

Communists and the Labour Movement

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Communists and the International

Communist movement

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Speaking at a public meeting following the Hague conference of the First International in September 1872 Marx said: "Let us recall the main principle of the International: solidarity. We shall achieve the great goal for which we are striving provided we firmly consolidate this life-giving principle among all workers in all countries."

The struggles of the working people and the national liberation movements in the just over 100 years since then have grown dramatically. There is not a single non-socialist country in which the people are not stirring into action for their liberation and social change. The people of an ever increasing number of countries are winning victory and setting out to build a new socialist order.

In every case without exception victories have been won only by defeating local reaction and the forces of international imperialism. Cuba, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua and the present struggle in our near neighbour, Vanuatu, prove the point.

Their experience shows that the liberation and revolutionary forces have a common enemy. They are bound together by a common interest. Their common enemy is imperialism and state-monopoly capitalism. There is an internationalism of capital which obliges the working class to oppose its power by proletarian internationalism.

Above all the Marxist-Leninist Parties embody this internationalism of the working classes and join to it the national liberation movements in common struggle against imperialism. The Parties are also joined in common purpose by adopting the ideology of Marxism-Leninism which combines the advanced and liberating ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and others.

The Australian working class has many proud achievements in making its contribution to internationalism. It is only necessary to recall the decisive solidarity by waterfront workers with the new Indonesian Republic following World War II, the Vietnam moratorium, aid to Greece and Chile and opposition to apartheid in South Africa. There have been Hands off Russia and Hands Off China committees. Internationalism was exemplified in the International Brigade which fought for Republican Spain. Individual trade unions have given solidarity aid to their counterparts in other countries.

As the historic struggles between the two systems and for national liberation become wider and wider the question of internationalism becomes more, not less, important.

The imperialists have a very acute appreciation of the importance and power of proletarian internationalism. Many victories have been won against imperialism by individual contingents in this or that country because of solidarity assistance.

It is therefore not surprising that they do everything possible to isolate each country the better to maintain their domination. They try and develop nationalism in each country, setting one country against another, one race against another. They use their economic resources, try boycotts, bans and sanctions. But their main weapon has been and remains anti-Sovietism and anti-communism.

They use anti-communism because the communists uphold proletarian internationalism not merely as a moral concept because communism stands for unity but as a sacred duty to be acted upon with practical measures.

They use anti-Sovietism not only because the Soviet Union was the first socialist state and as such is the living alternative to capitalism but also because the Soviet Union has been and remains the main base of socialism, the main embodiment of socialist practice and theoretical achievement and

the main material base without which possibly no other socialist revolutions would have been able to survive.

Could socialist Cuba have survived without the protective arm of the Soviet Union? Could the Vietnamese have shot down American B52's without Soviet rockets? Could a number of small and economically weak African states have won out against the economic pressure and threats of intervention by imperialism without the help of the socialist countries and particularly the Soviet Union. Cuba, passing on its own internationalism, rescued the Angolan liberation movement from defeat by South African invasion forces.

The African frontline states for their part gave sanctuary and aid to the Zimbabwean patriots and were undoubtedly a decisive factor in her liberation.

The Socialist Party makes no secret of its estimation of the role of the Soviet Union and declares that the defence of the socialist community of nations and of the Soviet Union is a responsibility of all real internationalists. In today's situation building bridges of friendship and understanding between our own people and those of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries is a necessary act of solidarity in the interests of peace and socialism.

Furthermore, as communists who aspire to build a socialist society in our own country we draw great strength and inspiration as well as knowledge and example from the existing socialist countries.

One of the early acts of the Communist Party of Australia when it was formed in 1920 was to become affiliated with the Communist International. Leaders of the CPA were active participants in the work of the Comintern and Lance Sharkey was a member of the Executive Committee of the C.I.

The Comintern gave great assistance towards the consolidation and strengthening of the communists in many countries. Its existence immeasurably strengthened proletarian internationalism throughout the world. The meeting of the 7th Congress of the Communist International held in 1935 played a tremendous role in mobilising the communists and all progressives in common struggle against war and fascism. The great report of Georgi Dimitrov is read and studied today and is one of the most comprehensive and outstanding elaborations of the united front and peoples front concepts. It was of course, a practical application of proletarian internationalism.

The C.I. was disbanded in 1943 to removed all barriers to the widest possible anti-fascist front but also because the tremendous growth of the communist parties demanded "a greater degree of independence and initiative than ever before, demanded the abandonment of leadership from a single centre which had become an obstacle to the activation of the parties' work." (Outline History of the Communist International p. 511).

The disbandment of the C.I. did not mean that the principles of internationalism on what the Comintern had built were invalid or no longer applicable. It did not mean that the ideology of Marxism-Leninism had failed. Quite the contrary. It had proven its validity and strength.

If consolidation of the communist parties was the general rule there were exceptions. Unfortunately, for the revolutionary movement, Australia proved to be one of the exceptions and all sorts of anti-Marxist trends and anti-internationalist trends began to emerge.

The first of these was anti-Sovietism. Of course, attempts were made to justify this trend in various ways. The right to criticise was argued. Of course this was to be on a reciprocal basis — you criticise us and we criticise you. In practice, however, if the socialist countries criticised other parties it was then claimed that this was interference or that the CPSU

was trying to impose its model. Furthermore, it was all to be done in public and the main aim was to inscribe the right to declare all socialist countries as merely "socialist-based" or "post-capitalist" societies.

It was claimed that internationalism had become distorted to mean identification with the state interests of an individual country, with no secrets as to which country was in mind.

Of course proletarian internationalism is in the interests of the part as well as the whole. Communists have a world outlook. The slogan "Workers of all countries, unite!" is a concept embracing all — those lands which have won socialism and those which have not.

Another twist was to advance the concept that the main contribution that could be made by the communists in any country was the struggle for social change in ones own country. This relative truth was not combined with advocacy of internationalism but in fact posed against it and used as an excuse for a negative attitude towards the international communist movement in general and the Soviet Union in particular.

Under the influence of a Maoist concept it was also asserted that the "primary" international duty was to support the national liberation struggles. Again this was put forward as an alternative to solidarity with the Socialist countries.

Another variation of this same theme was to speak about the relations between communist parties as being governed by equality, independence and non-interference forgetting about solidarity and mutual support.

On ideological questions it became fashionable to prove one's purity by declaring independence from any overseas party, political centre or dogma.

Here we have first of all an Aunt Sally. There is no political centre and no overseas party seeks anyone elses allegiance. So we knock over something that in reality does not exist. It of course does exist in the propaganda arsenal of the anti-communists — but nowhere else.

And what is this "dogma" which must be exercised? Is it the dogma of Catholicism or the Maoist assertions of the "inevitability of war" or Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution"? Of course not! It is the alleged "dogma" of Marxism-Leninism and is again nothing more nor less than one of the oft repeated slanders of academic prize-fighters of capitalism. Dialectical materialism specifically excludes dogmatic contentions. Yet we hear the opposite from some who claim to be marxists.

There is another extremely important question which today faces communists and internationalists and that is to make an assessment of the position and intention of the present leaders of the Communist Party of China.

There are some who want to keep doors open or try and open them where they are closed and start up a dialogue with the Chinese leaders. This approach arises from a view that the issues are simply to be seen as some conflict between the state interests of China and the Soviet Union with each side striving for hegemony. Furthermore, that each side is equally to blame.

This presentation of the situation is quite erroneous.

The Chinese leaders have abandoned communist positions for nationalist ones. Instead of international solidarity with the socialist countries and

the national liberation movements they have openly come out against them.

Instead of working for peace they are promoting war by every possible means. They are now in open alliance with imperialism. Can they go any further?

They are the most rabid advocates of nuclear war and are openly trying to establish a world-wide front together with imperialism against the Soviet Union and other socialist states. They committed open aggression against socialist Vietnam and still talk in the language of the warlords of old about teaching Vietnam another lesson.

One communist concept after another has been turned on its head until it is no longer possible to regard the Chinese leaders as communists.

In these circumstances any attempt at dialogue can only serve the purpose of creating illusions about the real situation. How can there be solidarity with the Chinese leaders when they are acting in concert with the most reactionary circles of imperialism. Solidarity with the Chinese leaders leads one to regard Malcolm Fraser as an ally and that is exactly the position reached by the Maoists in Australia.

Because of the conjunction of the imperialists and the Chinese leaders the people of the world have entered what is probably the most dangerous and fateful decade in all human history.

It is fitting that a discussion of Communists and the International Communist Movement should conclude with presentation of an historically important task for everyone. It is the preservation of world peace, stopping the march towards the precipice orchestrated by the Carters, Reagans, Thatchers, Frasers and the Deng Xia Pings. As was the case in the struggle against the fascist menace a great deal will depend on the strength, unity, solidarity of the communists in every land.

It is probably imperialism's last big counter-revolutionary attempt before it is pushed finally off the stage of history. The more clear-headed we are about it the less pain and danger there will be. We believe the principles of proletarian internationalism which have contributed immensely to the dramatic changes in the last 60 years are equally valid for the future. They not only point towards the future unity of mankind in a socialist society but also the means by which to get there.