The Caucus was pitched to Red Ant, in somewhat vague terms, as an opportunity to "democratise" VS and make its existing program more "Marxist". We were invited to attend the Caucus launch where its "Draft Points of Unity", assembled by the RCO, would be calcified as the basis for membership. The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) also attended this meeting. However, after several attempts to interrogate the purposes of the Caucus and what was tangibly implied by its Points of Unity, the CPA was overruled by the RCO. Claiming to have never even seen the Points of Unity prior to the meeting, and in the absence of sufficient discussion of them, the CPA was not prepared to endorse their content without a period of review. Luckily for us, an individual member of Red Ant received a printed paper copy of the Points of Unity before the launch. It seems the CPA were not similarly approached.

Not long after the Caucus was launched, the CPA chose to disaffiliate, citing the RCO's "undemocratic" conduct, stating that they could not participate in a caucus that "misrepresents its purpose" and "prioritises the RCO's agenda over left-unity". These issues raise two important points. First, how was the Caucus's purpose represented? Its purpose, as represented to Red Ant, was to endeavour collaboratively with other socialist organisations towards democratising VS and



amending the existing program in favour of more revolutionary Marxist demands. These tasks were more-or-less implicit in the Points of Unity, even where the document remained quite broad in scope. However, this purpose and these tasks are at tremendous distance from the strategic approach taken by the Caucus at the VS member's conference in June. The approach at conference was coordinated by the RCO, with a flurry of amendments and counter motions submitted to almost every agenda item. Provided with generous speaking time proportional to their membership size, the Caucus presented a series of combative arguments, admonishing VS, antagonising the leadership, and perturbing the majority of VS members who dual card with Socialist Alternative. Despite a guaranteed endorsement from VS-kingmaker Daniel López, the Caucus declined to run one candidate for leadership on the grounds of minority representation, opting instead to run a full slate, winning no one from the Caucus to the leadership body. Nothing at all about their approach at the member's conference would lead an outsider to believe the Caucus had any commitment to a positive purpose, or any desire to collaborate with the extra-RCO left. And despite ample opportunity, nothing was done to advance either of their purported aims, of "democratising" VS or amending its program to reflect more "Marxist" politics. To the rest of us, this appeared as little more than a chance for the RCO to polemicise against "SALT".

From this we can conclude one of two things; the RCO represented their intended purpose in good faith but failed to advance said purpose, adopted a misguided strategy and failed to heed any guidance provided by anyone outside their circles. Or, the RCO did in fact misrepresent the purpose of the Caucus and formed it as a way to surreptitiously intervene into VS on the basis of their own political commitments. This conundrum is easily resolved with reference to the RCO's post-hoc elaboration of the Caucus, released after the VS members conference; the "Communist" Caucus is a partyist caucus with a partyist strategic direction. It was implicit even at the launch that the RCO was committed, above all else, to their own "partyist" strategy. The CPA had attempted to interrogate the purpose of the Caucus and the Points of Unity, concerned that endorsing this document without clarity over what it implied would leave them at the whim of the RCO. One of our members, in a bid to resolve these tensions, proposed an amendment that would allow participants to abstain from activities if a decision conflicted

with their existing organisational commitments. This motion was affirmed by every other group present, but was shot down by the RCO, with their interstate members present on zoom tipping the vote in their favour. The caucus idea had generated interest from many different organisations, with members representing the CPA, Red Ant, the Spartacist League, the Platypus Society and even Socialist Alternative at the launch. But these different groups, all of whom were at some level interested in the idea and prepared to hear out a pitch, were brought together in one place only for the RCO to demonstrate that maintaining their mandate over the Caucus was their immediate priority.

This brings us to the CPA's second issue, that the Caucus seemed to "prioritise the RCO's agenda over left-unity". This was a problem at the launch and it reached its apogee at the conference; the RCO's unwavering "partyist" agenda has repeatedly undermined their ability to advance a unity project. The RCO seems to understand itself as somehow unique in recognising the fractured and sectarian condition of the modern left, and seems to believe its strategy, the "partyist" strategy, is the only way to resolve such fracture. They ecclesiastically proselytise to the rest of the sectarian left, such that all the sects may finally bask in the glorious light of the partyist gospel. But the political hindrance posed by the "sect form" and the necessity for its sublimation are not uniquely "partyist" conclusions, nor is the "partyist" strategy the only way to achieve such a sublimation. Other sects might identify that the grounds for unity emerge in practice. And while the RCO theoretically recognises that it does not exist above or beyond the "sect form", an outsider may surmise that there is seemingly little impetus on their part to sublimate their own sectarian practices. As they engage with other sects, the RCO are quick to fall back on polemicism, and their interventions are often pervaded by a certain air of haughtiness. This style of intervention can seem quite conceited, and risks alienating the RCO from the very sects they endeavour to court. Such a disposition towards the rest of the left, such an unwillingness to budge on the sacred gospel of partyism, in a word, such sectarianism, all stand in stark contrast with their fidelity to the project of left-unity.

So, whatever the precise dimensions of its formation and purpose may have been, we are left with a Caucus which belongs to the RCO and which functions in advance of their politics. There are agreeable aspects to the RCO's politics, such as their principled

commitment to unity and their formalistic understanding of how it can be achieved. But unity isn't just made on paper, it is something to be struggled for, to be practiced, to be made in practice. Perhaps a real unity could have been forged in practice with the way the Caucus was pitched to us, as a means for existing sects to unite behind shared aims and a shared strategy. But this would require the RCO to surrender their sectarian commitment to partyist politics and engage the existing intellectual life of the broader left. The Points of Unity may not have simply been an anachronistic transposition of transhistorical political demands, but might have instead been equally couched in the immediacy of our conjunctural tasks. There may have even been room to cooperate with Socialist Alternative and the VS leadership in marrying today's exoteric political stakes to the proletariat's esoteric historic role, arriving at a set of minimal and maximal demands. It may have meant committing our efforts to raising intellectual life within VS, or even looking outward to the class itself. The sacrosanct form of the party is nothing more than an instrument of revolutionary class action, the crystallisation of the political will of the class. It is not enough to draft programs or even unite the sects; the party, irrespective of its form, is devoid of content in the absence of the class.

For these reasons, Red Ant has decided to withdraw from the Communist Caucus. But this should not be thought of as the cessation of all possibility for collaboration between the RCO and ourselves at Red Ant. At this moment, it simply does not make sense for us to participate in a partyist caucus when we are not committed to the doctrine of partyism. Nevertheless, we invite the RCO to take this as an opportunity to broaden and deepen the existing dialogue between our organisations, to work together to build our fraternity, and perhaps, given enough time and enough revolutionary patience, we can reach a shared basis for formal unity.

Red Ant is also interested in building our relationships and fraternity with the broader landscape of the Australian left. We are still interested in the VS project and in engaging with its variegated pool of members, including Socialist Alternative. But above all, we are interested in finding a common ground upon which ourselves and the rest of the fractured "sectarian" left can converge on the basis of our shared political commitments, instead of continuing to split hairs over our minutiae of disagreement. ■

Before trying to answer your questions I ought to warn you that unfortunately I have not had the opportunity to learn the Jewish language, which moreover has been developed only since I became an adult. I have not had, and I do not have the possibility of following the Jewish press, which prevents me from giving a precise opinion on the different aspects of so important and tragic a problem. I cannot therefore claim any special authority in replying to your questions. Nevertheless I am going to try and say what I think about it.

During my youth I rather leaned toward the prognosis that the Jews of different countries would be assimilated and that the Jewish question would thus disappear in a quasi-automatic fashion. The historical development of the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. Decaying capitalism has everywhere swung over to an exacerbated nationalism, one part of which is anti-semitism. The Jewish question has loomed largest in the most highly developed capitalist country of Europe, in Germany.

On the other hand the Jews of different countries have created their press and developed the Yiddish language as an instrument adapted to modern-culture. One must therefore reckon with the fact that the Jewish nation will maintain itself for an entire epoch to come. Now the nation cannot normally exist without a common territory. Zionism springs from this very idea. But the facts of every passing day demonstrate to us that Zionism is incapable of resolving the Jewish question. The conflict between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine acquires a more and more tragic and more and more menacing character. I do not at all believe that the Jewish question can be resolved within the framework of rotting capitalism and under the control of British imperialism.

And how, you ask me, can socialism solve this question? On this point I can but offer hypotheses. Once socialism has become master of our planet or at least of its most important sections, it will have unimaginable resources in all domains. Human history has witnessed the epoch of great migrations on the basis of barbarism. Socialism will open the possibility of great migrations on the basis of the most developed technique and culture. It goes without saying that what is here involved is not compulsory displacements, that is, the creation of new ghettos for certain nationalities, but displacements freely consented to, or rather demanded by certain nationalities or parts of nationalities. The dispersed Jews who would want to be reassembled in the same community



will find a sufficiently extensive and rich spot under the sun. The same possibility will be opened for the Arabs, as for all other scattered nations. National topography will become a part of the planned economy. This is the grand historical perspective that I envisage. To work for international socialism means also to work for the solution of the Jewish question.

You ask me if the Jewish question still exists in the USSR. Yes, it exists, just as the Ukrainian, the Georgian, even the Russian questions exist there. The omnipotent bureaucracy stifles the development of national culture just as it does the whole of culture. Worse still, the country of the great proletarian revolution is now passing through a period of profound reaction. If the revolutionary wave revived the finest sentiments of human solidarity, the Thermidorian reaction has stirred up all that is low, dark and backward in this agglomeration of 170 million people. To reinforce its domination the bureaucracy does not even hesitate to resort in a scarcely camouflaged manner to chauvinistic tendencies, above all to anti-semitic ones. The latest Moscow trial, for example, was staged with the hardly concealed design of presenting internationalists as faithless and lawless Jews who are capable of selling themselves to the German Gestapo.

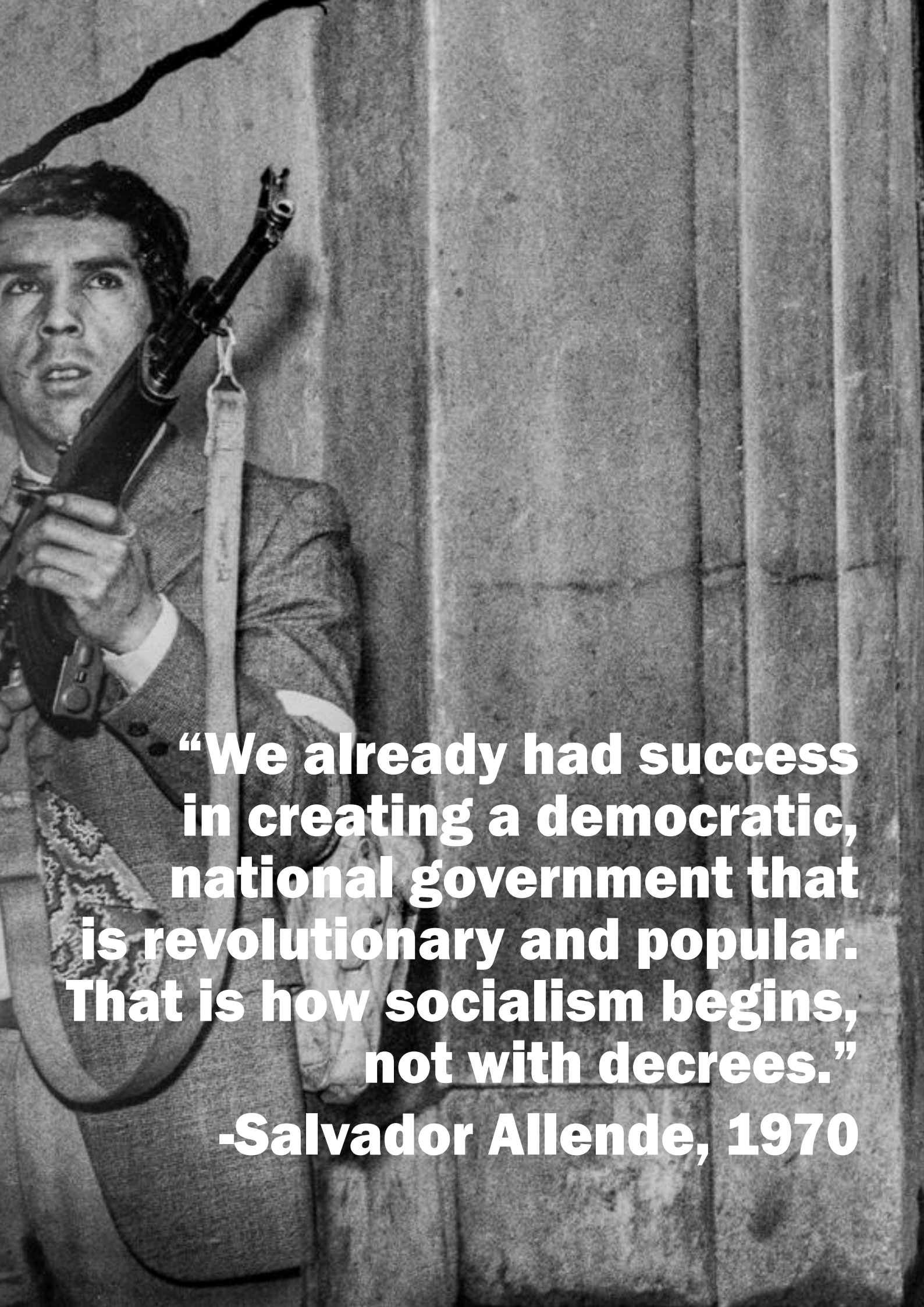
Since 1925 and above all since 1926, anti-semitic demagogy, well camouflaged, unattackable, goes hand in hand with symbolic trials against avowed pogromists. You ask me if

the old Jewish petty bourgeoisie in the USSR has been socially assimilated by the new soviet environment. I am indeed at a loss to give you a clear reply. The social and national statistics in the USSR are extremely tendencious. They do not serve to set forth the truth, but above all to glorify the leaders, the chiefs, the creators of happiness. An important part of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie has been absorbed by the formidable apparatuses of the state, industry, commerce, the cooperatives, etc., above all in their lower and middle layers. This fact engenders an anti-semitic state of feeling and the leaders manipulate it with a cunning skill in order to canalize and to direct especially against the Jews the existing discontent against the bureaucracy.

On Biro-bidjan I can give you no more than my personal evaluations. I am not acquainted with this region and still less with the conditions in which the Jews have settled there. In any case it can be no more than a very limited experience. The USSR alone would still be too poor to resolve its own Jewish question, even under a regime much more socialist than the present one. The Jewish question, I repeat, is indissolubly bound up with the complete emancipation of humanity. Everything else that is done in this domain can only be a palliative and often even a two-edged blade, as the example of Palestine shows. ■ **Leon Trotsky, 18 January 1937**

**Below: Community members and activists in Newcastle hold space to disrupt the 'March for Australia' rally at Pacific Park. Photo: Max J.**





**“We already had success  
in creating a democratic,  
national government that  
is revolutionary and popular.  
That is how socialism begins,  
not with decrees.”**

**-Salvador Allende, 1970**