



# MASSIVELY INCREASE PUBLIC HOUSING! SOCIALISTIC CHINA IS DOING THIS

## FIGHT FOR THE SAME HERE!



**STOP Neo-Colonialism – Defend Syria**  
**Against the Pro-Imperialist "Rebels"**

Oppose NATO/Australia Diplomatic, Military & Political Intervention in Syria!  
 Oppose Imperialism Everywhere! Support the Ongoing Anti-NATO Resistance in Libya! NATO/Australia Get Out of Afghanistan! Australian Imperialists Get out of East Timor, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea!

Fellow Working Class People: Stand by Others Who Are Being Attacked By Australia's Capitalist Rulers – Let's Defend Syria!

From Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Bahrain to Turkey, Moscow, Wall to Liberland, 4th President of the United States Barack Obama, 1st Secretary of the Communist Working Class



### OPPOSE ALL NATO/AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY AND POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN SYRIA!



### **Cover photos**

**Top:** 16 Dec 2011: A building worker at the construction site of a project of public rental housing in Jingyuan Lu in the Shijingshan district of Beijing, the capital city of the Peoples Republic of China. Within a year, during the closing session of China's 18th National Congress of the Communist Party in November 2012, the Chinese government announced the completion of this - to date the country's largest public rental housing project. Media attending the Communist Party's Congress in Beijing were brought to see the low-cost housing project comprised of eight, 28-storey buildings and including facilities for a nursing home as well as a kindergarten. [Sources: Xinhua News Agency, China Daily News]

**Bottom:** Young people of Syrian origin pose for a photo in front of the Trotskyist Platform banner at the thousands-strong Hands Off Syria rally held in Sydney on 5 August.

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# **MASSIVELY INCREASE PUBLIC HOUSING! SOCIALISTIC CHINA IS DOING THAT SO LET'S FIGHT FOR THE SAME HERE!**



*Well over 100,000 people are homeless in Australia including thousands of children.*

**5 June 2012 – More and more of Australia’s poor are skipping meals because they can’t afford to pay for the food. In an annual survey by the Salvation Army of those who have sought its help, more than half the respondents admitted to skipping meals in order to pay for other necessities (ABC News Website, 16 May.) Other startling findings were that a third of those surveyed could not afford heating and a third could not afford medicine prescribed by their doctor.**

Charities are reporting that an increasing number of people are seeking their help. Low-income people are being crippled by punishing rents and utility charges. And job slashing by business bosses are hitting working class people hard. The official spin about the supposedly low unemployment rate masks the reality that about 600,000 people are officially unemployed in this country. However, perhaps an even greater number of people are not recorded in official unemployment figures only because long-term lack of success in finding a job has discouraged them from looking for work or because they are a single parent unable to find

affordable childcare. Meanwhile, one and a half million people are not able to get as many hours of work as they want to. They are not counted in the deceitful, official unemployment figures as those figures will not classify a person as unemployed if they obtain as little as one hour of work in a week. The drive of the business owners to maximize profits is forcing more and more workers into tenuous, low-wage casual jobs. That is why charities are reporting that an increasing proportion of those seeking help are not unemployed people but the working poor. These are typically people with young children who just can't get enough hours in part-time jobs to get by or can't make ends meet on the paltry minimum wage.

How could this be happening in a country that has such spectacular land and mineral resources? The fact is that the wealthy corporate elite who run this country's economy do not care what happens to the rest of us. Over the last few months, every week seems to bring a new announcement of job losses by major company owners who, having leached billions in profits out of their workers' toil over the years, do not hesitate to lay off these workers whenever that helps them to maximise profits. Just today, rail freight company QR National announced the axing of 500 jobs even after having gouged a \$189 million profit in the last six months of 2011. For its part, the ANZ Bank announced in February that it was axing a 1,000 jobs after having ripped off a spectacular profit of nearly \$3 billion in just half a year.

The capitalist business owners that are slashing jobs are causing misery to working class people but they are obtaining a lavish lifestyle for themselves. They are obtaining incredible wealth for themselves not through their own labour but by grabbing the fruit of their employees labour. And even as working class people do it harder and harder, these exploiters are taking an ever-greater share of national income. The total wealth of the Australia's five richest people alone is a staggering \$54 billion (*The Australian*, 24 May.) That's **more than 30 times** what the federal government spends each year on affordable housing!

Among the richest in this country are property developers. Indeed, of Australia's 200 richest people, 49 grabbed most of their money from property (*BRW Rich 200*, 2011.) They have obtained this wealth not from the building of affordable homes for the masses but through selling expensive houses for the affluent section of the middle class and holiday



*While so many are homeless in Australia, the rich live in obscene luxury: inside a home selling for \$16.5 million in Hope Island, Queensland. It features two fully equipped bars, a ten-seat movie theatre, ten bathrooms and enclosed parking for eight cars.*

mansions for the multiple-home owning upper class. Alternatively, they have been channelling construction resources into erecting shopping complexes dominated by pricey designer clothing and accessory stores. These strategies have maximized profits for the greedy property developers well. However, for low-income people it means that there is so very little housing built that they can actually afford to even rent.

That is why when working class people go to apply to lease accommodation where they can actually afford to pay the rent, there are often dozens and dozens of others seeking to rent the same place. With such a shortage of affordable housing, landlords are able to get away with driving up rents and bullying tenants. Other social problems are also being exacerbated. Knowing there is little affordable accommodation available, women suffering in violent or abusive relationships with male breadwinners are presented with the agonising choice of either risking homelessness or remaining in the oppressive relationship.

Given this terrible shortage of affordable accommodation, you would





*7 May 2012, Sydney: Rally in Western Sydney suburb, Parramatta, calls to "Stop Housing Being Built Only for the Rich! Provide Public Housing for the Working Class! China is Doing That in a Huge Way - We Demand the Same Here!"*

expect that if governments served the masses they would strongly build up public rental housing. Yet Australian governments of all stripes have, instead, been eroding public housing. In the decade from 1997 to 2007, the Howard government slashed the number of public housing dwellings by 30,000 even as the population grew. For its part, the Gillard government slashed by a quarter the outlay for social housing in last month's federal budget.

The ruling class' undermining of affordable housing is not some exception to their overall stance. It is part of their all-sided attacks on the rights of the working class and poor. Thus, the latest federal budget saw the government announce that low-income single parents, mostly single mothers, with children older than eight will be moved off receiving the Parenting Payment onto the much lower Newstart Allowance. Even with the much beat up little "benefits for battlers" announced in the budget, low income single parents will end up some \$30 to \$40 a week worse off.

That is why the struggle to reverse the attacks on public housing must be combined with a fight to smash the broad ranging attacks on the working class and the poor. To help agitate for such a fight back, Trotskyist Platform has initiated a campaign to demand a massive increase in public housing and to connect this demand with the overall class struggle of the working class against the capitalist exploiters. Given that many despair that the relentless erosion of public housing can ever really be reversed, we have, as a key part of the campaign, pointed to the massive public housing program underway in the Peoples Republic of China. This year alone, China will have **18 million** units of public housing under construction. This shows what can be achieved when political power is in the hands – and in China's

case even when only tenuously in the hands – of the working class masses.

We reprint below some of the speeches from the two rallies that have been held thus far as part of the campaign:

## **“The Housing authorities treat us like dirt”**

*The following is a write up of points that were fed into the February 16 public housing rally in Sydney from a tenants' rights activist and Trotskyist Platform supporter living in rural Western NSW. These points focused on the way Housing authorities were ill-treating public housing tenants. This enmeshed with a key fight of the campaign which is not only to win a huge increase in public housing but to demand proper treatment and drastically reduced rents for those who do manage to obtain public housing.*

*The comrade's details about how the Department of Housing authorities treat public housing tenants in his town resonated with rally participants who know that similar things go on in Sydney and the rest of Australia too.*

Firstly, I want to say that I am in full solidarity with this rally and the campaign for a massive increase in public housing. I completely support the idea of demanding a public housing program like the one that the Peoples Republic of China has instituted for the benefit of its working class people. However, here in this town in rural Western NSW, as elsewhere in Australia, governments are selling off public housing.

An important struggle here is also to win decent treatment for those who are already in public housing. Frankly, public housing tenants in this town are treated like dirt by the Housing authorities. A big problem is that the Department of Housing authorities regularly refuse or delay doing repairs. In one particularly horrific case, the plumbing in a public housing dwelling was so bad that when the person living in it flushed the toilet, faeces went on to the floor of her dwelling. And the tenant who has to put up with this is a woman who has health problems!

Then there is the case of a roof that was so run down that it started to cave in and allowed water to leak in. Often such problems are exacerbated because the authorities engage shonky maintenance contractors.

In the meantime, public housing authorities, instead of honoring their responsibility to renovate dwellings, are demanding that tenants paint their own units themselves. Yet when the Housing authorities want to harass a tenant about an issue they sometimes go and accost them on the street which is illegal even by laws that are themselves biased against tenants.

In summary, public housing tenants in this town in rural Western NSW feel like they are a door mat to be stepped on by the Housing bureaucrats, who look upon them as worthless people.

I wish all the comrades and everyone else who came to support this rally the best in our important struggle.

**“The capitalist free market is just not going to provide enough affordable rental accommodation.”**

*Here is a transcript of the speeches from the May 7 rally that was held in Parramatta Mall in Western Sydney under the slogans, “Stop Housing Being Built Only for the Rich! Provide Public Housing for the Working Class! China Is Doing That in A Huge Way – We Demand The Same Here!” We begin with the introduction to the demonstration by the rally chair (and also chairman of Trotskyist Platform), Sarah Fitzenmeyer.*

*The speeches have been lightly edited for publication.*

**Sarah Fitzenmeyer (rally chair):** Sisters and brothers, thanks for coming to support today’s rally. This is an urgent action because today in this country there is a terrible lack of housing that is affordable for working class people. There is also a huge shortage of rental housing that is affordable for people on low incomes.

Why in such a resource rich country like Australia does such a problem exist? Well, around the corner there in Macquarie Street, at the intersection with Marsden Street, the biggest residential project in Parramatta to date is being built. Three hundred and seventy apartments will be built in a 25-storey development dubbed the Vertical Village. It sounds like it will be a great place to live. Except for one big problem! Three bedroom apartments there are going to be selling for over a million dollars. For over

a million dollars each! You see this Vertical Village has been billed as a luxury complex for so-called high-end customers. In other words it won't be affordable for working class people.

Now if the biggest residential development here in the heart of the working class Western suburbs will not provide accommodation that working class people can afford then just imagine what is happening in the rest of Sydney.

The fact is that right across Australia developers are building expensive homes for the affluent instead of providing rental accommodation that is affordable for working class people. Why? Because they all have the same mentality as the multi-millionaire boss of that Crown Group that is developing that complex in Macquarie Street. They are all driven purely by the quest for profits. And they know that they can make a lot more money building expensive homes for the wealthy even if a proportion of these remain vacant.

The capitalist free market is just not going to provide enough affordable rental accommodation. That is why the state must step in and build low rent, good quality public housing for working class people and people on low incomes. However, governments here are doing the exact opposite. Whether it's a Liberal government or a Labor government, or as the case federally now, a Labor/Greens government, the governments are selling off public housing.

We desperately need to stop them. The ever-growing shortage of public housing means that many working class people are struggling to get a roof over their heads and homelessness is rising. Meanwhile, private landlords are able to jack rents up and up because they know that people have nowhere else to go. As a result the median rent for houses in Sydney is now a whopping \$500 a week. That means if you are a family paying the average rent for a house in Sydney and relying solely on the minimum wage of one family member, you would only have \$89 a week left over for all other expenses.

Yet a different reality is possible. Look at what is going on in the world's most populous country, China. China has pulled itself up from the terrible poverty of its pre-1949 days when it was a neocolony. However, because its available natural resources have to be divided between 1.3 billion people,



*The failure of Australia's political system to provide housing for Aboriginal people has left some with no alternative but to build shelters such as this one.*

the GDP per person for China is still twelve times less than Australia's. Yet unlike here, the Peoples Republic of China is making spectacular progress in providing low rent public housing for its masses. Last year alone, China started building well over ten million affordable housing units. In China's biggest city, Chongqing, where the public housing campaign has been very strong, one in three people will be living in public housing by the end of this year. Yet, here in fabulously resource-rich Australia with such a relatively small population, only one in 25 people get access to public housing.

Sisters and brothers, governments in Australia are failing to provide public housing for working class people because the governments here all serve just the big end of town – the very wealthy bank bosses, factory owners, property developers and mining tycoons. So the only way we are going to get the public housing that we need is ... if we fight for it! And that is exactly what we are here to do today. We are here to help build a struggle that will fight for a massive increase in low-rent public housing as part of the overall working class movement against exploitation.

So I will now hand over to our first speaker, Yuri Gromov. Yuri is the editor of Trotskyist Platform, the group that has initiated today's action. Yuri has worked very hard to help organize this rally.

**“We need strong contingents of workers to join us in this battle for more public housing. What Gillard and Abbott and O’Farrell and the rest of them fear most of all is when workers, united together in a strong union, are prepared to strike. Workers together create all the wonders of this world but they can also threaten to shut down production and harm the profits of their capitalist bosses, the fat cats who all these roosters crowing in the farmyard of Australian politics really serve.”**

**Yuri Gromov (Trotskyist Platform editor):** There are about 250,000 households on the waiting list for social housing in Australia. One family told us they’d been waiting seven years for public housing. Twelve years, others said, fifteen years for one woman. The queue for housing would be even longer if the eligibility criteria for it hadn’t been so cruelly restricted. In NSW, a single person can’t even get on the waiting list if their weekly income is more than \$525 a week and that’s less than the minimum wage for a fulltime worker!



*Sovereign Island, Gold Coast, Queensland consists of 700 exclusive houses many valued at over 20 million dollars. Earlier this year new berths were added to the island’s marina so that the super rich residents can park large luxury yachts. The capitalist system means that construction resources are used to satisfy whims of the ultra-rich rather than the basic housing needs of the masses.*

So the poor are forced to have to deal with the sharks of the private rental market. If you look at the people in the bottom 40% income bracket who are renting privately in Sydney, nearly three out of every five are paying more than 30% of their income on rents. Many are actually paying more than half of their income. **Hundreds of thousands of people are just one income cheque away from being thrown out into the street.** Just one redundancy announcement from a greedy boss and they'll be joining the other 100,000 plus people who are homeless in this country.

What we need now is good quality, low rent public housing to be provided on a huge scale. What we see instead is governments in Australia **selling off** public housing. Governments of all stripes are neglecting the public services that working class people most rely on. Public hospitals are badly under-funded. Public schools aren't allocated enough teachers. The ALP/Greens federal government has so shamefully, so shamelessly slashed welfare payments to single mothers and attacked the rights of disability support pensioners.

Only mass action can turn things around. We need strong contingents of workers to join us in this battle for more public housing. What Gillard and Abbott and O'Farrell and the rest of them fear most of all is when workers, united together in a strong union, are prepared to strike. Workers together create all the wonders of this world but they can also threaten to shut down production and harm the profits of their capitalist bosses, the fat cats who all these roosters crowing in the farmyard of Australian politics really serve.

Australia's richest person, mining heiress, Gina Rinehart, has alone hoarded 17.1 billion dollars. If we left her say a cool couple of million and took the rest and used it for public housing, 190,000 dwellings could be built – enough to end homelessness in this country. And if we did the same to the wealth of the other 200 richest tycoons in Australia, nearly two million public housing dwellings could be built and that would really hit the rental crisis for six.

We must never forget this. Because governments and talkback radio hosts have created a **myth** that the affordable housing crisis and other social problems are caused by too much immigration. They push racist

lies that resources are being drained into “special benefits” for Aboriginal people even as Aboriginal people suffer terrible racist discrimination and horrendous police violence. There’s a reason why the powers that be spread such utter racist rubbish. It’s to divert anger on to migrants and Aboriginal people so that we don’t realize that the real cause of the affordable housing crisis and the crazily long public hospital waiting times is that **so much of this country’s wealth is hoarded by a few, ultra-rich, capitalist exploiters.**

We must not let them divert people away from our struggle. We need to destroy these racist myths by positively mobilising to defend migrants, refugees and Aboriginal people from racist attacks. We need to take the economy out of the greedy hands of the Gina Rineharts and the Andrew Forrest’s and put it under the collective control of the masses led by the working class.

The potential of such a system can be partly seen in the Peoples Republic of China. Although the workers state in China is deformed and has allowed too much capitalism in, the key sectors of China’s economy still remain under socialistic state ownership. This has enabled China to sail through the global economic crisis and allowed it to embark on a spectacular public housing program. In one province alone, called Heilongjiang in North East China, they started building over 900,000 new public housing dwellings last year. That province has a population just 1.7 times that of Australia. So, in proportionate terms, what they’ve done in this one Chinese province is the equivalent of providing 530,000 new public housing dwellings here. That’s approaching doubling Australia’s entire public housing stock and that province in socialistic China has achieved it in just one year!

Today we’re using China’s gigantic public housing drive to strengthen and inspire our own struggle for more public housing in Australia. The ruling class of capitalist countries like the U.S. and Australia hate this. They fear that the existence of a workers state in China, however tenuous, encourages the masses in their own countries to demand more. That’s why they’ve mobilized their World Bank, assisted by more right-wing factions of the Chinese bureaucracy itself, to try and foist upon China a plan to *privatize* her booming, socialistic state-owned enterprises. We must stand by those within China seeking to oppose all these moves to drown the workers state in capitalist restoration. Preserving a socialistic system in China can





*One of China's many new public housing complexes. Last year China started construction of over ten million new public housing dwellings.*

only continue to inspire our own struggles for justice here at home.

But there are, of course, obstacles to implementing a China-style public housing program here at home. China's program is partly financed by its banks. And even though such social housing is not particularly profitable, their banks still lend for it because all of China's major banks are state-owned. And the state's telling them they must lend for this program. But Australia's banks are capitalist-owned and absolutely obsessed with ensuring fat profits for their shareholders. They won't be told to lend for public housing, not by the likes of Gillard or Swan, that's for sure.

Secondly, the greedy developers who'd be contracted to build public housing in Australia would inevitably charge rip-off prices. Remember all the corruption around the school buildings program? The developers and their cronies in government would get rich out of it but too few homes would get built. But in China the major developers are, once again, state-owned. They're building public housing at low prices, even when they barely break even on it, because their managers' careers depend not just

on profits but on meeting social goals too *like affordable housing*. So if we're going to win the type of public housing we need here at home in Australia we've also got to fight to *rip* the banks and construction firms *out of* the hands of the rich, exploiting class and ultimately bring the whole economy into the hands of a workers state.

When we succeed in achieving this workers' revolution then we'll no longer have public housing authorities like the ones today who stall on urgent plumbing repairs and afterwards threaten to kick you out if you even get the tiniest bit behind on water charge payments. Working class people will be the authorities. And in power workers will build a socialist society that guarantees jobs, free housing and dignity for all.

**“In the Peoples Republic of China ... there are restrictions discouraging wealthy families from buying even a second home. As a result in China, housing speculation has been almost totally killed off.”**

**Sarah Fitzenmeyer (rally chair):** When developers are building expensive homes for the affluent, they are not rich people's first homes. The super rich are buying multiple houses. Often this is for making money on rising house prices. At other times it is for pure leisure so that they have holiday homes to use whenever they feel like it. The late Melbourne-based tycoon Dick Pratt famously had a penthouse pad in a plush Circular Quay development just so that he could cheat on his wife in secret and then a separate 2.5 million dollar mansion in Centennial Park to secretly hide away with his mistress.

The result of all this is that there are a large number of houses in this country that may be occupied for only a few days in a year. Indeed, at any one time more than 122,000 dwellings in Sydney are unoccupied. All this is made worse by government tax policies that encourage the well-off to buy multiples homes to avoid tax. This is very different to what the state in the Peoples Republic of China is doing. There in the big cities, any family who owns two homes anywhere within China is simply banned from buying a third home. What is more, there are restrictions discouraging wealthy families from buying even a second home. For example, they are not able to buy a second home in key cities like Beijing unless they live there.

Furthermore, even those who do buy a second home are only allowed to get a loan for 40% of the price. As a result in China, housing speculation has been almost totally killed off.

Last year, more than nine out of ten homes sold in the private market in China were bought by first-home buyers. The Peoples Republic of China's restrictions on housing speculation and its massive public housing program meant that last year it actually built more public housing dwellings than private ones.

Here, however, the authorities are doing the very opposite. The problem is that in Australia, unlike in the Peoples Republic of China, the state authorities are only interested in serving the wealthy capitalist exploiters. That is why if we are going to get affordable housing for working class people here, we are going to have fight for it.

Our next speaker is someone who has worked harder than anyone to spread the message of this rally. He is Samuel Kim, a Trotskyist Platform comrade activist.

**“The erosion of public housing is happening whether it’s the right-wing Liberals in office or as we have now federally, a defacto Labor/Green coalition. Even when the ALP or Greens promise measures benefiting the masses, they never deliver. For these supposedly left-wing politicians, they are all still committed to running a system dominated by the bankers, factory bosses and mining magnates who are forever trying to squeeze every last penny out of the masses that they exploit. The ALP or Greens politicians may here and there criticize a tycoon or billionaire, maybe even take a bit of tax off them like scraps off a table for the people but they never question, never threaten a tycoon’s or billionaire’s, the Elite’s, bourgeois scum’s mode of exploitation.”**

**Samuel Kim (Trotskyist Platform activist):** In Claymore, near Campbelltown, Sydney's biggest public housing area, governments are slashing the public housing. The number of public housing units will be cut from 1,151 to just 447. And they are not just slashing public housing in Claymore but are also selling off public housing in Glebe, Millers Point and in many other suburbs by stealth. The homeless, the poor and working class people are, no wonder, waiting 5 to 20 years for public housing.

The shortage of affordable rental accommodation allows private landlords to have a strategic edge over the housing market scramble of the working class, and to get away with exorbitant rents enforced on working people. In Sydney a one-bedroom apartment has a median rent of \$420 a week. Imagine if a young struggling couple happens to rely on unemployment benefits: even with rent assistance they would together have around \$50 a week left over after rent, hardly enough for food, bills and proper integration into society.

Since there are so many people trying to obtain the relatively few affordable rental places available, private landlords think they can get away with not only increasing rents but with discriminating against people when choosing tenants. That is why the disabled, the old, the poor, single mothers, non-white ethnic people, Aboriginal people, the unemployed all have the hardest time finding a place to rent.

The erosion of public housing is happening whether it's the right-wing Liberals in office or as we have now federally, a defacto Labor/Green coalition. Even when the ALP or Greens promise measures benefiting the masses, they never deliver. For these supposedly left-wing politicians, they are all still committed to running a system dominated by the bankers, factory bosses and mining magnates who are forever trying to squeeze every last penny out of the masses that they exploit. The ALP or Greens politicians may here and there criticize a tycoon or billionaire, maybe even take a bit of tax off them like scraps off a table for the people but they never question, never threaten a tycoon's or billionaire's, the Elite's, bourgeois scum's mode of exploitation.

That's why we are not going to get more public housing by making submissions to governments. It's not that these governments don't know the facts. They do! The problem is that under Australia's current political



*Tianjin Railway Station, China: An inter-city express service soon before departing for Beijing. The whole journey takes just 32 minutes for a trip equal in distance to that of Sydney to Kiama which here takes over two hours and twenty minutes! Two state-owned manufacturers build all of China's very fast trains. Public ownership of socialistic China's key industries has enabled spectacular advances in public transport and public housing in recent years. (photo: Trotskyist Platform)*

structure, whoever is elected to office administers a state that ultimately only serves the interests of the ruling capitalist class.

What we need to do is organize the struggle of the working class through the unions which are the organized organs of the working class to fight against capitalist exploitation of all working people. We need to fight for massively increased public housing and properly funded public schools and hospitals as part of the working class union movement. However, winning an increase in public housing is only part of the struggle. We also need to ensure that people once in public housing are treated properly. The draconian water charges that they face must be abolished. The rents that people pay in public housing in Australia are far too high for low-income people. People have to pay 25% of income they receive as rent. Yet in the capital city of socialistic China, Beijing, low income people pay at most 10% of their income in rent and as little as half a percent!

Here in Australia, the Housing authorities not only delay repairs but treat tenants with much disrespect. It's because the housing authorities are thugs of the State we live in, the thuggish nature of the capitalist State's enforcers treats the people and poor with such hatred. Look at the way the police shot Aboriginal children in Kings Cross and then brutally bashed the youth afterwards as the teenagers bled to the verge of death from the gunshots. Now, would a rich, white, middle aged corporate executive be treated by the police thugs in the same way?

That is why Trotskyist Platform insists that we eventually will need to sweep away this state that serves only the capitalist exploiters. After the capitalist state is swept away we should construct a state that serves working class people, the working class who are the glorious engine of society. Such a state we propose would rip the factories, mines, banks, commercial buildings and productive land out of the hands of the exploiters and bring them into the collective hands of the masses. Then finally the resources needed to provide free quality public housing, public health care and public schools will be available.

We desperately need such a socialist solution because capitalism and its ongoing economic crisis and past crises is bringing and has brought so much misery worldwide. Look at the failure of capitalism in Spain where half of Spain's youth are unemployed. Greece, Japan, the USA all face similar crises with no real signs of a proper solution. When the same capitalist economic crisis hits here, the capitalists and reactionary politicians will attack the weakest and the poor working classes, slashing public housing and welfare.

That's why class struggle must be unleashed to defend our rights. In Portugal, Greece, Italy, India, worldwide, workers are waging major battles. When such struggles break out in Australia (and it's inevitable) we must ensure that these struggles do not get diverted into the traps of the parliamentary capitalist games but instead rely only on the united power of working class people. The powerful working class, when united and fully conscious, will organize to take political power. Such struggle beckons. A society that will end homelessness, inequality, racism, wars and poverty. Towards socialism, towards communism. Down with the capitalists. Victory to the working class. Victory to the Revolution.




*Sydney rally for public housing noted that while capitalist Australian governments are selling off public housing, in socialistic China they started the construction of over 10 million public housing units in 2011 alone. (photo: Trotskyist Platform)*

**“In the end we will only stop this situation for good when we get a state structure that actually serves working class people. In China, such a state, despite its inconsistencies and fragility, is spectacularly building affordable public housing for its masses. Here what we have instead are authorities who only serve the big end of town – who only serve the Gina Rineharts, the Clive Palmers, the Andrew Forrests and the rest of the capitalist factory bosses, bank executives and greedy developers. We cannot tolerate this situation anymore – we need to have a state that serves us.”**

**Sarah Fitzenmeyer (rally chair):** Greedy landlords know that there are shortages of affordable accommodation, they know that they can get away with not only driving up rents but with bullying tenants. However it is not only private tenants who are being treated badly. The public housing authorities’ “solution” to deal with the huge waiting lists is to constantly find excuses to boot people out of their homes. The housing departments treat public tenants with contempt, with the same contempt that Alan Jones and other shock jocks show to those doing it hard. Working class people have all got to unite to stop this. In the end we will only stop this situation for good when we get a state structure that actually serves working class people. In China, such a state, despite its inconsistencies and fragility, is spectacularly building affordable public housing for its masses.

Here what we have instead are authorities who only serve the big end of town – who only serve the Gina Rineharts, the Clive Palmers, the Andrew Forests and the rest of the capitalist factory bosses, bank executives and greedy developers. We cannot tolerate this situation anymore – we need to have a state that serves us.

Yet we know that the exploiting elite are not just going to hand over their power to the masses. We are going to have fight for it. Our advantage is that it is the working class that makes the wheels of industry, mining, construction and transport turn. United together, the working class can defeat the exploiters through industrial action and then more. We need to organize to unleash that power right now to demand a massive increase in public housing as well as better resourced public schools and public hospitals and free childcare.

We must ensure that today's action becomes just the start of an urgent struggle for lower public housing rents and a massive increase in public housing. 



**OPPOSE POLICE TERROR AGAINST ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, “ETHNIC” YOUTH AND ALL THE POOR!  
DON'T ALLOW BUSINESS AS USUAL – BUILD MASS  
ACTIONS BACKED BY TRADE UNION POWER!**



*Horrific racist savagery: After shooting Aboriginal youth Troy Taylor in Sydney's Kings Cross, police drag and bash the teenager as he bleeds to within an inch of death. (photo: Sunday Telegraph)*

**May 11 – Enough is enough! How many more mothers and fathers must grieve over a child killed by Australian police? How many more close friends must agonise over a dear one whose life hangs in the balance because they were attacked by cops? Police are getting ever more vicious. They must be opposed! Recent events have made this all too clear.**

On March 21, six Sydney cops viciously killed Brazilian student Roberto Laudisio. After having identified Roberto as having allegedly stolen, of all things, a packet of biscuits, the cops hounded him as if he was the target of a hunting expedition. They smashed him against a shop window, capsicum sprayed him and then, in what resembled an horrific game of cat and mouse, repeatedly tasered him to death.

Less than two weeks later, NSW cops were at it again. They opened fire at

point blank range on Aboriginal youth in Kings Cross. After shooting two teenagers, police brutally dragged their victims out of the car that they were in. One of them was 17-year old Troy Taylor. Police had shot him in the neck. Now they barbarically bashed him as he lay helpless on the edge of death in a pool of his own blood. Despite the best efforts of Liberal premier O'Farrell and the mainstream media, much of the public has been horrified at this Nazi-like savagery. Yet this is hardly the exception. Since 1980, over 500 Indigenous people have died in state custody. And over the last few years, a startling number of people of all ethnicities have died at the hands of police.

With Australian police so trigger-happy, anyone could potentially be the next victim. Yet there is also a definite bias. The authorities target, in the first place, Aboriginal people and after that working class non-white ethnic youth and more broadly poorer people of all colours. Look at the difference between the way police treated the Aboriginal youth in Kings Cross, who had allegedly mounted onto a footpath in a stolen car, and the way the authorities treated the late tycoon Dick Pratt. Pratt had stolen not a mere car but 700 million dollars from ordinary people by forming an illegal cartel to set rip-off prices on packaging (for everyday items) sold by his firm, Visy. Yet when Pratt was finally charged, he was not gunned down by the authorities. Instead the elite rushed to his defence. Then when he developed cancer, the police did not brutally bash him as he fought for his life. Instead, politicians fell over themselves to visit the ailing capitalist bigwig and prosecutors even dropped all charges against him. After his death, the filthy, greedy criminal was given a state funeral! It's one law for some, one law for others!

The fact is that the police, alongside the courts, prisons and army, form part of a rich people's state, a capitalist state. Although it may occasionally put a real murderer or rapist in jail, the state's main job is to protect the rich capitalist business elite from any revolt by the working class masses that they exploit. Even in times when the masses' struggles are quieter, the state is busy evicting poor tenants struggling to pay rent, harassing the homeless and amplifying racist government policies by picking on Aboriginal people and also African, Asian and Middle Eastern youth. Doing such dirty "work" day in day out, police develop a hostile attitude to those doing it hardest in our society. And they just keep getting worse! That's because governments – whether Liberal, ALP or ALP/Greens in coalition – are allowing the very rich to get richer at the expense of the poor. Look at

the way Gillard has slashed the parenting payments for low-income single mothers. Such vicious policies encourage the police, who enforce the ever more unequal status quo, to become even more contemptuous towards those stuck at the bottom of an unjust society.

That is why we must build defiant mass actions against this tyranny. We must demand that the cops who killed Roberto and who brought two youths in the Kings Cross incident to the brink of death must be jailed. Justice for TJ Hickey and all victims of state violence! Most of all our actions, which need to be backed up by the power of the united working class, must be strong enough to make the authorities realize that if they don't rein in their cops, there will be consequences. It won't be business as usual! In particular, trade union industrial action can hit the profits of the business elite who run this country hard and make them start to understand that they'll be hit in the hip pocket if their cops continue with their terror.

This struggle is urgent because when the capitalist economic crisis, centered in Europe, does arrive here then the state will become even more brutal. The capitalist rulers will make the masses pay for the crisis and they will mobilise their state to try and crush any fight back. The violence that cops have dealt to the Occupy Sydney demonstrators will be unleashed on a greater scale. That is what riot police are doing in places like Greece and Spain as the masses resist the poverty imposed by the exploiting elite. In 2008, Greek police murdered 15 year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos when they opened fire on protesters.

That's why it's in the very interest of the workers movement to stand by those most targeted by police today. For it is the same state that's hounding the most downtrodden groups that will be used to attack workers' picket lines and jail trade union militants when the workers' struggle hots up. Furthermore, only by standing with Aboriginal people and embattled "ethnic" communities can the working class movement undercut the schemes of the rulers to divide their ranks with racism.

That some workers can come to understand this was shown by the stance of the Sydney branch of the MUA dock workers union in support of Aboriginal hero Lex Wotton. Wotton was the leader of the 2004 resistance by the people of Palm Island that responded to the racist police murder of Mulrunji Doomadgee. That 100% justified resistance saw the centres of racist tyranny on the island, the police station and court, end up in ashes.



*April 24, Sydney: Among the hundreds of people who participated in a determined emergency protest against the Kings Cross police shooting. Their placard reads "End Police Terrorism – Taserung, Bashing and Killing Ethnic People."*

The MUA Sydney Branch was won over to joining a burgeoning campaign to defend Wotton from persecution. This culminated in a stopwork by all Sydney port workers on 7 November 2008 on the day Wotton was sentenced by a Townsville Court. This union action was instrumental in making the authorities realise that the masses would not let them get away with imposing on Wotton the extreme jail sentence that they had wanted.

To make such powerful actions the norm rather than the exception, we must struggle to replace the pro-ALP ideology and leadership that currently dominates the unions with a program of struggle based on opposition to this racist, rich people's state. A key part of this agenda is to have the Police Association removed from Unions NSW. It is the duty of all socialists to fight for this. It is very hard to mobilise trade union support for campaigns against cop violence when we've got police representatives at our union meetings! It is thus not good enough for some Left groups to only denounce the cops where that is popular and then, in another setting,



*12 May 2012, Sydney: Rally outside Kings Cross station protests vile police attack on Aboriginal youth. Seeing this as crucial to building the necessary trade union/black/"ethnic" mobilisations against police violence, Trotskyist Platform placards at the protest called to free the union movement from the presence of the Police Association.*

claim it's a positive that, for instance, cops joined last year's NSW public sector workers' rallies.

**NO ILLUSIONS IN ANY STATE INQUIRIES – "INDEPENDENT" OR NOT!  
NO ILLUSIONS IN REFORMING THE POLICE!**

If we are going to direct the anger at police violence into the kind of struggle that can actually make the cops think twice before unleashing their terror, it is crucial that people do not get diverted into false hopes that the police force can actually be made to alter its character. Yet such hopes are widespread, even among those working hard to organize

actions to respond to the Kings Cross outrage. Thus, one of the demands of the May 12 protest is for a police citizens review board. However, the police force which has been built up over many years for the express purpose of maintaining our unfair social order cannot be controlled by any review board. All such boards will serve to do is to give a pretence that the police are under the public's control. In the U.S. where such civilian review boards exist, terrible cop violence against Blacks, Hispanics and the poor continues unabated.

What is widely understood is that when police investigate themselves this always leads to a whitewash. Yet people are instead calling for an "independent inquiry." The trouble with that is that any inquiry conducted by the state will not be in any shape or form actually "independent." It will be an inquiry conducted by an institution that serves the same ruling class as do the cops. That is why when there was a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, that "independent inquiry" failed to bring charges against a single murderous cop. What positive recommendations it did make have since not even been implemented.

Most of those calling for an "independent inquiry" are motivated by a sincere yearning for justice for the victims of police violence. But others have other ulterior aims too. Thus, Greens politician David Shoebridge's



*28 January 2012, Surfers Paradise Police Station: Yet more racist cop brutality. CCTV footage shows the last part of the police bashing of ethnic youth, Noa Begic. Mr Begic (above) was arrested for singing a song called Take the Power Back after leaving a nightclub. After being taken into custody, police repeatedly bashed Noa Begic as they hurled racist insults at him.*






*15 September 2012, Sydney: Police unleash dogs to bite Muslims protesting against an American film vilifying Islam. The protests against the film tapped into widespread anger amongst Arab and South Asian peoples at the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, at the U.S.-backed occupation of Palestine and at the continued Western imperialist subjugation of the Middle East. The racist character of the heavy-handed police attack on the Muslim rally contrasts with the way that police have allowed Christian fundamentalist bigots to cowardly harass women entering abortion clinics. It also contrasts with the weak police presence during the horrific December 2005 Cronulla riot by thousands of white supremacists. Although we completely reject the anti-secular agenda of the many religious fundamentalists that participated in the September 15 rally, Trotskyist Platform strongly defends the protesters against the blatantly racist police attack on them and their right to protest. We also stand squarely with Muslim and other ethnic communities against the torrent of racist abuse that has been churned up against them by capitalist politicians and media in the days since the September 15 rally.*

calls for an “independent inquiry” are in good part aimed at restoring public faith in the police and in quelling determined opposition to the state. He made that clear at the April 24 protest when he reprimanded youth there for using “violent language” against the police. How dare he! Police heinously bashed children right after shooting them and this Greens politician complains about people’s hostile language to the police!

Yet whether illusions in state inquiries are promoted by cynical politicians or by those with noble intentions, their effect is to undercut the fight to build the type of actions that can actually deter the cops. One of the reasons

that the campaign to defend Lex Wotton was able to lead on to union industrial action is that the Sydney-based campaign avoided making calls for a state inquiry into the case and thereby ensured that it did not dull its participants' sense that they must rely only on the power of the masses.

We need, today, the kind of action that the port workers took in defence of Lex Wotton but on a much larger scale. That is what it will take to begin to push back the rampaging police. In the end, those at risk of being hit with state violence will only truly be safe when this racist, capitalist state is swept away and replaced with a state serving the interests of working class people.

This aim of socialist revolution is what we should be guided by. Yet we can only prepare for this final goal in the course of waging struggles today. So beware those who use the necessity of a "long term working class strategy" as a means to dampen today the militancy of youth. A genuine working class-centred outlook seeks not to discourage resistance but to mobilise the working class behind staunch actions that embattled youth may take – such as if they organised mass pickets around particular police stations. We must combine the courage and determination of the embattled youth seen, for example, in the 2004 Redfern resistance struggle (that responded to the police murder of TJ Hickey) with the power of the organised workers movement. Let us win justice for all victims of racist and anti-working class police violence! 



**OPPOSE ALL NATO/AUSTRALIA DIPLOMATIC,  
MILITARY & POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN SYRIA!  
NO TO NEO-COLONIALISM:  
DEFEND SYRIA AGAINST THE  
PRO-IMPERIALIST “REBELS”**



*Damascus, 10 May 2012: Some of the victims of a terror bomb blast by the Western-backed “rebels” in Syria*

**July 27 – It was disturbing footage. Picked up by Reuters and then shown on SBS and ABC News, the video which they noted on the side, “could not be independently verified,” claimed to show supposed Syrian soldiers beating captured anti-government protesters. There was a problem, however! An email to the ABC program Media Watch noted that the accents of the troops shown in the footage were Lebanese not Syrian, that the car shown in the background had a Lebanese number plate and that the soldiers were not even wearing Syrian army uniforms. After some research Media Watch independently verified that this was indeed not footage from Syria but from Lebanon (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaNei6tuiUU&feature>**

**=[player\\_embedded](#)). The clip that had claimed to show Syrian Army brutality turned out to be taken from a YouTube posting of a couple of Lebanese militias bragging about their actions. What is more, the original posting to YouTube took place several years earlier in August 2008! Such is the deception being spread by the pro-Western Syrian Opposition forces.**

This false story was emblazoned all over the mainstream Western media on May 8 last year. Yet over a year later, the likes of BBC, CNN, ABC, SBS, all the commercial channels and all the Australian mainstream newspapers continue to spread lie after lie about events in Syria. They retail accounts from the Syrian Opposition which they *know* may well be false and (as they throw their hands up in the air and any responsibility to check facts out the window in a disingenuous surrender to the so-called realities of the new social media) they then try to cover themselves with the disclaimer that the accounts “could not be independently verified.” These media outlets know that if they constantly feed in reports hammering the same line – that the Syrian government forces are brutally attacking “peaceful protesters” fighting for “democracy” – people will ignore the disclaimers and buy the “could not be independently verified” claims. They know that even when they are caught out lying red-handed, people will have already formed their views based on their false stories long before the quiet apologies that they sneak in would be announced. Of course, the mainstream Western media do not issue any accounts that “cannot be independently verified” when those accounts happen to come from the Syrian government. No way – after all that may make people doubt the story that they, the mainstream media, are trying to sell them. Nor do they report on some things that are patently verifiable. Like the fact that demonstrations siding with the government of Bashar Al-Assad against the pro-Western and Al-Qaeda Opposition have brought out hundreds of thousands of people in Syria’s two biggest cities, Damascus and Aleppo. Or the fact that Opposition forces are murdering countless numbers of people both in chilling massacres of pro-government civilians and in indiscriminate terrorist attacks like the May 10 car bombing in Damascus that killed at least 55 people.

The mainstream Western media are deceiving their audience for a reason. These media outlets, which are either owned by Western governments (like the BBC, SBS and ABC) or by the billionaire elites whom these governments serve (like CNN, Rupert Murdoch’s newspapers and Kerry Stokes’



*Sydney, 5 August 2012: Thousands upon thousands of people marched through the streets of Sydney in opposition to NATO's proxy war on Syria.*

Channel 7) want to establish a regime in Syria slavishly loyal to Western imperialism. The media's demonization of the Syrian government and lionisation of its Opposition are aimed at mobilising public support behind the NATO powers' – and their allies' like Australia – growing intervention in Syria. This intervention has many facets. Firstly, the imperialist powers have placed crippling economic sanctions on Syria. These sanctions alongside the war in the country have brought great hardship to the Syrian people – hardships which have added further fuel to anti-government discontent. Secondly, they have organised to diplomatically isolate Syria. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, the imperialists are funnelling massive amounts of money, supplies, communication equipment, arms and military intelligence to Syrian Opposition forces. They do this both directly and via their allies in the Middle East – in particular via the repressive Turkish regime and via the brutal monarchs that rule Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain. A June 21 article in *The New York Times*, a well-known mouthpiece of U.S. imperialism, admitted that CIA officers in Southern Turkey are directly organising the transfer of arms to the Syrian Opposition. Quoting American officials, the article stated that:

The weapons, including automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition and some antitank weapons, are being funneled mostly across the Turkish border by way of a shadowy network of intermediaries including Syria's Muslim Brotherhood and paid for by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

NATO powers are also organising volunteers – mainly religious extremist elements from the likes of Libya, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia – and mercenaries to go to Syria to spearhead the “Free Syrian Army” guerrilla forces. China’s official newsagency, *Xinhua*, referred to reports that the CIA alone has recruited and trained 6,000 of these foreign fighters (*Xinhua*, June 17.) Saudi Arabia and Qatar, for their part, are paying the salaries of the “Free Syrian Army” while Turkey is hosting the Opposition’s military bases. In the meantime, as was the case in Libya long before NATO began its “official” intervention, British SAS special forces and MI6 intelligence operatives along with their American, French and Turkish counterparts are actually on the ground in Syria playing a major role in organising, advising and directing the Opposition’s war – including in battles in the city of Homs. In short, as we go to press, the Western imperialist regimes and their allies are doing everything possible to overthrow the Syrian government short of an open invasion.

Yet, increasingly some Western imperialists are preparing the public for open military intervention of the kind they used in Libya last year. At the forefront of this charge are the British imperialists. Asked if his government had ruled out the use of force in Syria, British foreign secretary William Hague stated that Syria was “on the edge of collapse or of a sectarian civil war so I don’t think we can rule anything out.” Meanwhile, the new, fake-Socialist administration of France is singing the same tune as the right wing, conservative British government. French president, Francois Hollande, had barely learned his way around the Élysée Palace (official residence for France’s presidents) when he threatened the possibility of open military intervention in Syria (*Wall Street Journal*, 29 May). Although the U.S., weighed down by its lead role in NATO’s failing war on Afghanistan and aware that Syria has more armed strength and more allies than Libya, is more cautious about an open intervention, sections of the U.S. ruling class have been calling for a full-scale military assault too.

### **STOP SYRIA BEING TURNED INTO ANOTHER LIBYA!**

To see what direct NATO intervention in Syria would bring we only have to look at what it brought to Libya. NATO intervention caused the death of between fifty and eighty thousand Libyan people as NATO aircraft and missiles rained destruction upon Libyan cities. The Western imperialists deliberately targeted Libya’s civilian infrastructure when they found that the Libyan people would not submit. NATO attacks destroyed power

plants and water supply networks. They also committed the most horrific killings of civilians in air strikes upon areas of Libya that refused to submit to NATO's "rebel" allies. Today, Libya is a hellhole for many. The gangs of militias that the American, British and French ruling classes (supported by Australian imperialism) installed into power are roaming the streets murdering their opponents – and often that means each other too. This once relatively peaceful country is today wracked by frequent outbreaks of violence and intensified tribal conflicts. Particularly victimised today are Libya's black African population who have been subjected to barbaric massacres and forced relocation by NATO's allies. Black Libyans are also among the worst treated of the thousands of prisoners unofficially held and tortured by the pro-NATO militias. In the meantime, the new NATO-puppet regime is allowing its imperialist masters to grab larger chunks of Libya's oil wealth and greater access to its economy, all the while looting their share of the country's wealth with a level of corruption greater than in the Gaddafi days.

We cannot allow Syria to meet the same fate. Syrian migrants opposed to the imperialist campaign have organised a rally for 12 noon on August 5 at Sydney's Town Hall under the slogans: "We demand no Western Intervention in Syria! Stop the US-NATO proxy war! Question the fabrication and misinformation being spread by Western media! Condemn the real terrorists, who are... being funded, trained and armed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, NATO with the support of the US and Israel! Peace in Secular Syria!" Trotskyist Platform (TP) urges all readers of our publications to support this important action. And we say that while you are at the rally be sure to advocate to fellow participants a strategy of mobilising the working class against the Australian regime's participation in the imperialist drive. TP will be organising a contingent for the rally that, while calling to defend Syria against the pro-imperialist "Rebels," will also promote opposition to imperialist intervention everywhere. Thus we will call for support to the ongoing Libyan resistance against the NATO-puppet regime in that country and will demand that all NATO/Australian troops get out of Afghanistan and all Australian troops get out of East Timor.

The struggle over Syria has enormous implications for the entire world. If the capitalist rulers of the U.S., Britain, France, Australia etc get away with imposing regime change in Syria they will be emboldened to target other governments that do not submit enough to their diktats (just like

how NATO's success in overthrowing Libya's Gaddafi government has in its turn encouraged their drive to establish a puppet regime in Syria.) Everyone knows that if the imperialists succeed in toppling Assad then Syria's Iranian ally will be next on the chopping block. And what then? Perhaps the left-wing governments in Venezuela, Bolivia and other parts of Latin America will be targeted. And one of the ultimate foreign policy goals for the capitalist powers is also, of course, the destruction of the socialistic states in Cuba, China, North Korea and anywhere else where a workers state so hated *and* feared by the imperialists has dared to raise its head ever since the Russian Revolution of 1917 first led the workers of the world by its bright example.

### **WHY NATO POWERS ARE DESPERATE FOR REGIME CHANGE IN SYRIA**

So why do the Western capitalists want regime change in Syria? After all, unlike in say Cuba and China, the Baath Party rulers of Syria, despite some pretensions of "socialism," pretty much run a capitalist system anyway. And the Baathists are hardly consistent anti-imperialists, either. So it was that in 1991, the government of Bashar Al-Assad's father, Hafeez Al-Assad, supported the first U.S.-led Gulf War against Iraq. Yet all this is not enough for the imperialists. They want total puppets – like the regimes currently ruling Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain and Turkey. And this Assad's Baathists are not. For one, domestically, the Assad government, while overseeing a system based on capitalist exploitation, still maintains a degree of nationalized industry. This makes it harder for corporations from the richer countries to exploit Syria to the extent that they would like to. However, unlike Libya, Syria is not spectacularly resource rich. Thus the imperialists' main reasons for wanting to depose the Assad government are not about Syrian domestic issues *per se* but rather to do with Syria's regional role.

This is because the current Damascus government sometimes obstructs imperialist plans. Thus, while the Baathists supported the 1991 Gulf war, in 2003 they opposed the invasion of Iraq by the US-led "coalition of the willing." And while the Damascus government has generally maintained an uneasy status quo with Israel, at the same time it has provided sanctuary for various Palestinian liberation groups and has helped to arm Israel's Lebanese foe, Hezbollah. Indeed, today alongside its Iranian ally, Syria is the last remaining Middle Eastern country with any significant military strength that is not part of the NATO fold. There had been one other such



*"Rebel"-held territory in Syria: An Al Qaeda banner flies alongside the green, black and white flag of the "opposition" which is used by the Free Syrian Army and other "rebels". Victory of the imperialist-backed "rebels" would be a big setback to the rights of women and youth.*

country until last year ... Libya. But we all know what happened there!

If Washington and Co. can now bring Syria and Iran under their control that would shore up the position of their key regional attack dogs, Saudi Arabia and Israel. More importantly for them, it would bring the whole oil-rich Middle East under their domination. That would allow their corporate elites to plunder yet more billions in petrodollars. It would also help them to isolate and undermine the world's only non-imperialist power, the Peoples Republic of China. A good part of the West's regime change agenda in Libya and now Syria and Iran is about depriving China of allies in the oil-rich Middle East and upsetting the flow of energy resources to China's booming socialistic economy.

Put in a nutshell, if the imperialists succeed in getting their way in Syria it would be a very bad thing for the masses in the Middle East and for all the downtrodden peoples of the globe. **That is why the working class, all leftists and all opponents of the subjugation of the "Third World" must stand against imperialism's schemes to impose regime change on the people of Syria. We must strongly take the side of the pro-government forces against the pro-imperialist Opposition in the military conflict that is now wracking Syria. That means we must not only oppose direct NATO intervention but must also oppose the massive support that the imperialists are giving to their servants**

**within Syria – in particular, the Free Syrian Army and Syrian National Council opposition groups. Down with all sanctions and diplomatic measures against Syria! Down with all imperialist funding of armed groups and political organisations!**

We should take this clear stand without giving *political* support to Assad and his Baathists. In other words, communists in Syria should in this period continue to recruit to their *own* banner. They should prove in action that they are the best anti-imperialists and in this way increase their strength relative to the Baathists. Communists should be saying: first we will unite with Assad's supporters to defeat the imperialists and their puppets and then we will be able to prove to the victorious masses that they also do not need to be ruled by those who sometimes ally with imperialism – like the Baathists have done in the past. Instead, we will show the masses that they need a consistently anti-imperialist government – a workers' and toiling peoples' government. For only the working class in power can truly free Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Tunisia, Libya, Iran, Oman, Jordan, Lebanon and others not only from imperialist political meddling but from economic plunder by the corporate bigwigs of the richer capitalist powers.

However, there is no getting around the need *right now* to support the pro-Assad forces in the *current* conflict. Yet most of the avowed Left groups in Australia are badly shirking that responsibility. These groups – such as Socialist Alternative, the Solidarity group and Socialist Alliance – say that they are opposed to imperialist intervention in Syria, yet they are at the same time, to different degrees, backing the pro-imperialist Opposition movement. Often they do this by making proclamations supporting the “Syrian Revolution.” But this current “Syrian Revolution” is no progressive social revolution – it is a “revolution” supported, armed, funded and proclaimed by imperialism. To be sure, many in Syria who have dived in behind the Opposition are partly motivated by legitimate grievances. Chief among these grievances is unbearably high unemployment as well as high prices for basic items resulting from the neo-liberal slashing of subsidies and cutbacks in public infrastructure. Yet the victory of the imperialist-backed “Revolution” will only lead to the rich Western business elite increasing their grip over Syria. That will lead to still worse exploitation of the masses as well as to privatisations and imperialist-dictated austerity. That in turn will cause even more unemployment and erosion of public services. Look at the poverty and chaos that the imperialist-backed



“Revolution” has brought to the Libyan masses!

Now all this does not mean that any opposition to a government that is disliked by imperialists, like the Assad government, will always be reactionary and pro-imperialist. Far from it! From early on in the Middle East uprisings, Trotskyist Platform has insisted that an opposition movement in any Middle Eastern country cannot be worth supporting in any way unless it is fighting for a government that will be more hostile to imperialism than the current regime that it is opposing. This is doubly true for movements in countries whose governments currently have frosty relations with the imperialists, like Syria and Iran. Yet from the start of the recent upheaval in Syria, the Syrian Opposition did not meet this criterion. The movement quickly became dominated by both Western liberals and more decisively by pro-imperialist politico-religious forces, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood – an organisation with a long history of co-operation with Washington despite its rhetoric against the U.S.’s Israeli ally. Indeed, an article in *The New Yorker* by American journalist Seymour Hersh back in 2007 revealed that the U.S. was already then financing the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood via its Saudi allies. It was also providing other technical assistance to the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies with Washington using its servants in Lebanon – in particular the clique around the billionaire Hariri family – as go betweens.

It is true that at the start of the current upheaval the Opposition movement was very diverse. It brought together all those opposed to Assad from many directions. That included some leftists, liberal secularists and others who did not want to become allies of imperialism. Yet those who may have intended to form a progressive opposition have by choosing to remain allied, however loosely, with the dominant pro-imperialist opposition groupings are *in practice* helping imperialism’s agenda to establish a puppet government in Damascus.

Early on in the Syrian upheaval, while we were especially suspicious of the Opposition, we did not take a definite side in the clashes between the imperialist-encouraged Opposition and the repressive government. For at that time, while it was clear that the NATO powers were sympathetic to the Opposition, it was not then assured that the Opposition had been decisively brought under their wing. Yet increasingly this is what happened. The bloody victory of imperialist-imposed regime change in Libya helped to further subordinate the Syrian Opposition to Washington, London,



*Trotskyist Platform at August 5 Sydney rally against the NATO proxies’ drive for regime change in Syria.*

Paris and Co. Meanwhile, the Western regimes and their Saudi, Qatari and Turkish partners ensured that arms, supplies and money were funnelled only to the most compliant groups like the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. This further increased the relative weight of the most pro-imperialist factions of the Opposition. Eventually, it became clear that the Syrian armed Opposition were definitely acting, whether consciously or not, as servants of imperialism. From that time on, Trotskyist Platform has taken the position of supporting those siding with the Damascus government in their resistance against the pro-imperialist Opposition. We are not alone in taking this course. There are Syrian activists who call themselves the “Patriotic Opposition” who like us are not political supporters of the Baathists but who are also, rightly, mobilizing in a united-front with the pro-Assad forces against the pro-imperialist “Rebels.”

Over the last few months, Trotskyist Platform, uniquely among Australian socialist groups, has joined in demonstrations in Sydney held by the many Syrian migrants that are against the Syrian Opposition. We also participated in a March 31 protest initiated by the Social Justice Network that among other demands called to oppose foreign intervention in Syria. At these rallies, Trotskyist Platform has been promoting the need to combine opposition to Canberra’s support for imperialist actions against Syria with opposition to Australian capitalism’s attacks here at home on the rights of the working class, poor, “ethnic” people and Aboriginal

people. Thus, a sign we have been carrying at the demonstrations reads:

Australian Government Demands for Pro-Imperialist, Regime Change in Syria Is Only Good for Australia's Rich, Capitalist Class. Australian Working Class: Fight against All Neo-Colonial Meddling in the Middle East!



*Damascus, 12 October 2011: Hundreds of thousands rally in support of the government of Bashar Al-Assad. Despite the regime's oppressive, capitalist character, many Syrians rightly fear that an imperialist-religious fundamentalist takeover would be much worse than the conditions they now endure.*

## **SYRIAN MASSES MOBILISE AGAINST PRO-IMPERIALIST OPPOSITION**

Demonstrations in both Syria and by Syrian communities abroad against the Western-backed Opposition have been massive. Many Syrian people are horrified at the death, violence and chaos that the “Rebels” have brought to their once relatively peaceful country. Revulsion at the prospect of Syria being turned into a totally subservient neocolony of imperialism has brought hundreds of thousands of people who are not Baath Party sympathisers to join with Baathist supporters in huge demonstrations within Syria.

Yet it is not only legitimate hatred of the imperialists that is energizing the Syrian masses against the Opposition. The dominant elements of the Opposition – including the Muslim Brotherhood, “independent” jihadists, the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb-al-Tahrir) and the still more fanatical

Salafists – are strongly politically religious outfits who want to curtail the rights of women and restrict social freedoms. By contrast, the Baathist government is a relatively secular government. For all the anti-working class and repressive character of the Assad dynasty, the fact remains that women in Syria have the most rights of any country in the Arab world. Women are, of course, far from being completely liberated in Syria and this becomes especially evident when Syria is compared with those ex-colonial, developing countries that are luckily under socialistic rule. Thus, female illiteracy in Syria is 22% while it is only 9% in socialistic China where over 99% of young women (those aged between 15 and 24) are literate (World Bank Report 2010.) Nevertheless, in Assad’s Syria, women have far greater rights when compared with those terribly oppressive societies whose rulers are fronting the imperialist campaign against Syria. For example, in Saudi Arabia the ruling monarchy has ensured that nearly all women are excluded from many basic activities – like playing sport and driving a car! Indeed, some reactionary elements are joining the Syrian “Rebels”, in part, because they think that this is indeed where a woman’s place should be. They are angry that women have too much freedom in secular Syria! On the other hand, large numbers of Syrian women and youth are flocking in behind pro-government rallies because they don’t want to see the position of Syrian women thrown back to the hell that Saudi women face. They also don’t want to see their social freedoms crushed in a fundamentalist “new” order. This has been evident too in the Australian rallies supporting the Damascus government organized by parts of the Syrian expatriate community. It has been refreshing to see the prominent role women have played in these rallies. These demonstrations have also been notable for the fact that women and men have stood side by side with one another at the events and that most of the women participants have been wearing secular dress. In contrast, several other recent public actions in Australia related to the Middle East upheavals have been characterized by women playing a subordinate role in the events and/or by men and women being segregated by rally organizers.

Closely related to the struggle over the position of women is the issue of secularism. The biggest players in the Syrian Opposition want to replace Assad’s secular government with a government that is not only specifically Islamic but specifically Sunni Islamic. They have been appealing to and whipping up Sunni sectarianism against the 30% of Syrians who are from non-Sunni backgrounds – Christians, Alawis, other Shias (Alawis practice



*Syrian “rebels” have been raiding and ransacking Christian churches in Syria. Here a “rebel” shows the wares from such a raid on a church. This has led many Christians and other religious minorities to back the relatively secular Baathist government.*

a strand of Islam related to Shia Islam), Druze etc. This has even had its reflection here with supporters of the Syrian Opposition disgustingly establishing a Facebook site, labeled “Boycott Tyranny,” which calls on people to boycott Sydney shops that the site identifies as being owned by Shias and Alawis in Sydney. ABC Radio (*World Today* program, June 26) reported that people have even gone into the shops to tell customers not to buy from the stores. The same program also refers to reports that the Australian Alawite community have been targeted even more directly with a shooting in Sydney attributed to sectarian tensions, as well as an attack on a prayer room in Melbourne.

In Syria, itself, Sunni sectarian “Rebel” forces have been responsible for terrible massacres against non-Sunni communities as well as desecration of Christian and Alawi religious sites. Not surprisingly then, most of Syria’s minority communities are on the side of the Baathist government in the conflict with the Opposition. So are a great many from the Sunni community who want to restore the country’s decades-old, relative, inter-communal peace. That relative peace between the communities – which was always fragile because capitalist rule could not solve the problems of poverty and inequality that breed ethnic/communal tensions – is in danger of being totally shattered. Sectarian killings against ethnic minority communities

by Sunni Opposition fighters has, in turn, led to revenge attacks against Sunni people.

Meanwhile, not satisfied with setting off communal killings in Syria, pro-imperialist forces have also been inciting communal tensions in Lebanon between Sunnis and Shias/Alawis. Indeed, some observers have suggested that the NATO imperialists may in the end seize on an act of communal slaughter in Lebanon rather than in Syria as their excuse to directly unleash their military might upon *both* these countries.

### **MASSACRES BY IMPERIALIST-BACKED FORCES USED TO JUSTIFY MORE MASSACRES**

There is an eerie resemblance between the direction parts of Syria are headed in and what happened to Iraq. There too, at least on a personal and social level, there was once relative peace between Sunnis and Shias. Then the U.S.-led invading forces appealed first to Shia sectarianism to back their invasion and then later to Sunni sectarianism to undercut the anti-occupation insurgency and to justify the continuation of the occupation on the grounds that the invaders would protect minority communities. The result of these divide and conquer tactics was that it set off a horrific explosion of mutual violence and bombings between Shias and Sunnis that has killed tens of thousands of people. Even though most of the occupying forces have now left the country, their actions have destroyed Iraq's inter-communal peace for many generations to come.

The ongoing imperialist meddling in Syria is not only starting to take Syria down the same path but, as in Iraq, the Western capitalist powers are, with the height of cynicism, using the need to stop sectarian killings as a rationale for further intervention. In many cases the massacres that they are pointing to have been actually committed by their proxies within Syria. A case in point is the heinous massacre that took place in the plains of Houla in the town of Taldou, not far from Syria's border with northern Lebanon. That massacre saw 108 people murdered in cold blood including 49 children. Immediately, the NATO powers and their Australian imperialist allies blamed the Syrian government for the atrocity.

Of course, the mainstream Western media were quick to blame the Syrian Army too. UN officials, for their part, led by that resolute imperialist puppet who serves as Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, also strongly implied that

the Assad government was responsible even while admitting that they had no proof. Yet before long the real facts started to emerge. For starters, it became clear that even the supporters of the Opposition in the town where the massacre occurred were not blaming the Syrian Army itself. Rather they blamed a pro-government civilian militia group called the Shabiha. That was also convenient as it is easier to frame a civilian force for responsibility for a massacre than to frame an actual army. Yet despite all the highly charged denunciation of Assad's supposed responsibility for war crimes, more and more holes emerged in the *Al Jazeera/CNN/BBC/Fox/ABC/SBS* story. For one, it became clear that everyone killed was from three extended families who lived in different parts of the town of Taldou. Yet no neighbours were even injured. So why did those responsible for the massacre only target these particular families who were dispersed throughout the town and not attack the many staunchly and openly anti-government people who lived in the town – including those who later spoke to the Western media? And why would a force with the military strength in the area to carry out a horrific but highly selective massacre of people in different parts of the town then leave the area to their enemies immediately afterwards, allowing their enemies to use the dead bodies as propaganda? Especially when they knew that U.N. monitors would soon be on their way! As the Chinese state-run newspaper, *Peoples Daily*, expressed it in an article titled "*Humanitarian Intervention*" *May Cause Bigger Disaster*:

Without truth, there can be no justice. The top priority right now is to find out the truth behind the massacre. As Syria's opposing parties are all shifting the blame, we can guess that whoever benefits the most from the massacre is the mastermind.

...The massacre occurred at a time when the United Nations was sending more monitors to Syria, and during Annan's visit to the country. It would not make any sense for the Syrian government to cause trouble for itself and to offer Western powers an excuse to intervene. Therefore, the Syrian government is the most unlikely suspect for the massacre.

Those who want to oust Assad and fish in troubled waters are more likely suspects.

*Peoples Daily Online*, 1 June 2012

The detailed truth of what happened in Houla was actually published

by various freelance journalists that investigated the facts. However, this truth was not widely known until a major mainstream Western newspaper, the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* went to Houla and performed its own serious investigation. The *FAZ* found that the Houla massacre was indeed committed by Syrian Opposition forces, in particular by forces driven by a fanatical Sunni jihadism. Although the *FAZ* does do its best to protect the “reputation” of its fellow mainstream Western media outlets (and allied Arab media like *Al-Jazeera*) who gave a completely wrong account of what happened at Houla, the *FAZ* account nevertheless does provide conclusive proof that Syrian Opposition forces were the perpetrators of this horrific crime. The newspaper’s findings were published in two articles: an initial article on 7 June (see: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/neue-erkenntnisse-zu-getoeteten-von-hula-abermals-massaker-in-syrien-11776496.html>) and a more detailed follow-up piece on 13 June (<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/arabische-welt/syrien-eine-ausloeschung-11784434.html> for a translation see <http://www.moonofalabama.org/2012/06/new-faz-piece-on-houla-massacre-the-extermiation/comments/page/2/#comments>).

Based on eyewitness accounts, the conservative *FAZ* was able to explain the twisted “motivation” behind why the perpetrators singled out the three extended families for extermination

Of the names of civilians killed, 84 are known. These are the fathers, mothers and 49 children of the family Al Sayyid and two branches of the family Abdarrazzaq. Residents of the city state that these were Alawites and Muslims who had converted from Sunni to Shia Islam. A few kilometers away from the border with Lebanon, this made them suspect of being sympathizers of Hezbollah, detested among Sunnis [*it would be more accurate to say detested by sectarian-minded supporters of the “Rebels” – TP*]. Additionally killed in Taldou were relatives of the government loyal member of parliament Abdalmuti Mashlab.

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 June (translation)

Only one member of the family Al Sayyid, the eleven year old Ali, survived the massacre. This is because he had pretended to be dead and smeared himself with the blood of his mother. Ali is quoted by AP (Associated Press) as saying that: “The perpetrators were shaved bald and had long beards.” *FAZ* noted that this is the look of fanatical jihadists, not of the (secular, pro-government) Shabiha militia.



It turned out that some residents in the town, a mainly Sunni town loyal to the Opposition, took part in the massacre. That is why they joined in telling the pro-Opposition media and UN inspectors that later arrived (and who both wanted to believe this in any case) that the pro-government militia were the perpetrators.

The *FAZ* also quoted eyewitnesses about how this was hardly the first time that the Opposition has committed an atrocity and then blamed the Syrian authorities for it:

On April 1 the nun Agnès-Maryam, from the monastery of Jacob (“Deir Mar Yakub”) which lies south of Homs in the village of Qara, described in a long open letter the climate of violence and fear in the region. She comes to the conclusion that the Sunni insurgents operate a stepwise liquidation of all minorities. She describes the expulsion of Christians and Alawites from their homes, which are then occupied by the rebels, and the rape of young girls, who the rebels pass off as “war booty”; she was an eye witness when the rebels killed a businessman in the street of Wadi Sajjeh with a car bomb after he refused to close his shop and then said in front of a camera from Al Jazeera that the regime had committed the crime. Finally she describes how Sunni insurgents in the Khalidijah district of Homs locked Alawite and Christian hostages into a house and blew it up only to then explain that this was an atrocity of the regime.

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 June (translation)

The second *FAZ* article concludes with a summary of the horrific events that took place in the Houla town of Taldou:

The following sequence of events can be reconstructed: After the Friday prayers on May 25th more than 700 gunmen under the leadership of Abdurrazzaq Tlass and Yahya Yusuf came in three groups from Rastan, Kafr Laha and Akraha and attacked three army checkpoints around Taldou. The numerically superior rebels and the (mostly also Sunni) soldiers fought bloody battles in which two dozen soldiers, mostly conscripts, were killed. During and after the fighting the rebels, supported by residents of Taldou, snuffed out the families of Sayyid and Abdurrazzaq. They had refused to join the opposition.

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 June (translation)



*This is how Syrian “rebels” deal with supporters of Bashar Al-Assad - by throwing them out of windows. Supposedly “democratic,” Syrian “rebels” have also been throwing public sector workers from the top of buildings. Victory for Western-backed forces would result in a brutal social order as in today’s Libya and Iraq where fierce repression would be used to enforce greater exploitation by Western imperialist corporations.*

## **AUSTRALIAN IMPERIALISM’S AGGRESSIVE STANCE ON SYRIA**

The imperialists followed their false accusations against Damascus over Houla by seizing on the understandable world outrage at the massacre to justify escalating their intervention in Syria. They also harnessed the outrage to intensify pressure on Russia and China to accept further moves to topple the Assad government. In late May, various Western countries also expelled Syrian diplomatic personnel. As usual the ambitious Australian imperialists could not wait to get in first. New ALP foreign minister, Bob Carr, was the first to announce the expulsion of Syrian consular staff. Carr even slipped in ahead of his hawkish counterparts in Britain and France. This follows a definite pattern. As the imperialists ratcheted up towards their direct intervention in Libya last year, it was previous foreign minister Kevin Rudd who first spearheaded the calls for that “No Fly Zone” that became the cover for the wholesale NATO assault upon Libya.

Many who oppose the Australian rulers’ actions over Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan etc see it as being the result of Canberra being subservient to Washington. In reality, the Australian ruling class’ stance has an even more sinister motivation. For, while Australia’s capitalist rulers do back their Washington counterparts on international questions, it is not simply because they are not independent enough to stand up to

the U.S. imperialists but rather because their alliance with Washington serves Australian imperialism's **own** predatory goals. The rich corporate bosses of Australia, who exploit Australian workers, exploit in an even more aggressive way the peoples of the South Pacific and parts of Asia. Australian-owned resource giant likes BHP and Woodside Petroleum loot the mineral and oil wealth of Papua New Guinea and East Timor. For a long time Australian business elites have also dominated the economies of countries like Fiji and the Solomon Islands and Australian bosses in various sectors are making a killing out of their operations in Indonesia and the Philippines.

All this exploitation is ultimately enforced by the use or threat of military action. In 1989, the Australian regime organised its puppets in Papua New Guinea to orchestrate a brutal war and blockade of the island of Bougainville which had risen up against the devastating destruction of its people's livelihoods by Australian-owned mining corporation CRA (which was later merged with a British company to form Rio Tinto.) Australian *ex-special* forces mercenaries strafed the Bougainville people from helicopter gun ships. By the end of the war, 20,000 Bougainville people had died as a result of gunfire or from the lack of medicine and food caused by the blockade. Then in 1999, after strongly backing Indonesia's brutal occupation of East Timor for 24 years, the Australian rulers seized on bloodshed in East Timor to militarily occupy the country and turn this oil-rich area into its own direct neocolony. In 2006, hundreds of Australian troops again occupied East Timor. This military re-occupation formed a key part of a defacto coup that Canberra orchestrated to depose the then Fretilin party government in East Timor. The Australian rulers considered that this Fretilin government, led by then prime minister Mari Alkatiri, was not subservient enough and was too persistent in questioning Australia's theft of Timor's huge seabed oil resources. Even today, there are still 390 Australian troops in tiny East Timor. They lead a so-called "International Stabilisation Force." Meanwhile, in between their first and second interventions in East Timor, the Australian Defence Forces led yet another military occupation of a South Pacific country. This time they took over the Solomon Islands. The Australian military remains in the Solomons to this day, albeit in reduced numbers, alongside Australian Federal Police and high-level bureaucrats busy establishing a puppet regime there. Then just after their 2006 re-occupation of East Timor, Australian troops and cops and their New Zealand allies were at it again. This time they intervened

into Tonga in order to shore up the monarchy there. The Tongan monarchy had been rocked by mass protests against the domination of Tonga's parliament by un-elected officials appointed by the king. And after doing all this, the Australian regime has the hide to today claim that it is trying to win "democracy" for Syria!

Today, the Australian ruling class plan even more aggressive interventions in this region. There was uproar in Fiji and other countries in this region when *The Australian* newspaper recently revealed that a secret chapter of Australia's 2009 Defence *White Paper* prepared detailed plans for a possible invasion of Fiji and military intervention in Papua New Guinea (*Pacific Media Centre*, June 9.) The plans specified the use of amphibious ships in the invasion of Fiji and detailed the amount of Australian troops that would be needed. The plans also spoke about how the Australian military could "secure the government" during an intervention in PNG.

However, in order to bully and exploit the peoples of this region in such a stampeding manner, the Australian capitalists need the protection of more powerful bullies. And that's the biggest gang of bullies around – the imperialist rulers of the United States of America. So when Bob Carr leapt to get in behind Washington's campaign against Syria, he was doing it in the way that a lower-level mafia boss always supports the adventures of The Godfather. The less powerful crime boss always knows that his ability to maraud over his own turf depends on the ongoing power of that top criminal. That is why all the parties bidding to run Australian capitalism are supporting the NATO drive against Syria. That means not only the right-wing Liberals and the ALP sellouts of the working class but also the small-l liberal Greens. The Greens, who opposed the sending of troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, have a pacifist reputation. However, their strident support of NATO intervention in Libya and Syria proves that they see the world from the standpoint of the Australian imperialists no less than do the Liberals and the ALP tops. Indeed, the Greens are the most aggressive of all the parliamentary parties in supporting the drive for imperialist-imposed regime change in Syria. When the Gillard government announced their order demanding that Syrian diplomatic personnel leave Australia, Greens parliamentarian Adam Bandt not only boasted that, "It is something we called for quite some time ago" but called for additional sanctions against Syria (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May.)

Yet while supporting NATO's proxy war against Syria makes sense to all

wings of Australia's ruling class, this attack on Syria is truly bad news for the Australian masses. If the imperial ruling classes succeed in imposing bloody regime change in Syria then all of them, including the rulers here, will become even more arrogant and even more aggressive in their dealings with the exploited and oppressed in their own countries. That is why all the downtrodden in Australia should struggle so that imperialism's schemes for Syria be thoroughly defeated. NSW workers whose rights to compensation when injured at work are being viciously attacked, public sector workers in Queensland, NSW and Victoria facing major job cuts by state Liberal governments, single mothers whose payments have been drastically slashed by the federal ALP/Greens government and Aboriginal people facing racist police violence would all see their struggles receive a bit of a boost if the ruling class of this country suffered blows to its prestige from setbacks to its "plans" for Syria.

Furthermore, there is a more long-term, yet more critical, reason why working class people must oppose the imperialist campaign against Syria. For the fearsome storm that is raging against Syria today is in some ways but the early winds of a much more cataclysmic cyclone that is threatening to engulf all of humanity. And that threat is not just the threat of another war pitting the imperial powers against a small developing country, or a war against NATO's likely next target, Iran. It is the threat of a war between the predatory world powers themselves. For while all of NATO wants to get a more pliant regime in Damascus, each of the powers involved truly only wants a new regime to be their **own** exclusive puppet. Thus in Libya, while the British, French and U.S. imperialists united to forcibly overthrow the former Gaddafi government, the blood had hardly dried on all the people they had killed from their terror bombing when the competing oil corporations that these powers respectively serve started being at odds over who should get the biggest share of oil projects. Today, the German imperialist rulers are, as they were over Libya, more cautious about military intervention in Syria than their British and American counterparts. Why? Because they know that part of the reason why Washington wants to be able to control the Middle East – and with it the flow of oil – is so that it will have the ability to, in the future, blackmail the U.S.'s German and Japanese competitors. Meanwhile, part of the reason why the French imperialists have been so gung-ho about intervening in Libya and Syria is because they don't want their American and British rivals to secure all the loot for themselves!

The extent to which such a falling out between thieves already exists was seen in the June 18-19 G20 summit which focussed on the European economic crisis. At the start of the summit, European Commission head Jose Manuel Barroso launched an angry public attack on the Americans and Canadians for lecturing Europe and then blamed them (with some justification) for starting the whole global financial crisis. To be sure, a war between the U.S. and European powers is not yet an immediate threat. But the ongoing capitalist economic crisis hastens the day when such a conflict is, indeed, posed. For the only method that the capitalist rulers have left to clog up the expanding holes in their system is to try and fill it up with newly seized raw materials, markets and cheap labour from the "Third World." Yet the amount of bounty that can be plundered from the "Third World" is finite and all the thieving capitalist powers want to get the biggest share of the loot. As they did in World Wars I and II, these competing robbers are quite capable of dragging humanity into a new global war. If working class people do not want to see their children conscripted to go and kill and be killed for the sake of their own countries' capitalist exploiters then we must stop the drive towards a new world horror. We must stop the nuclear-armed NATO powers from becoming even more unhindered by restraining their push for regime change in Syria.

There is also another type of – perhaps more imminent – war that the NATO powers are brewing out of all the poison that they are pouring into Syria. Part of the reason why the NATO powers are targeting Syria is because alongside Iran it is a country in the oil-rich Middle East that has good relations with the Peoples Republic of China (PRC.) The big capitalist powers want to isolate the PRC in order to destroy socialistic rule in China. They want to foment a right-wing rebellion inside China that can implement a pro-capitalist regime change. Washington and Co. know that putting the diplomatic and military squeeze on the PRC helps to encourage pro-imperialist forces within China. And if all this does not work, the imperial powers are preparing for the possibility of, some time in the future, unleashing direct military action against the PRC. That is why the U.S. military is expanding its forces in the Western Pacific as part of its "Pivot to Asia" agenda. The Australian ruling class has already signed up to this, barely disguised, anti-China push with the Gillard government agreeing to allow U.S. military aircraft and 2,500 U.S. troops to station in Darwin. The secret chapter of the 2009 Defence *White Paper* referred to above also spoke of plans to use submarines in conjunction with the U.S.

military to blockade Chinese ports and sea routes (*The Australian*, 2 June.)

The workers movement in this country and internationally must stop this threatening drive against the socialistic PRC. If the capitalist powers succeed in defeating socialistic rule in the PRC, that will lead to mass privatisations of China's dominant state-owned enterprises. That would turn all of China into a huge sweatshop for the exploitation of labour, unlike today, where such conditions exist only in parts of China and to a lesser and lesser degree. If the 1.3 billion Chinese people were reduced to being a slave labour force for Western corporations, that would in turn allow the capitalist bosses in Australia and everywhere to wield the prospect of using "cheap Chinese labour" to drastically drive down workers' wages and conditions at home – something that we have already seen a partial taste of as a result of the partial inroads of capitalism into China. Meanwhile, if the world's only non-capitalist power was taken out of the way, the imperialists would feel little constraint to further raping the people of the developing countries. That is another reason why working class activists, leftists and opponents of exploitation of the "Third World" must oppose the imperialist drive to establish a pro-NATO – and thus anti-PRC – puppet regime in Syria.

### **CHINA MUST DO ITS SOCIALISTIC DUTY AND STAND MORE STRONGLY AGAINST THE IMPERIALIST DRIVE AGAINST SYRIA**

Given these imperialist plans for China, it is not surprising that China has been obstructing NATO's schemes against Syria. Supporters of socialism can be proud that the PRC has vetoed some of the UN Security Council motions aimed at preparing the way for imperialist-imposed regime change in Syria. Russia too has opposed some of the moves against Syria. On July 19, for the third time, the PRC and Russia made a double veto of a Western resolution in the Security Council that would have imposed further measures supporting the pro-imperialist "Rebels."

Now, Russia's reasons for currently opposing NATO's designs upon Syria are different to China's. Russia, unlike the PRC, is administered by a capitalist state. The Russian rulers are military powerful but not currently economically strong enough to as yet be a full-blown, independent imperialist power like any of the main NATO states. But they would like to be one – Russia certainly ain't the socialistic Soviet Union! Russia objects to Western intervention in Syria because Syria is its ally and Russia



*Many opponents of imperialist intervention in Syria have made a point of carrying the red, Five-Star flag of the Peoples Republic of China at protest rallies in Sydney.*



takes offence at its power being challenged. Furthermore, the Russian bourgeoisie would like to draw a line in nearby Syria to try and reduce NATO encroachment into the affairs of its ex-Soviet neighbours which Russia would like to be within its own sphere of influence. Nevertheless, despite Russia's intentions, opponents

of imperialism can only welcome any Russian arms going to the Syrian government at a time when it is battling a takeover by imperialist proxies.

Both Russia and the PRC are under tremendous pressure to withdraw their opposition to still greater imperialist intervention in Syria. A sustained diplomatic offensive led by U.S. secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, has seen both countries condemned for refusing to allow the more overt NATO plans for regime change. Unfortunately, there are signs that both countries have, to a small degree, yielded to this pressure. At an end of June meeting on



Syria, Russia, China and the NATO powers all agreed to a plan put forward by the UN “mediator” for a transitional government in Syria including both government and opposition figures to be selected by “mutual consent.” To be sure, Russia and China sharply differed with the Western powers on what the agreement actually meant – with the NATO powers saying there was no scope for Assad in such a government and Russia and China insisting that Assad should be part of the transition. Nevertheless, the acceptance that members of the pro-imperialist Opposition should be brought into the government to play a major role in it is a backward step that will only encourage the imperialist-backed forces.

Opponents of the imperialist takeover of Syria should be aware that Russia and the PRC acquiesced, albeit reluctantly, to the NATO assault on Libya by abstaining on the U.N. Security Council Resolution authorising that notorious, “No Fly Zone.” Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that one or both of Russia and the PRC will not betray, to an equal or lesser degree, Syria in the same way. There are different reasons why Russia and the PRC could do this. Russia as an ambitious, *wanna-be* imperialist power is susceptible to being enticed by other imperialist powers with promises that they can be part of the spoils in any deal. Indeed, the Western powers have been none too subtle in offering Russia “a major role” in Syria should it agree to booting out Assad.

The PRC, on the other hand, is a workers state and as such, however deformed it may be from the ideal, is genetically prohibited from becoming an imperial power. However, its leadership pursues a weak foreign policy of trying, at almost all costs, to avoid antagonising the imperial powers on all issues not directly pertaining to China itself. Thus, while it was hostile to the NATO takeover of Libya and is very worried about the moves towards imperialist-imposed regime change in Syria, Beijing only reluctantly takes a stand on this issue. Furthermore, within the PRC leadership there are conflicting forces arguing over policies on Syria and other international questions. Those arguing for more accommodation to the Western imperialists are generally those on the right-wing of China’s establishment. For these layers, greater acceptance of the capitalist powers on the international stage is part of their push on the domestic front for greater capitalist penetration of China’s, still public sector-dominated, economy. The most high-ranking of the right-leaning elements within China is the number three man in the ruling Communist Party (CPC), premier Wen Jiabao. At a press conference

following the March sitting of China's parliament, in which he also made a thinly veiled attack on some of the leftists within the CPC, Wen gave some legitimacy to the Syrian Opposition (see *Xinhua* article, 14 March, "China has no self-interests in Syrian Issue, respects Arab people's democracy appeal") in a unilateral move that went beyond the bounds of the official PRC position on Syria. Opposing the likes of Wen Jiabao are leftists within the CPC. Among them are elements within the CPC leadership itself like CPC Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang, the political leader of the PRC's domestic security apparatus. These leftist elements are adamant on the need to strengthen the PRC's socialistic foundations and as part of that struggle want a firmer line against the capitalist powers. In an article written in the CPC theoretical journal, *Qiushi*, Zhou Yongkang was emphatic:

We will never change in our endeavour to defend the [Communist] party's leading role and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

We will resolutely resist the attacks of hostile forces on our nation's political and judicial systems, and we will resolutely resist the influence of mistaken Western political and legal views.

China Leader Urges Resistance Against Western Forces,"  
*AFP*, 5 July 2012

Ultimately, the factional tensions within the Chinese leadership and the CPC are a watered down version of the basic conflict within China: a conflict between, on the one hand, the working class whose interests lie in preserving the workers state and ensuring that China moves on to a more consistently, pro-socialist path and, on the other hand, the budding layer of private business bosses within China, their more powerful counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan and the godfathers of all these capitalist exploiters – the ruling classes in the West. The state of this battle will not only have a tremendous impact on the well-being of the Chinese masses but on the fate of the entire world – and most immediately on the fate of Syria.

Unfortunately, even the more staunchly pro-socialist wing of the CPC leadership, while hostile to the capitalist powers, has no perspective of actually encouraging the class struggle of the working class masses within the imperialist countries against their own rulers. Thus the left-wing of the CPC leadership, while arguing for a firmer stance, also has a policy of seeking coexistence with the imperialist powers. This policy is based on

a mantra that countries can agree to mutually not interfere in the affairs of other countries. This policy is a failure and must be abandoned. For while Beijing genuinely does try to not interfere in the internal affairs of the imperialist countries, the rulers of these capitalist powers are for their part doing everything possible to interfere in the internal affairs of the PRC. Interfere, that is, with the purpose of trying to undermine socialistic rule in China. What is needed for the PRC is a policy of standing in a firm, principled way against imperialism and capitalism. Today, the PRC should vote down at the UN and other forums all forms of imperialist meddling in Syria. This includes opposing calls for the Assad government to submit to having elements of the pro-imperialist forces brought in to the government. Furthermore, the PRC should be sending all required supplies – including arms – to the Syrian government to ensure that the NATO proxies are defeated. Above all, the PRC should seek to encourage the struggle for socialism in the imperialist countries themselves. For starters, they could win support for socialism by loudly proclaiming in international forums that the sole reason for China’s stunning successes in the midst of the global economic crisis is that its system is based on socialistic, public ownership of the commanding heights of its economy. Most crucially, the PRC must support major worker struggles in the capitalist world, like the brave struggles of Spanish mineworkers, while never missing a chance to attack the inequalities and injustice of capitalist rule in the West.

### **HAVE NO FAITH IN THE UN! TRUST ONLY IN THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MOVEMENT TO RESIST IMPERIALISM**

Although Russia and China have been able to veto at the U.N. several Western-sponsored resolutions against Syria, we should have zero trust in the United Nations. The U.N. is dominated by the imperialist powers who by and large still rule the world. To be sure there are exceptions. The world’s most populous country, China, is a workers state, albeit one threatened by capitalist restorationist forces. There are also four other worker states in the world: Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and Laos. Then there are a small number of rulers of developing countries that are currently taking a firm line against imperialism, like Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Russia, meanwhile, is a would-be imperialist rival of the NATO powers and thus does not always go along with the Western imperialists. Yet the U.N. remains a tool for U.S. imperialism in particular. For although most of the UN member countries are “Third World” countries suffering exploitation by the ruling classes of the richer nations, the rulers of these Developing

Countries are subservient to the imperial powers. These local rulers are exploiters of their own masses and rely on the imperialist powers to help keep their own toiling classes subjugated even while baulking at the lion's share that the imperialists plunder for themselves.

Thus the U.N. has a long history of being used as an "international" cover to help the U.S. and allied imperialists establish puppet regimes. In 1960, despite strong opposition from the then USSR and the likes of the then socialistic Yugoslavia, U.N. troops were highly complicit in a military coup against the newly elected independence leader of Congo, Patrice Lumumba. This coup, organised by the CIA and the Congo's Belgian "former" colonial rulers, saw the left-leaning Lumumba not only executed but his body gruesomely cut up into pieces and dissolved in acid by Belgian police trying to cover up their responsibility for this horrific crime. The terrible suffering and violence that has plagued this mineral-rich region of the world ever since is in good part due to the criminal acts of the American and Belgian rulers and their U.N. tools in the early 1960s.

During the 1990s, sanctions imposed by the UN on Iraq led to the death of over one million Iraqis – mostly children – from a lack of medicine and sometimes food itself. Then UN so-called "weapons inspections" helped provide the pretext for the U.S.-led charge towards war on Iraq. In the end, with the UN having served its purpose on the issue, the U.S., Britain and Australia simply bypassed the UN and invaded Iraq in March 2003.

And of course last year, it was under the cover of a UN resolution that NATO devastated Libya and installed a puppet regime there. In Syria today, the UN continues to play a pro-imperialist role. Although the PRC and Russia have vetoed those UN resolutions that would have most blatantly backed the pro-imperialist forces, they have both acquiesced to the U.N. special envoy, Kofi Annan's "mediation efforts" as well as to the presence of UN monitors in Syria. The effect of the UN monitors and Annan's diplomatic pressure has been to impede the military efforts of the Syrian government while allowing the "Rebels" to attack the Syrian people unhindered. It has been this UN intervention alongside the massive imperialist backing that has allowed the "Rebels" to make advances over the last couple of months.

That is why we must oppose all forms of UN intervention in Syria. Instead of having any illusions in the UN our efforts must be directed into two connected paths. Firstly, we must appeal to the PRC to do its socialistic duty and stand more strongly against imperialist intervention in Syria.



*Left: Women in Saudi Arabia are terribly oppressed under the monarchist regime there. If they want to marry, divorce, travel, go to school, get a job or open a bank account, they need the approval of a male relative. Yet the Saudi monarchy is the main Arab partner of the Western imperialist drive to supposedly bring “freedom” to Syria. The victory of the imperialist/Saudi-backed “rebels” in Syria would see the greater freedoms that women in relatively secular Syria have (Right) being smashed.*

Secondly, and most crucially, we must mobilise opposition to imperialism’s attacks upon Syria within the imperialist countries themselves. However, in demonstrating against Canberra’s participation in the campaign against Syria, we should *not* see our protests as appeals to the Australian rulers to break ranks with their NATO counterparts. For as we have explained above, the Australian capitalist class is backing their U.S. counterparts because this is in their own interests. Thus any appeals to the Australian imperialists will be futile and will demoralise the movement. The struggle here must be instead seen as an action aimed at deterring an enemy. We need to mobilise a movement strong enough to make the Australian exploiting class fear that their continued participation in the regime-change drive against Syria will cost them at home – cost them in terms of stirring up opposition to their own rule here. That is why the movement against the Australian rulers’ actions over Syria must appeal to the working class – the class whose interests lie with standing against the capitalist ruling class that exploits them. For one this means that the Union Jack Australian flag must *not* be carried at demonstrations against the proxy war on Syria. For that flag is rightly hated by the most politically conscious trade union activists in this country. They know that this flag is the flag of the institutions and monarchy that upholds the tyranny of the greedy capitalist bosses. Furthermore, the current Australian flag is downright offensive to many Aboriginal people for it is the flag under which their ancestors were massacred and it is the flag under which, today, they continue to be dispossessed and subjected to continuing violence and

racist discrimination by the authorities. It is those who are at the bottom of this unfair society who will be most receptive to a campaign against the Australian rulers' neo-colonial drive against Syria.

Of course, we must understand that when the movement against imperialist intervention appeals to the class interests of the working class that will necessarily turn off any capitalist elements – for example, say, any wealthy businessmen from Australia's Syrian community. But so be it! It is the working class through its collective industrial muscle that has the power to resist the imperialist ruling class. During the Vietnam War, we saw this in action. It was then that, in order to undermine the imperialist war against the Vietnamese revolutionaries, Australian seamen and waterfront workers refused to transport supplies to the Australian military. Today we need to build towards workers' industrial action to protest against the imperialist campaign for regime change in Syria. This will, of course, not be easy. For our trade unions are currently, for the most part, led by pro-ALP officials who thus support the imperialist drive against Syria. Therefore, we need an intense political struggle within the workers movement to convince the most politically aware trade union members and win them to participating in the demonstrations against Western intervention. This energised layer of workers can then be the force to win broader sections of the union movement to solidarity with Syria against imperialism.

Trotskyist Platform (TP) vows to do all we can to win the most politically advanced layers of the working class to the defence of Syria. We will continue in the tradition the struggle that we waged last year to defend Libya against NATO and its puppets. On March 27, TP and Supporters of the Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas led the first action in Australia against the bombing of Libya. This rally in Sydney's Town Hall Square which demanded "NATO War Criminals – Hands Off Libya!" and called to "Defeat the NATO air strikes on Libya" was also supported by the Revolutionary Socialist Party and by particular activists within the Stop the War Coalition (that are more anti-imperialist than others in the coalition.) On April 10, we joined with courageous Libyan international students in a protest in Wollongong against the NATO attack. Later, as people in Libya continued to resist the NATO proxies following the imperialist capture of Tripoli, TP initiated a second united-front demonstration in Sydney in solidarity with the Libyan resistance. This September 10 speakout was held under the slogans: "Down with Canberra's Diplomatic and Financial Support to Pro-NATO Forces Rampaging Through Libya! Smash's NATO's Drive to

Conquer Libya!"

## **STAND FIRM AGAINST IMPERIALIST-IMPOSED REGIME CHANGE**


To mobilise the masses of the imperialist countries against their own rulers' drive against Syria requires first of all that leftists take a firm line against any bending to imperialist demands. Unfortunately, other than TP, most Left groups are currently failing to do this. Some figures on the Left are taking a harder line against the NATO "Rebels" but still accommodate to imperialist aims. Take, for instance, British left-leaning politician George Galloway. Galloway eloquently attacks Western intervention in Syria and criticises the Muslim Brotherhood and other "Rebel" groups. Yet Galloway then states that: "I hope that the Syrian people can find their way to a peaceful and negotiated solution to this conflict. Assad must go. This is the end of the era of dictatorship in Syria" (see Youtube of his speech: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQNbW6sSiQU&sns=em>). However, any "negotiated solution" that allows the imperialist-backed forces a greater say in government is a concession to imperialism. And if Assad were to "go" *as a result of a blatantly imperialist-backed movement* then that too is a victory for the imperialists that will encourage them to pursue further regime-change operations around the globe. We must not allow the colonising powers such victories! Those leftists that understand this *must* fight to win broader sections of the Left to take a strong stand against *any* degree of imperialist-imposed regime change in Syria.

It is true that, *in the future*, the Baathist rulers of Syria will have to be swept away because the capitalist system that they administer cannot provide secure jobs and economic security to the masses and what's more their continued rule is fuelling support for reactionary fundamentalist and pro-Western forces. However, such a progressive change could only come about as a result of an **explicitly pro-working class** movement that is avowedly more anti-imperialist and more secular than the current government. For such a movement to be built demands that the openly pro-imperialist forces that are trying to seize power today – the "Rebels" – are defeated. Only through the triumph of this anti-imperialist struggle can a truly progressive revolution be posed.

**Where we *do* need to fight for regime change *right now* is in the imperialist countries themselves!** We need to advance the struggle to depose the capitalist ruling classes in the West – the greatest force for

oppression in the world. Let us not allow the torturers of Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, the ones who have killed hundreds of thousands of people in their brutal wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, the ones whose forces here kill Aboriginal people in custody and who use draconian repression against construction union activists, to continue killing and maiming people the world over in the name of “human rights.”

Right now, in certain NATO countries like Spain and Greece the capitalist establishment is deeply hated and the masses are truly restive. Workers in these countries have mobilised in wave after wave of general strikes against the ruling class that wants to make the masses pay for their failing capitalist economic system. A defeat for NATO’s regime change plans in Syria would further weaken the authority of the Spanish, Greek and Italian rulers and that could be just the spark that ignites the flame of revolutionary workers’ struggle in these countries. A defeat for the imperial powers in Syria would also be a blow against the ruling class establishment in the likes of the U.S. and Australia and would encourage the masses here to understand that those who oppress them are not invincible.

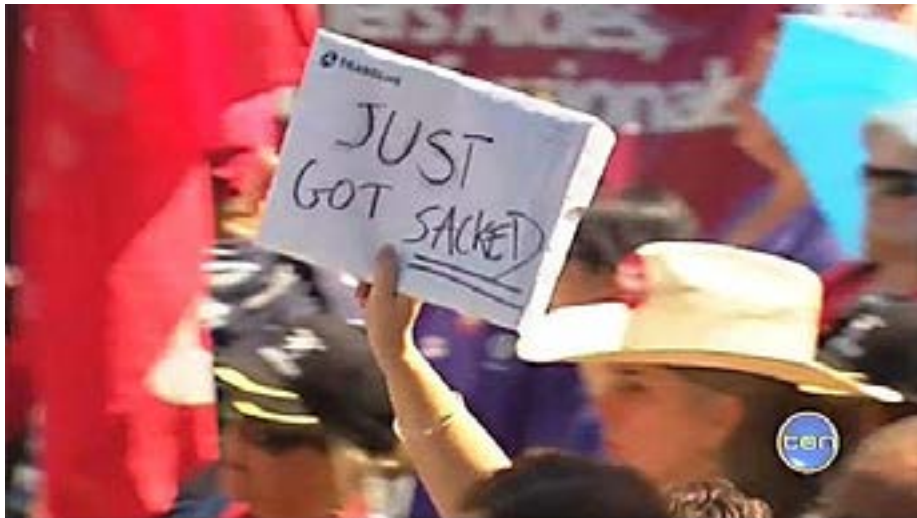
Today the world is at a crossroads. The major world capitalist economies are crumbling before our very eyes. Yet these dying beasts are still dangerous. They try to survive by the only way they know how – by devouring ever more of the wealth from the ex-colonial countries. However, if we can repulse their efforts to drive their tentacles deeper into the hearts of the ex-colonies, these monsters will lose confidence. And, meanwhile, the hundreds of millions suffering in the belly of these beasts will feel emboldened at the setbacks for their oppressors. They will start to organise to stab the beast to death with collective blows. And out of the slain carcasses of the capitalist beast we can feed the growth of a new society, a socialist society of peace and secularism where everyone is guaranteed decent jobs and a secure standard of living, a world where the subjugation of the ex-colonies by imperial powers will simply no longer exist. This is the future that we must work towards. **The capitalist regimes in the U.S, Britain, France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Germany, Japan and Australia must go!** 



**CRUSH THE QLD GOVERNMENT'S ATTACKS ON PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS!**

**LET'S NOT GET DIVERTED INTO CAMPAIGNING FOR AN ALP/GREENS GOVERNMENT!**

# **THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SAVE JOBS IS ALL OUT STRIKE ACTION!**



*An unlucky participant at the September 12 rally in Brisbane - one of thousands being laid off from the public sector in an austerity drive resembling those occurring across Europe.*

**Queensland is in shock.** Far from being a death by a thousand cuts, the unprecedented slashing of the public sector in Queensland enacted by the recently elected Liberal National Party (LNP) government headed by Premier Campbell Newman almost amounts to instant decapitation. For a long time a job in the public service meant greater job security than in the private sector. This has been demolished as the Liberal National Party moves to make the public service operate along lines identical to the private sector ie “perform” or you are out. Legislation has been passed by the LNP which overrides job security provisions in collective agreements.

A public servant with 30 years experience, in an interview given on the condition of anonymity, gave some impressions of what public sector workers are going through. Some of his comments included “...in my unit alone we have lost more than 140 years of frontline experience...the job

cuts are running so deep that it is starting to affect frontline services... the public sector has been brought to its knees and every single person in Queensland will suffer because of it..." (*Toowoomba Chronicle*, 15 August 2012)

The culture of fear is palpable amongst public sector workers. Every job is potentially a target. On top of Newman's aim to cut 20 000 jobs from the public service, a further 25 000 jobs are now under threat as the LNP government moves to redefine what it considers to be "frontline services" (*The Courier Mail*, 14 August 2012.) "Frontline" is now determined to be any staff member who has 75% or more of their work time in direct contact with the public. So anyone with less than 75% direct contact with the public can be deemed not frontline and thus open to be considered "surplus." Needless to say, this encompasses the vast majority of public sector workers.

The services that the working class will lose are the other side of the actual job cuts equation. On the 7th of September another 2700 job cuts were announced, this time from Queensland Health. Inevitably, direct health services to the public will be drastically affected. These measures will hit and harm the most vulnerable in society - the elderly, the infirm, the disabled, the mentally ill, those from low socio-economic backgrounds and the unemployed. Alongside health care cuts, gay and lesbian support groups, tenancy advocacy organisations and even some caravan parks face closure due to the targeted austerity measures.

The working class is looking to the unions for leadership. These massive attacks, unprecedented in Queensland history, need to be stopped dead in their tracks before they are extended across the entire public sector. How can this be done? By using **the method that won the working class their gains in the first place - the method of industrial action. In Queensland strike action has the power to smash the LNP government's attacks on public sector workers.** Not only is this the one method that stands a chance of succeeding, it is the only method which can rouse the largely still dormant working class into action. If workers can see a fight being honestly organised, potentially many thousands will respond and join the struggle. Workers are prepared and in some cases are *itching* to take action. There were many long held grievances about working conditions even before the LNP state government was elected earlier this year. Of

course, industrial action would be most effective if it involved key sectors of the Queensland economy such as the railways. There are ample grounds for this as there has been speculation that 2000 jobs could soon be cut from Queensland Rail.

Appeals should also be made to trade unionists in key private sector industries to launch solidarity action with the public sector workers for *any attack on a group of workers is an attack on all workers*. Indeed, this is most obvious to rail freight workers - for since the previous ALP government privatised rail freight company QR National as part of an attack on public sector workers, hundreds of these now private sector jobs have been lost. And just a few days ago, QR National announced that it would be axing at least another 900 jobs this year.

To mobilise workers in the private sector in solidarity with the struggle against public sector job cuts, the workers movement needs to undercut all the lies pushed by the ruling class that aim to divert workers from seeing who is really responsible for job losses. Thus, we must defeat the capitalist bosses and their governments' attempts to blame refugees, migrant guest workers or workers overseas for job losses here. In response to bosses bringing in guest workers to exploit, our unions should not respond by playing off local workers against these already vulnerable guest workers but should instead undercut the greedy bosses' plans by demanding that our fellow workers from overseas are given the same pay and conditions as local workers, are all made union members and are, indeed, given full citizenship rights so that they feel confident to stand up for their rights without fear of deportation. Unity with workers overseas is crucial if we are to win. If a strike campaign against the Newman government's attacks grows strong, as it must, the government will try all sorts of means to undercut industrial action. In the face of this we will need solidarity industrial action from our fellow workers overseas to make our struggle here all the more potent.

If unions were to combine a struggle against the job slashing with calls for a big increase in the public services that working class people need the most then the campaign would quickly gain strong support from private sector workers as well as from all sections of the working class community including struggling job seekers, working class students and Aboriginal people battling against incessant racist discrimination and



*12 September 2012, Brisbane: Workers begin a march to Queensland's parliament house in protest at draconian cuts to public sector jobs. Despite the pro-ALP union bureaucracy's half-hearted building of the action, up to ten thousand people joined the rally showing the anger that could be harnessed to smash the cutbacks.*

enforced poverty. So, alongside demands to smash Newman's job cuts let us demand: **Massively increased funding for public schools, public hospitals and public housing! For free public transport!**

It's easy to see this onslaught by a conservative LNP government as one that is simply due to their ideological underpinnings. "Small government" is, of course, one of their motivators. But some in the unfortunately disorganised movement against the cuts believe that's what this is all about - simply just conservative ideology - and attempt to warn people about the current times being a "return to the Joh days." But this is not a battle which is going to be won by just appealing to people to vote out Campbell Newman. For one thing, the massive majority the LNP now has in parliament means that the LNP are probably in power for the next 6 years at least. And just voting them out and placing the equally neoliberal ALP back in government is obviously no solution either. The current attacks from the LNP government in Queensland emanate not just from conservative ideology but also from the global crisis of capitalism which has been in "recession" since around September 2008. Fearful that exports to China's booming socialistic state-owned enterprises will not be enough to save their economy from going down the same slippery slope

as their counterparts in the rest of the world, the Australian capitalist ruling class have been seeking to buttress their system the only way they know: by exploiting workers even more, by slashing jobs and by cutting the social services that working class people need the most. This is what governments of all stripes have been doing: making workers and the poor pay for the capitalists' filthy greed and disastrous mistakes.

Premier Campbell Newman, himself, has linked the situation to the global financial crisis although he does it to suit his own purposes. Newman has said that Queensland is the "Spain of Australia" and that's why such drastic budget cuts are necessary. But given the mass revulsion at the savage cuts by the LNP, the left has to explain that exchanging one conservative party in government with another slightly less conservative party is simply worse than useless. This is a struggle against capitalism, whether we recognise it or not. Many of those on the left can see that global capitalism is currently in a systemic, not a cyclical, crisis. It requires a response which challenges the system head on. Most immediately, that means the working class must use its most effective weapon for the stage of defensive action it now finds itself in - the weapon of strike action.

The leadership of the unions is a crucial factor in achieving effective and now ever so necessary class struggle. The unions are the working class' basic organs of self-defence and advocacy. But what type of leadership do we currently have? Two thousand delegates from 34 unions representing 370 000 Queensland workers met in Brisbane and via Skype on August 1. But the end result was a rally organised for September 12 - at the time, a whole month and a half away - and with no guarantee that it would be accompanied by industrial action! Queensland Council of Unions head John Battams also gave the game away when he called for a "long campaign." Other union leaders referred to a "1000 day" campaign against the LNP government. As many on the left noted, this is code for re-electing the ALP in three years' time! Such an approach is worse than useless. It is clear that for the ALP the cuts are just "too much, too fast." And, unfortunately, the September 12 rally was already a bridge too far for some public sector workers with Campbell Newman's axe hanging over their heads. Immediate action was *and still is* needed to curb the dark tide of the LNP's cruel job cuts agenda.

The union leaders are not, however, organising a fightback against the job cuts in any kind of really serious manner. All forms of industrial action,

up to and including strike action, is what is desperately needed. Yet the current union leadership keeps advising its members that no industrial action is legal outside of a collective bargaining period. While this is technically true, these laws are written precisely to prevent workers from taking industrial action, to effectively scare workers from *exerting* their right to strike. What our unions need is a leadership that is committed to waging a class struggle, one that recognises the fundamentally antagonistic interests between labour and capital. Such a leadership would understand and make it clear to its members that no government that is accepted by the obscenely wealthy tycoons will be a government that can consistently act in the interests of workers. We need a union leadership that works in conjunction with a genuinely mass socialist workers' party, which has as its final goal a workers' government based on socialist public ownership of the banks, mines, transport infrastructure and large industries: a state where there will be enough jobs for everyone and no worker will be left in fear of becoming suddenly unemployed.



*28 August 2012, Melbourne: Mass picket of building workers courageously pushes back violent assault by police during struggle against anti-union attacks by construction giant, Grocon. Power of united working class can defeat the assault on public sector jobs being waged by governments across the country.*

A taste of how the public sector unions in Queensland should be fighting was seen during the early days of a struggle in Melbourne. There the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) had been picketing Grocon's Emporium building site over Grocon's attempts to appoint its own health and safety representatives and its ban on union banners on its building sites. Grocon, more or less, wants to expel unions from its building sites. The union maintained its picket line in defiance of Supreme Court orders even in the face of an attack on the line by mounted police (*Herald Sun*, 30 August 2012.) On one day, the picket line was bolstered by the attendance of thousands of other construction workers and supporters and all were able to repel the police attack on the picket lines. Unfortunately the CFMEU leadership later called off the picket lines. However, the struggle unleashed by workers during the first days of this struggle is the type of action that unions in Queensland need to adopt. It is a thousand times more effective to rely on the strength of your own picket line rather than abide by the Industrial Relations Commission courts who are arrayed against workers and unions right from the start anyway.

The leadership of the main union which covers public sector workers, now known as Together, is hardly taking a serious approach to the largest attacks on the Queensland public sector in history. This leadership is calling on its members to take part in community campaign stalls, letterboxing and visiting local MPs. Some unionists are prepared to do these things even bearing in mind that most MPs are now members of the LNP and many public sector workers now find themselves in the unfortunate position of having the much-hated Campbell Newman, himself, as their local member and there's nothing wrong with using this as an additional campaign tool. But to counterpose such tactics which aim to "win over the community" to industrial action is just crazy and positively fatal for the campaign. A community campaign should, indeed, be on the cards but this campaign should aim to build community support for significant industrial *strike* action.

**At a time when literally *thousands upon thousands* of our fellow workers *right across the state* are staring down the barrel of a gun at *mass sackings* at the hands of a right wing government, every proud worker should ask of their union: if this is *not* the right moment for the union movement to begin to flex its mighty industrial muscle then *when exactly is it the right time to strike?* By the time the collective**



*United Voice union's banner at September 12 action in Brisbane.*

bargaining period comes around there might indeed be few workers left to bargain for.

The feeling is palpable on the streets of Queensland. Many workers are expecting the unions to call and lead serious strikes against this government. Some workers are becoming disillusioned that this is not happening and some long term members are questioning why they remain union members at all. When our union leaders fail to act swiftly to start an effective fightback against job cuts, despair and despondency is bound to take hold in a threatened and now subsequently demoralised workplace. **What our unions need is to be led by an agenda that relies entirely on the considerable industrial and social muscle of the united working class and not at all on the bosses' parliaments, courts and electoral games.** Whether or not union leaders are a part of a mass revolutionary workers party, they must accept the historical task that has been placed on the shoulders of the modern working class. We have to wage a struggle to replace capitalist power with a workers' government. This should be the goal. In the meantime, we need to turn around the 30 years of defeats that the union movement has endured and start winning victories. A better world is on offer, if we are prepared to fight for it. 🇺🇸



# THE STRUGGLE FOR THE LEFT TO TAKE AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST POSITION ON THE SYRIA CONFLICT

July 29 - The imperialists are in a de facto war with Syria. From massively arming the Syrian “Rebels” to providing them with money and military intelligence to organising foreign mercenaries to fight for them to having special forces assist these “Rebels” to the media’s overwhelming propaganda campaign against the Syrian government, the imperial powers are doing everything short of a full-scale invasion to ensure regime change in Syria. In such a clash between imperialism and a small, ex-colony, the position of leftists should be clear. As Russian revolutionary leader Lenin stated in his Marxist classic, *Socialism and War*, written in 1915 (i.e. written in the days of Tsarist Russia prior to the Russian Revolution):

... if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, India on England, Persia or China on Russia, and so forth, those would be “just”, “defensive” wars, *irrespective* of who attacked first; and every Socialist would sympathise with the victory of the oppressed, dependent, unequal states against the oppressing, slaveowning, predatory ‘great’ powers.

That means that we must today stand for the defence of Syria against the predatory NATO “great” powers and their proxies within Syria. This is the position that we in Trotskyist Platform fight for. This is why we have joined in solidarity with demonstrations called by those Syrian migrants who are opposed to imperialism and its “Rebels.” We do this while recognising, in the spirit of Lenin, that while we are in a temporary alliance with the capitalist, Baathist government in Syria against the imperialists and their allies, we should maintain our strict political independence from the Baathists and should continue to stand for the development of an independent, anti-imperialist, working class movement in Syria.

## WESTERN LEFT GROUPS REPEAT THEIR STANCE TAKEN DURING THE LIBYA WAR

Trotskyist Platform (TP) seeks to mobilise working class opposition right



*Libya after NATO-imposed "liberation." Top: Forces of the new imperialist-backed regime murder an already wounded pro-Gaddafi insurgent fighter. Bottom: Among the thousands of black-skinned people that the racist, pro-NATO authorities have imprisoned without trial in hellish, overcrowded facilities. This is the "democracy" that Syria would face if the NATO-backed "rebels" triumph.*



here against Australia's participation in the imperialist drive against Syria. As part of this struggle we need to win other activists and indeed other groups within the left-wing movements to also stand against the imperialist-backed Syrian "Rebels." In this battle TP has our work cut out for us. For most of the left-wing groups in this country are supporting the "Syrian Revolution" even while nominally opposing direct military intervention by the Western powers that are the very backers of this misnamed "Revolution."

Today, among the left groups with the most right-wing line on Syria is the Solidarity group and Socialist Alternative. Thus a 6 June *Socialist Alternative* article titled "A turning point in Syria?" parrots almost all the mainstream media propaganda supporting the Syrian "Revolution." This includes repeating the corporate media lie that the Syrian government was responsible for the Houla massacre, a massacre which even an investigation by the conservative, mainstream German newspaper, the

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has had to admit was definitely the work of sectarian “Rebels” (for further details see our other main article on Syria.) The SALT article goes on to gush with praise for the “Revolution” – that “Revolution” beloved by the Western capitalist powers, the world’s biggest oppressors.

The Socialist Alliance (SA) has roughly the same line as SALT but is more circumspect in its support for the “Revolution.” It recognises that the Opposition has committed atrocities and includes Sunni fundamentalist gangs supported by imperialism. Yet, while expressing reservations about some of the Opposition, SA’s position is still one of support for what they claim is the “Syrian people’s legitimate uprising.” Thus a 13 June SA statement insists that: “The Syrian people have a right to use arms to defend themselves from the violence of government military and paramilitary forces.”

To justify this position, SA attempt to draw a huge wall between some sections of the Opposition and others. Thus their 13 June statement stresses that, “We recognise the secular and anti-imperialist nature of much of the mass democratic opposition. We do not recognise the Syrian National Council, or any other exile elements now unilaterally being promoted by the imperialist powers, as representative of the Syrian uprising.” It is plain wishful thinking to claim that the majority of the Opposition forces are “secular and anti-imperialist” when it is clear that the dominant Opposition forces are the Western-backed Muslim Brotherhood, the even more extreme fundamentalist Salafists and other religiously based groups. Furthermore, being nominally secular does not, in itself, equate to being “anti-imperialist.” Thus the main secular Opposition group, the Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians, calls for an imposed “No-Fly Zone” over Syria and what is more is part of the Syria National Council that SA has itself identified as being pro-imperialist.

In any case, it matters little if some Opposition factions are nominally secular and claim to be anti-imperialist when these factions are allied, however loosely, with forces that are rabidly anti-secular and obviously imperialist-backed. For example, the different Syrian Opposition factions largely fight under the same flag. More significantly, while some of the different Opposition factions may not like each other, may get into pushing and shoving with each other at conferences and even, on rare occasions, minor skirmishes, they all do the overwhelming bulk of their fighting

against the Syrian government and not against each other. In the context of a civil war between two camps, a grouping can claim to be a “third force” separate from the two but if it is only shooting at one side then it is in practice in an alliance with the side that it is not shooting at! That is the essence of the issue! When there is a war between the government of a “Third World” country and imperialist-backed Opposition forces, supporting some Opposition groups’ “use of arms to defend themselves” from government forces **when these groups are not using arms equally against the openly pro-imperialist “Rebel” forces** means to aid the imperialist camp in the war. What would it mean, for example, if during the war on Libya one of the fractious “Rebel” groups claimed that it was not supporting NATO and yet mainly attacked the Gaddafi forces and not the pro-NATO “Rebels”? Regardless of that faction’s pretensions, it would clearly have been aiding imperialism.

To be fair to SA, they have placed more emphasis on opposing imperialist intervention in Syria than the likes of Socialist Alternative (SAIt). However, their overall support for the imperialist-backed Opposition undermines the ability of the Left to mobilise actual action against imperialist intervention. For when people who do oppose intervention are told that the imperialists are actually backing the right side in the conflict, this would make them less enthusiastic about actually getting active against the intervention. A similar thing occurred during the Libya War last year. Then even *after* NATO started bombing Libya in support of the “Rebels,” SA continued to back the “Rebels.” Thus a 27 March 2011 *Green Left Weekly* editorial, while opposing NATO intervention, emphatically reiterated SA’s support for NATO’s “Rebels”: “Gaddafi’s dictatorship deserves to fall and those Libyans fighting his rule deserve support. But Western military intervention is no solution .... The Libyan rebels deserve support in their struggle to overthrow Gaddafi.” With such a contradictory line it is little wonder that SA was largely paralysed when it came to actually organising actions against NATO’s war on Libya. They were only involved in one of the three actions that took place in Sydney against the bombing of Libya. The first and the third of these actions, on March 27 and September 10 respectively, which SA did not participate in, were emphatic in opposing all forms of imperialist intervention - military, diplomatic and political - and refused to give any support to the NATO-backed “Rebels.” The second action on April 3, which SA helped to organise alongside SAIt, Solidarity and the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), while opposing the military

intervention had as part of its call the appeal for Australian diplomatic intervention. Meanwhile, despite a strong speech from John Pilger that refused to support the “Rebels,” the speeches and placards from all the left groups organising the event called for support for the “Rebels” and their drive for regime change. When people are being told that they should support the “Rebels” that NATO is supporting and should support *their* drive for regime change then some may well think why not then “use” NATO to achieve that aim (which is actually what one long-time SA member was allowed to advocate for in public SA literature.) Little wonder then that although this April 3 rally was held relatively early in the Libya War, the groups that led it organised no further actions against the NATO attack for the remainder of the war.

Now a group that takes a slightly more left stance on Syria than SA is the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP.) Although they tilt somewhat in favour of the “Rebels”, the RSP position gravitates towards one of neutrality in the Syrian civil war:

What started as a democratic uprising is now being manipulated as an imperialist intervention. Its democratic content is being poisoned, and the character of the struggle is now one of civil war, with backers of both sides having no intention of implementing any democratic or progressive reforms. As hated as the Assad regime may be, it is not clear that the armed insurgency is popularly supported.

*Direct Action, 20 March 2012*

However, we cannot remain neutral in a de facto war between imperialism, via its proxies, and the government of a semi-colonial country. We must take the side of the oppressed country against the pro-imperialist forces.

## **THOSE WAVERING MUST BE WON TO A CLEAR ANTI-IMPERIALIST POSITION**

What is badly needed is for those activists, within the various wavering left groups, with a stronger anti-imperialist understanding to aggressively challenge and defeat soft-on-imperialism tendencies within their own groups. To assist this struggle we here respond to some of the chief arguments raised by those leftists that support the Syrian “Rebels.”

One argument raised is that the “Uprising” is a “democratic revolution,”

## Socialist Alliance: Support the Libyan uprising but reject foreign military intervention

Socialist Alliance statement March 18, 2011

The threat of military air strikes against Libya by Britain, France, the US and allies — now supported by a March 17 UN Security Council resolution — may or may not force the despotic Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi to stop using its armed forces against the rebel-held city of Benghazi in the short term.

However, it does pose grave dangers for the sovereignty of Libya and for the wave of democratic revolts that have swept the Arab world this year.

The Socialist Alliance is a strong and active supporter of this wave of democratic uprisings. We welcomed the uprising in Libya that began on February 17, and have helped organise actions in solidarity with this uprising — as we have with the uprisings in Egypt,



numerous revolutions on the right of Palestinians to self-determination, the UNSC has never once authorised force to be used against Israel or denying this right.

The Socialist Alliance opposes imperialist intervention into Libya. We call on the Australian government not to participate in this imperialist military adventure.

The Socialist Alliance believes the Libyan revolutionaries need solidarity. We support a campaign of international isolation of the Gaddafi regime, through the breaking of diplomatic ties with the Gaddafi regime and recognition of the rebel National Transitional Council, and financial sanctions on leaders of the Gaddafi regime and its assets.

We give support to immediate international aid (including military supplies without conditions) to the Libyan uprising.

For comment contact Peter Boyle (Socialist Alliance National Co-ordinator) 0491 760 577

1000 E-mailed to a friend

*March, 2011: Even after the UN resolution authorising NATO military action against Libya, the Socialist Alliance, while opposing direct NATO military intervention, reiterated its support for the "Rebels" whom the imperialist powers were intervening in support of. Here their 18 March 2011 statement concludes with support for the imperialist diplomatic manoeuvres and economic sanctions against Libya, as well as support for the imperialists' arming of their "Rebel" allies.*

centred on the working-class, against neoliberal policies. Now, there is no doubt that many of those originally involved were motivated by justified anger at the **effects** of neoliberal policies. However, opposition to the **effects of** neoliberal policies - like unemployment and high prices - is not the same as opposition to neoliberal policies. Thus the largest Opposition faction, the Muslim Brotherhood, is pro-"free market" and favours even more neoliberal policies than the Assad government including further privatisations.

Originally, the Opposition movement was neither progressive nor completely reactionary. Rather, although imperialist influence was already significant, the movement featured a mish-mash of groups with conflicting agendas. However, imperialism was eventually able to decisively subordinate the movement. This is hardly the first time that anger over legitimate issues has been harnessed into a reactionary direction by reactionary forces. The most extreme case was the rise of Hitler's Nazis which fed off anger at poverty and joblessness in Germany from the unemployed and from insecure layers of the middle class.

If the Syrian “uprising” is truly “democratic” and “progressive” then there is no way in hell that the reactionary, absolute monarchs that rule Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain would be enthusiastically backing it. And since when do the imperialist powers finance and give arms to movements against neoliberalism? And do people really think that the Western tycoon-owned media would fervently back a progressive uprising? The truth is that if there was a truly progressive rebellion against neoliberalism in Syria then the imperialists, despite their frosty relations with the Syria regime, would be **supporting** Assad in crushing it. It is worth going back to the events in Syria and Lebanon in 1976. Then Lebanon was in a civil war that pitted leftist and Palestinian forces in a coalition against conservative forces. Although there was also a sectarian aspect to the conflict with many Muslims supporting the leftist-Palestinian side and many Christians the right-wing side, it was definitely in the working class’ interest to support the leftist-Palestinian coalition. However, with this progressive side nearing victory, Bashar Al-Assad’s father, Hafeez, sent in the Syrian Army to crush their movement. Although Syria at the time was a Soviet ally and probably had even frostier relations with the West than it had at the start of the 2011-2012 uprising, the U.S. and France **welcomed** Syria’s repressive intervention. **Those leftists who today support the Syrian “Rebels” please take note! If Assad was indeed crushing a progressive uprising then the imperialists would be supporting him - not opposing him!**

Now another argument raised by leftist supporters of the Syrian Opposition actually refers to events like Syria’s repression of the leftist-Palestinian movement in Lebanon. It claims that the Syrian government is equally pro-imperialist as the Opposition. According to this schema, the Western imperialists only really decided to support the Opposition by chance. Yet if both sides were equally subservient to them then the imperial powers would have backed Assad since there is no way the Opposition would have the strength to take power without their support. The Baathists “anti-imperialism” is indeed rather flimsy. However, the imperialists want totally reliable puppets. And the Syrian government is not subservient enough for them. It is notable that in the infamous 2002 Nuclear Posture Review delivered by the U.S. Department of Defence, Syria is named as one of only seven countries against whom the Pentagon was ordered to draft plans for a nuclear strike (*Los Angeles Times*, 9 March 2002.) The list is telling. Of the other six countries, two - Iraq and Libya - have already

been subjected to imperialist-imposed regime change and another, Iran, is widely believed to be next in the firing line. Two of the other countries are the socialistic states who are, ultimately, most targeted by imperialism: China and North Korea. In any case, one does not have to take our word nor that of any other left group as to which side in the Syrian conflict is more pro-imperialist. **For the imperialists have themselves decided that question - they have delivered their verdict by choosing to support the “Rebels” against the Syrian government. And that says it all!**

Some leftists say that the Syrian uprising is part of the Arab Spring and that's why we must support it even if the imperialists are attempting to intervene in the Arab Spring in order to bring it under its influence. There is no doubt that the Syrian uprising was influenced by the Arab Spring - the regional uprising which began in Tunisia, spread to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and other countries. Western imperialism quickly saw the potential damage to their interests if many of their US-backed rulers in such countries were overthrown and if this occurred as a result of movements developing into an anti-imperialist, pro-working class direction. Thus the West partially engineered revolts in countries with more strained relations with them - Libya and Syria in particular - and then moved to derail initially independent forces that joined these movements for their own reasons by steering these whole uprisings into a decisively pro-Western direction. As in Afghanistan and other countries, Western imperialism is quite happy to use a combination of religious fundamentalist and other pro-Western elements to set up a totally subservient, pro-imperialist government. The best way to open the road to a true Spring for the toiling masses and the women of Syria is to support all efforts to defeat US and Western proxy imperialism there. In this struggle, the Assad government is a temporary, but only temporary, ally.

Perhaps the most sophisticated rationale promoted for discounting the significance of Western imperialist backing for the “Rebels” is the claim that this is a conflict between different imperialisms - between Western and Russian imperialism. Yet this argument is totally invalid for two reasons. Firstly, while Russia has military strength inherited from the USSR and Russia's capitalist rulers would like to be an imperialist power, it as yet lacks the economic clout to be an independent full-scale imperialist power. Secondly, and more importantly, Russia does not have the economic strength to turn Syria into its own neocolony, the way that the Western imperialists want to. Thus it seeks only to maintain the pre-“Uprising”



status quo where it has some influence. Yet even in that status quo, it was the Western powers rather than Russia that were the biggest players in the Syrian economy. Indeed, those leftists that support the “Rebels” have unwittingly admitted this when they speak of the “the **West’s** preference for authoritarian, neoliberal regimes such as Assad’s” (*Green Left Weekly*, 1 July, emphasis added.) Indeed in Syria’s oil sector, the biggest players are not Russian corporations but the British/Dutch Shell, France’s Total and Britain’s Gulfsands. Thus, in the situation today where the Western powers are trying to raise their domination over Syria from the level of parasitism to the level of outright neocolonial subjugation, socialists should welcome any Russian arms that flow onto the side of the Syrian government.

## **CORRECT THEORY AND CORRECT PRACTICE**

So why are leftists throwing up faulty arguments which lead them and those they influence to back pro-imperialist forces in Syria? Ultimately, they are indirectly bending to the intense media propaganda. Thus, when holding stalls on campuses and the like it is easier, when queried by people influenced by media lies, to say that “we support the Syrian uprising too.” Yet a wrong theoretical approach also makes it more likely to capitulate to these pressures. This wrong theoretical approach gives more weight to abstract calls for “democracy” in Developing Countries ahead of the need to free these countries from imperialist domination. Yet, all the so-called “Third World” countries are ground down and exploited by imperialism. This includes Syria where much of the hardship was caused by imperialist-dictated austerity measures like privatisations, subsidy cuts and the ending of price curbs. Thus in these countries, the struggle against imperialist subjugation is a central task of any progressive revolution. In turn, **if the imperialists choose to support a movement it definitely cannot be progressive!**

Furthermore, it is the poverty and inequality caused by imperialist exploitation that is the cause of dictatorial rule in the semi-colonial countries. As long as these conditions exist - and they will remain as long as capitalists remain in state power - then the rulers of these countries can keep the masses down only through dictatorship. Thus any new government that is brought to power with imperialist backing and is thus beholden to allow still greater imperialist exploitation of their country, will necessarily be compelled to unleash even more severe repression than the government it deposed. This will be the case regardless of



*Sydney, 27 March 2011: The first action in Australia against the NATO attack on Libya. The united-front rally opposed all forms of imperialist intervention - military, diplomatic and funding of political groups - in the Middle East and called to "Defeat the NATO air strikes on Libya!" The demonstration was initiated by Trotskyist Platform which at the rally emphasised the need to stand for the defeat of the NATO imperialists and their allies and for the defence of the Libyan forces being attacked by them.*

whether it came to power promising, or even intending, to bring more "democracy." That is why the idea that one can in certain circumstances "use" imperialist assistance to help "win democracy" in a Developing Country is a fantasy. Libya proved this yet again. There the movement that took power with imperialist backing in the name of "democracy" has unleashed the most fearsome terror as it seeks to suppress the masses facing greater poverty and inequality as a result of more savage looting by imperialist corporations.

If leftists can understand this point, they will be more resistant to mainstream media claims that Western-backed movements will bring "democracy." This struggle for theoretical clarification is thus vital. The issue of Syria concerns not just the fate of Syria but the whole Middle East and ultimately the whole world. The largest body of left-wing forces as possible must be cohered to agitate for workers' action within the Western countries against the neo-colonial proxy war on Syria. 🇷🇺



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