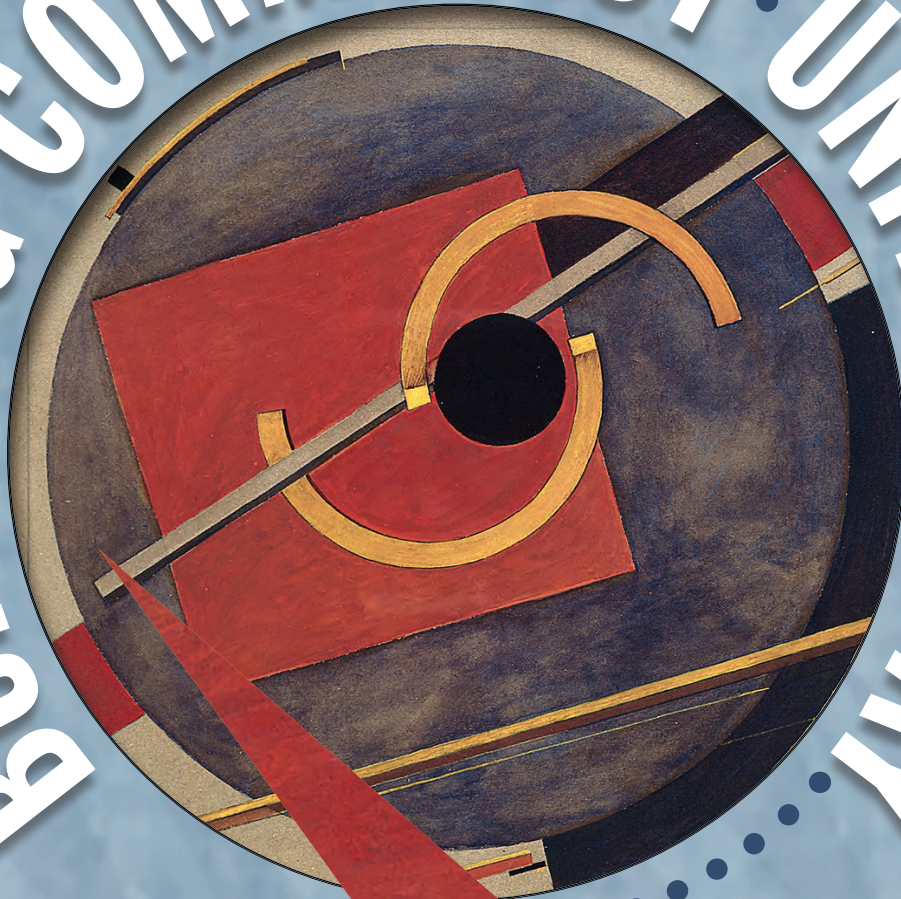


PARTISAN!

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BUILDING • COMMUNIST • UNITY • TODAY



- *Inside ~*
- **Reports on the**
- **Fourth General Conference**
- **of the RCO, now Communist Unity**

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What we fight for

Communist Unity is a partyist fighting organisation of workers and youth committed to the struggle for democracy, peace, and socialism. Our central aim is the reunification of the communist movement into a Communist Party. Without organisation, the working-class is nothing. Without a party, the communist movement is nothing. A party is the highest level of organisation. We advocate for the establishment of a communist party, because we do not believe that such a party exists today. This is despite the existence of 'so-called' communist parties, notably, the Communist Party of Australia (est. 1971). Most organisations on the socialist left are political sects, insular groupings organised around narrow platforms.

We communists have no interests separate from the working class as a whole. We differ only in seeing scientific socialism, or Marxism, as the guide to practice, and seeing the world-historic importance of the working class. Without revolutionary ideas, there can be no revolutionary movement, and thus the first aim of communists is to promote these revolutionary ideas—Marxism and scientific socialism.

We oppose all criminal wars waged by imperialists at home and abroad. Such wars are dime a dozen in capitalist society, and we can only abolish war by abolishing capitalism as a world system. We are internationalists, and believe that communists and workers must be organised globally. Capitalism is a global system, therefore communists must organise globally. We are revolutionaries. We do not believe that the capitalist class will willingly and peacefully relinquish the spoils of their conquests. They will use every means possible, legal and illegal, to maintain control over society through the state. We do not oppose using elections to win working class representation, but nonetheless aim to ready the working class to make revolution.

In summary, we fight to build a fighting party of communists, armed with revolutionary ideas, which can organise and lead the working class to power. By taking power, the working class can build a new society whose basis is unity and cooperation, not war and oppression. If you support democracy, socialism, and freedom, and oppose oppression, war, imperialism, and destitution, you might be a communist. Anyone who accepts these positions is urged to join Communist Unity in the struggle for a communist party. ■

PARTISAN!

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Front cover: Inset (large): *Preliminary sketch for a poster* El Lissitzky, 1920
Inset (small): *Adaptation of Basic Calculus* El Lissitzky, 1928 (wikiart.org)
Back cover: US-Israeli airstrikes target Tehran oil depot. 7 March. Credit: Sasan/AFP

Editorial

More *Partisan*, more problems

Partisan has undergone some subtle but interesting changes since Issue 16. These changes coincide with changes within the Revolutionary Communist Organisation. Firstly, the Revolutionary Communist Organisation accepted the membership of the Spartacist League of Australia, who now exist within the RCO as the Spartacist Tendency. Secondly, the RCO voted at its 4th General Conference to change its name to Communist Unity (CU). This is to better reflect what the aims of the organisation are: unity of the communist movement.

The entry of the Spartacist League into CU has opened a lot of opportunities for comrades. *Partisan* can now be printed professionally (as you will see in this issue you are holding), distributed effectively, and run like a proper, professional magazine. CU comrades now have an example of principled unity we can point to for the rest of the communist left. We join together to fight for revolutionary politics in a time of war, reaction, and widespread destitution.

Our 4th General Conference held in January was a pivotal event for the development of CU, both of its politics and as an organisation. Much of this issue is committed to presenting reports and analyses on our conference, so that you can learn about the issues at play during the conference, how the conference went, and where CU aims to go in the future. This is alongside articles covering the ongoing assault against Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, and others by US imperialism. Under Trump 2, US imperialism's war-drive has gone haywire. Pres. Maduro of Venezuela was kidnapped by American forces in alliance with layers of Maduro's own state. Israel continues its genocidal assault against the Palestinians, alongside invading Lebanon and Syria, and goading the US into a conflict with Iran.

“Man’s dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying, he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the Liberation of Mankind.”

—Nikolai Ostrovsky

How the Steel Was Tempered, 1936

This war with Iran has sent ripples across the world. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is dead—as are all his replacements, and thousands of workers and toilers across the Middle East. The Strait of Hormuz, through which travels 20% of natural gas and 25% of oil trade, has been permanently blocked by Iran. Both sides have destroyed gas and oil production and storage facilities. The world economy is barely on life support. Dire times like this impress the importance of revolutionary politics onto those of us who claim to be ‘communists’, ‘socialists’, or even ‘anarchists’. We must organise a revolutionary pole to oppose the imperialist war drive, to defend the peoples of the third world, and to build the power of the working class at home, in opposition to the domestic ruling class. This is why communist unity matters. Because without it, we will fail, every single time, to rise to every opportunity that presents itself to us. With crisis after crisis on the horizon, and no end to the chaos of imperialist warfare and destitution in sight, we can’t afford to keep missing our chances.

This issue marks the beginning of a new time for *Partisan*. No more will *Partisans* be printed shoddily, too late, and mailed improperly. No more will *Partisan* issues look amateur. We have expanded our operations team, bringing in talent from the Spartacist League’s *Red Battler*. We will be printing *Partisans* professionally and on time. We have switched from a monthly to a bi-monthly release schedule in order to adjust to the ‘new’ way of running things. By January 2027, we hope to return to our previous, monthly schedule. New year, new troubles, but a new *Partisan*!

Comradely,

Max J, for the *Partisan* Editorial Team

join

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SYDNEY



IRAN WAR

Our enemy is at home

*The following statement was issued by the **Central Committee** of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation on 29 March.*

As the skies of Iran are filled with the billowing plumes of oil smoke, the ghouls of capital claim that they are unleashing this brutal war in the name of ‘democracy, freedom, and self-defence’. Yet this war is really waged under the watchwords of ‘autocracy, oppression, and profit’. The United States and Israel have entered this war with different aims, but if they defeat the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Iranian Army the consequences are clear: Iran will be completely subjugated by American imperialism. If America wins this war, the only ‘freedom’ they will bring to the Iranian working class is the same freedom they brought to Libya and to Syria: the ‘freedom’ of mass graves, the ‘freedom’ of imperialism to loot the country to their hearts content, the ‘freedom’ for parents to sell their children into slavery, and the ‘freedom’ for workers to beg warlords for mercy.

Workers in Australia cannot be neutral in this conflict. We have a side we must choose – against the United States and with the Iranian proletariat. This means taking a firm stand in defence of Iran against the attempts by the US and Israel to topple or subjugate the Iranian state. We lend no support to the Mullah’s butcher regime, their capitalist dictatorship, their reli-

gious sectarianism, their racist policies, nor their elitist strategy which has led to this tragedy. But we recognise that the Iranian proletariat’s interests lie not in an American victory, which would only bring the barbarity of warlordism and the strengthening of its imperialist grip on the planet, but in the United States’ defeat. The depravity which Israel wishes to implement via missile in Iran and via tanks in Lebanon will completely cancel the possibility of an independent proletarian movement and a united communist party developing in Iran. Instead, proletarians would be massacred by tinpot warlords, ethnic and sectarian conflicts, and Taliban and Azerbaijani interventionists.

At this stage the war seems likely to only expand, with the American administration publicly discussing deploying marines to invade Iran. The Australian state and Labor government has announced its willingness to join the war drive, issuing military personnel to keep the Gulf open. The Australian Council of Trade Unions has issued a statement not speaking out against the war, but begging for “a fair stake in the massive windfall profits” plundered from abroad. In doing so, they are scabbing on the workers whose interests they claim to represent. Instead, they are serving the interests of Australian capital and its alliance with American imperialism. Australia is not neutral and our government has unambiguously taken a side with America and against workers everywhere. Already we are seeing the economic shockwaves of this war beginning to crest. With international oil and natural gas markets at risk, the knock-on effect has already impacted fuel prices and could impact everything from common supermarket goods, world shipping, and food security.

It is the working class, including in Australia, who will shoulder the greatest burden in this war – whether that is fighting and dying in it or suffering starvation, poverty, and state violence on the homefront. The irrationality of the capitalist economy is revealing itself again in the form of the ‘just in time’ system and the ‘A.I.’ bubble. At best, this war will bring unemployment and a worsening cost of living crisis. At worst – and if the ‘A.I.’ bubble pops – the war will bring a social crisis similar in magnitude to the Great Depression. The only question now is this: how much murder and depravity are we willing to suffer before we are ready to break our chains?

Against the anarchy of the market and of global war, we raise the banner of the forceful abolition of classes by the proletariat and of a transition towards an internationally planned economy under the democratic control



Abaca Press/Alamy Live News

Aftermath of imperialist terror bombing, central Tehran, 2 March.

of the entire human species. A workers' republic in Australia would unleash the full power of the proletariat to rebuild the continent and the world in our interests.

As revolutionaries, as internationalists, and as communists; we stand proudly for the defeat of our own state in the war. The enemy is not in Tehran; they are at home! To the American and Australian workers who may be sent off to die to line the capitalist's pockets, we have a very simple message: turn the guns around!

Sections of the left have attempted to retreat into social pacifism with calls for peace and international arbitration. This only follows the footsteps of left Laborite bureaucrats, such as those in the Maritime Union of Australia, whose statement appeals for the Australian government to take a "decisive turn to diplomacy, disarmament and respect for international law". Communists are not pacifists; when the clarion call of war comes, we are not afraid to fight. We fight for the defeat of our own ruling class, and for the victory of the workers!

However, those who give political support to the Mulhahs cripple the struggle. The reason we stand on the edge of this calamity is because of the regime's categorical failures. Communists must fight for the independent self-organisation of the proletariat across the Middle East. Only this form of struggle can overturn imperialism in any meaningful sense. Kissing the Iranian state's boot, which has been firmly on the neck of the Iranian worker for decades, does not do this. Similarly, there will be those in Iran and elsewhere who will be drawn to siding with the US' and Israel's form of imposed 'democracy and freedom'. But this 'democracy and freedom' is nothing but a cover for their imperialist ambitions. Don't believe them, and don't betray the real struggle by the proletariat for democracy and communism. From the masses of Bahrain to Lebanon, from Syria to Egypt, and from Yemen to the UAE; communists must fight together to rouse them into action on their own terms and for their own liberation.

Our task as communists in Australia is to fight the



Partisan map

Strait of Hormuz: chokepoint in Iran war.

enemy at home. That means taking up the struggle against imperialist war and linking the desire of working people for peace with the need to fight for socialism. It also means raising key demands: the closure of all US bases, the breaking of the US Alliance, and the defeat of US imperialism.

The communist movement in Australia is weak, it is divided and sectarian, but it has the power to be so much more than what it is. We must reject the small-minded parochialism of the sect, and fight for principled internationalist unity. Together a genuine communist party in Australia could fight the US' lackeys in the labour movement, smash AUKUS, tear up ANZUS, expel every American asset, and transform Australia from a bastion of imperialist oppression in the South Pacific into a burning beacon of freedom, democracy, and communism. ■



Partisan photo

RCO joins Palestine rally, Melbourne 29 March.

DEFEND IRAN!

DOWN WITH THE IMPERIALISTS!

from the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation, 2026

With the movement of the USS Abraham Lincoln into the Arab Gulf and increasingly bellicose sputterings from the President, it seems an attack on Iran by the imperialists is imminent. The American imperialists, in their desperation to keep the peoples of the world bent beneath their boot, want to take advantage of the crisis in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) to impose an American backed puppet regime on the Iranian people – and if that proves impossible, then drive the country into civil war. It is the duty of all communists, anti-imperialists, and proletarian internationalists to stand resolutely behind the workers and peasants of Iran in the struggle against the imperialists.

Defend Iran, down with the imperialist Workers of the World, Unite!
The current crisis in Iran, which is driven by the oligarchic ruling class of Iran's response to crippling sanctions imposed by the imperialists, has divided the country between supporters of the reactionary Islamic Republic and the petty bourgeois opposition, which is largely supported by the imperialist powers. The working class of Iran, who have seen their historic leadership crushed under the boot of the reactionary IRI regime, have proven their ability to heroically strike out on their own, but remain disparate and isolated in a broadly reactionary political climate.

There are some who extend opposition to imperialism to political support for the Islamic Republic and its leadership. We repudiate this popular frontist delusion. The ruling class of Iran have shown their inability to effectively resist the imperialists, or to stabilise the domestic situation on terms favourable to the working class. In the struggle against the imperialists, these reactionary priests and generals have shown that they will always prioritise their own positions within the capitalist world system. They must be swept aside – but this can only be achieved on the basis of an international anti-imperialist movement led by the proletariat.

We call on all socialists, communists, and internationalists in Australia to unite to defend the Iranian masses from imperialism, to support the struggle of the Iranian working class, and to...

Venezuela must win!

*The following statement of the **Central Committee** of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation was released on 4 January in solidarity with Venezuelan workers and for the defeat of the United States.*

American aggression against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has reached a fever-pitch. The Trump administration appears to be copying Israel's recent airstrikes against Iran, making targeted strikes against Venezuelan infrastructure, politicians, and army staff in an attempt to collapse the government. The US military has begun a bombing campaign in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela. American forces have captured Venezuelan President Maduro.

The prelude to this imperialist assault consisted of massacring fishermen under the cover of "fighting cartels", the closure of Venezuelan airspace, the embargo on Venezuelan oil exports, and the promotion of the reactionary Nobel Peace Prize winner María Corina Machado as a figurehead of an oppositional government.

The communist movement must unite to resist this imperialist assault on Venezuela. These attacks on the Venezuelan working class are among many last-ditch efforts to restore the political, economic and military supremacy of the declining American Empire. This attack has three major purposes: to create a favourable environment for US investment and the takeover of oil and mineral extraction, to ensure the deportation of 300,00 Venezuelans residing in the US whose Temporary Protected Status the Trump administration recently revoked, to cement the rationale of such uses of extraordinary force targeting migrants and other South American countries.

The primary task of Australian communists, socialists, and internationalist-minded workers today is to oppose this war, expose the imperialist alliance between Australia and the United States, and build a fighting anti-imperialist movement amongst workers and students. This movement must call for the defeat of the US military, the victory of the Venezuelan workers and peasants, and the overthrow of US imperialism. We support unequivocally the total mobilisation of the Venezuelan workers and peasants to crush the American imperialists, and their Venezuelan capitalist allies.

Millions of Venezuelan workers, peasants, and students are preparing to take up arms against imperialism.

The greatest military force the proletariat has is its own class power. For US imperialism to be defeated, the entire might of the working class must be brought to bear in a political, economic, social, and military struggle.

We have never had faith in Maduro's compromising nationalist leadership. History has shown us that these politics are a dead end: ending in integration into the imperialist world order, or the massacre of the most militant and combative wings of the proletariat. In Venezuela's case, we have both. Under Maduro's rule, state-owned businesses have been privatised, labour protections scrapped, welfare and pensions cut in favour of paying off predatory International Monetary Fund loans, hyperinflation has destroyed livelihoods, the indigenous population has been attacked, corruption has intensified, and the communist opposition has been suppressed.

Especially in the context of the sanctions placed on Venezuela by the first Trump administration in 2017, the national road to socialism has been shown to be wholly inadequate. Venezuelan workers have made immense sacrifices, and they have been betrayed by their leadership. If the US attempt to impose regime change succeeds, it will be because of Maduro's failure to renew the Bolivarian revolution, break it out of the oil-extraction-development model, and place power directly in the hands of the working class. The task of communists is to break the capitalist hegemony over the proletariat and fight for the working class to realise its own power. The Communist Party of Venezuela



Kyle Mazza/CNP

NYC, 5 January: US federal agents haul kidnapped Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores to court.



succinctly summed up the nature of the issue in their statement “No to imperialist occupation, no to internal capitulation!”:

“The defense of the homeland cannot be confused with support for the authoritarian bloc in power, but neither can it be confused with indifference to the foreign boot... Faced with the threat of a naval blockade and military escalation, the PCV calls for international class solidarity, appealing to the communist and workers’ parties of the world, including the American proletariat, to denounce imperialist piracy and the neo-colonial offensive against Venezuela and against all of Latin America and the Caribbean. Venezuela is presented today as an ‘exemplary case’: if the Trump Corollary prevails here, no country in the region will be safe from the confiscation of its resources and military imposition.”

The RCO calls on the rest of the socialist movement in Australia to fight for and agitate around these key anti-imperialist demands:

- The cancellation of AUKUS.
- ANZUS must be abrogated.
- Pine Gap must be closed, and the American military must be expelled.
- Australia must withdraw from all other imperialist alliances.
- All Australian police, military, and intelligence personnel must be withdrawn from international operations.

These demands provide the basis for united communist agitation against aggression in Venezuela. Our movement is far stronger when it is united around shared demands and common goals.

Some in the socialist movement will capitulate to pacifist demands to simply “stop the war”, without making any mention of the international struggle against US imperialism. This position is untenable and amounts to a rejection of the international class struggle. The communist position is not simply to stop the war. Communists are for the destruction of the US empire and imperialism altogether. US military dominance over the globe must end. Socialists who do not fight for a victory for Venezuelan workers only bolster the illusion of a rules-based international order in which peace can be achieved under imperialist domination and sow

confusion around the necessity for world revolution and the destruction of imperialism.

In Australia, the primary task is to rebuild a fighting anti-imperialist movement. This means organising in the streets, in workplaces, and in schools against imperialist war and exploitation. However, any anti-imperialist struggle is divided and undermined by the presence of sectarianism and the absence of a mass, internationalist communist party. Only such a party can wage a struggle that breaks trade unions from the narrow politics of patriotism and Laborism and pose a genuine challenge to the imperialist order. All genuine internationalists who wish to fight imperialism, and to fight for the world revolution, must strive for the construction of an independent and democratically run proletarian party with an international perspective.

Whoever rules in Venezuela tomorrow and in the coming months, the working class will remain. Any attempt to lay low this or that government, any bloody suppression of the working masses, is useless against the power of a united working class. One day, the workers of Latin America will defeat American imperialism and forge a united Latin American workers’ republic.

Defend Venezuela!

All Power to the Workers and Peasants!

Build the Anti-Imperialist Movement!

Break the Imperialist Alliance!

¡El pueblo armado jamás será vencido!

¡Trabajadores del mundo, úniós! ■

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Fourth General Conference of the RCO

REPORTS ON THE 2026 CONFERENCE



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Critiquing perspectives at the conference

Anthony Furia and Christina Veselovskiy report on Communist Unity's Fourth General Conference, summarising and critiquing the perspectives of all those involved, both major and minor.

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) held its 4th General Conference over the weekend of January 17th to 18th. Over two eight hour sessions, the organisation debated key political and social questions, as well as held organisational debates. The result of such organisational debates is the name change: the RCO will now be known as Communist Unity, with an official name change rolling over in the future.

Alongside these debates, the organisation presented general theses on the international situation and Australia's place in it, alongside the nature of fascism and Bonapartism. The organisation also debated stances on the Labor Party, the nascent Socialist Party (The Socialists), and the strategic orientation towards them.

The conference hosted members from across the country, many from Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, and Newcastle, along with Perth. Sixteen delegates (voters) were elected, an increase of five since the conference held in July 2025. The diversity of attendees reflected

the diversity of the organisation's growing membership.

The 4th Conference concluded with the election of a new central committee, made up of six members. Of these six, three are from Melbourne, two are from Brisbane, and one is from Canberra. This incoming central committee broadly represents the general politics of the organisation, with one committee member from the Spartacist Tendency (formerly the Spartacist League of Australia). Three of the six elected central committee members have been re-elected, having served on the previous central committee.

The debates held within the organisation reflected the diversity of views held by its membership. Until "The Mountain" (an "orthodox faction") was announced publicly, factional lines outside of the Spartacist Tendency were unclear. Moreover, proposals regarding the status of party and program were often submitted as strategic or tactical theses, or vice versa.

Given technical issues, a number of inexperienced chairs (one of whom was spilled and replaced), and the simple fact that most attendees had not interacted in person prior to conference, procedural hierarchies occasionally disintegrated. Many comrades opted to caucus

Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026

in real time, interrupting the flow of the conference.

The main divides expressed at this conference were between the Partyists, the “mainstream” politics of the RCO, and Actionists. While there is no hard “left” or “right” faction within the organisation, it’s clear that “The Mountain”, a newly formed Partyist faction, broadly represents the “centre”.

Actionism and its discontents

Actionism can be seen as a primary symptom of the challenge of interfacing communist politics within a fractured workers’ movement.

The actionist’s motto is surmisable in Marx’s warning to Wilhelm Bracke, that “every step of the real movement is more important than a dozen programs.” It places the aspirations of the communist movement in the subsistence struggles of today and drowns alleged “abstracts” in a sea of undefined terms inherited from long-dead traditions.

Both syndicalist and workerist tendencies within historical communist parties played their part in pushing actionism beyond the individualistic impulses and petty-bourgeois romanticism of its 19th-century origins.

In today’s highly atomised society, however, with incomes and technical knowledge ever-increasingly stratified both inside and outside the factory, actionism represents the last hope of salvaging the “general intellect” from the proletariat and providing it with enough space to stand on two feet once again.

Its goal is to eradicate the present foundations of ruling-class hegemony, but it does so with a flattened, oversimplified understanding of how political hegemony works. Actionism in 2026 is the voluntarism of the helpless amongst the working class, and the events of conference highlight the many contradictions within this tendency, in both higher and lesser forms.

Higher-stage actionism, a guide to reaction

This higher stage was on display during the motions and amendments proposed by members of the Spartacist Tendency. This “Spartacist” current demands a resolute break with liberal internationalism and the politics of Australia’s post-accords civil society. Hardly objectionable if taken by itself, the Spartacists’ error is mistaking this aspirational norm for our entire basis of unity.

For their part, the Spartacists consistently centred the crisis of liberalism and US imperialism throughout each session. Yet immediately, we must clarify some things:

Do all forces across the current political spectrum not argue that a political break from neoliberalism is necessary, including said liberals themselves?

Does the rise of anti-political demagogues and Bonapartist administrations not prove that such demands for a break are easily recuperable?

Are the many legal, legislative, financial, and bureaucratic embattlements faced by these regimes not proof of a strange resilience in neoliberal capitalism? That, despite red herrings like the war on academic departments, actual elites prove readily capable of ejecting any position they so choose and recuperating its critique from the right? Is the crisis of state capacity not entirely the function of throttling investment and working-class bargaining power to protect the basic reproduction of the ruling class, rather than proof of liberal incompetence?

If so (and indeed these are so), how shall our program of negation emerge, as the Spartacists insist, from the “real” and “tangible” spectacles glimpsed on 24-hour news, discussed and pamphleteered ad nauseam around the water cooler, without being supplemented by a patient and rigorous study of the dynamics of debt-concealed immiseration and declining profit rates visible since the 1970s?

If abstracts are the enemy of the worker, how can they amplify their voice beyond their union and their sect if they already observe and condemn, on moral grounds, those instances of naked imperialism each night spent in front of the television, or on their smartphone?

If struggles are always concrete, have the past decades of failed protest movements not proven that the Spartacists’ day-to-day anti-imperialist politics are the illusion of agency shared by all participants in the spectacle, as moral inertia carries them from one headline to the next?

Without a program, the political outlook of the proletariat is narrow indeed, and the “Guide to Action” the Spartacists mentioned mainly serves as a Guide to *Reaction*. The goal of the communist is not just to address symptoms immediately visible on the skin, but to palpate the flows of blood and viscera underneath, uniting hand and mind in reference to logical experience and a diagnostician’s training.

Programmatic and Strategic analysis involves necessary abstractions because capitalist production itself deals in abstracts. The methodological nationalism of the Spartacists conceals the basic reproduction of the international ruling class under a deluge of summons to the barricades.

The Spartacists are by no means political amnesiacs, yet even they forget the ease with which anti-imperialist politics adopts an ineffectual voluntarist hope in core states, and aids projects of class collaboration in the periphery.

In the span of 100 years, liberalism has evacuated itself of all ideological content other than the doctrine of atomised individualism. Its vacuousness is the source of its resilience, and thus its negation can never be a purely local affair, appealing to no program beyond the immediate concerns of the workers. The Spartacists kindle their revolutionary fire using the same oxygen as the petty-bourgeois classes.

Reports on the General Conference

A program that invokes the acephalous mass of workers to justify its own correctness, asserting a priori socialist norms and immediate interests as one and the same, risks shrinking the horizon of struggle to boundaries no less narrow than those of all the other interests of reaction.

Lower-stage actionism and rhetorical errors

A minor but no less visible form of actionism emerged during conference, which helps clarify the role of conferences in the communist movement more broadly. In particular, several comrades showed a tendency to separate their rhetoric from the underlying motions being discussed.

Given that Communist Unity still shows tactical and organisational flaws commensurate with its pre-party status, and that, as mentioned before, internal culture is currently transitioning from cliquish, sectarian groups towards organised factions, it is predictable that these minor forms of actionist thinking will also slide their way into debates.

In particular, comrade Revmira (now a member of the Central Committee) frequently turned procedural

motions—such as establishing international liaison groups, the Partisan Defence Committee, and adjusting conference’s delegate system—into a pledge of fidelity to abstract ideals.

Comrade Revmira’s tendency to advocate for uncontroversial measures with inflammatory, Manichean rhetoric risks misleading younger and less experienced cadres about the principles and tactics the organisation stands for. Given that many of these motions were either unanimous or contained only friendly amendments, this activity risks creating an impression of unanimous support for the exaggerated emotional commitments that actionist-minded comrades may identify with, thereby influencing the tactical decisions they will make in the future.

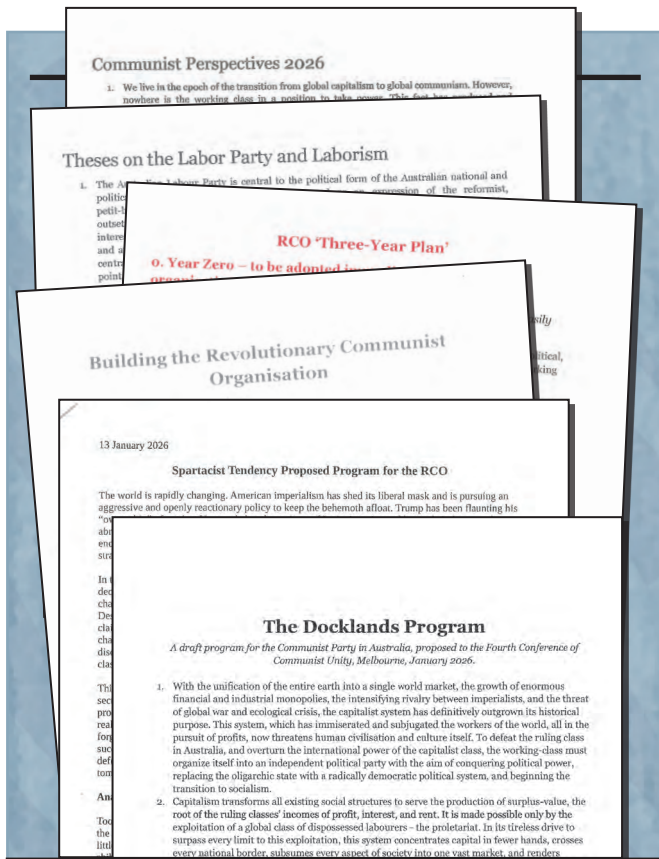
While conference speeches require a form of adversarial discourse and rhetorical commitments that diverge from the content of the proposal, as human language inevitably demands, what kinds of normative commitments comrades invest in their words matter when seeking conference’s consent.

Too often, comrades embody the inverse of Gramsci’s famous aphorism in that they are optimists of the intellect and pessimists of the will. Optimists of the intellect, for they believe they embody correct politics in reference to transhistoric ideals; they too often admit in their empty definitions of sober and scientific analysis that their understanding involves deterministic premises, that the goal of communism involves a Calvinistic degree of inevitability. Likewise, the pessimism of the will asserts itself in what goes unsaid by their rhetoric; that in our immediate context, no unity can be achieved without constant and undying faith in shibboleths—without them, without the passions, a dream can and will be deferred.

That our immediate political context is one of spectacles does not mean we must create counter-spectacles and inject them into our program and strategy. The sin of actionism is believing that tactics, when infused with the right declarations, can be elevated to the level of strategy and be embraced as the basis for unity. When addressing from the bully pulpit, we ask that comrades apply their calls for sober analysis with the consistency it deserves.

The meaning of the Spartacists

The Spartacists represent a critical step forward for organised factionalism within Communist Unity. The first faction to concretise itself in distinction to the dominant “Mountain” centre of an orthodox partyist persuasion, the Spartacist Tendency epitomises an actionist politics in factional command, to a greater level of political sophistication than those unrefined unreconstructed actionist elements that tend to be brought in from recruitment amongst the sects and



Documents debated at the conference.

Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026

social movements (both dominated by a politics of the moral imperative—that “something must be done”).

This is because the Spartacist Tendency, at their rhetorical best, poses the question of action in relation to the question of unity—the question of the struggle for the communist party. For their most theoretically clear members, the reasoning behind their immediatist, “bread and butter” program is straightforwardly that shared practical struggle (currently, for the tendency “practical struggle” is often elided to mean simply “union organising”) is a prerequisite for unity amongst communist forces. This is an idea that, in abstract, is not opposed by Mountain forces. That struggle is critical to furthering unity amongst communist forces, and thus the struggle for a mass party generally, is accepted across most elements of the organisation. It is in the question of priority, and what this struggle should look like in the present world-historic moment, that the Mountain and Spartacist Tendency find one another at odds. Endorsing motions such as the “proletarianisation” motion relies upon either an implicit theoretical acceptance of the Spartacist Tendency’s of the current political, organisational juncture (described above) or the adoption of a similar perspective in opposition to that presented by Mountain forces.

Here, the question is tactical: is now the time, both in terms of membership and the political situation, to enact a turn to industry? Could we really gain significance from such a turn? Would it concretely advance struggles for unity? Mountain forces generally opposed the perspective presented by the Spartacist Tendency that responded to these questions in the affirmative.

The vote on the motion to “proletarianise Communist Unity” (only very narrowly defeated), which argued for a goal of 50% blue- and pink-collar work membership, highlighted potential for cooperation between both factions, and the extent to which the question was tactical. The problem many in the Mountain have with the tactics immediately posed by the Spartacist Tendency is not with the tactics in abstract, but rather with their fetishisation to the level of strategy (and thereby their displacement of *real* political strategy) and their assertion that these are in fact the *right* tactics for our particular subjective and objective juncture. However, into the future, as circumstances shift and the organisation grows, drives to “proletarianise” the organisation and similar shifts in focus to union organising and work may be accepted by the Mountain, albeit on partyist terms—that is, as tactics within a broad strategic road to power.

Partyism: some notes

Communist Unity’s “partyist” tradition suffers from several theoretical and conceptual difficulties due to the immanent political, organisational situation it finds itself in. As the oldest and dominant trend within the organi-

sation over three successive general conferences, a core partyist conception has defined Communist Unity itself.

As the organisation grows, this conception, due to its own principled commitment to democratic openness, programmatic unity, and factional rights, faces consistent challenges from differing perspectives on the tasks of the organisation in the current moment, and the strategy that should be pursued in order to achieve



Pro-Montagnard (The Mountain) art by Étienne Béricourt during the French Revolution. Caption reads “Long live The Mountain, Long live the Republic, one and indivisible.”

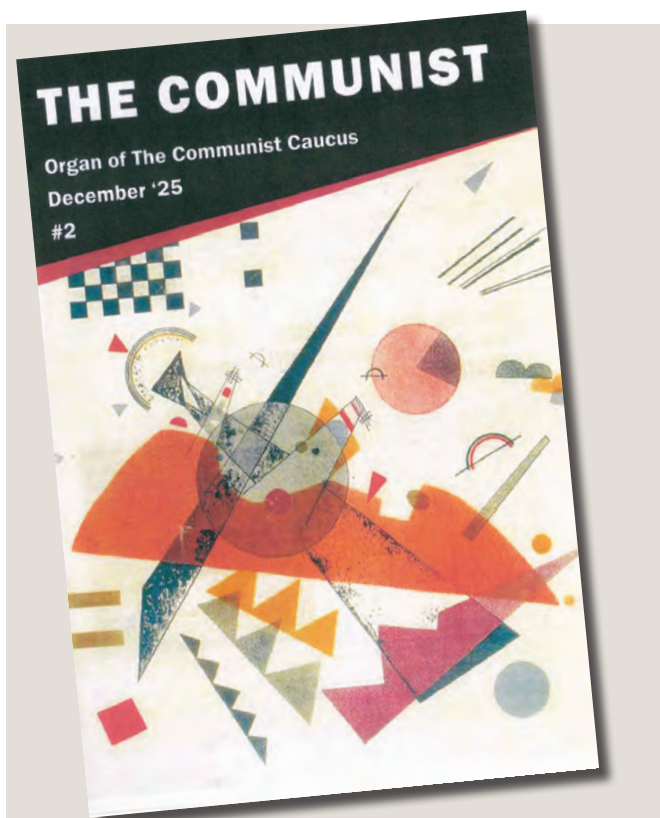
“partyist” aims (the forging of a mass communist party, through, in some form or another, the existing socialist movement).

The problem, then, becomes separating a narrower theoretical perspective of what “partyism” involves, held by those in Communist Unity who pioneered such an identity for the organisation, from the broad embrace of a notional “partyism” by virtually all oppositional elements within the organisation itself. This, furthermore, is not a clear-cut separation of one dominant trend against all others. There is a diverse stratification across the organisation’s layers, which is likely to continue to develop as we grow. That is, layers and members endorse or refute different elements of the central “partyist” con-

Reports on the General Conference

ception to differing degrees. One could, for example, oppose a minimum-maximum style program but endorse a strategy of going “through” the left to reforge the communist party, and vice versa.

This process of separation, spurred on by the creation of the Spartacist Tendency as a formal opposition to a generally hegemonic central trend, has forced partyism (in fact, has *allowed* partyism) within Communist Unity to face and present itself in clearer, public terms. In doing so, it has begun to undergo the shift from “clique” in the sense of informal social networks of politically influential comrades who organise to present a particular strategy and way forward for the organisation, to “faction”—a political body organised on public, expressed political terms, presenting a view for the future of the organisation which can now be more effectively contextualised through the presence of opposition and alternative perspectives.



THE COMMUNIST

The Communist is the publication of the Communist Caucus, an internal caucus of the Socialist Party. We are the only publication specifically aimed at the members, supporters and voters of the Socialist Party and its state affiliates.

Currently, an “orthodox” partyism—The Mountain—remains the central expression of such political organisation. It aligns itself with a minimum maximum program, an emphasis on organisational democracy and theoretical education, and the importance of a revolutionary strategy of patience—in opposition to actionist shortcuts and tactical posturing. How this develops into the future, and along what lines it may fracture, coalesce, and fracture again as the organisation grows, remains to be seen.

Concluding thoughts

Those guilty of actionism, those who elevate tactics to the level of strategy and programme, should in future understand their errors. Incidents such as these are instructive for the organisation moving forward, and further dialogue on many Spartacist proposals, such as the 50% proletarian motion, is encouraged. Non-*mountain* currents within partyism are emerging, but too often proceed on actionist assumptions. As the cliques and sects become factions, tactical struggles shall ultimately prove their mettle. Having conquered a programme for today, a Leninist considers the programme of the future, shaped by the struggles of tomorrow, and does not balk at tactical interventions.

Conference, which proceeds on the basis of democratic centralism, should not confuse the agreed-on motions with unwieldy and actionist rhetoric. Communist Unity does not seek dogmatists, but rather those capable of penetrating analysis and who are able to reason with the null hypotheses of their own beliefs. We don't fear to lay out our errors. Our external enemies can find reason for joy in this, but they'll be sorry. Once an error is recognised, it's already halfway to being repaired. Communist Unity, by the clarity of its debates and decisions, will certainly demonstrate this at the next Conference in 2027. ■

CANBERRA

COCKTAILS WITH COMRADES

FORTNIGHTLY
TUESDAY, 5:00PM
DISSENT BAR & CAFE
CITY WALK
HOSTED BY
COMMUNIST
UNITY

Solidarity!

Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026

The view from The Mountain

At the Revolutionary Communist Organisation's Fourth General Conference, factional perspectives over key political questions were raised. Mila Volkova reports on the conference, giving her perspective as a member of a newly formed faction within the organisation.

The applause was proud as we concluded the 4th General Conference of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO)—soon to be relaunched as ‘Communist Unity’. My comrades Christina and Anthony recently published a short analysis of the conference in the RCO’s magazine *Partisan!* Though Christina is not a member of the growing faction to which I belong—The Mountain—that article is a good abstract analysis of the events of the conference.

The conference, which took place on the 17th and 18th of January in Melbourne, signalled what comrade David Passerine termed ‘the end of the beginning’. With this conference, the RCO has begun to break out of the immaturity which has characterised it since its founding in 2022. We have achieved unity with the Spartacist League of Australia, now called the Spartacist Tendency of the RCO. Cliques are becoming factions. Assumptions about the future have been exchanged for concrete strategic plans. Our program has been cut down from a cumbersome sixty plus pages to a more concise—but still effective—seventeen. We have transitioned from a rag tag group with political aspirations to a serious political organisation with around eighty members across the country. But poor discipline and disorganisation indicated that the new still has some parts of the old in it. Some younger conference attendees have not yet grasped the sober and serious attitude of a good conference. Chairing was somewhat chaotic, and members weren’t used to being in an organisation where they don’t know every other member by face and name. Conference documents are currently being edited and will soon be made publicly available.

The RCO conference uses a delegate structure, where ordinary members can attend, speak, and move motions but only elected delegates may vote. RCO members sent sixteen delegates to conference, one for every three cadre members, to represent them. Delegates are elected in a manner like delegates of the Paris Commune: they are recallable and bound to the mandate that they ran on. Normally, this means delegates express their factional affiliations and aspirations for conference, and members vote for delegates based on this. Of these sixteen, eight were members of ‘The Mountain’. This faction was formed last minute by members of the ‘republican communist’/‘Macnair-ist’ RCO orthodoxy. A further three delegates were members of the Spartacist Tendency. The remaining five were swing voters

and included two self-identified ‘Left Communist’ delegates. In addition to running on a factional platform, delegates are required to seek the views of their members on all motions and vote in line with any instructions given to them—in a proportional manner, if the views of members diverge.

Day one

The day began with the political reports on the international situation and the class struggle in Australia. These reports fed into the ‘Communist Perspectives 2026-2027’, a document containing our major non-programmatic theoretical and political resolutions. Political disagreement over the content of these reports and the perspectives document was minimal. Surprisingly, the Spartacists did not directly contest the resolution that China is a semi-peripheral and sub-imperialist power. Instead, they criticised the documents for being too abstract and not directly linked with plans of action. It is unclear if this was a tactical decision made to avoid a theoretical debate on the nature of the Chinese social formation or if the Spartacists simply oppose the adoption of purely theoretical documents altogether.

During this section, several motions were brought forward on building ties with Indonesian and New Zealand communists, as well as developing a base of RCO cadres in Pasifika states and Papua New Guinea. Though no



Reports on the General Conference

one disagreed with the goals outlined in these motions, some comrades—me included—argued against them on the basis that they had no concrete plan to achieve them. These passed with some amendments. The Spartacists put forward a motion committing the RCO to a China defencist position. This motion made no mention of ‘multipolarity’ as a strategy nor of the political economy of China and was vague on what a ‘defence’ of China would mean and in which contexts it would apply. It is possible that this vagueness was intentional. It only committed the RCO to opposition to American imperialism and opposition to attacks on the standards of living of Chinese workers. This alone is uncontroversial, and the motion passed without much fuss. If this is part of a strategy to ‘wedge’ the RCO’s membership towards what the Spartacists consider a more revolutionary position, watered-down motions such as this one will not succeed in doing so.

After lunch, the conference discussed two proposals for the RCO’s program. First, we discussed the Spartacists’ proposal. This was a seven-page document with a short description of the world conjuncture and three slogans: break the working class from liberalism, merge the socialist and workers’ movements, and international unity against imperialism. This is the crux of the Spartacists’ strategic proposal. A defensive struggle of workers against imperialism and against further attacks on its conditions—led and agitated by militant cadres inside strategic industries such as industrial production and infrastructure—can galvanise the proletariat against its poor leadership and develop international class consciousness. From this, the vanguard can expand its ranks and develop a base in the proletariat. Out of this,

a party becomes possible. It is the lack of this base i.e. the focus of the current socialist movement on the ‘petit bourgeois’—the Sparts refer to professionals and students here—that is the cause of sectarianism and the movement’s isolation.

The non-Spartacist delegates did not necessarily disagree with this strategy. But the proposal was voted down in favour of the ‘Docklands Program’ (which is only a shortened version of the previous program) because most RCO members do not consider their proposal to be a programmatic one. For us, the program does not set out a plan of action to take the RCO from where it is now forward to the creation of a communist party. Rather, it is a proposal to the entire Australian socialist movement for a program that we can all collectively accept and work under. As a plan of action for the RCO specifically, the Spartacists’ program is myopic. As a primarily tactical and rhetorical document, the Spartacists’ program contains no vision for the dictatorship of the proletariat (the minimum) nor for communism itself (the maximum). I echo comrade David Passerine’s criticism of this form of unity (given in his talk at Crisis & Critique) as simultaneously too broad in the sense that one does not need to be a communist to agree with these tactics as the best form of struggle, and too narrow in the sense that many communists do not agree that these tactics are the best form of struggle. Such unity is prone to collapse in the face of political shocks or to opportunistic and self-interested participation by sectarian groupings—participation which can easily be withdrawn if it becomes inconvenient. This is not to say that we reject tactical unity. Insofar as a political organisation needs to be united in action, we accept tactical unity. But this is only achievable in the context of unity around comprehensive political goals i.e. unity around a program.

Day one ended with the presentation of three major ‘theses’ documents: one on the Labor Party, one on reactionary politics, and one on the Socialist Party. The third passed without any major disagreement. The second outlined the controversial perspective that Australia does not currently have the conditions for a reactionary political turn alike to that which the USA, UK, and European countries have experienced. This was justified by pointing out that Australia avoided the immediate fallout of the Great Financial Crisis, that the regional and rural population is much smaller in Australia than elsewhere, and that the proportion of the Australian middling classes employed in, or with class interests aligned with, the liberal, democratic, imperialist, and



Alamy

Genocide Joe Biden and lackey sidekicks celebrate AUKUS, San Diego 2023.

Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026

corporatist state is larger in Australia than elsewhere. Many conference attendees did not disagree with these claims on the face of them but cautioned against adopting a strong position which could be proven wrong should circumstances change. The motion passed despite Spartacist delegates voting against it on the grounds that the international liberal political order is collapsing and that reactionary politics would ‘spread’ from country to country. How this spread might concretely occur was not explained.

The theses on Labor led to the only disagreement at conference which was not ‘had out’ in an explicit manner. On this topic, there were essentially three positions: we should explicitly aim to split the Labor Party (this was the Spartacists’ position), we should pursue a ‘sacred lie’ in which we work inside the Labor Party on a purely agitational basis but expect a split (this was the Left Communist position), or we should aim to transform the Labor party into a democratically organised united front of the entire working class (The Mountain’s position). After amendments, the theses on Labor adopted the third position aspirationally while acknowledging the need to prepare for a split. But whether the hypothetical communist party should aim to split the Labor Party was not explicitly resolved for or against. This is disappointing and this issue is likely to be ‘hot topic’ in the leadup to next conference.

Day two

Day two was dominated by lengthy discussion of the RCO’s organisational reports, the Three-Year Plan, and ‘organisational proposals’. The press, education, and organisational building reports were passed without much contention. Though there was some discussion around the organisational building report, as some local sections contested the description of their success and failures as laid out by the outgoing CC, most amendments were relatively minor and the document passed without major re-writing. The Three-Year Plan and the Spartacists’ alternative proposal for a ‘50% proletarian RCO’ led to a lengthy back-and-forth in which the Three-Year Plan ultimately passed. The plan committed the RCO to quadrupling its cadre membership within two years and for pressuring the entire Australian ‘left’ into the Socialist Party in the third year.

This is to be accomplished by developing a ‘recruitment conveyor belt’—made up primarily of reading groups—which can bring potential recruits at all lev-



Partisan
One of the sessions at 2026 Marxism Fringe conference, Melbourne, 6 April.

els of political development into the RCO’s orbit and transform them into sympathisers or members, as well as build cadre members into effective organisers, writers, and theoreticians. These potential recruits are to be gathered by deepening and broadening the RCO’s burgeoning socialist social activities such as drinks, barbecue, public lecture, and panel discussion events. Through setting up local cross-sect newspapers on local politics in all cities, the RCO plans to develop a proto-party infrastructure and connections between the RCO, other sects, and the proletariat. The plan explicitly avoids organising in workers’ economic struggles at the point of their workplace until the third year at the earliest. This is on the grounds that sectarian division in the movement and the RCO’s small size and resources make us unable to engage in such struggles as communists as opposed to militant left labourites.

It is this that the Spartacists took issue with, arguing against the plan. They advocated instead for a full turn to industry, arguing that ‘the struggle is the best teacher’. They stated, repeatedly, that the plan did not consider sufficiently the breakdown of the liberal international order. They did not explain how an analysis of this would have changed the plan. The Spartacists’ motion, had it passed, would have committed the RCO to ensuring that at least 50% of its members worked in ‘blue- or pink-collar’ jobs, or ‘unionised industries’. There was no timeline given to attaining this goal. The delegates were split down the middle on this issue, with seven voting against it and seven voting in favour (with two abstentions), leading to the motion losing by default. The following is a more detailed and thought-out reconstruction of The Mountain’s arguments against the Spartacists’ motion and for the Three-Year Plan.

The Spartacists’ purely agitational strategy—i.e. lacking in mass theoretical education—alongside their

Reports on the General Conference

proposal for a purely oppositional program—i.e. without a vision for communism—will not succeed in reconstructing the socialist movement and the workers’ movement. The Spartacists’ application of Trotsky’s transitional program method will not produce the cadreised mass base that is necessary for a communist party to survive and grow in the long term. It instead produces a constituency within the working class that is motivated by emotional or moral resentment and kept together only by the activism of a small militant sect. Of course, all communist militants arrive at their politics for personal reasons like this. But if the resentment of the working class is not tempered with a comprehensive program and clear and realistic theoretical analysis, then it is vulnerable to ideological manipulation, prone to activist misadventures, and likely to demobilise following political defeats.

There is a link here with a difference in opinion regarding the definition of ‘proletariat’ between The Mountain and the Spartacists, which became clear during informal conversations outside of the conference floor. Whereas The Mountain defines it in the broad sense of all those lacking property of their own and thus reliant on the wage fund¹, the Spartacists define the proletariat only as those employed in large workplaces under ‘industrial’ conditions. Though this, hypothetically, may be the most advanced section of the proletariat², this definition is narrow and un-scientific. It is unclear why they have adopted this definition, which excludes houseworkers

and the reserve army of labour, considering that it is nowhere defined this way by Marx. Some Spartacists have claimed that baristas are petit bourgeois.

The Spartacists—perhaps implicitly—believe that it is possible for a defensive struggle by workers in a key industry to spread spontaneously to other sections of the class. This is a ‘lead by example’ approach. There are two problems with this. First, a defensive struggle simply will not galvanise a full class struggle except where there is broad and pre-existing penetration of the class by communist militants. Without this, such a struggle will be outmanoeuvred and defeated by the state apparatuses. Second, the Spartacists’ strategy places too much emphasis on agitation and not enough on the achievement of concrete goals. In the current conjuncture, it is not possible for a meaningful defensive struggle to be won except on a national level at least. More likely, it requires coordinated international action. Communist cadres will lose the support of workers if we organise them towards a struggle which fails. The difference in definitions of the proletariat is important here. If you take the Spartacists’ narrow definition of the proletariat, this is more conceivable. A strike by meat packers could potentially extend spontaneously into a strike by steel workers, but not a strike by hospitality staff or houseworkers.

In practice, the Spartacists minimise the role of theory in developing cadre and reject completely the role of theory in mass-facing work. The Mountain agrees that theory and practice must be linked. There will come a time—as outlined in the Three-Year Plan—when the RCO is larger and able to seriously engage in immediate economic struggle. But historical materialism is a science with a method and practice that is

1 Frederick Engels, *Principles of Communism* (Sanage Publishing House, 2021).

2 Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*, The Norton Library, N567 (Norton, 1971).

weekly worker

WORKERS HAMMER

Spart Cannonism
Comrade Mike Macnair's report of the Australian Revolutionary Communist Organisation's conference was generally encouraging (February 5). But I got the taking too seriously the to industry.

Beware of Sparts bearing gifts
I have a common view that open politics, as sharp as any the necessary, are essential to. However, there are those who Mike Macnair...

Syndicalist quackery
Their understanding of who constitutes the working class is radically false. So in their Mike Macnair thinks that the Spartacists are engaged in a dumb orthodoxy.

Unpack the crap
Once again, comrade Mike Macnair has written a quite demagogic letter about the Spartacist tendency (Spart Cannonism), February 12. Like the previous one (February 12, August 28, 2023), rather than a serious and perspective... our arguments and distinctions to...

Not a serious response, comrade Macnair
comrade Macnair
Mike Macnair's report 'Spart Cannonism' (February 12, 2023) is a... 'Spart Cannonism'... 'Spart Cannonism'... 'Spart Cannonism'...

Mike Macnair
Communist Party of Great Britain (PCC)

Vincent David
Spartacist League/Britain

For international exchanges on CU conference, check out Weekly Worker and Workers Hammer.

Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026

distinct from other forms of struggle³. It cannot be grasped purely through organising industrial actions. It must be taught and practiced within its own distinct parameters. Yes, it must be linked to other forms of struggle, or else it is blind. But avoiding theoretical education in favour of committing to more intense struggle and agitation is similarly short-sighted. The Mountain believes it is possible for a mass communist party to exist in Australia which has hundreds of thousands of members, and that each of these members is meaningfully engaged in scientific practice.

The conference ended with some changes to the organisational rules and the election of the new CC. The Arbitration and Support Committee (ASC), the organisation's internal disciplinary body and grievance manager, was reformed to be appointed by the CC directly, rather than elected by conference but subordinated to CC oversight. This was supported by the outgoing members of the ASC and, despite some reservations from delegates (me included), they spoke convincingly and the change was passed. The new CC contains four members of The Mountain (of which I am one), one Left Communist, and one Spartacist.

The future of Communist Unity

Beyond the implementation of the Three-Year Plan, the most important development in the RCO following this conference will be the growth of its internal factionalism. Now that there are clear lines of political demarcation thanks to the Spartacists, it is possible for the RCO orthodoxy to grow out of an informal clique leading a sect without challenge into a political faction of the multi-tendency socialist movement. Comrade Miki, member of the outgoing CC and of The Mountain, pointed out to me that this will require that The Mountain develops a proposal for what the entire socialist movement should be doing right now—rather than just what the RCO should be doing.

This will require time and discussion. Nonetheless, and drawing on Macnair's *Revolutionary Strategy*, I believe that this proposal should be: build a real opposition!

Before communists can meaningfully engage in a struggle that rebuilds the workers movement and wins it to communist politics, we must cohere ourselves as a real opposition to capitalist civilisation. This does not

³ Louis Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & and Other Essays*, ed. Gregory Elliot (Verso, 1990)

Before the merger: Spartacists and RCO join together in anti-imperialist contingent at Melbourne Palestine rally, August 2025.

Red Battler



mean a Maoist style proposal to 'oppose everything the enemy supports and support everything the enemy opposes' as this would still be a form of politics dictated by the capitalists. Rather, it means to oppose capitalism at its core and comprehensively in its structure, and to work doggedly against it everywhere.

What the actionists such as the Spartacists, Socialist Alternative, the Anarchist-Communist Federation, and Solidarity all get wrong is that they think of opposition to capitalist civilisation only in the forms of economic struggle and oppositional agitation. This is activism⁴. They fail to recognise that activism is itself a product of the intellectual division of labour in capitalist society⁵, which works to keep the proletariat dumb and obedient. Activism therefore maintains capitalist civilisation. For all the Spartacists' rhetoric against liberalism, they leave the ideological apparatuses of the capitalist state—embodied by social and mass media, the schooling system, and the institution of the family⁶—intact. They surrender one of our most important struggles to the bourgeoisie.

The Mountain's proposal must say to the whole Australian socialist movement: unite under our program, oppose the ideological hegemony of the capitalists, and organise the proletariat as it actually exists—not as sect dogma imported from the mid-20th century imagines it to be. ■

⁴ Amadeo Bordiga, "Dizionarietto Dei Chiodi Revisionisti: Attivismo," *Battaglia Comunista*, 1952; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Published in Penguin Classics 2017, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, Penguin Modern Classics (Penguin Books, 2017).

⁵ Nikos A. Pulantzas et al., *State, Power, Socialism*, New edition, Verso Classics 29 (Verso Books, 2000).

⁶ Louis Althusser et al., *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (Verso, 2014).

Reports on the General Conference

Spartacists for Communist Unity

C. Bouchier reports on CU's recent conference, laying out the perspective of the Spartacist Tendency.

Over the weekend of 17-18 January, the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (now renamed Communist Unity) held its fourth general conference, the first one Spartacist comrades have attended. The Spartacist League of Australia was unanimously accepted into the organisation and we were able to participate fully as a minority tendency.

The coming period portends burgeoning reaction and economic turmoil for the “lucky country,” as well as further fractures in its already perennially splintering socialist movement. Especially in this context, it is a welcome development that the SL/A and RCO have been able to merge our forces. It is true that this is only one step forwards of the many we will need to take, and our status as a medium-sized fish is only relative to the very, very small pond of Australia's left. Nevertheless, it is a breath of fresh air.

The conference itself was well organised and leading comrades of the Mountain tendency (MT) (which form the majority of the newly-voted CC) made great efforts to ensure Spartacist Tendency (ST) comrades were fully able to air criticisms and motivate our motions and amendments. As a result, discussion allowed for healthy debate over topics which the left as a whole needs to have. Over a myriad of key questions, agreements were able to be had and differences brought to the fore.

Whither Australia?

One of the key questions that framed the conference was: “Where is Australia going, and what do we do about it?”

As ST delegates emphasised throughout the conference, we understand the world not as rival imperialist blocs vying for redivision of the world, but from the standpoint of the relative decline of US hegemony and its struggle to stay on top—principally against a rising China. For this purpose, the American Empire is tearing up the international liberal status quo of the past four decades, and Australia's liberal order will be no exception.

Working-class discontent, having previously reared its head during the lockdowns and in the resounding defeat of the Voice referendum, has not gone away. The Labor government and the union bureaucracy have thus far been successful in preventing frustrations being channelled through class-struggle action—especially in regards to the CFMEU state takeover. But it has not been successful subduing discontent altogether.

With the failures of the workers movement, backlash at the status quo has increasingly turned rightwards, with One Nation's Hanson emerging as the de facto leader of the Opposition. In the aftermath of the Bondi killings, One Nation has been able to skewer the Labor government for its response to beef up “hate speech” laws and further gun control while tapping into frustration at the immigration

policies maintained by the Labor government and its predecessors. It is no accident that Albanese has increasingly treated token reforms as more tarnish than varnish. Support for Australia Day is higher than its been in years. With the American Empire escalating its moves against Australia's biggest trading partner in China, the liberal order's economic stability is set to crater which



No credit
Lenin and Trotsky, second anniversary of October Revolution

TALKING REDS

Discussion on key questions confronting the left

MELBOURNE

Last Friday of every month, 6pm
at The Clyde, Cardigan Street, Carlton

BRISBANE

First Saturday of every month, 2pm
at The Burrow (West End)

Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026



Red Battler

Melbourne, August 2024: Tens of thousands of construction workers protest Albanese Labor government's state takeover of CFMEU.

will put these trends on overdrive.

This is bad news. A rightwards turn amongst the working class will only further isolate the left. Australian capitalism is set to further tighten its vice, crack down on campus radicals and increase repression more generally. In the face of this, left groups remain hitched to their strategy of tailing the liberal leadership of worker and social movements or of further isolating themselves in a little radical bubble. The recruiting pool is set to stagnate and muddy. Pressure will push some towards further isolated desperate actions or to simply burn out. In this context the task must be to break from our current course and brace ourselves—both the CU itself and the socialist movement as a whole.

This was the perspective that the ST struggled for in the conference, as exemplified in our proposed program, but also through key motions which sought to concretise specific points for discussion and deliberation. Rooting ourselves in a materialist understanding of the world, and Australia's place in it, and setting tasks accordingly, has been key to the SL/A's method since its political reorientation—which previously contented itself with r-r-revolutionary sloganeering divorced from both an understanding of the world and what is to be done.

Unfortunately, one is hard pressed to even find the most basic discussion of Australia's present juncture being discussed in the left, reflecting a similar void in Australia's bourgeois press. As such, it was refreshing that the conference brought some of these questions to the fore. Discussion over MT-supported theses dedicated

to the international and Australian situation took up a significant portion of the conference. These discussions not just strengthen CU more generally but also the ST specifically. Thoroughly engaging with comrades on this question has enabled the ST to further sharpen and develop our arguments. And on the international situation, some agreement was even reached with other CU comrades.

This included an ST-proposed motion which defined the world by a hegemonic American Empire in decline. The motion concluded that international revolutionary unity must be forged on the basis of opposition to the American Empire and its attachés, including defence of China and the gains of the 1949 revolution. Some leading MT comrades voiced their support to the motion which was critical to it passing.

Where the sharpest differences were brought to the fore was on Australia's place in the world. Unfortunately, the MT-supported theses argued that Australia in many ways will be shielded from the coming world crises. Instead of a working class being driven rightwards against Labor and the liberal order it governs for, the theses argues that “The Labor Party still broadly commands the votes and support of workers in this country.” It went further to argue that “other capitalist parties do not offer an alternative government to that of Albanese,” with MT comrades even arguing that Albanese is well on course for a decade in government! Such a view disarms CU in the face of increasing reaction and under-rates the necessity to address the vital questions that attract workers to right-wing demagogues.

If those theses aimed to answer the question “Where is Australia going?” the “Three-Year Plan” effectively functioned as a counterpart to it answering the question “what do we do in the coming period?” The effort and detail that was put to this effect in the plan and its accompanying report is commendable. However, where the plan suffers is in its detachment from an understanding of both the capacities of the CU and the class dynamics in the country.

Year one alone of the plan projects every city having its own publication, running a Marxism school, reading group, social events, and more. It remains a question how we will accomplish this in Melbourne or Brisbane, let alone the Newcastle or soon-to-be Central Coast section. This “recruitment conveyor belt” is projected to double our membership in the first year, and double it again in the next before CU eventually becomes the “centre-of-gravity” of the Australian left by the third year.

This presumes a reservoir for recruitment far vaster than what actually exists. It also assumes that these recruits are just waiting in the wings for a conveyor belt to scoop them up. In the current context of increasing reaction such projections are especially illusory. Not

Reports on the General Conference

only are we setting ourselves up to be disappointed, it risks burning out the cadre we've already won over in the process. It was for this reason that the ST argued against adopting this motion as well as the theses on the Australian situation, both of which ultimately passed.

How do we build a party?

If the Three-Year Plan proposed a lot for the years ahead, one thing it argued to not do was to intervene into the workers movement. Well, not until year three. This gets to the heart of another question that was debated throughout the conference—"how do we build a party?" The debate over the ST motion "Towards a Proletarian RCO," which aimed to fight for a 50 percent blue- and pink-collar CU, brought this question to the fore.

There were myriad arguments against the motion, much of it over the definition of a worker. But the argument that emerged in the debate that best got to the core of why the proposal was so controversial is summed up by the title of a polemic written against the (now former) SL/A: "Party first, then split the class." That is: "How can we intervene into the workers movement today? Our forces are too small to meaningfully impact anything until we reforge a party. Let's sort out the left, let's reforge the communist party, then let's talk about the fight for revolutionary leadership."

This argument starts from a point of truth, that the left's forces (much less the CU's forces) are currently too small to break the working class wholesale from its misleaders. Where the argument goes awry is precisely over how we can build and develop the necessary forces for this.

There were a lot of correct points made about how the left today is a mess. But nothing would change the

political landscape of the paltry and almost chemically pure petty bourgeois left more than an influx of working-class militants committed to not just talk-shops but actually "what is to be done?" Nothing would strengthen the CU's forces, harden its cadre and make it a pole of revolutionary regroupment and reorientation more than forging itself as an organisation of proletarian militants committed to this goal. Building a mass workers party is a dialectical process. We must build up the forces to intervene into the working class, yes, but those forces will only be built through intervening into the workers movement and demonstrating to working-class militants and the left that we are "that section which pushes forwards all others" (to quote Marx). The union work that has been backed by the ICL internationally highlights that isolated revolutionary militants can have a modest but real impact.

While the ST intervened on this basis, other CU comrades also spoke up in favour of the motion. The debate was lively and the most contentious in the entire conference, ultimately losing by the smallest of margins through an evenly split vote.

The fight for communist unity

The most fundamental difference highlighted at the conference was: what basis for unity? Some MT comrades, correctly seeing two different methods behind the motions proposed by the MT and ST, have argued that the difference is over the question of "actionism." While there is a certain truth in that the ST very much emphasises that Marxism is a guide to action, the difference between the two tendencies is not so much how much we do, but on what basis.

Where the differences were most clear was the debate over the ST-proposed program and the MT-proposed Docklands Program. The Docklands Program seeks unity on the basis of not the *road* to power but the idea of it, a shared "vision" of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its "minimum" program is explicitly what a communist party ought to do once it ascends the reins of power. As MT comrades motivated, this program was consciously made to be more-or-less unobjectionable (at least in theory) to the rest of the left. Its strength is that it touches on a truth that today the left is splintered due to a thousand sectarian reasons, and there is no real programmatic basis for all these different little groups.

Where it suffers however, is tackling why the left, ostensibly sharing the same ideas of a socialist future, is nevertheless in a weak and divided state. Striving towards workers power entails breaking from the biggest failure of the left—its attachment (or its sectarian phrase mongering, aloofness) to the current-day leadership of the working class. The labour movement today is led by all sorts of Laborites who preach nice words for the working class, Palestine and peace but in one



Melbourne, 17–18 January 2026



Red Battler

Outside 2023 ALP National Conference: Spartacists fight to expose pacifist/left Laborites.

way or another are attached to the Labor government. It is the left's conciliation of these labour fakers that has driven it to its current-day irrelevant status, which in turn has empowered its most sectarian and cannibalistic elements. For socialist unity to be tenable, it must be on the basis of struggling to break these chains which bind the working class to its oppressor—not a "vision" of a future when oppression is done away with. While action is crucial to this fight of separating the wheat from the chaff, it is but the concrete expression of this broader framework.

The discussion over this question was where we made the least progress at the conference, aptly described as two ships passing in the night. Nevertheless, there will be plenty of opportunity for further discussion and to put our views to the test. Emblematic of this is two MT-supported theses on the Labor Party and the Socialist Party (SP), in which almost all of the politically crucial ST-proposed amendments passed or were accepted as "friendly" (thanks to backing of some MT comrades).

The theses on the Labor Party now explicitly argues that struggling for democracy in Labor is key, but this can only happen on the basis of "driving a political wedge between Labor's working-class base and its pro-capitalist tops, exploding the contradictions of this rotten entity." It continues by arguing that "our goal is not to build a better, more left, more democratic 'cleaned up' Labor Party. Rather, this struggle would expose the 'left' Laborites...." Such a perspective puts the CU against both those hitched to the current day liberal-Laborite leadership of the working class (like Solidarity, Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance) as well as those who stand aloof from it (like the Socialist Equality Party).

Similarly, the Socialist Party theses argues that key to CU's struggle within the SP will be to "break its

members from electoralism and capitulation to liberalism and the left Laborites that is conditioned by the dominance of Socialist Alternative's program."

These theses if put in practice would expose the ambiguities within the Docklands Program (now officially the CU program). The Docklands Program proposes unity with the left as they are, albeit with more democracy and sans sectarianism. The Labor Party and SP theses propose unity on the basis of irreconcilable struggle against the current day misleadership of the working class and those who conciliate with it. The latter means a struggle to break the left from its current trajectory—the only way we can succeed in regrouping the revolutionary left, which is today scattered.

What now?

The discussions at the conference and resulting motions are only the beginning. Now the real test begins for both the motions, the merger and CU as a whole. Key to this will be to put the motions voted into practice. The ST is committed to making as real as possible not just the motions we put forwards (the "American Empire" motion), or agreed with (the Labor and Socialist Party theses) but also those we argued against, including the Docklands Program and the Three-Year Plan. While there are sure to be differences on how to apply these motions, fighting for them in the struggle to build a common organisation, will test both agreement and disagreement and will be the only way forward for political clarification. It is a testament to the goodwill and political seriousness of CU comrades that we have been able to reach this stage. Continuing this approach on all sides will be key to ensuring its success, and we look forward to building CU as comrades united in a common organisation. ■

SPART TALK **TALK**

an English-language podcast

RED BATTLER

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNISTS MERGE

the road to unity between Sparts & RCO

w/ cdes bouchier & edith

spartalk.org/2026-rco

PC Partisan Defence Committee

Fundraising success!

PDC takes urgent aid to Cuba!

As Trump ratchets up the embargo on Cuba leading to increased food scarcity, power outages and collapsing social services, the Cuban Revolution is in acute danger. To withstand this onslaught, the country needs massive material aid, now! Our international fundraising campaign, launched last month, rallied behind the urgent need for solidarity that goes beyond paper statements of support and raised almost £19,000. Donations poured in from supporters and sympathisers in the US, Mexico, Germany, France, Australia and beyond. We thank everyone who donated to ensure that we reached our goal.

We are pleased to announce that comrades representing the PDC joined the Nuestra América Convoy to Cuba in Havana on 21 March, bringing much



needed material aid to the Cuban people. In addition, we will be distributing funds to organisations that are actively sending aid to Cuba. Among these is Cuba Vive, a British-based organisation launched two years ago by Unison North West and the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. They are sending crucial medical supplies like wheelchairs, blood transfusion sets and paediatric catheters as well as food. Another is Let Cuba Live!, a US-based campaign initiated by the Party for Socialism and Liberation, which is raising money to send solar panels and generators to Cuban hospitals. *Defend Cuba against US imperialism!* ■

Defend Malema to fight US imperialism

The following article is reprinted from Black History & the Class Struggle No. 27. It is an edited speech by comrade Erica of the Spartacist League US at the PDC's January 24 Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners in New York City. Outrageously Malema has since been sentenced to five years imprisonment!

Amandla! Awethu! Yesterday the South African government postponed the sentencing of EFF leader Julius Malema to April 15. This means the fight continues. We join in solidarity with our comrades in Spartacist/South Africa and fighters in the EFF in building support to defend Malema, to defend ourselves here in the belly of the beast too. The “Government of National Unity” (GNU) coalition—the ANC and the openly pro-imperialist and white-dominated Democratic Alliance—is going after Malema in order to prevent any resistance to the strangulation of the black masses. The GNU enforces this on behalf of Trump and the Randlords. Trump put a target on Malema's back last year in that infamous White House visit with imperialist puppet Cyril Ramaphosa.

Why Malema and the EFF? The imperialists want to prevent the masses attracted to the EFF from trying to fight for liberation from the racist Randlords and the neo-apartheid ANC government, which is responsible for a trail of broken promises and misery.

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

Contact: pdc.melbourne@exemail.com.au



The black South African masses are hated by the U.S. ruling class because they want land, good jobs, adequate housing, basic services like electricity and control of the mines and other imperialist-owned property. That's what is behind Trump's instruction to Ramaphosa to get rid of Julius Malema: the imperialists want to eliminate any movement that even gestures toward fighting for the land and resources that rightly belong to the black people of South Africa. Hands off Malema and the EFF!

The end of apartheid in 1994 was supposed to mean real liberation, but the reality is massive unemployment, miserable living conditions and rampant exploitation of black and Coloured workers. This is not so dissimilar to the aspirations for black liberation here. We were promised 40 acres and freedom following the Civil War, but instead got over a century and a half of racist capitalist oppression, segregation and massive state repression—with cops gunning down black and brown people with impunity.

Many black people in the U.S. feel a connection with black South Africans. There is a natural alliance. They both, along with the entire U.S. working class, share a common enemy in U.S. imperialism. The imperialists are trying to do to Malema in South Africa what they've done to militant black political leaders here, like Mumia Abu-Jamal: lock them away or worse.

Trump's crushing and starvation of the black South African masses goes hand in hand with his attacks on immigrants and his assault on workers here, too.

OUTRAGE!**Anti-ICE protesters convicted of “terrorism”**

On March 13, after a three-week show trial in Fort Worth, Texas, nine anti-ICE activists were found guilty of “material support to terrorism,” “conspiracy” and other bogus charges. The witchhunt against these activists is the front line in Trump’s campaign to outlaw anyone who opposes government policy. While dropping bombs on schoolchildren in Iran, the government brands leftist activists here as “terrorists.” These verdicts are bad news for all anti-ICE protesters, leftists, working people and the oppressed. We must redouble efforts to free these nine defendants—Savanna Batten, Daniel “Des” Rolando Sanchez Estrada, Zachary Evetts, Autumn Hill, Meagan Morris, Maricela Rueda, Benjamin “Champagne” Song, Elizabeth Soto and Ines Soto. Most face sentences of 10 to 60 years, while Song faces a possible life sentence. We say: *Free the Prairieland defendants! Drop all the charges!*

The case stems from a protest last July 4 by about a dozen people at the Prairieland ICE detention center

in Alvarado, Texas. The plan was for a small nighttime “noise” demonstration, setting off fireworks to “bring some joy” to those inside. For the Feds, that’s “conspiracy to use and carry an explosive device” and “terrorism.” In fact, detainees inside watched the fireworks through windows and cheered. A couple of protesters sprayed graffiti on a guard booth and an ICE vehicle. It began to drizzle and the protest wound down, people heading back to their cars.

But then a local Alvarado cop pulled up with lights flashing, jumped out of his vehicle and, by his own testimony, immediately pointed his gun at the back of a departing protester. Before the cop could shoot the protester, Song allegedly fired a rifle in defense. One shot, most likely a ricochet off the ground, grazed the cop. He suffered no serious injury and returned fire. For defending a comrade, Song has grotesquely been convicted of “attempted murder.”

Police swarmed in and arrested nine that night. Ten more have been rounded up since, including

And the threat to this country’s black population is undeniable.

But both of the struggles, the struggle for the national liberation of black South Africans and the struggle for black liberation here, have something else in common. Both have been betrayed by leaders of the union movement and leftists who seek alliances with the capitalist rulers and their politicians. Here that expresses itself by trying to keep the struggle for black liberation confined to what is acceptable to the liberals and the Democratic Party. This has resulted in turning off many workers who have seen their livelihoods suffer at the hands of the Democrats and have turned to Trump. This has deepened divisions in the working class, especially along racial lines.

These polarizations help keep working people divided against themselves as Trump launches attacks on immigrants and the unions. Now that the liberal mask has been torn off, the true face of racist U.S. imperialism again reveals itself, from the bombing of Venezuela and kidnapping of Maduro to the genocide in Palestine and attacks on Iran. U.S. imperialism is trying to force the world to line up behind its ambitions to maintain its world dominance. As the Mamdani administration works

hand in hand with the healthcare bosses to freeze out striking nurses here in NYC and the Trump administration sics ICE on protesters and immigrants alike, united-front class-struggle defense is posed now more than ever.

All of these fights that you will hear about today—the fight to free political prisoners, to defend Malema, to release Maduro, to rebuild the movement against racist cop terror, to defend immigrants against ICE, to defend union workers on strike—show that the only way out of this mess is to bridge the divisions in the working class by appealing to the need for all those under attack to take a united stand against the common U.S. imperialist enemy. We have a lot of groups here. Talk to us after about how we can join forces. ■



PDC photo

Melbourne, 23 January: PDC-initiated protest in defence of Malema.

friends, family and roommates. Sanchez, who was not even at the protest, was convicted of conspiring to “conceal a document” because he moved a box of zines and pamphlets to a friend’s apartment after the arrests and now faces 40 years. Owning guns, ammunition, fireworks and zines in Texas is perfectly legal. It also is not unusual for Texans—right or left—to bring guns to protests. As one prosecution witness said, “here in Texas everyone is armed,” and protests can be confrontational. Some protesters brought guns to the July 4 protest but most left them in their vehicles.

Most of those arrested in July were first charged with “attempted murder of a federal officer.” But after the Charlie Kirk assassination, Trump signed his order declaring “Antifa” a terrorist organization and the prosecutors sought a new indictment to make this a test case. The federal indictment falsely charges that the defendants belong to a “North Texas Antifa Cell,” which is branded a “domestic terrorist” organization. As some prosecution witnesses admitted, there is no such “cell” or “organization.” In reality, the protesters held a range of views, from anarchist to social democratic to none of the above. Most are LGBT folks, some read with the Emma Goldman Book Club, others practiced with the Socialist Rifle Association, while a few don’t like guns.

The entire case was a pack of manufactured evidence. Held in solitary in Texas hellhole jails, isolated from family and friends and facing a potential lifetime in prison, four of the 19 defendants capitulated to intense prosecution pressure. Turning state’s evidence, they signed whatever lies the Feds wrote for them. “My lawyer said I have to snitch, even if I have to make shit up,” one testified. Last summer, the cop who was allegedly grazed by a bullet gave a “statement” written by his lawyer that failed to mention that he had pulled his gun and pointed it at a protester! At trial, the ICE officer whose name was on the official incident report denied having written or even seen it before. The prosecution’s “expert” witness on Antifa, who helped them “craft” their terrorism charges, was a crackpot conspiracy theorist at the dubious Center for Security Policy, labeled an anti-Muslim “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The presiding judge is reactionary Trump appointee Mark Pittman. He fined defense lawyers for fighting for their clients, driving one off the case. During the first day of jury selection, the judge became unhinged by the large number of potential jurors who voiced their opposition to ICE, as well as jurors who said it made sense to take guns to protests. When he noticed that a defense lawyer was wearing a graphic of MLK



PDC US photo

Fort Worth Texas, 17 February: PDC joins protest outside courthouse on first day of trial. Conviction of Prairieland anti-ICE activists on “terrorism” charges is a dangerous attack on entire left.

on her shirt, he seized on that as a pretext to declare a “mistrial,” claiming the jury pool had been tainted and needed to be replaced. Later, he ruled that the defense could not present evidence or argue that Song had fired in self-defense of fellow protesters.

Still to come are sentencing hearings, appeals, and state court trials. It is urgently necessary for the left, anti-deportation activists, trade unionists and all of Trump’s perceived enemies to take a stand against this serious threat. Every day of the trial, activists came out in solidarity in a park across the street from the courthouse, greeting the defendants with chants as they left court in police vans. The Fort Worth police began to harass the activists as the case ground on.

“Today’s verdict on terrorism charges will not be the last as the Trump administration systematically dismantles Antifa,” intoned Attorney General Pam Bondi. “Terrorism” is the same lie federal authorities threw at anti-ICE protesters they murdered in Minneapolis. Last month, Congressional Republicans and Fox News painted the Democratic Socialists of America and Party for Socialism and Liberation as possible “foreign agents” for connecting ICE crimes to those of U.S. imperialism abroad. Two anti-ICE activists in Los Angeles were convicted last month on federal charges of “stalking” for following an ICE agent in his car. As the PDC said in a February 10 statement on Prairieland:

“Regardless of differences over strategy and tactics, leftists need to have each other’s backs. An injury to one is an injury to all! Defense of the left and minorities is also in the interest of the entire working class. The government will use these same ‘terrorism’ charges against striking trade unionists who stop scabs on the picket lines.”

PDC supporters were in Fort Worth every week of the trial. We have donated \$2,000 to the legal defense, done our best to get the word out and will keep fighting for these activists. We strongly urge you to do the same. For more information: prairielanddefendants.com/get-involved. ■

Down with the youth social media ban!

The following article by *Oskar Dziga* is reprinted from the *Spartacist Publication Women & Revolution* No. 47, April 2026.

Last December, the Australian government introduced a ban on youth under 16 holding social media accounts across all major online platforms. Millions of accounts have been banned since the minimum age came into effect and the government continues to promote its policy as a test run to be emulated internationally. Now, countries from the UK to Spain, Greece and France are considering similar age restrictions. In the U.S., both Trump and Democrats like Gavin Newsom are eyeing them.

These laws are totally reactionary. They will do nothing to protect kids from the deep social pressures bearing down on them. What they will do is further restrict open space for young people’s autonomy and self-expression, bolster the state’s social regimentation of youth and deepen resentment.

It goes without saying that social media platforms, interested only in extracting data and profit from their users, are no friends of young people. The fact that harm does take place through and on them, as well as their deliberately addictive nature, is exactly why age restriction is such a popular policy among parents. Politicians say they want to get kids back into the “real world.” But for so many youth, the real world ahead of them seems like a futureless horror show of war, devastation and personal social instability.

Young people need space to live and make mistakes, economic stability and real community (both offline and online) to develop into adults with a healthy social existence. The current social order cannot provide this.

Schools across Australia are falling apart. Kids are treated like prisoners. The cost-of-living and housing crises, and generalised social decay, hit kids hard, particularly those in immigrant working-class communities. Suicide is the major cause of death for youth between 15 and 24 years old and unemployment for that cohort is almost double-digit.

The response of state governments from Victoria to the Northern Territory has been to launch an anti-crime frenzy, particularly centered on youth. “Adult time for violent crime” legislation now allows courts to impose penalties previously reserved for adults on children as young as ten. A 14-year-old in Victoria can legally be sent to prison for life...but of course can’t have an Instagram account.

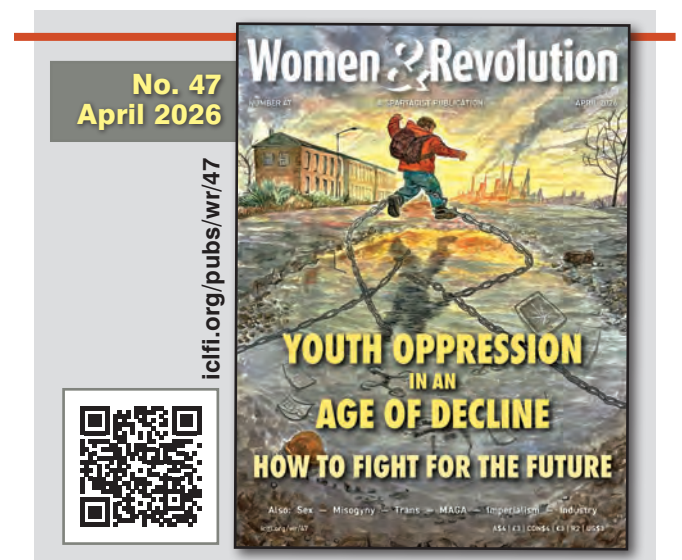
Restricting social media is a cynical and futile political tool for governments unable to address the actual crises facing young people, or to improve conditions for anyone for that matter. These measures cynically appeal

to parents by falsely blaming apps and algorithms for the problems of youth. For the Labor government, the ban means it can present itself as doing something to maintain “social cohesion” and “save” youth by bolstering the family. Spokespeople promote age restrictions explicitly as a “weapon in the arsenal” of parental authority, a way to “protect” kids from the unknown. For those family-first right-wingers who back them, this also fits in with culture-war grievances over supposedly eroding parental authority.

The drive to keep youth away from corrupting influences online continues to deepen, with the government in recent weeks introducing mandatory age verification for porn, R-rated video games and AI chatbots. The ban on social media thus *complements* the framework of repression. Such laws serve, at least in part, to further the regimentation of the young generation as the capitalist rulers prepare to crack down on social unrest and ultimately line up the population for war.

For teenagers, the relative autonomy afforded by social media fills the gaps in a restricted social existence. For better and (often) for worse, it is the primary space for communication, for finding a modicum of community, for coming into political awareness and for exploring sexuality. The latter is especially true for LGBTQ+ youth, who are even more likely to be isolated by restrictions on social media.

Young people who want to use social media will work around whatever system is implemented, and so they should. But it is crucial that there be a fightback against the whole ideological basis for these restrictions. Marxists must take a firm political stand: *Down with the youth social media bans!* ■



Anti-Semitic attack wielded for reaction

Defend Muslims, immigrants, supporters of Palestine!

The following *Red Battler Supplement* was issued on 18 December by the *Spartacist League of Australia*, now the *Spartacist Tendency of Communist Unity*.

The response to the despicable 14 December Bondi killings will be brutal. More gun control. More draconian laws against protests. Muslims increasingly persecuted. Anyone who says they are for Palestine is set to be labelled a terrorist. The Sydney Harbour Bridge march in August is already being smeared as laying the groundwork for this attack. From government “anti-Semitism envoy” Jillian Segal, to reactionary shock jock Andrew Bolt, a conga line of Zionists and right-wing demagogues are galvanised and pressing the offensive. One Nation’s Pauline Hanson has the wind in her sails. Even the Labor government’s token recognition of a Palestinian state is being gone after for “enabling terror,” and further gestures are now *verboden* as Albanese is eager to prove himself a full-throttle “opponent of anti-Semitism.”

Those who will bear the brunt of these blows will be Muslims, workers and all the oppressed. Heavily Muslim working-class neighbourhoods of Western Sydney, who have faced years of “anti-terror” sieges, raids and arrests, now face even more repression. This is bad news not just for those immediately under the gun but the workers movement as a whole. If supporters of Pal-

estine are to be labelled as terrorists, this gives the state a battering ram to go after anyone who opposes the genocide—including unions that endorsed the protests that are now labelled as a cause of the massacre.

Many on the left—including Solidarity, Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance—can correctly point out that this attack is being used to smear supporters of Palestine as anti-Semitic. But these smears are just the beginning of a broader campaign of repression. The ruling class is promising fire and fury against anyone in its crosshairs. This national unity campaign must be fought. Workers and oppressed: *prepare for defensive struggles!*

Defeating this ruling-class offensive requires taking head-on its rallying cry of “fighting anti-Semitism.” It is true that anti-Semitism has been growing, but its rise has been fuelled by the Zionist regime that has waged a genocidal war against the Palestinians in the name of defending Jewish people. The Labor government’s coming attacks in the name of “eradicating anti-Semitism” will only add fuel to the fire. A genuine fight against anti-Semitism can only happen on an anti-Zionist basis, the first step of which is bringing together in struggle workers and the oppressed against the coming reaction. ■

Fight police repression!

The following March 29 statement is by the *all-Brisbane Steering Committee* of the *Revolutionary Communist Organisation*

Less than a month ago, we argued that “‘social cohesion’ is the battle cry of the capitalists as they unleash hate speech laws to cripple anti-imperialist solidarity with Palestine.” The recent arrest of Liam Parry under new hate speech laws mere hours after they were passed through Queensland parliament, has revealed once more the naked cynicism of the slogan of ‘social cohesion’.

When Queensland Police Service (QPS) raids the Dorothy Day House over raising a banner and drags 18-year-olds into police vans for displaying a banned slogan, the incompatibility of freedom and capitalism is revealed once more. The formal freedom and equality promoted in capitalist society only ever exists to the degree that the capitalist class will allow. As the system is driven further into crisis, it will become all the more repressive and undemocratic.

Some on the left may argue that we need hate speech laws to ward against the fascist movement, but we reject this argument. Every control over speech will be used against us, even on the most farcical of evidence. We stand for universal and total freedom of speech. Those who are wrong must be proven to be wrong, not simply barred from speaking.

When the state comes for the workers and socialist movement we must fight back. As such the all-Brisbane Section of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation demands the immediate and unconditional release of Socialist Party member Liam Parry, freedom for all political prisoners, an end to police harassment of workers and popular organisation, and the repeal of all laws restricting speech and organisation, and all bans on political symbols. We call on the entire socialist movement to unite in defence of freedom of speech, press, and organisation, and call for a united front of all socialist and workers organisations to advance this fight. ■

Nothing new about the old police apparatus

Repression of the socialist movement by the police and their bosses is nothing new. In fact, the socialist movement should expect it, writes Adam Florence.

“Even with the most peaceful course of events, the present system always and inevitably exacts countless sacrifices from the working class.”

—V.I. Lenin in “Another Massacre”

On February 9th, several thousands of protesters took to the streets of Brisbane to protest the arrival of the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, in Sydney.

After a lull in mass protests for Palestine following the farcical ‘ceasefire’—which has left, by the most modest figures, 500 Palestinians murdered by the IDF—the invitation and arrival of one of the guiltiest figures in the genocide of the Palestinian people reignited the fervor for liberation. Protests sprung up across major cities such as Brisbane and Sydney and in smaller regions like Wyong and the Blue Mountains.

Herzog received this invitation on the basis of ‘supporting the Jewish community’ (see ‘Israel tightens grip over West Bank while Herzog visits Australia’, ABC News¹) after the December Bondi Shooting on a Hanukkah celebration. However, it seems to be playing out as more of a show of loyalty by Albanese and Wong to Israel.

Nowhere has this loyalty and commitment been more apparent than the rigid adherence to maintaining a ‘socially cohesive’ state. This social cohesion has been bought at the cost of increasing escalation of state repression of protests. Over 3500 police were deployed in the northeastern region of Sydney where they have been granted ‘special powers’ (see 9news Sydney report²) to

1 www.abc.net.au/news/2026-02-11/isaac-herzog-visit-protest-police-west-bank-annexation/106325902

2 vt.tiktok.com/ZSmFuG1NQ/



@ballebowness

Cops use draconian new police powers to attack protest against visiting Israeli president, Herzog.

stop and search and move anyone on for any reason.

Herzog visited Canberra then Melbourne later that week, where protesters met a similar deployment of police. Naturally, the mass deployment of the police

brought with it an unprecedented level of violence on protesters, with the worst being seen in Sydney. Footage showed police charging, releasing tear gas, and brutally beating and macing unarmed, peaceful protesters. Some victims were even pinned against the floor, then choked and repeatedly beat by several police officers. While the Melbourne protests remained peaceful, the police were deployed on mass, and the threat of Sydney-like violence loomed.

Behind the mask of every bourgeois state is the unhinged violence necessary to legitimise and maintain itself. Though we did not see such blunt violence from the police in Brisbane, the anti-free speech legislation, including banning the historic phrases ‘from the river to the sea’ and ‘globalise the Intifada’, that the Crisafulli government is passing, and the general rise in hostility nationwide to left-wing protests will only contribute to this growing violence. The Albanese government knows the pro-Palestine movement is popular amongst the masses and that it has developed within it an attitude that embarrasses and undermines their idea of ‘social cohesiveness’. Most importantly, the Labor government recognises that such movements jeopardise their relationship with the genocidal state of Israel.

It is unsurprising, then, that if—or when—this anti-free speech legislation is passed that the legality of holding pro Palestine demonstrations will be in question. The violence happening elsewhere will come here, and we must act accordingly. In Queensland, we are fortunate to have time to make the necessary preparations. We must proactively prepare for this extreme escalation; we, the people, must use every means necessary to keep protesters safe. We cannot allow the government to win by beating down and silencing our struggle.

May this article be a call out to all activist, socialist, and communist groups to make preparations for this violence. We must unite under the need to build a solid legal defence body, with the immediate task to build the capacity to unify so we may protect ourselves physically and legally.

We need to be prepared for the possibility of being arrested, for one of our comrades to be picked on by the police and for how we will protect our comrade should they be chosen as a victim of state violence. If you are going to these protests independently, then I would urge, with immediacy, to join an organisation such as Communist Unity. At minimum, maintain contact with members of an organisation who have a plan to defend you physically and legally.

The police do not escort our protest to keep us safe but to ensure that we remain within the guidelines of what the state allows. As soon as we threaten those guidelines, the violence of the state will be brought to bear. ■



The Ethiopian powderkeg

Capitalist development & sub-imperialist competition

A major war in the Horn of Africa now seems inevitable. But what are the stakes of such a conflict, and how did we get here? Edith Fischer explains.

War in the Horn of Africa now seems inevitable. As cross-border talks between the Abiy government of Ethiopia and their Eritrean counterparts break down once again, the Ethiopian military has mobilised to place pressure on the shared border. This comes amidst a more general crisis in eastern Africa which has seen state disintegration and civil war spread from Somalia to Sudan. Most Australian workers barely register these conflicts, despite them consuming millions of lives and having international ramifications. Even the most class conscious socialists are unlikely to print about these issues in their papers. However, the crisis in the Horn is just another site in the global crisis in capitalist development, and a site of intense competition between rival imperialist capitals.

This conflict is not new. Eritrea secured its independence from Ethiopia in 1991 after a thirty year long independence struggle against first the Ethiopian Empire and then against the Derg military regime. While many advocates of the Rules Based International Order had hoped that the 2018 peace accords between the two nations would serve to limit future conflicts, the last few years have seen a spiralling failure to reach any agreement between the two states. Central to these talks have been the problem of oceanic access for landlocked Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's development program, which has placed it on a collision course with its neighbours in Egypt over the damming of the Blue Nile, requires access to ports. As Abiy stated in a meeting with President Erdogan of Turkey,

Due to our enemies' plot, keeping Ethiopia a geographic prisoner for so long is not right... Logistics is the major bottleneck to our growth, and sea access is the key.

—"Historic Rivalries Spark Fresh Tensions in the Horn of Africa", Simon Marks for *Bloomberg*, 2026

In Ethiopia's sights is the port of Assab, 60km from the Ethiopian border. While not previously claimed in irredentist border disputes, this port city has become central to Ethiopian nationalist demands.

Capitalist development and nation state formation

Ethiopia's road to capitalist development has been a long one. Once ruled by the autocratic Solomonic Dynasty, Ethiopia is less of a nation-state and more of a complex network of client-patronage relationships between various ethnic groups and local elites, all nom-

inally ruled from the capital of Addis Ababa. Under the rule of the old Emperors, it was the Amhara that dominated the others—they made up the old aristocracy that presided over a largely feudal society. Becoming a useful ally of the European colonial powers, the Ethiopian monarchy was able to preserve its independence, and the feudal aristocracy kept the country languishing in backwardness.

However, Ethiopia could not maintain its splendid isolation forever. As the winds of modernity swept Africa and Asia, the monarchy sought to centralise the state and introduce a degree of modernisation of the military and state bureaucracy. The aristocracy resisted any attempt at modernisation, and the central government under reforming monarchs found their efforts stymied. This conflict remained central to Ethiopian politics until the overthrow of the monarchy in 1974 by nationalist petty officers, leading to the formation of the military junta widely known as the *Derg*.

The Derg and many of their opponents represented a form of politics that became all too common in the latter path of the 20th Century—petty bourgeois nationalists draping themselves in the language of Marxism-Leninism for the purposes of courting support, both from their domestic working classes and from the Warsaw Pact. The adoption of Marxist slogans was often superficial, but even when it was not, it was a Marxism adapted to the firmly petty bourgeois nature of these national struggles—revolutionary, but largely not proletarian or communist. The seizure of power by the Derg precipitated a revolutionary wave in Ethiopia—the seizure of feudal lands by the peasants and rolling strikes by Ethiopia's small industrial working class. However, within a handful of years, the wave of revolution had been subordinated to the interests of the new petty bourgeois ruling class, with demands for industrial democracy leading to the suppression of independent working class activity. The Marxist left in Ethiopia represented by parties like All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party were suppressed. The peasantry in turn faced drought, conscription, forced villagisation, and land fragmentation brought about by land reform—a crisis that drove many peasants into support for the revolution against the Derg.

The fall of the Derg at the hands of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991 saw power transfer from the Amharan state bureaucracy to the leading force in this ethnic rebel coalition—the Tigray People's Liberation Front, representing the highland Tigrayan ethnicity from the coun-

try's north. The EPRDF saw a period of Tigrayan dominance in Ethiopian politics, as well as the federalisation of the state.

Federalisation, while promoted on the basis of ethnic peace and cooperation, has only strengthened tribal and ethnic identity, and allowed for the proliferation of a variety of local interest blocs within national politics. Abiy Ahmed's career is a testament to this exact process of federalisation—hailing from the Oromo ethnic group, Abiy successfully united the non-Tigrayan ethnic groups against the TPLF and successfully drove them out of national politics. In place of the EPRDF, Abiy rules over the ethnically segregated Prosperity Party, named for the Prosperity Gospel style of evangelical Christianity which serves as its dominant ideology.

Abiy's attempt to forge a national Ethiopian state that can rise above ethnic divisions has been as unprofitable as his predecessors. With the Tigrayans effectively isolated, the now Oromo-dominated state has faced rebellions by Amharan militias and border disputes with Somalia over the status of the Somalian minority in Ethiopia. In turn, the government has undertaken successive military campaigns against the Tigrayans in the single most bloody military campaign of this century prior to the slaughter in Ukraine.

The crisis in Ethiopia is indicative of the problems of state formation in Africa at large. Without a strong national-state, the capacity for the Ethiopian state to undertake any kind of development program is limited. Ethnic federalism is often promoted as a solution, but absent the destruction of the local elites and significant reforms to the economic base that produces them, this only furthers the fragmentation of the state. This crisis is not secular, but rather it is the product of the limits of capitalist development itself. The Ethiopian bourgeoisie, deeply intertwined with the imperialist interests of the world markets and limited by the global composition of capital, are neither willing nor able to undertake a process of state formation that would allow for the development of the domestic industrial sector.

Sub-imperialist exploitation and social crisis

The Horn of Africa is a playground for imperialist interests. Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia all export significant quantities of agricultural products such as sheep and coffee, as well as having significant deposits of minerals such as gold. This has long made them a site of struggle between imperialist interests—Britain, France, and Italy in the 19th Century, and the United States in the 20th Century. Today, it is competition between sub-imperialist powers that shapes the conflicts in the region.

Demand for animal protein from the booming Gulf States is driving cycles of violent conflict between pastoralists and farmers over land and water rights. Mark Duffield and Nicholas Stockton, writing in the *Review of African Political Economy* describe the emergent form of militarised ranching as

a social and environmentally destructive mode of production. It is necessarily expansive, land-hungry, live-

lihood destroying and population displacing. Sustained violence, livestock exports have attracted little outside attention despite being at the core of the Horn's political economy. In a region once dominated by agro-pastoral subsistence economies, changes in the ownership, rearing and export of livestock reaches down into the social bedrock. Violent land clearances, livestock theft and armed grazing have devastated life-chances over vast swathes of territory to a greater extent than any other form of commodification.

—“Capitalism, war and plunder in the Horn of Africa”, Mark Duffield & Nicholas Stockton, in *Review of African Political Economy*, 2023

In turn, vast land grabs are today driven primarily by Saudi, Qatari, and Emirati investment. These buy ups of “unproductive” agricultural land place the Gulf imperialists in direct conflict with the peasants and pastoralists who find their lands enclosed and owned by foreign capitalists. Water rights, privatised in the long shadow of the end of “state socialism”, are bought up by Gulf-backed consortiums, and peasants and agricultural workers labour under backbreaking exploitation for Saudi Star Agricultural Development, Elite Agro, and MIDROC.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia under Abiy has become the United Arab Emirate's (UAE) strongest ally in the region. This remains the case despite Israel and Turkey working hard to court the Abiy government. The UAE today rivals China for the title of the single largest investor in Africa, bringing with it a whole series of geopolitical interests in the region. This has produced a spiral of competition, primarily between Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the one hand, and between the UAE and Ethiopia on the other. Across the whole region, proxy conflicts are shaped by these competing interests. It is the Saudis and Egyptians who stand behind the Sudanese Armed Forces in their struggle against the Emirati-backed Rapid Support Forces, while the UAE and Saudi Arabia openly supported rival factions in Yemen's long civil war. Notably, amidst this whirlwind of competition, both the UAE and Saudi Arabia remain important allies of the United States and the European imperialists, receiving extensive military investment as well as being deeply economically entwined with the dominant imperialist bloc.

The coming war between Ethiopia and Eritrea also bears the marks of this imperialist rivalry. The UAE has strengthened its relationship with Ethiopia, while Saudi has invested in an expansion at the port of Assab as well as in Eritrean agriculture and fisheries. Saudi investments will warrant defence, should war threaten them. The stage is then set for a wider conflict—one that pulls in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the various warring factions of Somalia.

It will be the sons of Ethiopia and Eritrea's workers and peasants who die in the coming war—fighting and dying over irredentist border disputes and oceanic access for their capitalist masters, and their master's masters. And as the imperialist system careens from crisis to crisis, and the spectre of global war grows ever greater, all working people will be posed the same question as those in the Horn: *international socialism, or a world divided by capitalist bandits?* ■

Letters



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Congratulations comrades

Red Dawn

Dear Comrades of Communist Unity (formerly the Revolutionary Communist Organisation),

I was delighted to learn that your organisation successfully held its 4th General Conference just over two weeks ago, yielding rich and productive discussions on political, social, and organisational questions. The conference also marked the first experience of organised factional activity, which was handled in a remarkably harmonious and constructive manner. This represents an important milestone in your organisation's transition from what was once a mere sect (despite its claims to anti-sectarianism) toward a genuine anti-sectarian movement.

The conference's convincing and instructive resolution of the divergence between "partyism" and "actionism" was particularly noteworthy. The elevation of actionism to the level of a full route was identified as reactionary, while the permeation of everyday struggle with actionist impulses hinders the shift of our socialist cause from ideological impulse toward scientific practice. I fully endorse this judgement.

The critique of actionism elevated to a route reminds me strongly of the economist wave that preceded and followed the Second Congress of the RSDLP in Russia. Back then it was bourgeois democracy; today it is postmodern liberalism. Yet the confusion of tactics with strategy, and the advocacy of a disorganized "freedom of criticism" (then Bernsteinian, now the rejection of "abstraction" in favour of immediacy), remain consistent in their harmfulness—indeed, the contemporary form may be even more pernicious. A century ago, an economist tendency that inverted means into ends could still serve as a vigorous yet mild appendage to the as-yet-not-in-power bourgeois democracy. In the present conjuncture, however, such a posture can achieve little beyond becoming part of the "crisis spectacle" under capitalism—spinning in empty activity, superficial redness, and real atrophy, only to flare up and die quickly.

The "microscopic" or everyday actionism, meanwhile, highlights a distinction that is often overlooked yet perhaps the most crucial: what makes scientific socialism scientific is its willingness—whether in mild or difficult times, in unity or temporary dispersion, in optimism or pessimism—to unflinchingly tear apart the illusions and "inevitability" fabricated by the bourgeoisie, to orient toward the construction of a non-capitalist future, and to persist in the struggle without reservation. Inverting this orientation—making the desired outcome the driving force of thought—inevitably degenerates into a form of utopian socialism, or what the report aptly terms a Calvinist optimism. Such optimism may appear harmless on the surface during periods of relatively low struggle intensity or rapid advances, masking itself in the pleasant continuity of encourag-

ing results and numbing activists. But when conditions reverse, the psychological drop from prior optimism to sudden setbacks—reflecting underlying organisational and rational deficiencies—can become the spark for collapse.

As a tendency with over half a century of theoretical and practical struggle behind it, the Spartacist Tendency's ability to articulate its positions derived from real struggle in a systematic and theorised manner is itself a result of the deepening of the struggle. It signals that the re-politicisation of the working-class movement and the re-proletarianisation of socialist thought have already collided like two palms clapping, beginning to produce sound. As a Marxist from China, heavily influenced by Maoism in my theoretical formation, I had previously disagreed with the ICL-FI's characterisation of certain remaining "communist" one-party states as still workers' states, as well as with the near-campist "defend China against the US" stance, and I had prejudged the entire Spartacist international current as dogmatic holdouts clinging to outdated positions. The seriousness and combativity displayed by the Spartacists at this conference, however, have led me to recognise the error in my earlier views.

At the same time, "partyism" is now undergoing its real test as factionalism shifts from a theoretical category to lived reality: will it become another sect that turns a deaf ear to dissenting opinions within the organic whole of the movement, adorning a bureaucratic substance with anti-sectarian rhetoric, or will it strive earnestly to become the leading core of a national—and ultimately international—revolutionary Marxist vanguard party? Communist Unity is in the process of answering this question.

Plus, for my part, I believe that proletarianisation is an indispensable and high-priority procedure for any organisation that calls itself communist. I therefore hope that when a similar proletarianisation motion is reconsidered at your next conference in 2027, it will be able to secure passage, backed by a sufficiently solid organisational foundation for its implementation.

In any case, I am convinced that this conference will go down as a milestone in the history of the Australian left. The comrades of RCO–Communist Unity are providing a model for the revolutionary left in Australia and around the world through their unity combined with firm theoretical and practical resolve.

Temporarily embarrassed Laborites

James Eisen

Australian Capital Territory politics was recently graced by the rare event of something almost happening, with the ACT Greens and Canberra Liberals briefly entertaining the idea of ousting Andrew Barr's twenty-year Labor government in favour of a Green-Blue

alliance, long confined to the nightmares of Labor rusted-ons.

This proposal, brief as it was, was quickly seized upon by ACT Labor and Labor-aligned media to fear-monger and shore up Labor's non-existent appeal. It's difficult to argue you need to support Labor to keep the "Tories" out when the "Tories" haven't governed for twenty years.

Labor members often accuse their opposition of Toryism, or "Tree Toryism" in the case of the Greens. While most often hurled by undergraduates who have never heard of a "Whig", it is revealing of the party's self-understanding. Labor imagines it is still fighting the same battles of 1914, 1945, or 1975, seeing all opposition as one reactionary mass.

The Canberra "Left," for its part, has largely bought into this framing, condemning the Greens for their transgression against the natural party of government. The loudest tut-tutting, however, tends to come from those who either don't live in Canberra, or have been residents for only the last two years of a seven-year undergraduate degree.

Lenin's "bourgeois worker's party" remark is repeated endlessly, without regard for how conditions have changed over a century of decomposition and defeat. There are no "workers' parties" today because there is no politically organised working class; only workers subsumed into one gelatinous mass called "the people." For Marx, the proletariat was a political, not sociological, category. In Germany in the 1870s, Bismarck could claim he won working-class votes, but only Bebel and Liebknecht could claim the allegiance of an independent, class-conscious proletariat.

Such a proletariat does not exist today. Instead, different sections of the middle and ruling classes rattle-rouse workers just enough to beat rival demagogues into submission, but not enough for independent organisation. Labor is part of this. Politically, it is a bourgeois progressive party, acting as kingmaker in a tripartite balancing act between the state, unions, and business. Sociologically, its membership is almost entirely professional bureaucrats. Its voter base includes many workers, yes, but there are just as many workers who vote Liberal, Green, or One Nation. Any revived socialist movement would have to win over workers from every capitalist party.

If we are choosing which state administrators would be "better" for the struggle for socialism, why prefer Labor? Perhaps a federal argument could be made, but in the ACT, after twenty years in power, Labor cannot even claim to be competent managers of capital.

Far from the well-managed corporate state that was promised, Labor cannot even make the light rail run on time. It has overseen corruption scandals, rolled out an essentially non-functional bus payment system that made most buses free for six months, and turned the most educated electorate in the country against the concept of public transport through painfully prolonged light rail construction times. Not to mention, it cannot run a city of fewer than half a million people without a

\$100 million annual deficit.

The claim that a Green-Blue coalition would endanger the ACT's progressive social policies is equally absurd. The Liberals hold less than one-third of the Legislative Assembly, and neither Greens nor Labor would consent to changes to abortion or euthanasia laws. The only valid objection is likely instability and initial unpopularity, but when the alternative is a government so thoroughly incompetent and ossified, is that much of a risk?

The option of an independently organised proletarian socialist movement is always present, and its absence is felt with every new disaster on our screens. But if that's off the table and we are content to merely be a gadfly on one set of reformist philanthropists, is this the side we must choose, merely because the branding is red?

What are we going to do about the state?

Porco, Sydney

The February 9th peaceful protest against Isaac Herzog's visit was met with extreme police violence. Videos and photos of police assaulting the elderly, children, praying Muslims and Palestinian protesters are widespread across social media. All of this is horrible. And we should be horrified.

Under Chris Minns, NSW Police has been directed to escalate their violence against the Palestine movement. They have begun to use all sorts of weapons to assault protesters; from pepper spray, to tear gas, to rubber bullets, fists, batons, horses... one has to wonder at what point live ammunition becomes a possibility. After all, police snipers were seen overlooking protesters on rooftops in Town Hall.

So what will the left do about it?

It is becoming politically and strategically untenable for activists and the socialist left to continue living in their fantasy land, that they can peacefully protest their way out of increasingly unstable situations. More and more now, it becomes clear that we need a party.

We need mass, centralised organisations training people in street politics, medic work and also the logistical, organisational and political tactics that can help protests defeat state repression, but more importantly, for the most vulnerable among us to be allowed to attend without the fear that they will be beaten and arrested by the armed thugs that Chris Minns will continue to send on us.

However, we are incapable of this. Hosting larger and larger rallies and protests is not the solution. They have guns. And as far as I'm concerned, everyone seems to forget this. Activists call Chris Minns and the NSW police fascist, but in comparison to real fascists, these people are restrained. Fascists would kill you for protests like this – though the violence that swept Sydney on Monday evening is reminiscent of the violent assaults waged by Mussolini's blackshirts against workers and peasants in Italy. If we want to stop the Australian state reaching that point, we need to develop a

tactical awareness that no one really seems to have. At least not publicly.

We call for the creation of worker militias, but this may be a naive relic of a former time, if it lacks further elaboration. To be clear, forming armed self defence groups is not the immediate answer to this problem. However, organisation is. Currently, we are not organised, while the police are becoming more violent with each protest.

Our strength is the social support we have in society right now. Our weakness is what we choose to do with it. There are more protests planned in the coming days. What will we learn from them?

What are we going to do about the state? Will we continue to pretend that minute grouplets of excitable anarchists, or miniature socialist sects of first year uni students, are capable of defeating armed thugs with the full backing of a modern state apparatus? Are we insane?

What would it take for the socialist left to recognise that its own disunity is partly to blame for this chaos? Do people need to die? If that's the case, perhaps we've already lost. How aimless, feckless, and detached from reality can these sectarians become? It's pitiful. We are victims of our own failures; failures which reverberate through history and crash upon the living workers and protesters of the present in every single second that we remain confused about the task ahead.

The task is taking power, and rebuilding a society for and by the working class. That is impossible with a fragmented movement. A united movement with dynamic public discourse and factional debates about strategy happening more or less in the public press? Well that might be a good first step.

The absurdity of it all, is that every section of the so-called revolutionary left, from the anarchists to Socialist Alternative to the CPA, has their own chosen section of liberal capitulators who they collaborate with. Imagine if our revolutionism could become non-negotiable, and our alliance with the reformists was predicated on the understanding that we were united against their opportunistic impulses.

The situation is escalating, whether we like it or not. The squeeze of capital can be felt in every corner of the global social organism. In order to break through the noise of absurd horror and devastation from Albanese, or the bloodlust of the Liberals, we need more than activist parties and miniscule grouplets. We need a strategy.

Until then, we will remain marginal and easily dispersed, and the working class will not trust our utopian and adventurist fantasies. Because in the end, they need to pay their bills, and would rather not be bashed by cops at rallies. How are we going to help them with that?

The farce of social cohesion and national unity

Antonio Garcia, Online

Since the horrific Bondi shooting last December, PM Anthony Albanese has repeatedly reiterated his desire to restore 'social cohesion' and 'national unity.' What methods has he employed to do so? He created a royal

commission to look into the attack, passing the burden of decision-making and action onto others. He stood behind NSW Premier Chris Minns as he rushed laws to restrict the right to protest and possess firearms through the state parliament. Finally, he invited Israeli President Isaac Herzog to come to Australia. In short, he created a commission to solve the problem for him, supported state leaders as they clamped down on tangentially-related bourgeois rights, and invited the president of perhaps the world's most controversial country to speak on the issue. What wonderful planning; what incredible foresight!

These responses, the knee-jerk reaction of a national bourgeoisie unaccustomed to civil strife, is one that proceeded quite predictably on Monday night. There, in the heart of Sydney, activists gathered to protest Isaac Herzog's visit. The stakes of the matter were obvious: Herzog was already in Sydney, and the disgruntled cries of protesters wouldn't send him packing. Moreover, the bulk of the protests were centered in Town Hall, far away from both Bondi Beach, the site of the shooting, and, in all likelihood, wherever Herzog was staying. In other words, this was a peaceful protest which was not pursuing any clear, material end. It was hastily-organised and focused on expressing the discontent of those attending. It was not a serious threat to the Australian state, Herzog's safety, or even 'public peace' – indeed, the bulk of protests occurred between five and eleven o'clock, after most of 'the public' had gone home.

Yet in spite of the protest's utter disorganisation, the boot came down hard on the activists. Almost as soon as they'd begun, they were ordered to disperse by the police. When these demands did not sway them, police swarmed those assembled. Protestors were chased down the streets of Town Hall, several activists were beaten, twenty-seven were arrested, and nine have been charged with various crimes. Chris Minns and other local authorities were quick to justify the crackdown, claiming the beatdowns were conducted "peacefully, until it became violent," because "the police had to react." When asked if anything would be done about the police's assault of a group of peacefully praying Muslims, Assistant Commissioner Peter McKenna claimed that "if their [the police's] decisions were right, wrong or otherwise, I'm not going to sit here and judge them this morning, because I saw what they were up against last night." Regarding another protest planned for Tuesday, NSW Police Minister Yasmin Cartley warned activists, "Think again, because you are deliberately antagonising the NSW police."

Such an absurd and disproportionate response is sure to rouse the bourgeois press and intellectuals. Some will, of course, defend the police's response – a conclusion we obviously cannot draw. Those unaware of the bourgeois state's role in capitalist society may admit it was disproportionate, but will argue that the state can be 'reformed' or 'adjusted' to ensure similar police violence doesn't happen again. This is a politically illiterate conclusion, at least in the sphere of Marxist politics. The bourgeois state is the tool of the bourgeoisie, and therefore, will utilise whatever means necessary to safeguard bourgeois

rule. Whilst these protests weren't a genuine threat to Australia's bourgeois order, such activity, if allowed to persist, may sour Israel and other members of the US bloc's view of the Australian bourgeoisie.

Thus, to save face in the eyes of its international allies and maintain its favourable position in world imperialism, the Australian haute-bourgeoisie must ensure such protests are firmly controlled. Finally, there will certainly be conspiracists who will use this crackdown to claim that 'Zionists,' 'Jews,' '(((they)))', or some other dog whistle, control the Australian government from the shadows. These racist, conspiratorial, remarks have no place in the workers' movement. Not only are they factually incorrect, for they also serve to sow division between proletarians of different races. Dividing the workers by religion, race, nationality, or otherwise, only serves to undermine the workers' movement and embolden the bourgeoisie to seize upon us at our weakest moment.

What, then, are the lessons to be learned? To our comrades already attuned to Marxism and the workers' movement, this is a clear, practical, example of Bordiga's argument: activism is the spontaneous reaction of an unorganised populace. It is spontaneous, poorly-organised, and greatly misconstrues the relations of force underpinning bourgeois dictatorship. It believes sudden bouts of angry words and picket signs are equal to the pepper spray, batons, and guns of the state. It believes sudden surges of emotion are effective counterweights to the falling rate of profit, imperial politics, and bourgeois dictatorship. Those in the workers' movement will do themselves a service by recalling Monday's events. It will not be through spontaneous, poorly-organised outbursts, but through carefully-strategised and carefully-planned activity that the workers' movement will succeed.

We must also recognise that Monday was a show of force. That the bourgeois state pursued such violent ends against unarmed, unorganised, and uncoordinated activists is telling. If this is how it treats a harmless group of protestors, what shall be the fate of earnest threats to bourgeois rule? Clearly, the bourgeois dictatorship holds no qualms with crushing against even the most marginal deviations from its imperial course. When the workers fill the streets with strikes, rallies, and marches for socialism, what shall we expect? Only one word comes to mind: brutality. The bourgeoisie will use every weapon in its arsenal: legal restrictions, physical violence, and a press which will sanitise its violence into a 'necessary reaction,' to silence the workers' demands. It is only a sober, unwavering workers' movement, one both theoretically and strategically equipped to face such opposition, which can counter the might of the bourgeois state. It is only a strong, united, workers' party that can proceed past such brutality and construct a world built for and by the working class: an international socialist republic.

Got an opinion? Send in a letter:
partisansubmissions@proton.me

Abolish it how?

Fox Luces

"What would it take for the socialist left to recognise that its own disunity is partly to blame for this chaos?" writes Porco reflecting on the ongoing expansions of state violence against the Palestine solidarity movement. This is an understandable question to ask. Equally understandable is the despair and anger that ripples through their letter. But this is the wrong question, and the wrong emotion. Almost everyone with their head in the game knows that a tipping point is coming, and that the left is currently too fractured to meet it properly – recognition of that fact gets us nowhere, and too much frustration over it actually drives us backward. I submit that "What are we going to do about the state" is a much better try at a progressive line of inquiry. Here is my attempt to answer it properly.

What to do about the state? Abolish it of course, for the structures of parliament, the police, the military and the courts are at present irredeemable tools of the ruling class. The real reason for the 'current chaos' is simple to understand: the global demand for justice in Palestine represents a direct challenge to the hegemony of western capital, which still belongs to the most centralised and well-armed capitalists in the world. Giving up their client in the middle east remains unacceptable, and even more unacceptable is allowing the working class any victory at all through their own self-organisation (which is what real concessions on Palestine would amount to), because what kind of example would that set? Combine this with what is odiously referred to as the 'cost of living crisis', stemming from the long-term gap between wage and productivity growth as well as the increasingly speculative and commodified housing industry, and the challenge becomes a crisis. When capitalism faces multiple insurmountable and interlocking crises, it is up to the left to seize the moment. Otherwise, yes, fascism takes hold – from both inside and outside the state. The old line that "fascism is capitalism in decay" rings true, though we might more accurately put it that fascism is a tool used by capital to maintain its hegemony. Anyone who still thinks it hyperbolic to use the 'f-word' following the protests in NSW is burying their head in the sand. As Porco himself points out, live ammunition is the logical next step.

So far this should be revision. The question is what to do about it; but Porco seems almost hostile toward any concrete ideas on this front. If the call for workers' militias is a "relic", then a call for organisation is meaningless; we all know organisation is necessary, that is why this magazine exists in the first place. So where to turn for something more concrete? Porco manages two sideways sneers at anarchists in their letter, but in doing so they may be overlooking a community that has been strategising the fight against the state more intensely than any other left tendency for a long time. Here I will endeavour to introduce an elementary concept that consistently emerges from this effort: prefiguration.

Prefigurative politics is the effort to build the future

society in the shell of the old; to, as much as possible, act as if we are already free. Obviously, this idea has its limits, but those limits are simply nowhere in sight, and frankly leftists these days are excessively familiar with them. The strategic point of prefiguration is two-fold. First, when we build an alternative to the state, we can use this to sustainably power the machine of resistance. This looks like providing food to those that need it, providing healthcare and first aid, protecting the most vulnerable sections of the working class (e.g. immigrants and transgender people), setting up education hubs – providing any services that we can, totally independent of the state. The goal here is to reprogram people’s impulses from leaning on the state to support them to leaning on their fellow workers. This introduces the second benefit of prefiguration, which is the providing of a tangible alternative. How many in the socialist left really believe that an alternative society is possible? Not just logically or academically, but with full commitment? How many feel up to the challenge of meeting every other member of society as an equal, of having no organised system of violence to appeal to with every inconvenience? In my opinion, a lack of commitment to the logical conclusion of our ideas holds us back in times like these. Prefigurative politics builds the experience necessary to change that.

For a historical example on which to draw, look no further than the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. What began essentially as a militia to protect black Americans against racists and the police grew into a hub for counterpower and community organisation. The Panthers ran free breakfast programs, regularly patrolled communities, and provided additional essential services. They formed close connections with similar organisations within the latino [sic] community, and provided direct support to Indigenous Americans in their fight against state oppression. Under the leadership of Fred Hampton, they also reached out to rabidly reactionary working-class white Americans with astonishing success. They grew, in the words of FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, into “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.” Would that we could ever receive a similar compliment from Mike Burgess!

If anyone is reading this wondering how on earth any left group in modern Australia could gain access to the resources needed to put any of this into action, that’s a good question to ask. However, I think we underestimate the manpower and connections the left would have access to if we were able to provide a more concrete proposition to sympathisers than “join our organisation – you can vote in our conference in a few months.” Everybody with organising experience knows how difficult it is to keep people motivated and active, but does it have to be that way? I submit that with a real project building a tangible alternative to the state, we may see gains in places we never thought to look.

Finally, a word on what to do right now: number one, join your local tenant organisation. These have the best chance of growing into something worthy of the name ‘counterpower’ right now. Look into any ‘food not

bombs’ style outfits near you. Unionise your workplace. Talk to people about their fear and hatred of the system – ask them what they’re doing about it. Work to find out what the actual needs of your community are, and work with fellow socialists to find ways to meet them. Proudly carry the banner of your organisation as you do so. Prefiguration at its best is not a replacement for a mass party, but a complement to it.

This is not a roadmap to revolution, but it’s a start, and the stakes are too high to wait for a perfect theory of the current moment. It’s time to stop wishing we were more unified or well organised, and to start reaching out.

About the slogan “defend Iran”...

Martin Greenfield

Communist Unity as an organisation seems to have adopted the slogan “Defend Iran” as its central mobilising slogan to combat Trump’s war on Iran and Australia’s support for it. This is an error.

The main aim of communists in Australia is to mobilise the working class to cripple Australia’s support for and involvement in the war. “Defend Iran” does not do this.

In fact, it confuses the issue. Defend Iran—how? Send blankets, missiles, troops? Defend the Iranian regime? This seems to come out of some ortho-Trot tablet of stone rather than thought-through consistent anti-imperialism.

“Stop the war on Iran. Defeat for US-Israeli aggression. No Australian support for Trump’s wars. Bring the troops home” are all much more concrete slogans aimed at defeating “our” side, mobilising workers against the war, and bringing a political cost to the Australian government.

Albanese’s quick-fire support for the war is now looking pretty stupid as the cost of warflation is biting.

Our main slogans are aimed at *mobilisation against our state*, and aimed at leading workers in this country to contest what that state is doing. Our approach should be to empower the working class here to become a political class against the Australian state.

Secondary mobilising slogans could be to support the people of Iran under imperialist bombardment.

The other big problem with “Defend Iran” is it has “campist” connotations. Yes, the defeat of US-Israel aggression at the hands of Iran would weaken imperialism, but that would not simply be a positive victory for the global working class. It would also strengthen the Islamist reactionaries in Tehran.

As the slogan can be interpreted as “campist” (my enemy’s enemy is my friend), workers without a clear anti-imperialist position (ie: most) could see this as calling for victory to the Iranian regime *as your first priority*, which it clearly is not (I hope). Our priority is crippling Australian support for the war.

In Iran itself, a revolutionary defencist position is correct, mobilising to defend the country, while pointing out the regime cannot adequately protect the people, will not consistently oppose imperialism.

But in Australia, in the US, Israel, NATO countries,

the call must be for the war to stop, for defeat to US-Israel aggression and solidarity with the people of Iran.

Stop the war on Iran, defeat for US-Israel aggression.

No Australian support—bring the troops home.

Solidarity with the peoples of Iran.

All seem to be a much better way to mobilise workers to take on the Australian state and its political operatives.

The quicker you drop “Defend Iran” as your main slogan, the better.

A rose by any other name... In defence of defence

C. Cunningham

I read with interest the letter by *Labor Tribune*'s Martin Greenfield (March 21), “About the slogan ‘defend Iran’...” This is a polemic against Communist Unity (CU) for raising the call to “Defend Iran!” in the face of the barbaric US-Israel onslaught. Our critic calls centring defence of Iran “an error” that should be dropped and “the quicker...the better.” Why? Because according to Greenfield this demand clouds the fact that “The main aim of communists in Australia is to mobilise the working class to cripple Australia’s support for and involvement in the war.” Instead, Greenfield argues that “Stop the war on Iran. Defeat for US-Israel aggression. No Australian support for Trump’s wars” and “Bring the troops home” are much more concrete slogans to defeat “our side” and mobilise workers against the war.

I wholeheartedly agree that communists should aim to cripple Australia’s involvement in the war and fight to defeat US-Israel aggression. What is puzzling is the attempt to separate that from standing in defence of Iran—does a rose by any other name not smell just as sweet? Another puzzle is the argument that taking a stance in defence of Iran implies hailing the Iranian regime. Would Greenfield make the same argument in regards to Palestine? As was explained in the CU’s most recent article “Iran War: Our Enemy is at Home”:

“Workers in Australia cannot be neutral in this conflict. We have a side we must choose—against the United States and with the Iranian proletariat. This means taking a firm stand in defence of Iran against the attempts by the US and Israel to topple or subjugate the Iranian state. We lend no support to the Mullah’s butcher regime.... But we recognise that the Iranian proletariat’s interests lie not in an American victory, which would only bring the barbarity of warlordism and the strengthening of its imperialist grip on the planet, but in the United States’ defeat.”

Standing as the best fighters in defence of Iran under threat of imperialist subjugation would not only undermine support for the regime but it would win the most militant workers and oppressed to the Communist banner. The Australian and international proletariat taking such a stance would be a great demonstration to the toilers of Iran that there is another alternative to the Mullahs in the fight against imperialism.

Workers from the US to Australia have every reason to embrace defence of Iran. The chaos in the Middle East is only heightening the cost-of-living crisis with greater social regimentation and bloody crackdowns to follow. The more this imperialist madness continues the more

the sons and daughters of workers will be dragooned into forfeiting their lives in wars that benefit only the billionaires who lord over them.

It is such anti-imperialist solidarity that revolutionary, communist unity is made of—this was the political basis for Lenin’s Comintern which the CU strives to reforge. It is only with this perspective that calling for “Solidarity with the peoples of Iran” would have any meaning, otherwise this call would be entirely acceptable to everyone from liberal Greens to Albanese, Netanyahu and Trump.

Greenfield’s strongest argument is that we should prioritise the tasks of the socialist and workers movement in Australia. Unfortunately, this is precisely where he falls short. The situation desperately calls for a workers movement that fights for anti-imperialist working-class actions such as strikes against the war, black-banning military goods and driving the US bases out. The biggest factor in crippling this development is the class’s union leadership, which channels discontent at the status quo away from the anti-imperialist road and into liberal cul-de-sacs. This includes the right wing, which either responds with silence or, like the ACTU leadership, calls for “a fair stake in the massive windfall profits.” It also includes the left-talking union leaders and liberal elements of the Labor Party who mouth fine words to stop war etc. but out of fealty to warmongers like Albanese & Wong don’t lift a finger to mobilise their base. Instead the MUA leadership champion calls for the Labor government to take a “decisive turn to diplomacy, disarmament and respect for international law.” Anger at the war, instead of being directed in opposition to imperialism is kept within bounds acceptable to Albanese thus maintaining the wretched status quo.

Feeling pressure from liberals and left Laborites, much of the left have remained in line with liberal-pacifist respectability. In some recent “anti-war” demos talk of Iran was *verboten*. When Iran has been mentioned it is with calls to “stop the war.” Instead of forthrightly arguing that to stop the war what is needed is to defeat US imperialism, the left stays within the good graces of “left” bureaucrats and other liberals peddling little more than appeals to the US’s deputy sheriff in Canberra to do better. The anti-imperialist movement can only be built in sharp opposition to all this liberal twaddle. In his bid to try and separate defending Iran and defeating the US, Greenfield muddles the latter with these very liberal calls as if they are one and the same! Enough conciliating with the conciliators! As CU drove home in its recently adopted “Theses on the Labor Party and Laborism”, we struggle to:

“...expose those ‘left’ Laborites who from Palestine to AUKUS preach nice-sounding demands but ultimately prioritise unity with the right wing above all else. This struggle would demonstrate the impotence of the left Laborites’ liberal pacifist program and their inability to carry out their demands.”

The workers and socialist movement needs to stop tripping over itself trying to disassociate from the Ayatollah and start fighting to disassociate itself from Albanese and his left conciliators. The sooner this is done the sooner we can build the anti-imperialist movement.

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