



Melbourne, 12 June 2014: Tens of thousands of trade unionists march in opposition to the federal government's anti-working class budget. The Abbott regime's participation in the predatory U.S.-led war in Iraq and Syria is aimed, in part, at diverting working class hostility to the budget and other anti-worker measures at home in Australia. The workers movement must unleash its immense power to oppose the U.S./Australia war campaign in Iraq and Syria as part of building a militant class struggle fightback against the ruling class' budget and anti-union attacks. (Story page 9)

Front Cover (clockwise from top): Workers at the Ausreo site in western Sydney, members of the AMWU manufacturing workers union, picketed the site for 10 weeks after the bullying bosses locked out the workers and refused to negotiate a pay rise. The workers' defiant struggle won solidarity from many other trade unionists. Class struggle methods are the road to workers' victory! (Story page 2) The march commemorating the 10th anniversary of the racist police killing of much loved 17-year-old Aboriginal boy, TJ Hickey, passes through Redfern. (Story page 39) "Drive out the fascist filth" chant protestors at the successful 2nd May anti-fascist counter protest in Brisbane which brought together construction workers from the CFMEU, BLF and ETU unions together with anarchists, Trotskyist Platform supporters, members of the Socialist Alliance and other anti-racists. (Story page 33)

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UNLEASH INDUSTRIAL ACTION NOW TO REVERSE THREE DECADES OF ATTACKS ON WORKING CLASS PEOPLE



PROVOCATION BY VIOLENT RACISTS CRUSHED IN BRISBANE



MORE THAN TEN YEARS ON AND JUSTICE FOR TJ HICKEY CAN STILL BE WON BY THE UNITED FORCE OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE TARGETED BY THE SAME RACIST, RICH PEOPLE'S STATE THAT MURDERED HIM

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SMASH ABBOTT'S BUDGET



Melbourne, 1987: Members of the Builder Labourers Federation (BLF) protest against their persecution. The BLF trade union was deregistered the year before by the then Hawke Labor government with the assistance of the NSW Wran Labor government and the Victorian Cain Labor government. Governments sent in police to raid union offices and to surround major building sites in order to violently prevent BLF members from going into their jobs. The capitalists and their social democratic servants targeted the BLF because it dared to use militant industrial action to fight for workers' rights and other progressive social justice causes. The ALP's smashing of the BLF was criminal treachery against the ALP's working class base.

RELY ON CLASS STRUGGLE NOT CAMPAIGNING FOR ALP/GREENS GOVERNMENTS

UNLEASH INDUSTRIAL ACTION NOW TO REVERSE THREE DECADES OF ATTACKS ON WORKING CLASS

3 July 2014 - Over the last four months, tens of thousands of people have been marching in large rallies protesting against the right wing Abbott regime. The first budget of the Liberal-National government has rightly enraged working class people, students and leftists. In measures that will hurt the working class, retrenched workers and the poor the most, Treasurer Hockey's budget has slashed funding for public hospitals and will make people pay a \$7 fee for each doctor's visit. The latter measure is likely to be the thin edge of a wedge aimed at slicing up any semblance of universal health care. Resources for Aboriginal services will be slashed, public funding for universities will be cut by 20% and graduates will have to pay their tuition fee debts back when their incomes are lower. People on the Disability Support Pension are to face nerve-wracking "re-assessments" of their eligibility for the pension. Most cruelly, unemployed people under the age of thirty are to be thrown off payments for six months a year. This will surely lead to even more homelessness, poverty and youth suicide.

Workers triumphant at the Ausreo site in western Sydney after learning that their struggle had forced the company to grant them a real wage increase. Class struggle methods are truly the road to workers' victory!



Sensing public sentiment, opposition parties have come out against several budget measures. Even greedy tycoon Clive Palmer and his conservative party have stated their intention to vote against some measures. ALP leaders have tried to restore their battered credentials with their working class base by denouncing the unfairness of the budget to low and middle income people. But let us not forget that the previous government, for the most part a *de facto* Labor-Greens coalition, also made life harder for the poor. The former ALP/Greens government cruelly drove 84,000 low income single parents – mainly single mothers – into extreme poverty when they threw them off the parenting payment onto the much lower Newstart Allowance. Furthermore, the last government undermined public housing. In 2010, then housing minister Tanya Plibersek – a supposed "Left" who today is Labor's main spokesperson at anti-Abbott rallies – worked together with the then state ALP government to plan the sell-off of public housing from NSW's biggest public housing estate at Claymore. Plibersek's program, which saw a large number of public dwellings sold off, is now being carried through further by the present state Liberal government.

Labor and Labor/Greens governments are not fundamentally better than conservative governments because, while the ALP leaders would like to appease their working class supporters and the Greens have a kind of liberal-progressive ideology, they are both committed to maintaining the capitalist order - the root cause of the anti-working

class attacks. This capitalist system requires that more and more gets squeezed out of the working class masses to satisfy the profit demands of the filthy rich corporate owners.

The worsening of the position of working class people began not with the election of Abbott but three decades earlier. This corresponded with the worldwide assault on workers and the poor associated with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher's anti-union offensive and Cold War anti-communist drive against the former USSR. In this country, the Bob Hawke and then Paul Keating Labor governments that came to power in 1983, privatized the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas, ended free education for tertiary students, straightjacketed the trade unions through an anti-strike "Accord" and smashed the militant BLF union that dared to defy the Accord. From Hawke onwards every new government has heaped new hardships upon the masses. The Keating Labor government divided and weakened the union movement by opposing industry-wide bargaining in favor of Enterprise bargaining. Howard then followed with his notorious attacks on unions, Aboriginal people and "ethnic" communities. The subsequent Labor government maintained most of Howard's right-wing measures and introduced new ones too. The Gillard and Rudd governments not only continued Howard's racist policy of quarantining 50% of the social security payments received by Aboriginal people in the NT but even extended the draconian measure to poor people of all ethnicities in others areas including Bankstown in

Sydney and the Brisbane suburb of Logan. The Rudd government Mark II also detailed a plan to slash over 5,000 public service jobs – a measure so severe that even the staunchly Laborite leadership of the CPSU public service workers union, for a couple of weeks last August, suspended campaigning for Labor. And now we have Abbott's gang in office threatening still more vicious cuts to public sector jobs and social services.

The Coalition's program will not be defeated by campaigning for an ALP or ALP/Greens government. Beholden to the demands of the capitalist system, such a government would likely maintain similar policies to the Liberals albeit with less aggressive language and at best a slightly slower pace of new attacks. The only way that attacks on working class people and the poor will be defeated is through mass struggle centred on strike action by the trade unions. By hurting the profits of the corporate bosses, such action could force the capitalist elite to tell their government to back off its anti-working

class reforms. When the Fraser government sought to dismantle the Medibank universal health insurance scheme - the predecessor to Medicare – unions launched industrial action culminating in a national general strike on 12 July 1976. Unfortunately, the impact of these powerful actions was deflected by the pro-ALP, ACTU leaders who refused to follow up the general strike with further action. Nevertheless, the effect of the strikes was to deter Fraser from implementing the full suite of neo-liberal attacks that he was planning. Today, as seen in the 30,000 strong June 12 union rally in Melbourne, there exists the working class anger at the budget to launch powerful strike action against it. Such action must not only oppose the Budget but must fight to smash the full range of attacks working class people are facing – from the Royal Commission witch hunt against the unions, to the sell offs of public housing, to the planned job cuts at the CSIRO, ATO and other public sector areas and to the impending further electricity privatization in NSW.

A REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM VERSUS A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PROGRAM

Melbourne, August 2012: Mounted police attack union construction workers during a workers' dispute with the greedy Grocon corporation. The organs of the state are being unleashed ever more aggressively against the union movement, targeting in particular the CFMEU construction workers union.



Many are hoping that decisive sections of the budget will be blocked by the Senate. Any blocking of reactionary measures by opposition parties reacting to mass outrage would be welcome. However, in the absence of decisive class struggle action that forces all the pro-capitalist parties to retreat from the planned measures, any parliamentary moves against the budget will only be partial. Already, last month, the ALP and Greens voted for the first budget supply bills – bills that included the curbing of rises in the aged pension and the slashing of legal aid services for low income people. If it is not mass action that ultimately destroys the budget then an ALP leadership that opposes Coalition attacks when in Opposition today could, once in government, push through identical measures by using its union connections to demobilize mass resistance. It is worth noting that the ALP actually opposed the Howard government when it first started slashing payments to low income single parents only to then drastically extend the cutbacks once in office. For their part, the Greens have spoken out against privatization but as part of the recently deposed governing coalition with the ALP in Tasmania, the Greens openly supported the privatisation of electricity distribution. Meanwhile in France, the ALP's social democratic counterpart (and a more left-talking one at that) the Socialist Party when in opposition campaigned on an anti-austerity platform. Yet, today the administration of Socialist Party president, Francois Hollande, is not only overseeing an official unemployment rate above 10% but implementing Abbott-like cuts to public services and public sector jobs while slashing taxes for big business. In fact, the unpopular policies of France's social democratic administration have created conditions for the rapid rise of dangerous far-right forces.

In contrast, if it is class struggle action that defeats the reactionary Budget measures then it could open the way to struggles to turn back the three decades of attacks on the working class and then lead on to a fight for what working class people really need. Class struggle action beginning with a fight against Abbott's budget attacks should move on to demand truly free public healthcare (including free specialist and dental visits), a huge increase in funding for public hospitals alongside measures to ensure that those resources don't flow into the pockets of private contractors, the abolition of all anti-strike laws, the removal of tertiary education tuition fees and fee-debts and a massive increase in low-rent public housing. To these demands the enemy will respond: where will the money come from? The ALP and Greens cannot deal with this question because they accept as a given the current, social structure where a small



Sydney, July 6: Thousands of trade unionists and leftists march in opposition to the anti-working class budget of the right wing federal government.

number of wealthy capitalists dominate the economy. The ALP and Greens in office limit progressive measures to what is acceptable to the capitalist order and at best try to fund social programs with budget deficits – deficits which cause inflation that erode workers' wages and pave the way for future austerity attacks on the working class. In contrast, we Marxists say that the money for the public services that working class people need should be ripped out of the hands of the greedy corporate bosses – ripped away from those who have extracted their wealth by plundering workers' labour. The combined wealth of Gina Rinehart, Andrew Forest, the Pratt family, Frank Lowy, James Packer, Clive Palmer and the other of Australia's 200 richest business owners alone is an astounding \$177 billion. That's nearly 150 times more than what the government will save over four years from its starvation budget cuts to payments to younger unemployed people!

To lead the necessary class struggle fightback the working class badly needs a leadership that will refuse to submit to the demands of capitalism. Although seeking to ride on anti-budget protests to promote the ALP's electoral fortunes, the current ALP leaders of the workers movement are stifling industrial action. Pro-ALP union leaders have bureaucratically suppressed calls for industrial action from rank-and-file union militants. We should never forget what happened to the struggle against Howard's *Workchoices* industrial legislation. In 2005 and early 2006, hundreds of thousands of workers risked their jobs to participate in industrial action against these anti-worker laws. But then the ACTU leaders wound down the industrial campaign in favour of an electoral strategy, turning the slogan "Your Rights at Work Worth Fighting For" to "Your Rights At Work Worth Voting For." However, the resulting Labor government then went on to retain most of the Howard laws, including the anti-strike provisions, in its own industrial laws. Instead of *Workchoices* being thoroughly smashed through strike

action we ended up with *Workchoices Lite* - that is, with an industrial relations system significantly worse for workers than in the pre-2005 Howard days.

The anti-capitalist perspective that must become dominant in our unions includes the necessity to stand by all those downtrodden by the same system that exploits workers. For example, right now, the union movement must mobilise contingents to support the brave activists in the Redfern Aboriginal Tent Embassy in their struggle to oppose developer and government plans to re-develop Redfern's Block without any provision for affordable housing for Aboriginal people. The fighting union movement that we need would also demand asylum in Australia with full citizenship rights for all refugees who are headed here. Only by actively opposing attempts of the exploiting class to blame refugees, Aboriginal people and "ethnic" communities for the social ills caused by their rotten capitalist system can we weld the working class into the united force that can defeat the capitalist rulers.

ALLOWING EVERY YOUTH A REAL CHANCE TO "LEARN OR EARN" MEANS STANDING UP TO THE CORPORATE BIGWIGS

The ideology "justifying" Abbott's plans to drastically restrict payments to young unemployed people and Gillard's equally cruel slashing of payments to low income single mothers is the notion that these measures would force these supposedly unwilling people to either "Learn or Earn." This is a despicable slander against unemployed workers and single mothers. The reason people are unemployed is simply because there are not enough jobs available and in the case of single parents also because there is a lack of available childcare that could enable a single parent to work.



Something that will be happening more and more if the capitalist ruling class gets away with imposing its agenda of attacks on trade unions and cutbacks to social welfare: a homeless man in George Street in Sydney city. The period covering both the Howard Liberal government and the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments saw a startling increase in homelessness.



The reason there are inadequate jobs is solely the fault of the greedy, big business bosses and the governments that serve them. The profit-obsessed exploiters would often rather cut back production - and thus employ less workers - and sell their produce at a higher price than boost production and reduce prices to sell the added output. Furthermore, the corporate bigwigs are always looking to cut jobs and make those that work toil harder. Last December, one of the subsidiaries of the Seven Group, heavy machinery supplier WesTrac, retrenched 630 workers even after the corporation announced a \$486 million profit for the financial year. Why? So that its main owner, billionaire Kerry Stokes, can gain more profits to lead a still more extravagant lifestyle. More recently BMA, the mining company 50-50 owned by Australian giant BHP Billiton and Japanese conglomerate Mitsubishi announced it was laying off over 230 workers as part of productivity "improvements" with more retrenchments expected. All this despite BHP announcing in February an 83% jump in its half yearly profit to a spectacular \$US8.1 billion and Mitsubishi recording a full year profit of \$US3.8 billion. Unfortunately, the current pro-ALP union leadership obscures the bosses' responsibility for job losses by saying that local jobs can be saved through calling for financial support to local corporations to help them compete against overseas rivals. However, what we need is not to line up workers behind calls to support local bosses but to mobilise struggle against these greedy corporate thugs in

order to stop them laying off workers. We should not let the likes of tycoon Kerry Stokes and the filthy rich big shareholders of BHP get away with retrenching workers. The response of the workers movement to Abbott and Hockey's pledge to make everyone "Earn or Learn" should be to say: We are going to fight for people's right to "Earn" by mobilizing industrial action to force companies planning job cuts to retain their workers at the expense of their profits and by demanding free and fully accessible, round-the-clock childcare. And we are going to ensure that young people truly have the choice to "Learn" by fighting for free tertiary education with a full living wage for all students.

In order to end unemployment, we should mobilise a class struggle campaign to demand laws that force profitable companies to increase hiring at the expense of the size of their profits. As we fight for such demands, the capitalists will of course scream that this will drive them out of business. To this we must respond: if you cannot operate enterprises in a way that provides jobs for workers - and it is clear that you can't - then you should not be allowed to own these enterprises. They need to be ripped out of your hands and brought into public ownership so that production can be planned to provide jobs for all. However, not only are all current parliamentary parties hostile to the idea of confiscating the factories, banks, transport systems and mines from the capitalists, any party that did attempt to do so would face fierce resistance

Opposite page: Health sector employees opposed to the government's moves to force people to pay for doctor's visits are among the hundreds of thousands of people who have marched in rallies opposed to the Abbott government's cruel and unfair budget.



Darwin, July 6: Large and spirited anti-government demonstrations have highlighted the multi-racial character of the most active section of Australia's powerful workers movement.

from the judiciary, police, army and top echelons of the bureaucracy, all of which have been built up for the very purpose of serving the exploiting class. That is why for our struggles to triumph they must culminate in the working class leading all of the oppressed in a revolutionary movement to sweep away the current capitalist state and to build a new workers state that will implement a socialist system based on collective ownership of the economy.

Workers, retrenched workers, Aboriginal people, "ethnic" youth, students and leftists: we are at a crossroads. After three decades of mounting assaults on our rights, the severity of the recent Coalition budget shows that we are facing the spectre of the drastic cutbacks to public services and public sector jobs that the masses in other capitalist countries like Greece, Spain, Italy, France and Brazil have endured since the global financial crisis. In those countries, the austerity measures have been implemented by right wing and social democratic governments alike. If the Australian masses have not experienced the same level of trauma it is only because China's booming, public sector-dominated, socialistic economy has kept Australia afloat by purchasing a huge amount of Australia's produce. Yet, China's demand for Australian exports will ease as Beijing moves to rebalance its economy towards services and high-end manufacturing. How are we then going to respond to the threat of extreme austerity measures here? The social democratic program of minimising class struggle action and subordinating it to the goal of electing social democratic governments has been an abject failure. It has allowed the capitalist exploiters to weaken our unions, casualise

the workforce and undermine the public services that working class people most need without any serious resistance. When social democrats gain office they have always betrayed their working class base in the quest to gain acceptance from the capitalist class who really run society. This has been true both in Australia and in every other country with a significant social democratic party. Inevitably, this causes such frustration and demoralisation amongst the masses that social democratic governments often pave the way for governments that are even further to the right than those governments that the social democrats had originally replaced when taking office.

It is high time for the workers movement to take a new road. The road of militant class struggle, of the workers movement championing the cause of all of the oppressed and of rejecting divisive protectionism. A road where the working class will not be diverted by any dead end paths of seeking to administer the existing capitalist state. A road that will end with the working class toppling the decrepit capitalist order and building a socialist society. Such a new society, instead of driving youth and the vulnerable into destitution under the guise of "Learn or Earn" will truly enable every person to "Earn or Learn" by guaranteeing jobs for all as well as free education and free 24-hour childcare. Let us get on to that path by building a concerted campaign of industrial action and mass struggle to smash Abbott's Budget. We must start to roll back the three decades of attacks against the toiling masses with whose collective hands the future socialist society will be built.



U.S./AUSTRALIA: HANDS OFF IRAQ AND SYRIA!

DEFEND SYRIA AGAINST WESTERN IMPERIALISM & ITS "REBEL" PROXIES!

WORKERS CAUGHT IN THE CROSS HAIRS OF CAPITALISM: DON'T LET THE JINGOISTIC BEAT OF WAR DIVERT YOU FROM JUSTIFIED ANGER AT THE EXPLOITERS & THEIR BUDGET

ABBOTT/SHORTEN'S WAR AND "ANTI-TERROR LAWS" ARE BAD FOR WORKING CLASS PEOPLE

Above: A home in Kfar Derian in Syria's western Aleppo province destroyed by U.S.-led air strikes. The imperialist bombing has already killed dozens of Syrians.

October 1 - The most fearsome force on the planet is once again slamming missiles into the Middle East. Over the last few weeks the U.S. imperialists have bombed Iraq. Last week, they and their Saudi, Qatari and other lapdogs started bombing inside Syria. That was done without Syrian government consent - a violation of Syria's sovereignty. Shortly after this attack, the Syrian Foreign Minister asserted that: "We have already stated that we consider any violation of Syria's sovereignty as aggression."

Australia's capitalist rulers could not wait to get involved. The Liberal government- with 100% support from the ALP "opposition" - deployed troops to the Middle East to join the U.S. before any other country. These forces include 200 special forces troops as well as a RAAF group with eight Super Hornet fighter-bombers. Today, Abbott announced that these forces would start operations.

When the U.S. and Australia invaded Iraq last time it was done under the bogus pretext of destroying non-existent nuclear weapons. This time the excuse is to destroy the fundamentalist ISIS ("Islamic State") group. Except that ISIS was one of the Syrian "Rebel" groups built up and trained by Washington - both directly in covert camps in Jordan and indirectly via its Turkish, Saudi and Qatari

allies - for the sake of its proxy war against Syria's government. Indeed, U.S. support for ISIS was so blatant that prominent U.S. senator, John McCain, not only expressed support to ISIS leaders in a meeting with the Syrian "Rebels" in May last year that was shown on CNN but was even in a photo shoot with none other than ISIS leader - "The Caliph" - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi!

ISIS are indeed cutthroats who subjugate women and murder non-Sunni minorities in the regions that they control. **Yet how little this war actually has to do with stopping extreme religious terror is highlighted by the fact that one of the close U.S. allies bombing relatively secular Syria to supposedly stop the "Islamic State" is itself the most savage fundamentalist,**

“Islamic State” in existence, Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, women are forbidden from driving cars and hundreds of people – many exploited migrant workers – have been publicly beheaded in the last few years including for such “crimes” as adultery.

The fact is that ISIS could not have achieved its current strength without earlier Western support for its war on Syria and without Turkey helping ISIS forces cross through Turkey into Syria. ISIS was also bred out of the horror caused by the U.S./Australian occupation of Iraq. Support for these Sunni extremists was incited by the Sunni-Shia frictions caused by Washington repeatedly swapping sides from favouring Shia to Sunni communities in Iraq in a destructive game of divide and conquer.

When ISIS and other Syrian “Rebel” groups carried out horrific massacres against Alawis, Shias, Christians, Kurds and secular Sunnis, not only did Western regimes continue to back these forces but the Western media lionised these groups and sought to pin their atrocities on the Syrian government. Obama only decided to move against ISIS because it was turned against Washington’s more favoured Syrian “Rebel” groups and because ISIS in Iraq was threatening to overrun the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government – a regime subservient to the U.S. So now that Washington’s vicious ISIS attack dog has escaped its master’s control, the master is trying to reign in its monster. But the master is the biggest monster of all: a monster, indeed, of such gigantic proportions that, together

with its Australian and other allies, it killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis in its March 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation.

Most importantly for Obama, the pretext of stopping ISIS allows them another chance to hammer the strategic Middle East into a region of total subordination to the U.S. – one where U.S. companies will have an exclusive grip on the oil valves. Thus, the U.S. used its intervention in Iraq to, within days, leverage the ejection of prime minister Nouri al-Maliki. Although himself a long-time Western puppet, Maliki occasionally pulled on his puppet strings too forcefully for the liking of the U.S.A – for example, by building relations with U.S. foe, Iran. So Washington used the weight of its latest intervention to have his premiership buried by rival Iraqi politicians.

Yet the most sinister plans of the U.S. and its allies are reserved not for Iraq but for Syria. The Western imperialists want to use this latest intervention to accomplish a longstanding push to depose the Syrian government which, although capitalist, is not compliant enough for Washington to accept. Thus, as part of the Iraq/Syria intervention, the U.S. has supplemented its already huge covert backing for anti-government Syrian “Rebels” by instituting a massive plan to openly arm and train in a Saudi camp so-called “moderate” Syrian “Rebels” – that is, all the largely fundamentalist “Rebel” factions who are still held firmly at the end of Washington’s leash. Neither the U.S. nor the “Rebels” have made any secret of the fact that the resulting greater power of the “Rebels”



Syria, May 2013: Prominent U.S. Republican Senator John McCain goes to Syria to meet with the “Rebel” forces to discuss U.S. supply of arms and money. After the meeting, McCain stated that it was “a very moving experience to meet these fighters” and called for even greater U.S. support to these “Rebels” whom he described as “moderates.” In the Left-hand side photo which was published at the time by CNN, McCain is talking to none other than ISIS leader Abur Bakr al-Baghdadi (shown encircled in both photos). In the Right-hand side photo, also posing with McCain is to his left a then Al-Qaeda – and now ISIS – operative (holding a gun) and General Salem Idris, then leader of the “moderate” Free Syrian Army proxies of imperialism.

will be unleashed not mainly against ISIS but against the Syrian government. Indeed, it is likely that in the longer term if not sooner, the U.S. will slide over from hitting ISIS targets to bombing Syrian government forces directly. Washington is hoping that by blatantly impinging on Syria’s sovereignty through the air strikes, it may be able to even provoke a war with the Syrian government in the short term. At a meeting with White House guests, Obama threatened that if Syria attempts to attack any U.S. war plane the U.S. would take down Syrian air defences and overthrow the Assad government (*The New York Times*, 13 September).

However, utilising in Syria the model that they used to overthrow Libya’s Gaddafi government will not prove so easy for Washington. Although weakened by the years-long war against the “Rebels,” Syria’s military is still much stronger than Libya’s was.

Furthermore, while the Gaddafi government did not have many strong allies, the Syrian government does have significant ones. Over the last three years, both socialistic China and Syria’s powerful ally, Russia, have used their positions as UN Security Council members to veto Western imperialist resolutions aimed at bolstering the “Rebels.” Indeed, following last week’s commencement of the U.S.-led bombing campaign in Syria, Iran and Russia both denounced the air strikes as a violation of Syria’s sovereignty. So did some leading Chinese state-owned media outlets which additionally warned Washington that China would not accept the air strikes being extended into direct attacks on the Assad government. Meanwhile, the Lebanese, Shia-based, Islamist group Hezbollah has for some time directly supported Syrian military resistance against Washington’s “Rebels.”



February, 2012: A NATO airstrike in Kapisa, Afghanistan kills 8 children. During the height of the U.S./NATO/Australian “war on terror” operation in Afghanistan, the occupation forces killed over 1,000 Afghan civilians every year.

Rocklea, southern Brisbane: One of several Muslim prayer centres defaced by racist filth following the Abbott government’s announcement of Australia’s participation in the U.S.-led war in Iraq and Syria.





Left: Australian troops in action in East Timor. Right: December 2013 protest by East Timorese against Australian capitalists' theft of Timor's oil and gas wealth. The protest followed revelations that Australia had spied on East Timorese officials in order to gain the upper hand in negotiations over partitioning East Timor's seabed natural resources. Protesters chanted, "Australia, imperialist, capitalist!" and "Australia is a thief of world oil". Australian imperialist jack booting around the South Pacific region is underpinned by U.S. power. Hence, the Australian capitalist rulers' loyalty to U.S. imperialism and the Australian ruling class support for U.S. marauding in the Middle East.

STAND AGAINST U.S. AND AUSTRALIAN IMPERIALIST MILITARISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND EVERYWHERE ELSE!

The U.S. rulers and their partners have not finalised their war strategy or even their exact war aims. But as bullies so used to getting their way through sheer brute force, their mantra is: When in doubt ... bomb! Whatever exact strategy they come up with, we can be sure that it will be disastrous for the masses of the region and will be a threat to the toiling classes of the whole world. Given their contemptuous disregard for the peoples of the "Third World," the U.S.-led forces will kill huge numbers of civilians as "collateral damage." That is what they did during their "war on terror" in Afghanistan which saw NATO forces killing *over 1,000 civilians per year* during the height of the occupation and the Australian military commit its own atrocities like the 12 February 2009 massacre. It was then that, in Uruzgan, that SAS commandos killed five children by throwing hand grenades into a family home. Meanwhile, the more overt presence in the region of its U.S. senior partner will embolden the Israeli rulers to still more aggressively terrorise the Palestinian people. All this and the fact that they are now being targeted by the American imperialist monster, that symbolises injustice to so many, will only bring ISIS more recruits. That in turn will prolong the war which will allow the Western powers more opportunity to still more rigidly impose their will on the region. If they succeed in doing that and especially if they are able to manufacture regime change in Syria it will feed their appetite to openly devour other parts of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Domestically in the U.S., Britain, France and Australia, the pumped up capitalist regimes will act still more arrogantly. Here that will spell more draconian attacks on the unions, Aboriginal people, refugees and the poor. That is why the working class and oppressed can only welcome any setbacks in the Syria-Iraq military campaign of their rulers. *What is needed is a movement of the working class and downtrodden in the U.S.A, Australia and elsewhere to demand: U.S./Britain/Australia: Hands Off Syria and Iraq! U.S., Australian, British, French militaries Get Out of All of the Middle East! Defend Syria against Western imperialism, its Fundamentalist Arab Allies and its "Rebel" Proxies! All remaining NATO and Australian troops get out of Afghanistan now!*

Even with 400 Australian troops still deployed in Afghanistan, Abbott and Shorten are just so excited to have the military involved in a new war. They see it as a chance to try out new weapons and whip up militaristic sentiments in the population. It is in good part through the jackboot of the military - or its threatened use - that the Australian capitalist class, which exploits workers at home, is able to still more ferociously exploit the workers of East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and the Philippines and to rob these countries of their natural resources. Moreover it is no secret in ruling circles that just like Obama's "Pivot to Asia," the main target of Australia's military build-up and the U.S. troops stationed in Darwin is the People's Republic of China. Canberra and

its senior partner in Washington is willing to risk the livelihoods of millions of Australian toilers - who rely on China's booming state-owned enterprises buying the lion share of Australian exports - in order to achieve their strategic goal of smashing socialistic rule in China. They understand that the continued existence of a workers state in China is not only a barrier to the unimpeded exploitation of China's huge working population but an obstacle to the imperialist subjugation of the "Third World" masses. **That is why it is crucial for the workers movement in Australia and the whole world to stand for the defence of socialistic China, however deformed it may currently be from the socialist "ideal."**

DOWN WITH ANTI-TERROR LAWS! DOWN WITH RACIST ATTACKS ON MUSLIMS AND OTHER "ETHNIC" PEOPLE!

To back its war drive, the Australian government has whipped up hysterical fears of a "terrorist threat" to Australians from ISIS. However, to date not a single person has ever been killed by Islamic fundamentalist terrorists in Australia. In contrast, racist state forces have killed hundreds of people. Let's recall for example the February 2004 racist murder by police in Redfern of 17-year-old Aboriginal boy T.J. Hickey, the Palm Island beating to death in custody of Aboriginal man Mulrunji Doomadgee by a police sergeant and the horrific tasering to death by police of Brazilian student Roberto Curti in 2012 for allegedly stealing biscuits.

Lakemba, Sydney: Hundreds of Muslims protest against the draconian, September 18 "anti-terror" raid.



Some extremist supporters in Australia of the Syrian “Rebels,” emboldened by government and media support for their cause, have conducted attacks on supporters of the Syrian government. Although these attacks were indeed frightening, they pale in scale compared to the violence that has been unleashed in Australia by white supremacist groups and extreme racist individuals. Let us remember the terrible violence that racist rioters at Cronulla Beach unleashed against Middle Eastern, South Asian and Aboriginal youth in December 2005. Then there is the series of horrific racist bashings and murders of Indian students and taxi drivers - and Chinese students as well - that made headlines five years ago but have actually continued unabated since. It is the far-right groups and violent racists that constitute the real terrorist threat in Australia! However, the Australian authorities have done next to nothing to stop these forces. Typical of the “resolve” of police to stop racist terrorists was seen a couple of years ago when a young Korean man surnamed Cho was attacked by racists in the southern Brisbane suburb of Runcorn. Local cops “investigating” the incident insulted him saying that Asians are stupid and silly and shouldn’t walk around at night.

The contrast between the authorities’ acceptance of racist terrorism and the extreme police mobilisation when they conducted raids against alleged ISIS supporters on September 18 could not be greater. With media fanfare, a huge 800-strong police and ASIO contingent raided homes in Sydney and Brisbane. Yet, after all that only two people were charged and one just for a lack of a firearms permit. The police claimed that the other person who was charged was part of an ISIS plot to behead random civilians. The media gleefully hyped up that claim into a hysterical fear campaign about “Muslim terrorists.” Nevertheless, the police story is yet to be proven and seems to be full of holes. For one, the police claimed that the alleged terrorist group had hatched their plot months ago during which time they had been under

surveillance. Yet just six days prior to the raid when Abbott raised the “terror threat” level to “high” he had insisted that, “We have no specific intelligence of particular plots” (News.com.au website, 12 September). Given that the raids were launched just four days after Abbott announced the deployment of combat troops, many suspect that the raids are simply a stunt by the government aimed at justifying the new war. Muslim community members who protested against the ferocity of the raids in a 500-strong rally in Lakemba noted that the police had violently roughed up women and children during the operation.

Just like most Aboriginal people have always felt, more and more Muslim people in Australia are seeing the police as the terror threat that they most fear. Their fears were reinforced when Victorian police shot dead Muslim teenager Numan Haider last week. Backed up by the government and media, police claimed the shooting was an act of “self-defence” after Haider had stabbed two officers. Yet, again many question marks exist over the police story. Outrageously, Haider’s grieving family have since received death threats. The hyped-up, racist government, police and media campaign has encouraged extreme racists to go on a violent stampede against anyone who looks Muslim. Racist cowards have shoved Muslim women on the streets and ripped off their headscarves. The fascist Australia Defence League has called for a new Cronulla riot. Racist idiots have targeted Sikh Indians because they think that their turbans mean that they are Muslim. Meanwhile, the homes of Muslims have been scrawled with racist insults. In Melbourne, a violent racist slammed the head of a 26 year-old Muslim woman travelling on a train against the carriage wall. Although some of the population have truly been scared into bearing, largely imaginary, fears of a terrorist attack, Muslim and other non-white communities are living with the **very real** fear of racist attack.

Prime Minister Abbott has made a point of refusing to condemn any of this racist



Left: The sword seized by police as “evidence” during a raid on a Sydney home as part of the giant “anti-terror” raid on September 18. The sword was used by police, government and media to sensationalize claims of a plot to behead random people. The Murdoch-owned Daily Telegraph newspaper directly linked the sword to the beheading plot. But it now turns out that the sword ... was made of plastic! It was bought at a night market and has been on display in the family home for several years. The reality of racist, capitalist Australia means that if you are not of white skin – and especially if you are of South Asian or “Middle Eastern appearance” – it can be dangerous to have in your possession any toy that looks like the one shown on the Right. During the raid that seized the “sword” shown on the Left, 21 year-old painter Mustafa Dirani was arrested before being released without charge. The sword is a Zulfiqar, an important symbol of Shia Islam. However, ISIS is a Sunni extremist group which considers Shias to be their greatest enemy. Many of their atrocities have been directed against Shias. This makes the fact that a Shia family could be targeted in supposedly anti-ISIS raids all the more ridiculous. The supposed “war on terror” is really a racist war against Muslims and other “ethnic” communities. It is part of a broader ruling class war against the rights of the entire working class at home and against governments in the “Third World” that refuse to bow down to imperialist orders.

violence – even directly feeding into it by joining the racist chorus against the Muslim *burqa*. After all, why would he even pretend to stand against extreme racism – the racist climate that he has cunningly helped to create and the war fever that he has infected part of the population with is helping to divert frustrations away from his government’s unpopular, anti-working class budget. The terror threat hype has also helped the government – with the backing of the ALP Opposition – to massively increase funding for ASIO and to today push through draconian new “anti-terror” laws. The laws will make it easier for ASIO to hack into your computers and postal mail. Dangerously, it will give ASIO and police officers immunity from prosecution for crimes that they commit during intelligence operations and will see journalists and whistle blowers – like Edward Snowden – jailed for up to 10 years for revealing details of intelligence operations. Although these laws are framed as being aimed against the likes of ISIS, their ultimate target is the workers movement, the Left and Aboriginal and other anti-racist movements. After all, that is who ASIO most spies on now! In particular, as the ruling class gears up for union-busting attacks against construction workers’ unions, the new laws

will be used to further spy on and intimidate militant unionists in the manner that special building industry laws have already been used to persecute activists of the CFMEU construction workers union. That is why **it is urgent for the union movement, the Left and anti-racist groups to unite in determined action to demand the abolition of all the anti-terror laws.**

Similarly, the workers movement must stand against the racist terrorism hype which serves to divert the working class masses from the truth that it is the capitalist exploiters at home and the governments who serve them who are the ones who are attacking our unions, planning to make us pay for doctors’ visits, threatening to make those of us under 30 starve for six months a year if we lose our jobs and forever eroding our right to secure, permanent jobs. **Activists have called a rally for 3pm on this Sunday, October 5 at Lakemba Train Station to oppose the vilification of Muslims. Trotskyist Platform urges all organisations and individuals in the Left and the working class to join this action.** Only by resisting the racism that the ruling elite seeks to infect our ranks with can the workers movement achieve the unity we need to defeat the attacks we are facing from the capitalist rulers.

We need mass actions to defend Muslims and other embattled non-white communities against racist attacks - such actions as the one on July 26 in Sydney's Marrickville when over 80 leftists, trade unionists and other anti-racists united to drive out a planned anti-Muslim picket by the white supremacist Party For Freedom. **Key to a successful anti-racist action is having**

the power of the organised workers movement behind it which can repel police attempts to crush such a mobilisation. A trade-union centred action like this took place on May 2 in Brisbane when more than a 100 construction workers from the BLF, CFMEU and ETU unions formed the core of a 200 strong group that routed a planned march by the neo-Nazi Australia First Party.

BUILD WORKING CLASS OPPOSITION TO THE IMPERIALIST WAR CAMPAIGN

The “war on terror” is, in fact, a tragically self-fulfilling prophesy. It is the repression, racist vilification, marginalisation from society and jobs and the knowledge that the imperialist invaders are devastating their lands that drives a very small percentage of Muslim youth in Australia into the arms of reactionary forces like ISIS. Of course, it is the most reactionary elements who choose to join such outfits – far-sighted individuals choose to react to oppression by becoming leftists instead. Yet contrary to mainstream propaganda that depicts “Australian values” as the very opposite of ISIS, the sad truth is that it is the worst values prevalent in Australian society – shaped as it is by the capitalist system and by its origins in the genocidal dispossession of this country’s first peoples – that help to push a small number of disaffected Muslim youth into the arms of reactionary fanatics. These “values” include piggish, male chauvinist bigotry against women and hatred of people from ethnic and religious minorities.

Although the U.S. and Australian rulers do now seem to, for the moment, want to crack down on ISIS, ISIS are hardly the first fanatics that the Western imperialists have nurtured in order to achieve their goals only to later turn on them when it suited their purposes. Thus Al-Qaeda – of which ISIS is an offshoot – was created and built up by the CIA in the late 1980s to organise foreign fighters to join Washington’s anti-communist war against the leftist Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan government and their Soviet

Red Army backers. After all, that was why Al Qaeda were so well trained, armed and funded! Even after the war against Al-Qaeda became a convenient excuse for imperialist intervention in Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere, Washington continued to work closely with Al Qaeda in other theatres. Thus, among the key “Rebel” factions that NATO backed and brought to power in Libya in 2011 was Al Qaeda itself. In fact, after NATO’s “Rebels” took power in Libya, the capital, Tripoli, was commanded by Abdulhakim

Belhadj, the “former” head of the Al Qaeda in Libya group. Belhadj and his supporters later collaborated with and helped train the pro-Western “Free Syrian Army” “Rebels” on the Turkish-Syria border. Meanwhile, Washington and its allies not only backed the Al Qaeda offshoot ISIS but also trained and backed the official Al Qaeda-allied group in Syria, the Al Nusra Front – who are actually, currently, the strongest non-ISIS, Syrian “Rebel” group. However, it was not just Washington that was up to its neck in collaboration with Al Qaeda in Syria. The previous Australian Labour government, in support of the Syrian “Rebels” – of which Al Qaeda is a key component – spearheaded Western diplomatic moves against the Syrian government. In May 2012, the Australian regime became one of the first countries in the world to expel Syria’s top diplomats from their country.

All this shows to what extent the imperial powers will go to in order to subjugate the world. However, this drive to world domination is not merely a policy choice for the capitalists. It is an absolute necessity for them as their crumbling system cannot survive unless they find new sources of labour to exploit, fresh natural resources to plunder and new markets to corner. As

their economies have lurched from one crisis to the next, the U.S.-led imperialists have become increasingly rabid in their predatory ventures. They have been targeting not only “Third World” countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria but also other developed capitalist powers. In February, Washington orchestrated a right-wing coup, spearheaded by fascist gangs, to depose the previously elected Ukrainian president in order to create a regime there hostile to Washington’s emerging capitalist rival, Russia. Meanwhile, part of Washington’s purpose in seizing control of the oil-rich Middle East is to have the ability to use that against its German imperialist and Japanese imperialist future rivals. The new U.S.-led direct intervention in the Middle East is, thus, yet another signal that the crumbling capitalist system will in the future lead us into the horror of a new world war if it is not first overthrown.

However, the question is what political force is going to be able to challenge the imperialist rulers and their increasing militarism. The ALP have once again proved that their social democratic program means that they will always on big questions betray the interests of their working class base. In contrast to the ALP, the Greens at least oppose troops being sent to the Middle East and had the

27 March 2011, Sydney: The first action in Australia against the NATO attack on Libya opposed all forms of imperialist intervention – military & diplomatic as well as funding of political groups – in the Middle East and called to “Defeat the NATO air strikes on Libya.” Trotskyist Platform (the initiator of the action), Supporters of the Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerrillas, the then Revolutionary Socialist Party and more anti-imperialist individuals within the Stop the War Coalition participated in the rally. Trotskyist Platform was the only bona-fide left group in Australia to fight for the defence of Libya against the NATO imperialists and their “Rebel” proxies.



decency to vote against the anti-terror laws. However, the Greens contributed to the current reality in Syria that has opened the way to the U.S.-led intervention. They were the strongest backers of the pro-imperialist drive for regime change in Syria. They were the first parliamentary party to demand the expulsion of Syrian diplomatic personnel and called for even more aggressive sanctions on Syria. Following the Greens in supporting the pro-imperialist Syrian “Rebels” were the various reformist-left groups that often (to varying degrees) pander to the Greens - like Solidarity, Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative.

Furthermore, although the Greens oppose Australia’s participation in the U.S.-led military campaign, they have stressed that now that the Australian military is there in the Middle East they are in full support of them in their actions. However, the Australian military is not some institution serving all Australian people. In capitalist Australia, the military - like the police and ASIO - is an institution created and maintained for serving the exclusive interests of the capitalist exploiting class. Regardless of whether some of its personnel are recruited from working class strata, the military will be acting against the interests of Australia’s and, indeed, the world’s working class people. **Every success for the U.S. and Australian militaries in their latest Middle East campaign will be a blow against the interests of the working class and downtrodden.**

What we need to do is to build a movement that will not only oppose Australia’s **participation** in this military adventure but will **oppose the imperialist military campaign itself and oppose the institution of the capitalist-serving military.** Such a movement must be based on the organised working class united with all of the oppressed. It is possible to win the working class to oppose the military intervention because these imperialist interventions are diametrically opposed to workers’ interests.

Against the intense propaganda that has a majority of Australians currently backing the war campaign, we can point out to class-conscious workers that the same politicians and media who lie to you when they say that curbing unions and privatising public enterprises is good for you are also lying when they say that this military campaign and the anti-terror laws are in your interests.

We need a movement that can expose Abbott’s claim that all Australians have a common interest in “Team Australia” against external threats. The notion is disgusting that low income workers share the same interests as greedy capitalist billionaire Andrew Forrest who wants to throw unemployed workers off the dole! There is no “Team Australia” because one part of the supposed “team” derives its wealth from exploiting the rest of the “team.” Abbott wants to sell us the “Team Australia” myth so that we will be looking out for external threats while the capitalist members of our “team” are peacefully emptying all of our pockets.

Let us build a movement centred on the working class and oppressed Aboriginal and “ethnic” communities that can oppose this imperialist military campaign in the Middle East. Let us build towards union industrial action against the military campaign. **What is urgently posed right now is to build energetic demonstrations demanding “U.S./Australian imperialism: Hands Off Syria and Iraq!”** Such actions must seek to win the participation of the most politically aware trade unionists, Aboriginal activists and working-class “ethnic” youth and must be based on slogans that openly appeal to the class interests that the working class have in opposing the militarism of the Australian ruling class. And out of the struggle to build such a pro-working class, anti-imperialist movement, the fight to build a revolutionary workers party will begin.



Above: Today’s Libya. The victory of the NATO-installed forces has brought to Libya chaos, endless violence, heightened oppression of women and murderous attacks on black African residents. Yet the victory of these pro-imperialist “Rebels” was welcomed by reformist left groups like Socialist Alternative (see below).

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

AUSTRALIAN POLITICS
INTERNATIONAL
ISSUES
USE OF SOCIALISM
HISTORY AND

MEMBERSHIP: Choose a membership level > Contribute from the 2013 calendar

22 Feb Tyrant Gaddafi finally falls, but what now?

Description

The ancient regime of the tyrant Gaddafi appeared to be over. After the overthrowing of Gaddafi in 2011, the world has been looking for a better alternative to his rule. The fall of Gaddafi has not happened in isolation. The Arab revolutions are continuing across the region. The direction the struggle takes in Libya will be significantly influenced by what happens in the ongoing revolutions immediately across the country's eastern and western borders.

A deepening of the revolutionary process in Egypt and/or Tunisia will, as was the case with the outbreak of the Libyan revolt in February, impact the consciousness and confidence of Libyan workers, students and unemployed youth. Likewise, the fall of Gaddafi may give heart to those in Syria taking on Assad that tenacity and perseverance can pay off.

One thing that can be said with confidence is that the revolutionary wave that has swept the Middle East and North Africa will continue to unleash forces of resistance that the ruling elites and their imperialist backers will struggle to contain. That is something to be welcomed.



17 August pro-PRC rally in Hong Kong was attended by over 110,000 people.

GREETINGS FOR THE OCTOBER 1 ANNIVERSARY OF CHINA'S GREAT 1949 REVOLUTION DOWN WITH YUPPY, ANTI-COMMUNIST HONG KONG PROTESTS

1 October 2014: Today in Hong Kong, the Western media are playing up the anti-PRC, anti-communist protests. The protests are indeed large but the Western media ignored a huge pro-PRC rally in Hong Kong just weeks ago. The main trade union federation, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, is pro-PRC. The parliamentary party with the biggest vote in Hong Kong is the pro-PRC, Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong. It was formed by pro-communist people and leaders of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions.

Hong Kong was stolen from China by the British in the 1840s as part of the Treaty of Nanking. That followed China's defeat in the Opium War. The humiliating treaty for China allowed Westerners in China to have "extraterritoriality" meaning that they were not subject to Chinese laws.

Under British rule, Hong Kong people had no democracy whatsoever. They were simply subjects of Britain ruled by the British Governor. This is something the

media hide.

In 1967, there was mass workers struggle in Hong Kong. This was led by communist activists and the pro-PRC, Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions. The British colonial authorities responded by arresting hundreds of workers and murdering some 30 to 40 worker and communist activists. Many activists were simply beaten to death after arrest.

However, because of Hong Kong's economically strategic location and harbour it became a wealthy port/transport hub and a financial and tourist centre. In a similar way to Singapore it creamed off the wealth produced by workers in surrounding regions. Therefore, Hong Kong has a large middle and upper-middle class. It is these layers who are the backbone of the current, anti-PRC movement. The movement is even wrong by bourgeois-democratic principles. Hong Kong is just a tiny proportion of China - it has just 0.5% of the PRC's total population. The protesters' demand is the equivalent of people in Sydney's wealthy financial district and harbour region demanding that they can completely determine their own area's policies separate from the whole of Australia's national laws - thus enabling them to keep for themselves the wealth which they have creamed off (through financial parasitism and payments for transport, retail etc) from the production taking place throughout the whole country.

The anti-PRC movement in Hong Kong is, of course, backed by the Western-funded NGOs. Although many naive, liberal young people have been sucked into the movement, the leaders of it understand that Western-style parliamentary "democracy" in Hong Kong would enable the anti-communist side to leverage capitalist wealth and influence to get their way.

Despite the privileged position of Hong Kong, with its large upper middle class, it is still very much a capitalist class society. There is a large and exploited working class there. There are tens of thousands of people in Hong Kong living in what can only be described as cages - tiny, semi-underground pens. When I was there in 2010, I noticed that there was a much higher proportion of homeless people there than in the mainland. Also unlike in the mainland

PRC, the police in Hong Kong are racist. Whereas in the mainland it is state-owned companies that dominate the economy, in Hong Kong it is powerful capitalist tycoons, often linked with organised crime (or they are simply the triad bosses themselves) that rule. Asia's richest man is Li Ka-shing, the Hong Kong tycoon who owns Hong Kong's ports among many other things.

The PRC leaders, as part of their wavering policies, have done the wrong thing by allowing a "one country, two systems" formula where Hong Kong is allowed to maintain a capitalist system. This has allowed pro-capitalist forces great influence and thus enables the current anti-PRC movement to have life. The current policy should be reversed or else pro-capitalist elements in the mainland will also be emboldened by the Hong Kong "pro-democracy" movement.

The policy should be "one country, one system of socialism!" The companies and wealth of Li Ka-shing and the other capitalists in Hong Kong should be ripped from their hands and put into public ownership. The banks, insurance companies and ports in particular must become state-owned. This will not only provide the public resources in Hong Kong to put an end to homelessness and free those living in the cages from their horrible existence but will enable Hong Kong's wealth derived from its location to be at least partly shared with all of China's 1.4 billion people. The defeat of the capitalists in Hong Kong would also win the PRC the trust and more active support of Hong Kong's working class and would undercut the present, anti-communist movement.

Comradely,

Praba, Trotskyist Platform Mailout
Organiser

FIGHT FOR PROPER MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC HOUSING STOP THE NEGLECT AND STOP THE SELL-OFFS



SUFFERING OF A PUBLIC HOUSING TENANT

Left: One of the damaged pipes that the NSW Department of Housing and wealthy maintenance contractor Spotless had left in a terrible state of disrepair at a public housing residence in Waterloo in inner city Sydney.

30 April 2014 – How would you feel if the children you are caring for had to live in a house where the leaks are so bad that not only does the kitchen and dining room flood when it rains but the penetrating water causes short circuits that present a potentially fatal electrical hazard to occupants? Unfortunately, this is just a part of what one tenant and the children she cares for had to go through as a result of the willful neglect of her landlord. However, her landlord is not just any landlord. Her landlord happens to be the government as she is a public housing tenant.

The tenant, sixty year-old Virginia Hickey, wants her story told as she knows that many others living in public housing are going through similar experiences. Ms Hickey (known affectionately as “Aunty Bowie”) has lived in her house in Douglas Street in the inner city Sydney suburb of Waterloo for many years. She is the primary carer for two of her grandchildren and, additionally, two younger grandchildren, one with a serious diabetic condition, stay with her on weekends.

The family’s ordeal actually began several years ago. Maintenance on the home was so neglected by the housing authorities that the whole place was falling apart: the stove was not working, the taps were faulty and everything from the roof to the walls to the flooring were in a terrible condition. Eventually, after pressing the authorities for years they seemingly acquiesced to her requests. In

March 2010, Spotless, the company which has the contract with the Department of Housing for the maintenance of her home, finally organised for the renovation to begin. Yet, this so-called “renovation” was done in a half-baked, reckless and arrogant manner. Thus, when Spotless asked Ms Hickey and the children to vacate the premises during the renovation, they did not provide any alternate accommodation. Instead, the Hickeys had to find accommodation for themselves. Virginia Hickey was initially told that the renovation would take six weeks. Instead, it took 11 months! They were forced to live away from their home for eleven months! You might think that after this 11 months that at least the quality of the renovation would be of a high standard. However, the very opposite was the case. Half the roofing had not been fixed, a door was loose and the toilet and the shower were still not repaired. Furthermore, Spotless performed the maintenance in such



28 June 2014: Members of the Illawarra-based Public Housing Union, Millers Point public housing tenants, supporters of public housing and Trotskyist Platform rally in Auburn to defend public housing. The main rally banner reads: “Stop the Sell Off of Public Housing! Smash the Attacks on Services That Working Class People Need the Most. Massively Increase Public Housing – Just Like What China Is Doing”

a reckless manner that they contaminated most of the furniture and goods in the home. Thus, the family’s furniture and beds and much of their clothes, shoes and personal items were marked as “contaminated” and were subsequently taken away to be dumped. Virginia Hickey was only offered an insulting amount of compensation for the loss of the family’s goods which she, understandably, rejected.

The Spotless company that failed Ms Hickey and her grandchildren so badly is, actually, one of the main companies that has a contract to maintain public housing dwellings in NSW. Their owners and executives are profit-obsessed corporate thugs notorious for exploiting and bullying their workers. From 2010 onwards, Spotless sought to force cleaners employed by them to sign individual contracts called Individual Flexibility Agreements (IFAs) which left the cleaners worse off. Workers who refused to accept the new anti-worker “Agreements” had shifts taken off them – in other words, they were given a huge pay cut. As Ms Hickey and her grandchildren found out, Spotless not only make huge profits by exploiting its employees but also by saving costs through doing a worse than half-baked job on maintaining public housing dwellings. The way it often works is that Spotless hires subcontractors (it prefers them to direct employees as it is easier for actual employees to unite and organise into unions to fight

for their rights) and then rides roughshod over these “subbies” by paying them for particular maintenance jobs based on a gross underestimation of the real time it takes to complete the jobs. The subcontractors, in turn, in order to make decent returns, then frantically rush the jobs and thus often do them in a shoddy and careless manner. However, while public housing tenants are suffering, the owners of Spotless – the ruthless private equity millionaires running Pacific Equity Partners (PEP) – are absolutely raking it in. Indeed, the profits of Spotless are so promising that after the company was bought by PEP for \$723 million in August 2012, now – less than two years later – PEP expects to sell **just half** of the company for \$1 billion! Now you know where much of the budget for public housing is ending up! Not in the provision of more public housing dwellings and quality maintenance but in the pockets of filthy rich private sector bosses.

With the Department of Housing and its Spotless contractor having overseen such a shoddy “renovation” of Virginia Hickey’s home in Waterloo, it was only a matter of time before the house crumbled further. This occurred around February 20 when the water started flooding into the dining room and kitchen of Ms Hickey’s residence during rainfall. The leak was so bad that it caused short circuits that sent the power zapping on and off and endangered the lives of Virginia Hickey and her grandchildren. A check of the



Guangzhou: A public housing complex in this southern Chinese city. Over the last few years, more public housing dwellings have been built in socialistic China than private ones as part of the Peoples Republic of China's plan to build 36 million public housing units during the 2011-2015 Five Year Plan. In Australia, only one in twenty five people in urban areas have access to public housing. In China, the proportion is nearly four times that figure and rapidly increasing all the time.

house by the family found that the roof was in terrible condition and the guttering and drainage pipes were rusted and full of holes. And all this just three years after a renovation that was supposedly so "thorough" that Spotless had to make the family vacate the house for 11 months!

That, unfortunately, was only the start of the family's latest housing ordeal. For, instead of immediately fixing the leak, the housing authorities disgustingly stalled on fixing the problem. An electrician did arrive to terminate power leads in the dining room with insulation which did reduce the chances of electrocution. However, this also meant that the family were without lighting and power in part of their house and with the floor flooding it wasn't safe to use extension cables from other parts of the house. Meanwhile, the water kept on gushing in – especially during

the days of very heavy rain in Waterloo on March 6, March 25 and March 27 and the long periods of rain from February 27 to March 2, March 24 to March 28 and April 11 to April 16. Desperate, Virginia Hickey not only pressed the housing authorities but contacted the ombudsman and politicians. All made slimy promises of immediate relief but nothing was fixed. It was only on April 17, a full eight weeks after Ms Hickey's dining room and kitchen first started flooding, that the housing authorities fixed the leaks.

However, with the authorities having so neglected genuine maintenance of the house, just one week later the gas supply in the house went out. This has left the family without hot water or a working stove. Six days later, at the time this article was written, the authorities have still not fixed the problem. It never ends!

Sydney, 5 November 2009: United front protest outside the office of then federal housing minister, Tanya Plibersek, demands a massive increase in public housing. Several speakers at the Trotskyist Platform initiated rally condemned the then ALP federal government for undermining public housing. Today, some ALP politicians who are now in opposition, including Tanya Plibersek, pretend to be friends of public housing even though the last ALP federal government worked with the then NSW ALP state government to organise the sell-off of hundreds of public housing units in the Campbelltown area in outer Sydney.



What Virginia Hickey and her grandchildren are going through is similar to what many other public housing tenants are experiencing. Why is this happening? One reason is that the private sector businesses given the maintenance contracts, like Spotless, are greedy profit-driven entities and, thus, seek to cut costs in their maintenance work at the great expense of public housing tenants. The reality is that with private sector corporations given the construction and maintenance work, public housing in Australia is far from fully "public."

The housing authorities are fully aware that the likes of Spotless are doing a shoddy job. This situation is, actually, to their liking because they **want** tenants to feel uncomfortable in their homes. Over the last twenty years, governments of all stripes have been trying to slash the amount of public housing dwellings and one of their favourite ways of doing this is to make tenants so unhappy with the state of their dwellings that they move out "voluntarily." In the last few years, the government campaign against public housing has intensified. Over the last four years, governments have demolished, sold off or announced their intention to sell-off large numbers of public housing dwellings from Glebe, Millers Point and the Rocks in inner city Sydney to Auburn, Bonyrigg and Claymore in western and south-western Sydney and to Bellambi,

Woonona and Wollongong in the Illawara. As this privatisation campaign intensifies, the authorities deliberately neglect maintenance even more in order to squeeze out tenants faster.

Governments are especially keen on selling off public housing dwellings in inner city areas like Waterloo and scenic areas like the Rocks and Bellambi because they know that they can get a big revenue hit from it while their developer mates in pole position to buyout such dwellings can make a quick killing. The interests of public housing tenants does not even figure here. The needs of working class tenants are expendable as far as Australian governments are concerned. Whether it's the right wing Liberals in government, the social-democratic ALP or even an ALP-Greens coalition, governments administering the capitalist state only serve the interests of the obscenely rich big business owners. And those interests demand taking more and more from working class people especially as the capitalist economies of the world still swirl in the vortex of the 2008-2009 Great Recession. That is why not only are governments slashing public housing but the last ALP/Greens government cruelly slashed payments to low-income single parents (mainly mothers) and the Abbott Liberal-National Coalition governments is planning to make us pay for doctor visits.

If the situation that Virginia Hickey faces is a bit more extreme than some other public housing tenants it is in part because she is an Aboriginal woman. It is people from especially oppressed sectors of society – Aboriginal people, working class people from African, Asian, Middle Eastern and Islander communities, women, the very poor and the disabled – who often cop the harshest treatment from state institutions. Furthermore, Virginia Hickey is a special target for the authorities because she happens to be the aunt of TJ Hickey, the 17 year-old boy riding his bicycle who was murdered by racist police in Redfern in February 2004. Virginia Hickey has been outspoken in fighting for justice for TJ and has been active in many other social justice causes. As a result the state authorities have targeted her. One way they seek to distract her and wear her down is by ensuring that her housing situation remains unbearable.

All this makes a mockery of the claims that “we live in a democracy in Australia.” We all may have the right to vote but not only are elections shaped by the rich capitalist’s class stranglehold over the media and financial resources for such things as political advertising (just think of the meteoric rise of Clive Palmer’s party) but the state organs themselves – from the police to the courts to the housing authority bureaucrats to the ombudsman’s office – are tied to the interests of the wealthy exploiting class. So, whoever wins government simply takes over administering all these anti-working class institutions. That is why justice for working class people or any of the other downtrodden sectors of society is not going to come through the parliaments, the courts, various tribunals or the ombudsman’s office.

What is needed is to unleash the industrial muscle of the working class in a common fight to smash all the many sided attacks

on working class people. We must unite the struggle to turn back all the attacks on public housing and its tenants with the fight for truly free and truly public healthcare, with the demand for free 24 hour childcare, with the struggle to force greedy bosses to increase hiring at the expense of their profits and with the fight to defeat the escalating attacks on our trade unions. To promote this perspective in the struggle for public housing, a rally has been called in the multi-racial Sydney working class suburb of Auburn to demand: “STOP THE SELL-OFF OF PUBLIC HOUSING. SMASH THE ATTACKS ON SERVICES WORKING CLASS PEOPLE NEED THE MOST. Massively Increase Public Housing – Just Like What China is Doing.” The demonstration will take place at 12 noon on June 28 at the corner of Rawson St and Northumberland Rd, near the Northern exit of Auburn Railway Station.

In the course of struggling to build the working class fightback that we need, we must push out the influence of the treacherous Labor Party within the workers movement and struggle to build a new, consistently anti-capitalist workers party. Such a party would unite the working class, teach it to only trust in its own power and make the workers movement the champion of the rights of Aboriginal people, women, vilified “ethnic” communities and the poor. When the working class, united with its allies, becomes the **ruling** class then maintenance in public housing will no longer be conducted by companies owned by greedy exploiters. No longer will public housing be overseen by arrogant bureaucrats who are contemptuous of working class people. Instead, maintenance will be conducted by socialist enterprises collectively owned by all the people. Indeed, housing will be administered by a brand new state built to serve the interests of the working class masses. Only then will Public Housing truly be **public** housing.

Opposite page: Thousands participated in marches throughout Australia such as this one in Sydney against Israel’s brutal July-August 2014 attack on Gaza.



**FOR WORKING CLASS ACTION
AGAINST THE U.S. & AUSTRALIAN RULERS
BACKING ISRAEL’S GENOCIDAL TERROR
SUPPORT THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION!
DEFEND SYRIAN SELF-DETERMINATION AGAINST NATO’S PROXY ARMIES!**

16 July 2014 – A child, his brother and an elderly woman - murdered by the latest Israeli strike on the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Younis. The incessant Israeli air strikes over the last eight days have devastated Gaza and many of the Palestinian people who have been killed are children. There must be mass mobilisations of the international working class, leftists and all opponents of racist oppression to demand: Down with the genocidal Israeli onslaught on Gaza! Lift the blockade of Gaza - Open all border crossings! Israeli troops and settlers out of all the Occupied Territories!

Hamas has responded to the siege of Gaza with rocket attacks on Israel: desperate attempts at self-defence by the vastly outgunned people of Gaza. Only one Israeli has been killed since July 8 – a person hit by mortar fire while handing out food to the murdering Israeli troops. In contrast, the Israeli onslaught has already killed 208 Gazans, mostly civilians. **This is not war but a one-sided slaughter of the subjugated Palestinian people by the bloodthirsty Israeli rulers.** Yet, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, the leaders of other imperialist countries including Australia, Middle East “peace envoy” Tony Blair (that despicable former Labour British PM) and the

mainstream media have all cynically sought to blame Hamas for the carnage: political support that, alongside the massive U.S. military and economic aid, has enabled the bloodshed and subjugation to continue.

Why do the Western capitalist rulers so resolutely back Israel’s rulers? Whacko, right wing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories claim that “Jews control America.” But the truth is if anything the other way around. Israel has since its inception been a deputy sheriff for the U.S. and other imperialists in the Middle East. A crucial anti-communist ally of the imperial powers during their Cold War against the then USSR, Israel today continues to be an attack dog for

U.S.-led imperialism. Thus, several times over the last two years Israel has unleashed attacks against Syrian government forces to assist the “rebel” “Free Syrian Army” (FSA) and the religious extremist proxies of Western Imperialism. Only yesterday, Israeli warplanes again attacked Syria killing up to 12 people at a Syrian military base and in the town of Baath City.

However, within the imperialist countries, large demonstrations have erupted against Israel’s onslaught against Gaza. Last Sunday, up to 6,000 people from diverse origins stretching from Latin America to China gathered at short notice in Sydney to march against Israel’s bloodbath. For this global movement to make a difference it must be **directed onto a perspective of building working class opposition to the imperialist rulers that back Israel.** Already the International Transport Workers

Federation - of which the Maritime Union of Australia is a member - has denounced the Israeli onslaught. Such opposition must be turned into **union industrial action against the U.S., British and Australian imperialist rulers in opposition to their backing for Israeli tyranny** – action that, if sufficiently strong, could force the imperialists to pull back from providing the support that holds up the Zionist terror machine. At the same time, **the international workers movement must firmly defend all military struggle by the subjugated Palestinian people against the murdering Israeli military** while opposing attacks on Israeli civilians which only play into the Zionist hands. **Arms to the Palestinian resistance!** In particular, military supplies should go to the secular, left-leaning resistance groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

DOWN WITH AUSTRALIAN IMPERIALISM AND ITS BACKING OF ISRAELI TERROR!

At last Sunday’s Sydney rally, among protesters’ chants was “Down, Down USA!” This represents understandable hatred of the regime that is both Israel’s main backer and the globe’s greatest oppressor. However, following the lead of their U.S. ally, the capitalist rulers here also always resolutely back Israel: under this Liberal regime, the previous Labor and Labor/Greens governments and all the rest as well. Last month, the Australian government changed its description of Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem making it the only government other than Israel itself that does not recognise that area as being occupied. For their part the ALP, through a statement issued two days ago by shadow foreign affairs minister Tanya Plibersek, heinously downplayed Israel’s terror by placing responsibility “on both sides” for the suffering caused by the Israeli onslaught.

Australia’s rulers follow Washington’s agenda not because Australia is under the thumb of America. The Australian ruling class are themselves aggressive imperialists that subjugate the South Pacific masses. Last

December, demonstrators in East Timor chanting “Australia is a thief of world oil” stoned the Australian embassy after it was revealed that Australia had bugged Timorese officials in 2004 during “negotiations” in



Palestinian children injured by Israeli bombardment. Israel killed over 500 Palestinian children in its murderous July-August 2014 onslaught on Gaza.



Left: Aboriginal people in chains in 1906 enslaved by the White, capitalist ruling class. Right: Aboriginal man Kevin Spratt was barbarically tortured by racist police at the East Perth watch house on 31 August 2008. In just over a minute police shot Spratt with a stun gun nine times. In both its past and present brutal oppression of Aboriginal people, the Australian ruling class has much in common with the Israeli rulers. Australia’s capitalist rulers will never be allies of the Palestinian struggle for liberation. The Australian Left and workers movement must unite opposition to the Australian ruling class backing for Israel’s racist war against Palestinian people with the struggles against the Australian ruling class’ own racist wars against Aboriginal people and refugees, along with its racist treatment of non-white “ethnic” and Muslim minorities and its exploitation of the working class.

which the Australian government arm twisted the Timorese to accept its theft of their oil. Australia’s capitalist rulers support Israeli tyranny because they want to defend the U.S.-dominated world “order” that protects their own imperialist marauding in this region. Furthermore, the racist Australian ruling class has much in common with the Zionist rulers. Thus, while Israel wages genocidal attacks on the Palestinian people, the Australian rulers have already committed near genocide of its first peoples and continue to brutally oppress Aboriginal people. Israel’s brutality against Palestinians is matched by the cruelty of the Australian imperialist forces which while occupying Afghanistan threw grenades into houses with children, participated in the horrific invasion of Iraq and in the late 1980s orchestrated a genocidal war and blockade of the people of PNG-controlled Bougainville Island that killed 20,000 people. The notion that the present Australian ruling class could be made to speak out for Palestinian rights is ludicrous. The Greens – who in contrast to the Liberals and ALP have at least had

the decency to oppose the Israeli onslaught – in particular promote this notion. However, this is worse than futile. For if supporters of the Palestinian struggle are convinced that the Australian rulers could become their **allies** then it will deter them from taking mass action **against** these same rulers. On the other hand, when the Palestine solidarity movement reaches the level of political clarity that motivates demonstrators to chant something like, “Down, Down, Aussie ruling class!” then it will open the road to the type of working class action that has the potential to actually force the imperialists to withdraw the support that holds up Israel’s terror. Such action would resonate worldwide and would encourage the U.S. working class to follow suit against its own rulers.

Palestinians inspect damage in the Gaza town of Khuza’a. Israel’s 2014 assault killed over 2,000 Palestinian civilians and devastated Gaza.





Tel Aviv, July 26: Up to 8,000 Israeli leftists brave threatened police repression to protest against Israel's genocidal attack on Gaza.

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY MEANS FIGHTING FOR A CLASS STRUGGLE, ANTI-IMPERIALIST PERSPECTIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Israel's ability to crush the Palestinian people has been strengthened by the imperialists' violent interventions to crush any Middle Eastern country that refuses to fully accept the U.S.-Israeli-Saudi dictated "order." In 2003, the U.S, Britain, Australia and other U.S. allies invaded Iraq. Now, after having backed the ISIS religious fanatics, the U.S. is cynically using the pretext of stopping ISIS to again intervene in Iraq. Meanwhile, in 2011, NATO countries killed tens of thousands of Libyans in airstrikes to depose the Gaddafi government that was one of only two Arab governments still outside the NATO fold. Now, the last remaining Arab country outside NATO control, Syria, has been devastated by an imperialist war on it waged through "rebel" proxies. From massively funding and arming these "rebel" forces - directly and through its Turkish, Saudi and Qatari allies - to sending its special forces to assist them, the U.S. and its allies have done everything to weaken Syria. Needless to say this has emboldened Israel. For although the capitalist rulers of Syria have been far from consistent supporters of the Palestinian struggle, they have been the Arab government that has most backed the Palestinians and given support to several Palestinian resistance factions. Yet, many nominally pro-Palestinian groups here from the Greens to left groups like Solidarity, Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance have shamefully supported the imperialist-subordinated Syrian "rebels." We in Trotskyist Platform are, unfortunately, the only Australian left group to take an active stand for the defence of Syria against NATO's "rebel" proxies. We say to all supporters of Palestinian rights: *defending the Palestinian people against the Israeli proxies of Western imperialism also means defending Syria against Western imperialism's FSA/fundamentalist proxies.* We must also demand: U.S. and all other imperialist forces get out of Iraq and all of the Middle East!

Currently, the Israeli terror machine may seem invincible. However, not only is there the potential for mass opposition to Western support for Israel within the imperialist countries but within Israel itself hundreds have bravely defied Nazi-like media propaganda and violent attacks from fascist thugs to protest against the onslaught on Gaza. Furthermore, contrary to the myth promoted especially by "liberal" Zionist groups that Israel is a harmonious, egalitarian society for all Jews, Israel not only murderously represses the Palestinian people but harshly oppresses many of its own citizens. African migrants are violently attacked by fascist

forces, Israeli Arabs who make up 20% of the population face systematic discrimination and there is a widening gap between rich and poor that has led to Israel having one of the highest rates of poverty amongst developed countries. All this oppression has sparked mass protests. Most notably the second half of 2011 saw hundreds of thousands of Israelis participate in huge protests against high rents, privatisation and neo-liberal policies. The protests started to be backed by workers' strikes and also involved thousands of people erecting tent cities that dwarfed the Occupy Sydney actions. A communist party must be built that can lever a component of the Jewish-

background workers angry at the effects of capitalism up to a perspective of uniting with the Palestinian people around a program of opposing the Zionist state that both enforces capitalism and subjugates the Palestinian people. Such a party would be irreconcilably opposed to Zionism - it would firmly defend the Palestinian military resistance and would stand for the right of return of all Palestinians. It would also clearly delineate itself from bankrupt Palestinian nationalism whose most prominent representative today, Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas, is a servile apologist for imperialism who cannot even bring himself to unequivocally blame Israel for the latest carnage in Gaza. The revolutionary workers party that must be built would also oppose the ideology of politically religious forces like Hamas who, whilst many members of its military wing have often courageously resisted the Zionist butchers, have an anti-secular, anti-women's rights ideology that is counterposed to liberation and thus obstructs the struggle to unite the working class.

The intense racism of Israeli society makes the perspective of uniting Jewish-background workers and the Palestinian masses difficult. Just as the relatively higher standard of living of workers in imperialist Australia relative to those in neighbouring countries generates an arrogant, racist strain within the Australian workers movement, the higher standard of living of workers of Jewish background in Israel - thanks to massive imperialist aid - relative to their Arab neighbours reinforces the exclusivist, racist

ideology that the Israeli rulers promote. On the other hand, the Palestinian masses have suffered so cruelly under the horrific Zionist occupation that it is hard for Palestinians to break from nationalism and trust any Israelis. But eventually the deepening crisis of capitalism, which is already causing rising discontent within Israel itself, will bring opportunities to break some section of the Jewish working class from Zionism and win them to championing the Palestinian struggle as an indispensable part of their own fight for liberation from capitalist decay and poverty. The impetus for this will likely come from the eruption of revolutionary class struggle in the surrounding Middle Eastern countries. The Middle East uprisings over the last few years showed the level of mass discontent with the corrupt, poverty-stricken, high unemployment status quo. However, in the case of Libya and Syria, opposition forces were quickly subordinated to the predatory interests of the Western imperialist powers and became totally reactionary. In other cases, as in Egypt and Tunisia, the uprisings led at best to steps sideways from one form of imperialist-dominated capitalism to another. What was missing in those cases was a strong political force that could split the energised toilers away from pro-capitalist opposition forces and direct the movements onto a clearly pro-working class, anti-imperialist and pro-women's rights agenda. When the working class people in Jordan, Egypt and Turkey take power in a revolutionary wave, this will bring the class question to the fore in Palestine-Israel and spur the development



Israel, mid-2011: Hundreds of thousands of Israelis take part in massive, Occupy-style protests against the lack of affordable housing and poor public services. A communist party must be built in Palestine/Israel that can lever a component of the Jewish-background workers angry at the effects of capitalism up to a perspective of uniting with the Palestinian people around a program of opposing the Zionist state that both enforces capitalism and subjugates the Palestinian people.

of a united communist party of Palestinian toilers and workers of Jewish background. The revolutionary smashing of the Zionist state would finally liberate the long suffering Palestinian people and create a necessarily secular and anti-racist workers state – one where people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds who accept socialist rule and an anti-racist society would be protected and respected.

For pro-Palestinian activists living in Australia and other imperialist countries, the main and most urgent task right now is to unite the opposition movement against the local capitalist rulers' backing for Israel with mass opposition to their own exploitation of workers and oppression of the poor. What makes it possible to motivate such struggle in Australia is the reality that many working class people are angry at the capitalist bosses for slashing their jobs after making fortunes from their workers' toil. They are seething

too because the governments that serve these exploiters are attempting to make people pay for doctor visits and to deny unemployed people under 30 access to the dole for six months a year. All this makes workers question everything the capitalist rulers do – including their foreign policy, a policy which includes fervent support for Israel. Let's also unite opposition to the Australian ruling class' backing for Israel's racist war against Palestinian people with the struggles against the Australian ruling class' own racist wars against Aboriginal people and refugees, along with its racist treatment of non-white "ethnic" and Muslim minorities. **Mobilise mass opposition to the U.S., British and Australian rulers that back Israel's tyranny! Shake the imperialist branches that hold up the Zionists' nest so that it falls and the branches themselves weaken! Down with Israel's genocidal war on Gaza!**



Palestinian men bury the bodies of members of the Abu Jamei family, who were killed in an Israeli airstrike on the southern town of Khan Younis in Gaza. At the family's home, people searching beneath the rubble left by the overnight attack counted 26 bodies, all slain by the immense Israeli killing machine which is backed both financially and morally by the U.S. and Australian imperialist ruling classes.



PROVOCATION BY VIOLENT RACISTS CRUSHED IN BRISBANE UNIONS UNITED WITH LEFTISTS & OTHER ANTI-RACISTS GOT THE JOB DONE!

The 2 May 2014 anti-fascist action brought construction workers from the CFMEU, BLF and ETU unions together with anarchists, Trotskyist Platform, Socialist Alliance and other anti-racists.

This was a taste of the power of the organised working class. It was the workers movement at its best. On 2 May 2014 in Brisbane, over a hundred construction workers from the BLF, CFMEU and ETU trade unions formed the core of a demonstration of 200 anti-racists that successfully shut down an attempted march by the fascist Australia First Party (AFP).

The violent, white supremacist AFP had planned a march in support of its larger, Greek neo-Nazi counterpart, the Golden Dawn party. However, when they showed up for their provocation they found a multiracial group of construction workers and other anti-fascists facing them down. The Queensland police, of course, came to the defence of the extreme racists. However, the cops were not able to push around this anti-racist rally the way they often do. The contingents of trade unionists embodied strength in numbers, the inherent collective ability to act in tight unison and the threat of retaliatory

industrial action if the police attacked them. As a result, despite a police line protecting the fascists, the anti-racist mobilisation was able to surround the neo-Nazis at various times.

Most construction workers appeared to be self organising, although there was at least one CFMEU organiser there. They were very well aware of what danger open Nazi organising in their own town meant for them as well as for everyone else. The construction workers, supported by other anti-fascists, made sure the Golden Dawn supporters could not march anywhere. When they managed to reach the city by car, to set up in front of the Greek consulate, the mass anti-Nazi action prevented them from doing this also. At this point, the Nazis were compelled to jump in taxis and hot-foot it out of there. Some of the fascists also ended up being taught a literally painful lesson by the construction workers. Brilliant – the workers united will never be defeated!

We congratulate all those that took part in this anti-fascist victory. Trotskyist Platform is proud to have joined the unionised construction workers, anarchists, anti-racist students and other anti-fascists in participating in this action and to have actively built the mobilisation. In the days leading up to May 2, we mass distributed a leaflet in working class suburbs in Brisbane calling for trade unionists and other anti-racists to join the action (see below).

What the union participation in the May 2 anti-fascist mobilisation was based on is the understanding that the violent racism of the likes of the AFP – incited by the “civilized” racism of the Abbott conservative government – is a threat to the unity of the working class, unity without which the workers movement cannot win strike struggles to defend their rights. In joining the May 2 anti-racist mobilisation, these trade unionists proved that they are at the forefront of the workers movement and are workers who really understand the often chanted slogan at union rallies: *The Workers United Will Never Be Defeated!* Unfortunately, there is also another, quite

opposite, consciousness that is deeply prevalent in the workers movement – a nationalist consciousness promoted by the pro-ALP union tops that portrays overseas workers as rivals for jobs with Australian workers. This Laborite ideology see the union movement using divisive slogans such as “Stop exporting Aussie jobs overseas” and “Keep out overseas guest workers.” Such slogans go against the principles of unionism and workers unity as they pit local workers against their overseas sisters and brothers. It sees one group of workers – local workers – looking to cut a separate deal with the bosses at the expense of another group of workers – overseas workers. Not only is this divisive but it harms the struggle for workers’ rights. Politically savvy trade unionists know that even if the boss at a particular workplace is using the employment of one group of especially exploited workers (like young workers) to try and undercut working conditions, it is always destructive to workers’ rights for the remaining workers to demand that the business owner favour them at the expense of the others. This only allows the boss to divide workers and distract them from the boss’ sole responsibility

for the workers’ grievances. Instead, politically advanced trade unionists know that what is needed is for all workers to unite against the capitalist boss and to demand that the conditions of the most exploited workers be brought up to that of other workers. Only this will, ultimately, stop the corporate bigwigs from undercutting workers’ rights. This applies both at a national and international level. The union movement must unite local, 457 Visa and international workers to stand up together against the capitalist exploiters both here and abroad while simultaneously demanding that the conditions of 457 Visa workers and the employees of Australian-owned corporations operating overseas be brought up to that of local workers.

The construction workers’ role in the May 2 victory pushes against the stream of divisive nationalism that the pro-ALP, current leaders of the working class pump into the workers movement. By enhancing workers’ unity across racial lines and by also giving workers greater confidence in their own power as a class, the May 2 anti-fascist action increases the workers movement’s ability to stand up to the myriad attacks it is facing today – from the anti-working class, anti-poor Abbott/Hockey budget to the developing ruling class offensive against the union movement. The fact that the capitalist rulers’ anti-union campaign is targeted in the first place against construction workers’ unions makes the May 2 anti-racist mobilisation all the more important.

The working class needs to build a new leadership that can clarify and spread the lessons of struggles such as the 2 May 2014 Brisbane mobilisation to the entire union movement. Such a workers’ party would use powerful internationalist-



May 2, Brisbane: Staunch trade unionists teach one of the violent fascists a lesson in workers’ power. The organised working class has the power and interest to decisively crush the fascists.

minded struggles such as the May 2 action to help drive out the influence of divisive Laborite nationalism from the workers movement. This would, in turn, make the working class more politically prepared to mobilise against the fascist threat. As the 2 May 2014 events in Brisbane showed, it is the organised working class that must spearhead the fight against fascism and racism. The workers movement will be at the forefront of this fight because the interests of their class demands that it be so, because their power to shut down production gives them the ability to deter police attacks against anti-racist mobilisations and because their collective toil at common workplaces gives workers a unique ability to organise and to act in disciplined unanimity. Most crucially, it will be when the working class lead all of the poor and oppressed in sweeping away the rotting capitalist system that fascism and racism can be swept away from this planet for good.

Below is reprinted the leaflet that Trotskyist Platform distributed to help build the May 2 anti-fascist mobilisation in Brisbane. The leaflet was titled, “Crush the Violent Racists’ May 2 Mobilisation! Unions United with Aboriginal People, “Ethnic” Minorities & Leftists Can Do the Job! Drive Out the Fascists from Brisbane to Athens!”



2 May 2014, Brisbane: Neo-Nazi filth cower in the face of the mass trade union centred mobilisation. The workers when truly united - and conscious of their collective class interests - can never be defeated.



Vietnamese student Minh Duong was savagely bashed in Melbourne by three Neo-Nazi skinheads in June 2012. The racist scum kicked and punched him 70 times, stabbed him, smashed a brick over his head so hard that it broke in two and then left him for dead. Fascists cannot be debated but must be crushed by mass action.

Some people may have believed that the Second World War definitively put an end to the evil of fascism. Yet on 2nd May in the heart of Brisbane, a neo-Nazi group, the Australia First Party, will hold a march in support of its larger Greek fascist counterpart, the Golden Dawn. The Australia First Party was among the extremist forces that incited the December 2005 white supremacist rampage at Cronulla Beach against Arab, Asian and other non-white people. Just three months ago, the Brisbane Australia First Party attacked the January 26 *Invasion Day* Aboriginal rights march. Members of their Golden Dawn fascist colleagues in Greece are notorious for murderous attacks on dark-skinned people, leftists and anti-racists including the January 2013 stabbing murder of Pakistani migrant Shehzad Luqman and the September 2013 murder of anti-racist rapper Pavlos Pyssas. **That the fascists plan to openly parade on 2nd May is an immediate physical threat to Aboriginal people and to the Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Islander communities of Brisbane. It will embolden every violent racist out there to commit yet more attacks – like the Neo-Nazi skinheads who in June 2012 savagely bashed Vietnamese student Minh Duong on the streets of Melbourne and left him for dead. The 2nd May fascist mobilisation is also a direct threat to the multiracial working class of Brisbane. Like Hitler and Mussolini, if fascists took power again they would exterminate real trade unions and all independent working class and leftist organisations. Yet long before they get anywhere near government, the fascists' racist violence is already threatening the workers' movement. For their actions**

sow the division, distrust and fear that is so harmful to efforts to build workers' unity – the unity that is so crucial for workers' rights struggles to succeed. The union movement must draw around itself all the intended victims of the fascists in a mass action to stop the 2nd May neo-Nazi threat. Indeed, a counter-mobilisation to the fascist march has been called and already hundreds have committed to this urgent action. Anti-fascists will gather at 11am, outside the Greek Club at 29 Edmondstone Street, South Brisbane. We call on trade unionists, Aboriginal people, Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Islander communities, Muslims, Jews, gays and lesbians and all anti-racists to be there on 2nd May to stop the fascist parade and drive the violent racists off the streets.

What is needed on 2nd May is not simply a protest against the Australia First Party and Golden Dawn but an action so overwhelming and determined that it will physically stop the fascist parade in its tracks and decisively disperse the violent racists. Fascism must be stopped! Fascism cannot be defeated by arguments or by debates or by ideological struggle alone. Because fascism uses physical force to "win" its battles, it must be confronted and overcome by a physical force that is far greater than itself. This force is the organised working class. In fact, it is the working class that has the most to lose if ultra-racist ideas take hold. In the long run, the working class is unable to win *any* gains for itself while elements of racism persist. Yet racism and fascism *can* be quashed if workers are mobilised in a disciplined and united manner.

Racism in Australia is undoubtedly being fed by the major parties in government, especially via their inhumane actions towards refugees and asylum seekers. Capitalist governments are acutely aware of their need to divide workers during a protracted recession. Such extreme racism from capitalist governments, however, can only proceed in the absence of class struggle and, particularly, in the absence of struggle led by the Trade Unions. **If the working class does not mobilise to challenge mass unemployment and social decay – and the faltering capitalist system that causes it – then masses of disillusioned unemployed and semi-employed people and struggling sections of the middle class can fall prey to fascist movements of the ilk of Golden Dawn in Greece today.**

The grotesque anti-human actions taken by fascist groups such as Golden Dawn inevitably lead to some with genuine intentions to call for Golden Dawn and/or Australia First to be banned, to have them made illegal. **We are certainly not going to get in the way of the mainstream capitalists reining in their fascists guard dogs for a while. However, we absolutely should not be making any appeals to mainstream capitalists to act against their fascist counterparts. For the masses mustn't be lulled into a false sense of security and fall into the fatal illusion that the capitalists can be trusted to keep their vicious fascist killers caged.**

In reality, they are just throwing them pieces of meat, making sure that they are ready to be truly unleashed when the need arises. If we in the workers and left movement are not ready for this and have failed to put down the fascist animals ourselves – instead, leaving these dogs' leashes in the hands of the capitalists – then, ultimately, we may well get devoured! The Australian capitalist state is itself founded on racism. It is based on the continued dispossession of the Aboriginal people of this land and racist oppression of other communities as well, most specifically seen in the barbaric treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. The capitalist state in Greece certainly has jailed some Golden Dawn leaders – but Golden Dawn continues to flourish there virtually unchecked. In fact, there are many cases where Greek police have literally stood by while Golden Dawn have beaten and assaulted immigrants and anti-fascist activists. Indeed, it is claimed that up to 60% of the police in Greece politically support Golden Dawn!

Make no mistake about it, the Australian capitalist state is no less racist and no less anti-worker than the Greek capitalist state. Here, the Australian government is leading an unremitting drive against the Union movement, in the form of Royal Commissions and page after page of anti-Union legislation stripping away workers' rights won through over a century of struggle. In Queensland

Brisbane, 2 May 2014: Trade unionists and anti-racists pursue the Australia First Party and Golden Dawn fascists.



workers and community groups have lost the right to association with any group being able to be declared “illegal” at the stroke of a pen. The capitalist state is not neutral, it will not stop the fascists and does, in fact, often enough aid them. For example, in January 2011, when anti-racists mobilised to protest against a racist mural in the Sydney suburb of Newtown, the police attacked and arrested eight anti-fascist activists. Moreover, it is the capitalist state itself which creates fascism via the corporate media and corporate politicians whipping up racist hysteria in order to distract workers from their real enemies such as the banks and mining magnates who cream obscene wealth from the labour of toiling people.

What we need to defeat the fascists is united front action. That means the broadest unity in action of the different tendencies in the workers movement and in the Left – all of whom are targets of the fascists – while at the same time each group completely maintains its own banner and program. Though we in Trotskyist Platform have sharply

differing political views to the anarchist who runs the *Slackbastard* blog and who has initiated the 2nd May counter-mobilisation to the fascist threat, we applaud the initiative he has taken and are thus actively building this action. Strong united front action can indeed stop the 2nd May fascist provocation.

If such a victory is the result of a union-centred action it will strengthen the unity of the working class, increase its confidence in its own power and encourage it to rely only on the methods of mass struggle rather than the dead end of parliament and the courts. In short, a victorious workers-centred mobilisation to crush the fascist parade on 2nd May will give a badly needed shot in the arm to the struggle to smash the capitalists’ escalating attacks on workers’ rights and their assault upon basic social services and the poor. Unite all the working class, poor, Aboriginal and “ethnic” forces in the struggle against fascism! Crush the fascists’ May 2 mobilisation!

Below Left & Bottom: Staunch, multiracial construction union workers gather at the anti-fascist counter rally in Brisbane on May 2. Sharing the conviction, expressed in a clear way in the Trotskyist Platform banner (Below Right), that the organised working class in alliance with Aboriginal people, “ethnic” minorities and anti-racists of all colours could put the racist, neo-nazi threat to flight, groups of workers streamed in from

all directions to join and, in effect, take command of the anti-fascist action. This points the way to the future and demonstrates how courageous workers can refuse to be bullied into inaction by the federal government’s lousy current anti-union drive.



MOBILISE UNITED ACTION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, TRADE UNIONS AND “ETHNIC” COMMUNITIES TO DEMAND: JUSTICE FOR TJ, JAIL FOR THE RACIST MURDERING COPS

February 2014: It’s one of the most horrific crimes imaginable: a police vehicle ramming the back wheel of a 17-year-old boy’s bicycle and sending him flying through the air to be impaled on a spiked metal fence. Ten years ago, this is exactly what happened to an Aboriginal boy called TJ Hickey after racist cops in another police vehicle chased him through the streets of Redfern. Then, violating the standard emergency procedure of sawing off the fence so that the stake could be carefully removed in hospital, police barbarically ripped TJ from the fence and threw him to the ground. Even as TJ lay bleeding, police proceeded to search him rather than immediately call for an ambulance! The next day, TJ died of his gruesome injuries.

TJ’s killing has been followed by ten years of cover up by the police, courts and various governments. In the meantime, the rate at which black people die at the hands of state authorities continues unabated. In one case in January 2012, Kwementyaye Briscoe died in Alice Springs after being taken into supposed “protective custody” for merely being drunk. Even NT coroner, Greg Cavanagh, admitted that police flung Briscoe onto a desk, left him bleeding on the ground, dragged him along the floor to his cell and failed to give him any medical treatment even though they knew he was by then in a comatose state. Their heinous actions caused Kwementyaye to die. Since 1980 over 500 Aboriginal people have died in custody.

Without any doubt, Aboriginal people cop the worst police brutality in Australia. However,

the racist authorities also target working class youth of African, Asian, Islander and Middle Eastern origin. Last June, 17 year-old Sudanese youth, Einpwi Amom was tasered by police even **when** he was handcuffed and surrounded by six cops. Einpwi’s alleged “crime” was that he had sworn at officers. When Einpwi tried to run away from them, he hit his head on the stairs of Blacktown station. He lost consciousness for two minutes only to wake finding cops brutalising – and then tasering – him. Fortunately, a friend managed to capture footage of the attack on her phone. Yet such cop brutality is all too common in working class suburbs. Even low-income white people – such as public housing tenants – can face police harassment. Indeed, the simplest Marxist analysis shows that **the main role of the police, courts, army,**

Royal Commissions, prisons and other state organs in a capitalist country is to enforce the rule of the rich, big business owners over the working class that they exploit. Although cops sometimes do catch real criminals, whenever the exploited masses stand up for their rights the police's main function becomes all too clear. Thus, in August 2012, mounted police in Melbourne violently attacked the picket lines of building workers who were struggling against the attempt of greedy tycoon Daniel Grollo's firm, Grocon, to undercut workplace safety and drive out the CFMEU union.

The racism of the police force comes directly from their role as the bully boys for the ruling class in Australia. The all important unity of the working class is constantly threatened by the bosses' divide and rule tactics in which whipping up racism plays the lead role. And the ruling class seeks to divert onto Aboriginal people and non-white "ethnic" communities the masses' frustration about the constantly declining state of social services and their day to day basics of existence. But the ruling class' oppression of Aboriginal people has an added dimension – it is aimed at perpetuating and

justifying the conquest of the first peoples of this land. Indeed, the "culture" of the police and legal system in this country is inherited from one of their major founding functions – to drive Aboriginal people from their land, to carry out murderous "expeditions" against Aboriginal people who resisted and to at various times attempt outright genocide.

Yet, despite this vicious capitalist state determination to bury the truth about TJ's murder, his family has courageously continued to demand justice. Upon every anniversary of the police crime against TJ, they and their anti-racist supporters have marched in protest. This year's 10th Anniversary March will rally at 10:30am, February 14 at the corner of George and Phillips Streets in Waterloo. Trotskyist Platform urges all our friends to join this march and to do so understanding that no justice will be granted by any benevolent act of the racist, capitalist authorities. It will have to be won by united action of all those targeted by the state that murdered TJ – Aboriginal people, militant trade unionists, ethnic minorities and the poor.

JUSTICE FOR TJ CAN STILL BE WON BY THE UNITED FORCE OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE TARGETED BY THE SAME STATE THAT MURDERED HIM



Melbourne, 2012: Police in riot gear attack strike action by members of the CFMEU construction workers union who were fighting to defend workplace safety conditions at the Myer Emporium site. The same police that unleash racist violence against Aboriginal people are the ones that attack the struggles of the working class. It is in the very interests of the workers movement to stand by their Aboriginal sisters and brothers in opposing cop terror.



14 February 2014: Trotskyist Platform participating in the march protesting the 10th anniversary of the racist police killing of TJ Hickey. The Trotskyist Platform contingent called to, 'Mobilise United Action of Aboriginal People, Trade Unions and "Ethnic" Communities to Demand: Justice for TJ Hickey, Jail for the Racist Killer Cops.'

Those running the campaign for TJ have sincerely been through every legal process in the book in their quest for justice. First, they had to bear listening to the findings of a police inquiry into TJ's death that was, as expected, a total cover up. Then the coronial inquiry was yet another whitewash. Eyewitnesses who saw TJ's bike being rammed were prevented from testifying and the bike itself was held by the police and not presented to the coroner. Then, last April, TJ's mother, Gail Hickey, and the Indigenous Social Justice Association met NSW Attorney General, Greg Smith. Smith made vague promises but ten months later nothing, of course, has happened. The state institutions have continued to cover up TJ's murder whether NSW has been administered by the ALP regime that was in power when TJ was killed or by the current conservative coalition. Federal governments have impeded justice – and will continue to do so – whether it is the Liberal/Nationals or the ALP or even the ALP/Greens who are in power. With the authorities slamming one door after another, some involved in the campaign have become demoralised and fear that justice can never be won. Instead, they think that the best that can be achieved are token gestures such as an apology from the NSW parliament. Yet what the denial of justice for TJ really proves is that justice certainly cannot be won through the current presiding strategy of the campaign. The hope that in some corner of the system there will be someone willing to stand up for justice has been dashed every step of the way. All the whitewashes demonstrate this. **Rather than appealing to state institutions, justice for victims of police brutality can**

only be won by mobilising in opposition to this state. A united opposition of all those who are ultimately in the gun sights of the racist, bosses' state. A campaign that is so uncompromising that the authorities out of fear are forced to concede justice.

Many Aboriginal people do understand that the state authorities are their enemy. This was seen in the heroic February 2004 struggle of hundreds of mainly Aboriginal youth in Redfern. In response to TJ's murder, they held back heavily armed cops in a nine hour pitched battle that resonated with and inspired oppressed people all over the world. This Redfern struggle, along with the November 2004 resistance on Palm Island (that saw up to 15% of the island rise up to burn down the police station and courthouse in response to the whitewash of the police murder of Mulrunji Doomadgee) will one day take its place alongside the heroic deeds of Pemulwuy, Yagan, Windradyne, Jandamarra and many others who led Aboriginal resistance to the colonial invaders. The heroes of Redfern and Palm Island demonstrate the courage needed to really oppose the racist, rich people's state. But to triumph today, Aboriginal resistance must also have behind it the support of "ethnic" communities (who themselves face racism), anti-racist activists and most crucially the industrial power of the organised workers movement. **Once big business owners who run the country see their profits being hurt by trade union industrial action against racist police terror then they will be forced to rein in their marauding thugs in blue.**

How the idea of working class action in defence of Aboriginal people can be made a reality was seen in the campaign in defence of Palm Island resistance hero Lex Wotton. The Sydney-based campaign simply demanded that the enemy drop all charges against Lex. It made no appeals to any state institution whatsoever to be a vehicle for justice. Instead, the movement openly appealed to the common class interests that workers have in defending Lex and in opposing state oppression of Aboriginal people. Thus the calls for the rally in the lead up to Lex's trial emphasised that:

The subjugation of Aboriginal people is an extreme form of the repression that the authorities are also unleashing against trade unionists who stand up for workers' rights. The ABCC construction industry police are spying on and intimidating CFMEU construction union members and continue to initiate jail-carrying charges against individual union activists.

Thus the movement was able to win the support of the Sydney Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). This culminated in a stop work action by all Sydney port workers on 7 November 2008, the day Lex was being sentenced by a Townsville Court. Although it was not powerful enough to stop Lex being jailed, the burgeoning movement and the MUA stop work compelled the authorities to

give Lex a notably lighter sentence than the ten years plus sentence that they had been planning.

Today, with the Abbott regime openly threatening repression against unions, especially the CFMEU, there is much potential to show workers the common interest that they have with others targeted by the bosses' state – like Aboriginal people. A strategy like the one that the campaign for Lex's freedom was waged on is what we need for the campaign for TJ. However, success will not simply depend upon what the campaign itself does. To ensure that the MUA stop work in defence of Lex is the norm rather than the exception for the union movement, we must struggle to replace the pro-ALP ideology and leadership that currently dominates our unions with a Marxist program of struggle based on opposition to this racist, capitalist state. As that struggle develops then not only will we be able to more powerfully fight for justice for TJ, Mulrunji, Eddie Murray and Brazilian student Roberto Laudisio, to sadly name but a few of the victims of racist state terror in Australia. We will eventually be able to sweep away the entire capitalist state so that not only horrific racist state crimes – like the murder of TJ – but also the incessant exploitation of long suffering workers will be but things of the past. **Justice for TJ!**



14 February 2014: TJ's mother Gail Hickey (Left) leads a large march to protest the 10th anniversary of the police murder of TJ Hickey and the ten years of racist cover-up by the police and state authorities.

FORCE BOSSES TO INCREASE HIRING AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR PROFITS!



STOP CAPITALIST JOB SLASHING THROUGH CLASS STRUGGLE

Above: On 2 January 2014, the MUA, CFMEU, CEPU, RBTU and other unions participated in important rallies in Sydney and Melbourne in support of the struggle of Korean railway workers against the privatisation of the South Korean rail network. Class struggle and internationalism is what can turn back the worldwide attacks of the capitalist classes against workers.

8 January 2014 - Billionaire Kerry Stokes has been “busy” cruising around in his luxury yacht. He is riding high. But the same can't be said for the workers whose toil made him his fortune. Last month, workers at one of Stokes' Seven Group subsidiaries, heavy machinery supplier WesTrac, were told that 630 of them would be retrenched. These workers are among tens of thousands who are being laid off across the country. Last September, Telstra announced that it was axing 1,100 workers. And this is after its owners made an obscene \$3.9 billion profit last year. Although the media like to focus on jobs lost through off-shoring, these recent Telstra cuts – like most job slashing in Australia – has little to do with that. Most of the Telstra jobs axed in this latest round are those of line maintenance technicians – hardly roles that can be off-shored. Telstra's latest profit grab is about cutting jobs by driving remaining workers harder and by reducing service quality to the public.

What has especially highlighted the jobs crisis was General Motors' announcement last month that it will axe 2900 jobs and end manufacturing in Australia in 2017. This follows Ford's announcement that it will slash 1,200 jobs and stop manufacturing here. The combined effect of the closures on parts manufacturers means that over

50,000 workers in all could lose their jobs in the automotive sector. This will not only be devastating for workers but shows the basic irrationality of capitalism in that skills built up over many decades will now be lost. And the trend of workers being ripped away from permanent jobs in unionised workplaces and dumped into insecure, casual jobs – where

The luxury yacht that Australian billionaire Kerry Stokes likes to cruise around the world in. In the previous financial year, Stokes Seven Group made a \$486 million profit. Yet in December 2013, Seven Group subsidiary, heavy machinery supplier WestTrac, announced the retrenchment of a further 630 workers. Workers' jobs are being axed to pay for the extravagant lifestyles of Kerry Stokes and the other capitalist tycoons.



workers have little chance of learning skills and enjoy minimal rights – will be all the more deepened. As usual, the car bosses have justified the layoffs by crying poor. This is a scam! The \$153 million loss that GM made last year in its Australian Holden operations – after paying for fat management salaries – is dwarfed by the \$4.9 billion profit that it made worldwide. Thus GM's owners, who include billionaire Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway which holds a \$1.4 billion portion, would only lose 3% of their profits if they kept the jobs of the soon to be axed Holden workers.

Enough is enough! It is high time for the working class and its allies to act. We cannot allow the likes of Kerry Stokes', whose Seven Group made a huge \$486 million profit last year, to get away with his firm axing jobs at its WesTrac subsidiary just so that he can suck even higher profits to buy even more extravagant mansions. We need to say to the capitalist owners: *we are simply not going to allow you to slash jobs. We are going to force you to keep employing more people than you think would be ideal for maximising your profits and you will have to wear this. And if that means you are going to have to sell one of your luxury yachts and delay buying your private jet – then tough! And if having a larger workforce means that you will be pushed to lower your prices in order to sell the extra production that a larger workforce could bring then all the better for it!*

However, the corporate bosses-loving Abbott regime sure isn't going to help us stop company owners from slashing jobs! Indeed, many in his ministry seemed to be partly happy about the crumbling of the car

industry – since they know that workers in this sector are a bastion of trade unionism and once upon a time even had a reputation for class struggle militancy. Yet whether it is the ALP, the Greens or the Palmer United Party, none of the opposition parties also ever talk of measures to make it illegal for the corporate bosses to cut jobs. Thus, while the ALP leaders would actually like to be able to appease their working class support base by campaigning to save the jobs of GM and other workers, their subservience to the capitalist "order" and its principle that business owners have the "right" to do whatever it takes to maximise their profits means that they are completely incapable of preventing the job cuts. All the ALP could propose over the crisis facing Holden workers is to offer more handouts to GM – an idea they soon dropped. For the over \$2 billion that governments handed over to the Holden bosses over the last 12 years did not stop them from axing their workers' jobs. In the end, what handouts to companies actually do is to divide workers as workers in other sectors, whose taxes in good part fund government handouts, are made to feel resentful that they are propping up workers in a particular sector when their own jobs are also on the line. Indeed, any handout to GM effectively means that workers are, in good part through their taxes, handing over tens of millions of dollars to the likes of the billionaire Warren Buffett. One is reminded of the obscene spectacle that took place in November 2008 when the heads of GM, Ford and Chrysler flew into Washington to beg the U.S. government for a bailout, all arriving in their luxurious private jets!



Workers leaving work at Toyota's Altona plant. An estimated 2500 jobs in total will be lost as a result of the closure of Toyota's assembly plants in Australia. The combined impact of the announced closures of the Holden, Ford and Toyota plants and the flow on effects to supplier firms will see up to 50,000 workers lose their jobs in the automotive sector.

IF THE CAPITALISTS CAN'T PROVIDE JOBS FOR WORKERS THEN THE ECONOMY SHOULD BE TAKEN OUT OF THEIR HANDS

Despite the nature of all the current parliamentary parties, the working class is far from powerless to stop job cuts. Strong union industrial action could force companies planning job cuts to retain their workers. For such action could compel business owners to realise that industrial action could cost them far more than the profits they will save by having a smaller workforce. The potential to stop the job cuts at Telstra and WesTrac is especially strong as not only could workers' strikes shut down their hugely profitable operations in Australia but many of the workers in these firms are union members. Moreover, solidarity action by workers at other parts of Stokes' Seven Group – including Channel 7, equipment hire company Coates Hire and lighting supplier AllightSykes – could really bulldoze his moves to bury jobs at his WesTrac subsidiary.

The situation is slightly different at Holden given GM plans to shut down its manufacturing in Australia. Yet, if Holden workers were to occupy GM plants at Elizabeth (in Adelaide) and Port Melbourne insisting that they will not allow GM to sell the billions of dollars in equipment there then these workers would find thousands of workers at supplier companies and hundreds of thousands of other sympathetic workers supporting their battle to save their jobs. However, to override GM's job slashing also requires workers at GM's profitable operations in places like South Korea and the U.S. to take solidarity action with Holden workers here. Workers at GM's South Korean subsidiaries have already waged militant struggles and although U.S. GM workers have not taken such action for years, U.S. GM plants are still among the most unionised sites in the U.S.A. In 1998, the knock-on effect from a 54 day strike by over 9,000 workers at GM's Flint component plant in Michigan ended up shutting down nearly 30 GM assembly plants and 100 components plants across the U.S. and ended up costing GM bosses nearly \$3 billion.

However, if we are going to have the struggle that we need, there needs to be a radical change in our unions. Reflecting the politics of their ALP mates in parliament, most current union leaders accept the notion that for workers' jobs to be safe, company profits must be maximised. Yet it is precisely in the drive to maximise profits that bosses are slashing jobs. The dominance of this ideology that workers' welfare depends on capitalist business success has allowed the bosses to gut workers' rights, casualise large chunks of the workforce and weaken our unions without our side putting up the resistance that could have smashed these attacks. Furthermore, the union tops' approach makes the workers movement vulnerable to bosses' threats that unless workers accept reduced conditions, profits will suffer and the bosses will be "forced" to cut jobs. This is precisely the threat that Toyota is making as they callously feed off workers fears following the Holden layoffs.

Workers at unionised workplaces will be the spearhead in the fight to defend jobs

and a powerful struggle waged by these workers could spur on the building of unions at currently non-unionised sites. However, in the struggle against job losses, we need to unite union workers with workers at currently non-unionised sites as well as with unemployed workers and with working class youth worried about their future job prospects. To build such united struggle, we should launch a campaign of industrial action and rallies to demand laws that restrict the “right” of profitable businesses to slash jobs. In waging a struggle for such demands we should have no illusions that the pro-capitalist governments will in any way be on our side. Instead, we should see our fight as being aimed at forcing concessions from the enemy – just like in the past our struggles have won laws granting certain minimum leave entitlements and maximum working hours. Among the demands that such a movement could fight for are:

- That no enterprise can retrench workers’ jobs if it or its parent company is currently making a profit.
- That no firm can slash jobs if its total profit over the previous four years exceeds the total wages of all the potentially axed workers.
- An end to and a reversal of all the draconian public sector job cuts which Liberal and ALP state governments have implemented in recent years and which Abbot’s Liberal/National Coalition want to deepen at the Federal level.

Fighting for such demands will help start to mobilise action around the truth that fighting to save workers’ jobs means forcing the bosses to wear lower profits. As a class-struggle movement for jobs develops, our demands should not stop with this. We must emphasise the demand for full employment at the capitalist bosses’ expense – through reducing the working week *with no loss in*



MUA maritime workers union leadership’s campaign for “Local Jobs” against overseas labour on local shipping. Such divisive campaigns set local workers against their overseas sisters and brothers and undermine the necessary workers’ unity needed to defeat “multinational” corporate bosses through class struggle. The unions should instead focus the struggle on fighting for overseas workers to get the same wages and conditions as local workers and should unite all workers in industrial action to force the capitalist exploiters to cede improved conditions and more jobs for all.

workers’ wages to the level needed to spread the available work around among all those who want to work.

As we fight for such demands, the capitalists will howl that this will drive them out of business – just as they do every time workers call for a pay rise. To this we must respond: *if you cannot operate enterprises in a way that provides jobs for workers then you should not own these enterprises. They need to be ripped from your hands and brought into public ownership so that production can be planned to provide jobs for all and to utilise all available labour to serve society.* However, not only are all current parliamentary parties thoroughly hostile to this idea of confiscating the factories, banks, transport systems and mines from the capitalists, any party that in the future attempted to do so would face fierce resistance from the judiciary, police,

June 30: Workers at Woolworths Distribution Centre in Warnervale (in NSW’s Central Coast) take strike action after the company issued many warnings for workers “taking too much time between jobs”. A program of industrial action is needed to defend workers’ jobs and to fight to force the capitalist bosses to accede to hiring more workers at the expense of their bloated profits.



army and top echelons of the bureaucracy. For the current state apparatus has unbreakable, generations-old connections to the rich capitalist elite. That is why for our struggles to triumph, they must culminate in the working class leading all of the oppressed

in a revolutionary movement to sweep away the current capitalist state and to build a new workers state that will implement a socialist system – a system based on people’s common ownership of the economy.

THE WORKERS UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED: TURNING THE SLOGAN INTO A REALITY

Key to unlocking the necessary fight back is to expose any illusions that local workers’ jobs can be protected through collaborative schemes with the bosses. Today, manufacturing union heads run a “Make it Here Or Jobs Disappear” campaign that appeals for government support for manufacturing firms and protectionist laws to favour local firms over overseas producers. Yet, the experience with Holden proves how little handouts to companies actually guarantee jobs. Protectionist measures don’t save jobs either for just as one country can take measures to protect its own firms, other countries can do the same. In the end all that protectionist appeals do is to set workers in different nations against each other while their greedy bosses - happy that workers are divided and looking out for the interest of their “own” firms rather than uniting against the bosses internationally – are left laughing all the way to the bank.

Yet, despite the failure of protectionist appeals to save jobs, most union leaders continue to make such calls because they fear the alternative: a strategy based on hard-fought industrial action. About the only time that most union leaders are taking any stand against job losses is if these layoffs are the result of off-shoring. The capitalist exploiters indeed do seek out lower paid labour they can find overseas just as they seek to replace workers here with lower-paid youth. However, our response to off-shoring should not be to counterpose the interests of local workers to their overseas comrades. That only serves to undercut the global workers’ unity that we so badly need if we are to defeat job slashing by multinational corporate giants like Rio Tinto, Ford and GM, all of which have operations in many countries. Instead, we should say: *we are happy if our working class comrades overseas get new jobs but there should be absolutely no job cuts locally. Furthermore, when a firm sets up a new operation in any country, we will fight for those workers to get the same conditions as the best paid workers at any of the firm’s global operations.* Yet, instead of such an approach, Laborite union leaders promote divisive slogans like “Stop Aussie Jobs Going Overseas!” Similarly, instead of uniting the struggle of local workers with 457-Visa workers in the fight to defend the conditions of all workers, the current line of

most union leaders is to make the divisive call to “Keep Out Guest Workers.”

We can see how campaigns that pit local workers against their overseas counterparts play out when we look at the results of the July 2012 “Local Workers First” rally in Perth. The trigger for the rally were moves by greedy billionaire Gina Rinehart and the likes of Rio Tinto to bring in overseas labour for their projects. Yet, when this same Rio Tinto announced last November that it was axing 1,100 jobs – including those of many Aboriginal workers – at its Gove alumina refinery in the NT, union leaders failed to organise any serious opposition. They could mobilise nearly 10,000 people to march for the blatantly divisive demand that Australian workers’ jobs be put ahead of those of overseas workers yet when capitalists are actually slashing Australian workers’ jobs in a move that had nothing to do with bringing in overseas workers, the union officials concerned didn’t want to organise any resistance at all. **By channelling local workers concerns about their jobs into opposition to overseas workers, pro-ALP bureaucrats have diverted workers from the struggle that is actually needed – the one against the job-slashing exploiters.**

Furthermore, consider what the July 2012 Perth rally means for potential efforts to save jobs in the automotive sector. Among the guest workers being rebuffed by the “Local Workers First” campaign are Korean workers. Yet, workers in South Korea’s GM plants are key to any struggle to stop job losses at Holden, not only because South Korea is where GM’s profits could seriously be hurt by solidarity strikes with Holden workers but because currently South Korean workers are much more willing to take action against their bosses than Australian workers are. Last month, rail workers in South Korea courageously faced down violent police attacks in a weeks long anti-privatisation struggle that triggered massive solidarity rallies by other workers. Yet, *how in hell* are Korean workers going to be convinced to risk their jobs to support their Australian sisters and brothers at Holden when they see Australian workers marching to put Australian workers ahead of overseas workers?

The influence of Laborite nationalism is so insidious that even many left wing groups like Socialist Alternative (*Socialist Alternative*, 3 July 2012) and the Communist Party of Australia (*The Guardian*, 11 July 2012) hailed the July 2012 “Local Workers First” rally. To be sure, these groups sought to distance themselves from the most jingoistic aspects of the rally. Yet, no matter in how cleansed a form they present it, as the rally’s main banner slogan “WA Kids Miss Out When Miners Use Overseas Workers” made all too clear, this is a poisonous campaign that pits local workers against their overseas comrades. It is a complete violation of the main call of *The Communist Manifesto*, which all nominally Marxist groups claim to stand on, “Workers of All Countries Unite.” It is not that there are no healthy feelings of solidarity toward overseas workers amongst sections of the Australian working class. After all, on January 2, officials of the MUA, CFMEU and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union held a rally outside the South Korean Consulate in solidarity with Korean rail workers. Yet what is needed is not only

a show of solidarity but Australian workers truly **standing as one** with their overseas comrades. As *The Communist Manifesto* stresses:

The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality

That means just as at an individual workplace one group of workers should not ask the boss to favour them at the expense of other workers, workers in one country should not ask capitalists to favour them at the expense of their overseas comrades.

Trotskyist Platform works to contribute to the building of union leadership that will be based on *The Communist Manifesto*’s principles. We do, of course, understand that capitalists hire guest workers in order to drive down wages. Yet, we maintain that this should be entirely met by union demands for guest workers to be given the same wages as the best paid local workers, to be given citizenship rights and to be fully unionised *and not at all* by divisive demands to “keep out guest workers.” If you understand that the only way to protect jobs is by struggle against job-slashing bosses then you will do everything to **build workers unity – without which struggles are doomed to failure**. That is why our unions must also oppose racist scapegoating of Aboriginal people, refugees and “ethnic” communities which is used by the exploiting class to divert workers’ anger away from the true source of their problems – the corporate bigwigs. Kerry Stokes epitomises how the capitalists use such methods. Although Stokes likes to present himself as an enlightened person – all the better to promote his Asian business interests – the Channel 7 station that he owns churns out a stream of hostile stereotyping against the likes of refugees. How better for Kerry Stokes to divert workers at his WesTrac subsidiary from the fact that it is his greed that is the sole cause of the job cuts there!

The class struggle leadership of the unions that needs to be built must be linked to a revolutionary party that will organise the workers struggle in all political arenas. Such

a party would draw around the class struggle all those downtrodden by capitalism – from Aboriginal people suffering terrible racism, to “ethnic” youth, to working class youth facing joblessness and to low-income women and single mothers facing hostile stigmatisation and enforced poverty. We badly need such a struggle against capitalism. For capitalism has proven that it cannot guarantee workers’ livelihoods and periodically falls into crises that bring untold suffering – like the Great Depression of the 1930s and the recent Great Recession that has ravaged the masses in Europe, America and the rest of the capitalist world. If workers here did not suffer the same unemployment level during this recent crisis it is only because the Australian economy was saved by surging exports to socialistic China’s

booming state-owned steel and energy producers. Yet China’s ruling Communist Party is moving that country to focus more on services and high-end manufacturing – that is, to an economy that will need smaller increases in imports of Australian iron ore and liquefied gas. This means that when the inevitable, next capitalist crisis hits or if this one lingers for much longer, even socialistic China will not be able save the Australian economy. Unless we reject the capitalists’ “right” to sack workers whenever their profits demand it, as part of beginning to challenge their whole system, we will end up here with the catastrophic situation that our working class sisters and brothers in Greece and Spain face right now – where three out of every five young workers is unemployed.

FORCE THE RULING CLASS TO HOLD BACK THEIR COPS FROM KILLING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE – UNLEASH UNION/BLACK ACTION! PALM ISLAND ABORIGINAL HERO LEX WOTTON JOINS BRISBANE G20 PROTESTS

Below Left: More than 500 people withstood over 40 degree heat in Brisbane on November 14 to rally against Aboriginal deaths in custody, including Lex Wotton (Below Right) who addressed the demonstration proudly saying, “I don’t regret what happened to myself, and for what I did... it made me stronger, it made me who I am today... anything I can do to be a part of change, for the struggle for our rights, I’m always there.” The protest was held just 12 days before the 10th anniversary of the heroic Palm Island resistance action in 2004 when hundreds of Aboriginal residents of the island responded to the brutal killing of Mulrunji Doomadgee at the hands of Police Sergeant Chris Hurley by burning down the local courthouse, police station, Hurley’s home and police barracks. Wotton was arrested and, accused by the authorities of leading the resistance action, he faced up to 14 years in jail. However, a defiant working class-centred campaign was organised in his defence arguing that the very same deadly, racist, state power arrayed against Aboriginal people also lines up ready to bash unionists on picket lines when they stand up to fight for workers’ rights. This campaign culminated with a sharp, short stopwork action on the docks of Sydney by members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) timed to coincide with the sentencing of Wotton on 7 November 2008. As a result of this working class pressure on the state, Lex received a relatively light sentence and was released after two years. Nevertheless, any kind of sentence was a travesty against the inspirational Aboriginal leader.



FREEDOM FOR THE REFUGEES!

NO TO OFFSHORE OR ONSHORE DETENTION!

BUILD A PRO-WORKING CLASS REFUGEE RIGHTS MOVEMENT



The late Reza Berati. The 24 year-old Kurdish asylum seeker was murdered in Australia's immigration detention hellhole in PNG's Manus Island by Australian and PNG detention centre guards and at least one Salvation Army employee.

20 March 2014 - Thousands of people have protested in recent weeks against the Abbott regime's brutal war on refugees. The latest atrocity to spark protest was a rampage against refugees by guards at Australia's Manus Island detention centre in PNG. On February 17, these guards unleashed murderous violence. Backed up by PNG police - who like other state institutions in Papua New Guinea are

largely subservient to Australian imperialism - they attacked the detainees with sticks and machetes, murdering 24 year-old Kurdish asylum seeker, Reza Berati, and injuring 77 other refugees.

The recent large pro-refugee rights rallies have brought out a wide variety of people. Many are youth passionately opposed to racism. Some are small-l liberals who see the cruelty against refugees as a blot on the copybook of an otherwise fair society. Yet the despicable treatment of refugees is actually typical of the record of capitalist Australia - from genocidal terror against this country's first peoples to the anti-Chinese pogroms of the late 1800s and right through to the 2005 white supremacist riot at Cronulla Beach. Indeed, just three days before the Manus Island rampage, supporters of slain Aboriginal youth TJ Hickey marked ten years of the cover up of his murder by racist police in Redfern. The previous week, one of the four police officers who were surrounding an Aboriginal woman, Sheila Oakley, in her own home south of Brisbane, barbarically fired a taser straight into her eye and blinded it.

The Coalition's war on refugees is naked. Scott Morrison and Tony Abbott rant hardline refugee bashing speeches. ALP politicians have made some criticisms of Morrison's lies about the Manus events. But, in case anyone thought that the ALP was considering shifting its own racist policy, ALP immigration

spokesman, Richard Marles, made his party's stance all too clear:

"We cannot afford for the Manus Island detention facility to fall over."

"It is the cornerstone of Australia's strategy in terms of reducing the flow of boats from Indonesia."

Indeed, it was the Keating ALP government that first introduced mandatory detention in 1992. And let's not forget that the Rudd government *Version 2.0* introduced the extreme policy of sending all refugee arrivals to the Manus hellhole. **The ALP leaders have as much of the blood of Reza Berati on their hands as does the right wing Coalition!**

There are some within Labor ranks that do oppose aspects of the war on refugees. However, **the ALP leadership fully embraces anti-refugee racism because that flows naturally from their support for the capitalist order** - a system of exploitation that necessarily compels the ruling class to promote racism in order to *divide* and *divert* the working class people that they exploit and thus prevent the exploited masses from rising up against them. Today, as the ultra-rich bosses intensify their

attacks on workers' unions and savagely slash jobs - from WesTrac to Holden to Qantas - they and their hounds in government are intensifying the scapegoating of refugees and migrants. That's why if the working class is going to be able to focus its own against the powerful capitalist enemy then it must actively challenge racist scapegoating of refugees. **Mobilise trade union power to demand: Close all the detention centres! Residency with full citizenship rights for all refugees and migrants imprisoned in Manus Island, Christmas Island, Villawood and everywhere else!**

Importantly, at recent pro-refugee actions there has been a presence from some unions including the MUA, Teachers Federation and ASU. This now needs to be urgently converted from the presence of a small number of officials to the actual mass mobilisation of union ranks - thereby laying the basis for actual industrial action. Because striking workers can bring industrial production to a standstill, the working class has the power to defeat all the schemes of the racist, rich ruling class. But how can mass union support be achieved? It is not simply a matter of lobbying union officials. To be able to win significant union support, we must convince the most active layers of the unions that defending refugee rights is an important part of bolstering the union's very ability to resist the greedy bosses. That means **pro-refugee demonstrations need to feature slogans in their rally leaflets that clearly point out how defending refugees is crucial for strengthening workers' unity across racial lines and achieving the kind of solidarity that can lead to the defeat of the powerful capitalist bosses.** The refugee rights movement must bring together the fight for refugee rights with the struggle for workers emancipation into one, unbeatable whole.

However, the current refugee rights groups like the Refugee Action Coalition (RAC) do not have this perspective. RAC has, indeed, worked tirelessly to expose the crimes against refugees. And the left wing groups that dominate RAC like Solidarity, Socialist Alliance (SA) and Socialist Alternative (SALT) certainly do believe in lobbying unions. However, these groups refuse to make appeals to workers' class interests part of official rally slogans

because they fear alienating pro-capitalist small-l liberals and Greens. And although there are some differences among the leftist groups within RAC - for example, SALT believe in using the "Fu_k" word in chants while SA are less keen to do so - all these groups ultimately pander to the upper and upper-middle class liberals and Greens by refusing to make RAC actions explicitly pro-working class. They would argue that this is necessary to maintain a "broad" movement. But, in the end, **because the interests of the corporate bosses and the working class are in direct opposition, you can only either appeal to one class or the other.** By refusing to openly appeal to workers' class interests, the current refugee rights movement is cutting off the chance of broadening support for refugees amongst the working class. And it is the organised working class and not well-heeled, small-l liberals or two-faced mainstream politicians that has the consistent interest and power to defeat the war on refugees.

Many refugee rights activists have illusions in the Greens who, after all, are the one parliamentary party that at least speaks out against aspects of the war on refugees. However, the flakiness of the Greens' commitment to refugee rights was demonstrated all too clearly when it jumped into a coalition with the Gillard ALP government without demanding even the slightest commitment from that government to ease its war on refugees. The Greens' inability to offer real solutions flows from their middle class refusal to stand unequivocally for workers class interests against those of the capitalist bosses. Thus, in Tasmania, as part of the recently deposed governing coalition with the ALP, the Greens openly supported the anti-worker privatisation of electricity distribution. This refusal to stand for class struggle solutions leaves the Greens coughing up divisive nationalist "solutions" instead. In fact, the Greens are the most hardline of all major parties in whipping up hysteria over foreign ownership of land (see <http://www.greens.org.au/land-ownership>). Although such Greens jingoism is not directly aimed against asylum seekers, it definitely feeds into the poisonous national chauvinism that inevitably rebounds against asylum seekers who are, after all, in essence the most vulnerable section of migrant Australia.

The 17 February 2014 rampage by detention centre guards at Australia's immigration detention centre on Manus Island sparked mass protests. The horrific riot by the guards included their murder of asylum seeker Reza Berati. The policy of detaining all asylum seekers arriving by sea offshore and denying them the chance of settlement in Australia was first implemented by the previous Rudd ALP government and is being continued by the current right wing Coalition government.



MOBILISE TRADE UNION POWER IN DEFENCE OF REFUGEES

The struggle to mobilise the workers movement behind refugees depends not only on what the refugee rights movement does. It also depends, crucially, on there being a union leadership that is prepared to stand strongly against racism. Some union officials have come out in support of refugee rights but this is undercut by the overall union leadership's subordination to the refugee-bashing ALP. Like their ALP mates in parliament, most of the union bureaucracy bows down to the capitalist order. They reject militant industrial action. In response to job slashing, they call for government assistance for local corporations and protectionist measures against overseas producers. In response to the bosses' exploitation of 457 Visa workers, our union leaders - instead of fighting to win our guest worker sisters and brothers the same conditions as local workers and full citizenship rights - divisively call for local workers to be put ahead of their 457 Visa comrades.

Not only do such policies fuel xenophobic nationalism, they damage the workers' unity that is needed to fight for workers rights. What the working class so badly needs is a leadership that's prepared to unleash union power to force greedy bosses to retain jobs at the expense of their profits, all as part of a broader workers' fightback against the capitalist exploiters. And any union activist who is serious about mobilising industrial action knows that a successful strike depends, above all, on workers' unity and a clear understanding of who the enemy is (*the bosses and their hacks in government*) and who the enemy definitely is not (*migrant workers and refugees*). That is why we communists insist that the fight against racism is crucial to the struggle for workers' rights. Indeed, with the ruling class on an anti-union offensive - highlighted by the Abbott government's Royal Commission against the unions -

opposing the ruling class' strategy to divert the masses frustrations onto asylum seekers and 457 Visa workers is actually a life and death question for the union movement itself.

Despite being concerned for the welfare of asylum seekers, bourgeois liberal elements in the refugee rights movement know (while middle class elements *think*) that they have

The tent "accommodation" on Manus Island where the Australian regime cruelly imprisons asylum seekers.



too much to gain living under a capitalist system. Too much to ever commit to a full frontal attack against the very system that transports asylum seekers to hellhole camps on Nauru and Manus Island. On the other hand, workers have long had an axe to grind with the Australian capitalist state. For the system has been set up to ensure that the yoke of exploitation remains permanently fixed around the broad, many coloured shoulders of the Australian working class. A powerful, united, multi-ethnic workers' front is what's needed to finally shake this yoke off. But first the insidious, divisive racism that pits worker against worker, all in the name of profits and dividends for the greedy bosses and shareholders, must be well and truly cast off. The refugee rights

movement can assist in the formation of an anti-racist, class-struggle union leadership by ensuring that its slogans appeal directly to the interests that workers have in defending asylum seekers. In turn, the refugee rights struggle urgently needs union power behind it. Otherwise the spirited refugee rights rallies that are taking place, while useful in energising new layers of support, will not be able to stop a determined and rampaging ruling class. So let's ensure that the refugee rights movement unashamedly proclaims its solidarity with the working class by saying: **"Don't let the bosses and politicians divide and divert workers with racism! Make our unions stronger - Build workers unity - Fight for refugee rights!"**



On 4 September 2014, refugee rights supporters held a protest in solidarity with Iranian asylum seeker, Hamid Kehazaei outside Brisbane's Mater Hospital. The 24 year-old had been pronounced brain dead by doctors at the hospital three days earlier. Imprisoned at the Manus Island immigration detention centre, he cut his foot and developed septicemia which led to his death. This highly preventable tragedy was due to the hellish conditions at the Manus Island detention centre, the lack of proper medical facilities there and criminal neglect by the detention centre authorities.



Blacktown, western Sydney: One of the Trotskyist Platform placards at the November 2013 protest against racist police violence that reads: 'Police brutalise working class "ethnic" youth, kill Aboriginal people in custody and attack trade union picket lines. Let's unite trade unionists, Aboriginal people and "ethnic" youth in mass struggle against state terror.' Photo: Jaroslaw Gasiorek

RACIST COP ATTACK ON TEEN GATHERS PROTESTERS OUTSIDE POLICE STATION

Above Right: 20 June 2013, Blacktown station, western Sydney: Barbarism! Racist police taser Sudanese-born teenager Einpwi Amom even as he was already in handcuffs and surrounded by six cops.
Above Left: 24 November 2013 protest in Blacktown, western Sydney against police brutality.

Up to 75 people gathered on 24th November 2013 outside Blacktown police station to protest against an horrific act of police brutality perpetrated against a teenager of Sudanese background. On 20th June 2013 a cop – surrounded by 6 others in an all too typical, cowardly and over the top racist cop attack – brutally tasered an already handcuffed young man. Concerned Blacktown community members, leftists and the Sudanese community energetically and spiritedly participated at the protest denouncing police brutality. This particular tasing of a teenager follows a pattern of already rampant racist police violence, violence against working class people and, especially, attacks on Aboriginal people.

That day at Blacktown train station, high school student Einpwi Amom, 17 at the time, harmlessly called out to his cousin to “hurry the F up.” Unfortunately for Einpwi, a police officer who must have been feeling particularly aggressive that day alarmed the teenager by shouting back at him. Scared, Einpwi began to run away but, as the now rampaging police officer gave chase, Einpwi tripped down the station stairway and fell head first onto the hand railing, knocking himself out. CCTV footage shows the boy lying motionless and seemingly lifeless on the stairs while a cop runs over to him and, failing to check on his condition, drags his motionless and unconscious body down the stairs like a sack of potatoes. He then, outrageously, proceeded to handcuff the unconscious boy. Einpwi lies subdued on the ground with his arms and legs are twisted around by the cops. As he regains consciousness he wriggles a bit, as you naturally would if you suddenly discovered that you were being manhandled

by so many cops. Still squirming and in handcuffs and surrounded by 6 cops, one officer proceeds to taser him. Afterwards, police are seen on phone footage dragging him through the train station by his arms as Einpwi is unable to even stand let alone walk. He is shouting loudly in pain.

The cops, after brutalising the teenager this way, then had the audacity to rap the young man with 6 charges: failing to comply with direction, offensive language, resisting a police officer in the course of duty and 3 counts of assaulting a police officer. Not only was Einpwi brutalised and tortured but the merciless police were determined to ruin a young man’s life and cage him in prison.

So outrageously barbaric was this case against darkskinned Einpwi Amom that even Parramatta Children’s Court, an unfair capitalist rich people’s institution which is itself no stranger to locking up coloured working class children, was pressured to

dismiss all charges and exonerate Einpwi as innocent.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Sudanese community in Australia called for the cops involved in the incident to be charged with assault.

Still the police have refused to even apologise and maintain their position on the use of the taser on that day. Needless to say, the cops have not paid any compensation to Einpwi or his family for their heinous actions.

Notably, this incident of excessive police force and tasing follows Brazilian student, Roberto Laudisio Curti, being tasered to death in March 2012 in the very middle of downtown Sydney.

But why are the cops so cowardly in their attacks on dark skinned minorities like the Sudanese youth Einpwi? Trotskyist Platform knows through our work and campaigns in Western Sydney young members of the Sudanese and Somalian as well as other sections of the African community and they tell us that police harassment against family and friends occurs on a frequent basis. The reason why police here are so brutal and racist is because, historically, Australia is a country founded on colonialist land theft from Aboriginal people that has spread the myth and horrible racist lie that just because of the colour of their skin Aboriginal people were not really part of the human race, let alone equal to the white invaders. In order to take this vast rich land away from the first peoples Australia’s capitalist rulers needed a racist lie to justify committing horrific acts of genocide, brutal acts that have continued up until today. Though only recently the practice of putting Aboriginal people into prison-like missions by the authorities has ceased, the population of Aboriginal

people in actual prisons continues to grow way out of proportion to the relative size of the Aboriginal community in Australia. As the enforcers of the dispossession of the Aboriginal people based on vicious racist lies, the police have committed the most horrific racist crimes and, thus, are the most deeply imbibed with the white supremacist ideology of the ruling class.

This system and ideology of colonialism and capitalism stole so much land from the Aboriginal people which can be used for agriculture and industry. Thus, we see the battered social conditions Aboriginal people suffer under today. Meanwhile, many migrants of Sudanese, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Chinese and Indian background are doing it tough working in low paid, labourious and dangerous jobs while unemployment, especially for the youth, is very high as well because of racism. As the force that maintains this racist and exploitative status quo, the police force is naturally a breeding ground for the most stridently racist and anti-poor sentiments. Furthermore, the police, courts and state institutions in general defend the ruling class: the same ruling class that through the media they control uses poisonous racist scapegoating of Aboriginal people, refugees and non-white migrant communities to divert the anger of the masses away from the exploiters. But the capitalist enforcers, as upholders of an order that spreads racist capitalist ideology, not only especially attack working class non-white people but even target wealthier dark-skinned or Asian people.

Though it is, notably, the minority, migrant and ethnic communities who are downtrodden by the worst oppression, all working class people be they black, yellow, or white ultimately find themselves in the

same boat together as members of the same oppressed class. When workers are united – and all pathetic petty bickering between fellow workers in racist ways is ended – it gives workers the necessary united power that can triumph over the capitalist bosses that exploit us. That is why it is in the interests of the trade union movement to mobilise its social power to defend Aboriginal, African, Middle Eastern, Asian and Islander youth who are targeted by racist police. We need mass actions of trade union contingents alongside Aboriginal and “ethnic” communities to oppose the racist police violence.

At the 24th November rally outside the Blacktown police station, one protester brought a placard that read “You’re a service not a force”.

But who do the police actually serve? The police under the current system today serve the ultra-rich and company owning class of people. The police may from time to time arrest a cruel murderer or rapist and here or there may stop an act of violence when it suits them but they are also at the core of a state whose laws exist to serve the ultra-rich class of capitalist rulers and the system of private property that underpins their rule. In other words these police don’t really serve the working class masses. For example, just earlier this year, a trade union that represents workers in the construction, forestry, energy and mining industry called the CFMEU, was

sued through the rich people’s courts around 1 million dollars for a series of protests and strikes. Notably, in Melbourne, police used their horses and almost trampled protesting unionists who were fighting for greater workplace safety and union rights. Moreover, CFMEU construction union activists are subject to the Gestapo-like secret police snooping and persecution of the *so called* Fair Work Australia regime. The present day courts and police do not serve the interests of the working class people: this system enables the rich ruling class to steal even more from the working people and attack the more militant unions like the CFMEU.

Other protesters at the Blacktown demonstration angrily shouted at police as they tried to appeal to their moral senses. Some protesters thought that you can appeal to the courts and the cops to be nicer. This is an utterly futile, false and vain hope. Wouldn’t it be great if we could just simply and politely ask police to be nicer? Unfortunately, the reality is that the police and courts today are pitted against the interests of the working class. Notoriously, the capitalist state’s henchmen go hard on racial minorities. They are also known to kick sole parent mother families onto the street when they can’t pay the rent and cops attack picket lines set up by workers when standing up against poverty-causing mass sackings. The police and the courts, today, are inherently unjust. This is, ultimately, seen in their enforcement of this

February 2014, Logan, Queensland: Aboriginal woman Sheila Oakley heads a protest rally. She had been blinded in one eye after police outrageously tasered her in her own home.



entire capitalist system of exploitation of the working class. We, therefore, cannot appeal to the police and courts to be less oppressive as oppression of workers constitutes – in a very real sense – their very *bread and butter*.

So what are we going to do about unjust police acting in such a blatantly racist and discriminatory manner?

At the protest Trotskyist Platform took along placards that variously read:

“Down with racist police terror against Aboriginal, African, Asian, Islander, and Middle Eastern origin youth.”

“Police brutalise working class ‘Ethnic’ youth, kill Aboriginal people in custody and attack trade union picket lines. Let’s unite trade unionists, Aboriginal people, and ethnic youth in mass struggle against state terror”

“Don’t allow business as usual for police and other state institutions while they are unleashing terror – Oppose them with mass actions backed by working class power!”

“Don’t trust any inquiries run by the racist rich people’s state! Let’s just demand the jailing of the cops who assaulted and tasered Einpwi Amom!”

In our placards we appeal to working class unionists, the multi-racial working class and all racially oppressed segments of Australia to unite against the capitalist system’s state terror.

As we have seen, it is not just African people but Aboriginal, Middle Eastern, Asian and unionists who are also affected by police harassment and targeting. Indeed, this is a broader class issue: the racially oppressed are some of the most repressed but all working class people be they black, white, yellow or brown, all working class people are subjugated by this capitalist system.



Relatives of Sheila Oakley and other demonstrators hold up Trotskyist Platform placards at a protest in February 2014 outside the Logan police station in south Brisbane. The rally protested against the brutal taserings of Sheila Oakley by Queensland police which left her, tragically, blind in one eye.

Social-Democratic pacifism and trying to win cops over is a dead end. We need to win the multi-racial working class masses and union contingents to take action to stop racist capitalist police brutality. This strategy must be part of a perspective to change the system as a whole through building and educating towards a revolutionary change through mass working class struggle.

In the end for any real change, a new system would need to be set up and the old system swept away in a massive radical upsurge in the working class. The new system would be loyal to the interests of the working class masses and not the rich exploiters. The industries and land would need to be publicly owned under a socialist economy. Such a system would have full employment and free housing which will result in creating a harmonious and cooperative society and this, in essence, will eradicate the savage basis of racism: that is, competition over scarce resources. Such a system would need to create a new type of working class people’s police, working class people’s court and working class people’s army that will not repress minorities or the working class toilers but will defend a socialist society. Defend it in its evolution towards a truly egalitarian and classless society. All comrades that understand this have a duty to be active in their unions uniting workers to a revolutionary and internationalist understanding. Active in helping build the mass struggle alongside all our sisters and brothers amongst the ranks of the poor and oppressed. Active in helping build the victorious working class party of the future.



Opposite page: Dead civilians in Luhansk City in eastern Ukraine following an airstrike on the rebel region by the Ukrainian Air Force. Ukraine's brutal war on the Donbass region has killed hundreds of civilians.

**THE MAIN ENEMY ARE THE CAPITALIST RULERS AT HOME
LIFT WESTERN SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA!
DOWN WITH NATO/AUSTRALIAN MEDDLING IN UKRAINE!
ABBOTT & SHORTEN USE UKRAINE
PLANE TRAGEDY TO PROMOTE
SUPPORT FOR AUSSIE IMPERIALISM
DEFEND THE JUST STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE DONBASS!
FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY UNITY OF THE
UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN WORKING CLASS!**

September 22 - On July 16, an Israeli military attack killed four boys between the ages of 9 and 11 as they played soccer on a Gaza beach. This was a horrific crime all too typical of the Israeli military. In its July and August assault on Gaza, they killed 2,133 Palestinians, overwhelmingly civilians and nearly 500 of whom were children. Yet Israel's genocidal assault has been supported by the Australian government. Prime Minister Abbott and Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, have refused to even condemn the killing of Palestinian children. Indeed, the day after the murder of the Palestinian children playing on the beach, Bishop issued a press release blaming Hamas for the war and outrageously praising Israel for its supposed determination to accept a ceasefire. So when the powerful and sophisticated Israeli military carries out incessant attacks on Gaza that they know are mostly killing Palestinian civilians, the Australian regime and much of the mainstream media excuse this as self-defence.

Yet when on the very same day as that Bishop press release, Malaysian Airline flight MH17 was tragically shot down over eastern Ukraine, the Australian government, without any credible evidence whatsoever, unleashed aggressive language that blamed Russian-speaking rebels in eastern Ukraine and their Russian backers for deliberately downing the civilian aircraft. Abbott rushed to declare, "These were innocent people going about their lives and they have been wantonly killed by Russian-backed rebels using probably, quite possibly equipment supplied by [Russia]." Later he followed this up with further shrill denunciations. Abbott screamed that Russia was a "bully" and ranted that Ukraine has been "subject to active destabilisation and indeed outright invasion from Russia." Now, the Liberal-National Party regime has implemented further sanctions on Russia and has announced that it is considering supplying the hard right Ukrainian regime with "non-lethal" military assistance.

The shooting down of MH17 was, indeed, a horrible human-made tragedy that took the lives of 298 innocent passengers and crew. Among the dead were 193 Dutch people, 43 Malaysians (including popular actress Shuba Jay) and 37 Australian residents (some of whom were citizens of overseas countries.) Six of those tragically killed in the crash were delegates on their way to the 20th International AIDS Conference in Melbourne. Yet not only is it not clear who shot down the aircraft, current indications of who was responsible actually point away from the Donbass-based rebels. Now, it is of course possible that the rebel forces representing Russian-speaking people seeking self-rule for the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine could have shot down the aircraft by mistake, thinking it was a Ukrainian military plane. Let us assume for a moment that the wild and completely unsubstantiated accusations of the Western rulers turn out to be correct and a rebel missile did, indeed, bring down the Malaysian airliner. Then there is certainly negligence involved in not properly checking to ensure that the targeted aircraft was not a civilian airliner. However, far, far greater criminal negligence would then fall on the part of the aviation authorities and the greedy capitalist airline bosses who, to save fuel costs, continued to authorise flights over a dangerous war zone where military aircraft have already been shot down by surface to air missiles. If the Donbass resistance were, in fact, the ones who brought down the plane, it is absolutely certain that the shooting of the plane would have been a case of mistaken

identity as they could have gained no military advantage from downing a Malaysian civilian airliner and would have, indeed, suffered a massive propaganda blow from it. Although they would still be guilty of negligence, there is a massive, absolutely enormous difference between this and the deliberate terrorist shooting down of a civilian airliner which Obama, Abbott and other Western rulers have deceitfully implied was the case. Later, we shall address the question of who, ultimately, has the most responsibility for the airline tragedy even if it was after all the Donbass rebels that fired the shots.

Yet, it is far, far from certain or even probable that the Donbass rebels did bring down the airliner. For one, there has been no tangible evidence that Russia or anyone else supplied the Donetsk rebels with the BUK-M1 surface to air missile that Western and Ukrainian rulers say brought down the Malaysian plane. Previously, the rebels had never even used such a missile. The Ukrainian military planes that they had earlier destroyed were all shot down at much lower altitude with another less advanced missile system. That system is incapable of shooting down an aircraft flying at 33,000 feet which is the altitude that the Malaysian airliner was flying at. Indeed, a group of retired U.S. intelligence officers from the CIA, FBI, U.S. Army and other agencies are so concerned that the unsubstantiated claims by the U.S. government are harming U.S. interests that they released an open memorandum to Obama stating that:

Twelve days after the shoot-down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, your administration still has issued no coordinated intelligence assessment summarizing what evidence exists to determine who was responsible – much less to convincingly support repeated claims that the plane was downed by a Russian-supplied missile in the hands of Ukrainian separatists.

- <http://consortiumnews.com/2014/07/29/obama-should-release-ukraine-evidence/>

This open memorandum is all the more telling given that these retired U.S. intelligence officers are hardly opponents of U.S. imperialism – indeed, the memorandum takes as a positive example right wing former president Ronald Reagan's release of intelligence information to "justify" the U.S. bombing of Libya in 1986!

So, if the Donetsk rebels did not bring down the Malaysian airliner who else could have shot it down? The Russian Defence Ministry maintained that its air traffic control had picked up at least one Ukrainian Air Force Sukhoi SU-25 fighter just 3 to 5 km from the Malaysian airliner before the incident. This information release was, no doubt, aimed at suggesting that it was a Ukrainian fighter jet that brought down the passenger plane. Certainly given the current tensions between Russia and Ukraine, the Russian government has an interest in pointing the finger at Kiev. Yet, what has given this hypothesis a serious life is when none other than the flagship, mainstream newspaper of Malaysia, *New Straits Times*, published several articles suggesting that MH17 was brought down by a missile fired from a Ukrainian aircraft and then finished off with aircraft gunfire. Thus, a *New Straits Times* article carried on its website on August 7, headlined "US analysts conclude MH17 downed by aircraft," commenced as follows:

INTELLIGENCE analysts in the United States had already concluded that Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down by an air-to-air missile, and that the Ukrainian government had had something to do with it.

This corroborates an emerging theory postulated by local investigators that the Boeing 777-200 was crippled by an air-to-air missile and finished off with cannon fire from a fighter that had been shadowing it as it plummeted to earth.

In a damning report dated Aug 3, headlined 'Flight 17 Shoot-Down Scenario Shifts', Associated Press reporter Robert Parry said

'some US intelligence sources had concluded that the rebels and Russia were likely not at fault and that it appears Ukrainian government forces were to blame'.

- <http://www.nst.com.my/node/20925>

The *New Straits Times* article continued:

Yesterday, the *New Straits Times* quoted experts who had said that photographs of the blast fragmentation patterns on the fuselage of the airliner showed two distinct shapes – the shredding pattern associated with a warhead packed with "flechettes", and the more uniform, round-type penetration holes consistent with that of cannon rounds.

The above evidence is significant because cannon rounds could not have reached the aircraft from the ground – they had to be fired from another aircraft. *New Straits Times* also quoted Michael Bociurkiw, a Ukrainian-Canadian monitor with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) who, along with another colleague, was the first international monitor to reach the wreckage after flight MH17 was brought down. In a July 29 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation interview, Bociurkiw, had stated that:

There have been two or three pieces of fuselage that have been really pockmarked with what almost looks like machinegun fire; very, very strong machinegun fire.

To put the *New Straits Times* reports into perspective one has to understand what this newspaper represents. *New Straits Times* is not only the main establishment newspaper of Malaysia, it is also closely linked to the Malaysian government – a government which while not quite as fully subservient to Washington as its neighbours is nevertheless far closer to the U.S. rulers than it is to Russia. This newspaper has no political interest in contradicting the Western narrative about the plane tragedy. Soon after the *New Straits Times* reports, Malaysia's defence minister, Hishammuddin Hussein came out and denied that MH17 was shot down by fighter jets. Yet, since then *New Straits Times* has run at least one article supporting the alternative narrative (see, for example: <http://www.nst.com.my/node/22405>). However, all these *New Straits Times* accounts and the evidence they are based on have been completely ignored by the Western mainstream media. Furthermore,

the U.S., British and Australian rulers who had been so aggressively denouncing Russia and the Donetsk rebels over MH17 have now become fairly quiet about the whole incident adding to suspicions that they are aware that another party were the real perpetrators.

If it was the Ukrainian military that did, indeed, shoot down MH17 what possible motive could they have? One suggestion is based on the fact that the livery of Malaysian Airlines sported by MH17 is rather close to the Russian tri-colour. They could have mistakenly thought it was a Russian transport aircraft. Another hypothesis is based on reports that at the time of the shooting, Vladimir Putin's aircraft, whose Russian tri-colour based livery is similar to that of the Malaysian airliner – was in the air not all that far from MH17. Could the shooting down of MH17 have been a botched attempt by the Ukrainian Air Force to assassinate Putin? Then there is a still more sinister possible motive: that the right wing Ukrainian regime shot down the plane in order to blame the rebels. Could this be possible? Certainly the Ukrainian regime has a motive for doing this. The blame that the rebel forces received for the shooting down of the civilian aircraft was a great propaganda coup for the Ukrainian government. If the Ukrainian military did shoot down MH17 in such a false flag attack then in that case the downing of the civilian airliner would have not been a terrible accident caused by negligence from various parties but deliberate mass murder. It would seem unthinkable for any humans to undertake such a heinous crime. Yet, other U.S.-backed forces involved in conflicts have committed precisely these kinds of attacks – especially the imperialist-backed Syrian "rebels." For example, in May 2012, 108 civilians including 49 children were horrifically massacred in the town of Taldou in Syria's Houla Plains. The Syrian "rebels" displayed the bodies to UN inspectors and to their supporters in the Western media as evidence of the Syrian pro-government forces supposed responsibility for the massacre. Yet a German mainstream newspaper soon uncovered that it was the Western-backed "rebels" who had in fact committed the massacre and had displayed the bodies in order to blame the Syrian government.

Even less morally averse to downing a civilian

aircraft than the Ukrainian Army are the fascist militias that have, as volunteers, joined the Ukrainian military's fight against the rebels. These murderous fascists hark back to the tradition of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army of Stepan Bandera, which allied with the Nazis invaders against the Soviet Union during World War II. The Bandera forces murdered over 100,000 Poles, Jews and Communists in a series of gruesome massacres. Today's Ukrainian fascist irregulars not only have a fanatical hatred of Russian speakers but are extreme white supremacists who would have little qualm in targeting a civilian aircraft from an Asian airline.

Then there is, of course, the possibility that the U.S. directly shot down the aircraft. Certainly, the U.S. and allied imperialists have been the greatest beneficiaries from the political fallout from the shooting down of MH17. It has put Washington's Russian capitalist rival on the diplomatic back foot. The U.S. imperialists have long treated the peoples of the "Third World" as expendable pawns. Thus, while claims that the U.S. government was behind the September 11, 2001 bombings must, surely, be far-fetched given that the target was a key symbol of U.S. capitalist, financial and commercial power, the targeting of an Asian airliner is well within the range of past CIA actions. These cold-hearted enforcers of U.S. capitalist interests would rationalise this as "unfortunate collateral damage" incurred for the sake of the greater good – that is, the good of U.S. imperialism!

The U.S. rulers certainly know all about shooting down civilian airliners. On 3rd July 1988, the U.S. Navy guided missile cruiser *USS Vincennes* downed Iran Air flight 655 which was on a regular flight from Tehran to Dubai. All 274 passengers and 16 crew aboard Iranian Airbus A300 were killed by the U.S. missile strike. The Iranian passenger airliner was on its normal flight path within Iranian airspace and above Iranian territorial waters in the Persian Gulf when it was shot down. The U.S. never apologised or accepted any responsibility for the killing of the people aboard Iran Air flight 655 and claimed that the crew of the warship had misidentified the plane as an F14-A Tomcat fighter aircraft. Except that the passenger airliner was in regular English language radio contact with

air traffic controllers. Moreover, not only was the airliner well within a recognised civilian air corridor, it was a full 20km away from the U.S. warship when the latter fired the two missiles that killed all 290 people aboard the aircraft.

The mainstream Western media don't want to talk too much about this horrific incident today when attacking the Donetsk rebels and Russia over the MH17 tragedy. Yet there are also some important differences between the U.S. shooting down the Iranian airliner and the accusation that Donbass rebels brought down MH17. If the, increasing doubtful, claim that the Eastern Ukraine based rebels downed MH17 were true then the accidental strike would have been conducted by a desperate force fighting a war and shooting down an aircraft above its own territory. In contrast, the U.S. was **not at war** when the *USS Vincennes* shot down Iran Air flight 655 and, further, that attack was unleashed thousands of miles away from the U.S.A in the Persian Gulf. This makes U.S. claims that their warship misidentified the airliner highly dubious. Also, while NATO and the Australian government are accusing a ragtag rebel army lacking advanced surveillance systems of shooting down MH17, Iranian Air flight 655 was downed by the most powerful military force in the world – a force with more than adequate sophistication to clearly distinguish between

an attacking military aircraft and a civilian airliner. The U.S. warship's own Aegis Combat System picked up the Iranian airliner's radio transmitter's emission of the normal Mode III code clearly identifying it as a civilian airliner on its normal course. Furthermore, it turned out that the warship's advanced surveillance system had also recorded that the aircraft was in a steady climb, not the descending profile of an attack run. Most Iranians, not to mention most rational observers in general, believe that the U.S. warship deliberately shot down the civilian airliner. This was either because the U.S. wanted to teach disobedient Iran a lesson or because a trigger happy crew wanted to try out their new advanced combat system.

Russians are, themselves, familiar with this kind of horrific tragedy. On 4 October 2001 Siberian Airlines Flight 1812 heading to the Russian city of Novosibirsk from Tel Aviv, Israel was shot down and crashed into the Black Sea, killing all 78 passengers onboard. At first denying any involvement, Ukraine ended up paying \$15 million in compensation to victims' families as evidence clearly pointed to the Ukrainian military accidentally shooting down the plane during a training exercise. The fact that Ukraine, thus, carries such recent form in this area has, predictably, garnered scant attention in the Western press in the wake of the MH17 disaster.

CANBERRA'S MEDDLING IN UKRAINE: GOOD FOR AUSTRALIA'S CAPITALIST EXPLOITERS, BAD FOR THE WORKING CLASS & OPPRESSED

So what can we say in summary about who shot down MH17? Unlike the tycoon or capitalist government-owned Western media, we Marxists base ourselves on reality and have no reason to distort the truth. Nor do we have a need to present scenarios that are only possibilities or even probabilities as dead certainties. Taking this approach, in summary, as we go to press, we can say that it is not certain who brought down Malaysian airline flight MH17. However, we can say that the analysis of actual hard evidence thus far points more towards the Ukrainian military as the perpetrators rather than the Eastern Ukraine rebels. And what we can say with absolute certainty is that in the (increasingly less likely) case that the Donbass rebels did bring down the airliner, this was an accidental shooting. Yet not only have the Liberal government, the ALP opposition and the mainstream media all rushed to pronounce both the Donbass rebels and their Russian backers as guilty, they have deviously equated the possible accidental shooting by these forces with a deliberate terrorist attack on a passenger-filled civilian airliner. In stark contrast, at the very same time that it was making these lurid allegations against the Donbass rebels, the Australian ruling class apologised for Israel's deliberate devastation of Gaza which the Australian regime *knew* amounted to the deliberate mass slaughter of Palestinian civilians. So why these diametrically opposite responses from the Australian ruling class?

In the case of the war on Gaza, the U.S. and Australian rulers support Israel's brutal assault because Israel has long been a key henchman for Western imperialism in the Middle East region. In contrast, the Donbass rebels and Russia are not the lapdogs of NATO and are, thus, targets for the Western imperialists' propaganda attacks and economic sanctions. The capitalist powers in the West want a loyal partner in power in Kiev because they want prized access to markets and investment opportunities in the Ukraine. However, that is not their only purpose. They meddle in Ukraine in order to ensure that there is a regime there that will act as a counterweight to – and a container of – Russia. With this aim, the U.S. and its allies have drawn not only Ukraine but Georgia into an "Intensified Dialogue" with NATO in what they hope will be a step towards integrating these countries into NATO membership itself. Three other former Soviet republics were brought into NATO membership in 2004: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. These moves are not only aimed in big part against Russia but also against the Western imperialists' ultimate target – socialistic China.

The U.S.-led Western powers largely rule the world – brutally exploiting the masses of the so-called "Third World" and toppling disobedient governments seemingly at will. They tolerate no opposition to their tyranny. The U.S. rulers and their counterparts in the likes of Britain and Australia killed hundreds

of thousands of people when they invaded and occupied Iraq and Afghanistan. They have fuelled a bloody proxy war in Syria against the uncompliant Assad government. Today, these Western colonial predators are using the crimes of the ISIS monster that they had until recently fed and nurtured as a force against the Syrian government, as an excuse to again directly intervene to impose their will on Iraq and to more openly fight for regime change in Syria. Earlier in 2011, they devastated Libya with air strikes in order to remove the all too independent Gaddafi government in Libya. In short, the U.S., British and Australian imperialist ruling classes are used to getting their way and will do anything to ensure that they do. So the last thing that these imperial overlords will accept is a new, emerging capitalist rival with the potential to tread on their turf (which the Western imperialists now consider to be almost the entire world!) However, capitalist Russia *is* just such an emerging power. Although it has been greatly weakened by capitalist restoration in 1991-92, Russia still retains some portion of the former USSR's industrial and technological might and is today easily the second strongest military power in the world. The Western imperialists, who have largely divided the world between themselves, approach Russia in the same way that criminal gangs unite to curb and bully an upstart *new kid on the block* rival who could impinge on their operations.

Below Left: Australian Federal Police arrive in Ukraine on the pretext of the MH17 air crash investigation. The deployment of these police - for work that should have been done by specialist pathologists and air crash investigators - to an area controlled by a force (the Donetsk rebels) that the Australian regime opposes was meant to assert Australian imperialism's "right" to jackboot wherever they please. Australian cops are often deployed to enforce the Australian capitalists' tyranny over the peoples of the South Pacific. Below Right: Australian Federal Police were once again deployed to the Solomon Islands in April 2014 to guard the Gold Ridge mine owned by Australian corporation St Barbara.



So what is the reason for the Australian rulers getting involved in all of this? After all, Russia and Ukraine are far away from Canberra's sphere of influence and Russia has no designs on Australia's neocolonies in the South Pacific. The reason is that Australian imperialism's tyranny in this region depends on having the backing of the U.S. superpower. It is under the protection of U.S. might that Australian corporate giants like BHP and Woodside steal the oil of East Timor; that Australian mining tycoons plunder the natural resources of PNG; that the Australian military and cops often jackboot around the South Pacific and that Australian judges and high-level bureaucrats get muscled into the upper echelons of the state institutions of PNG and the Solomon Islands. Thus, the Australian ruling class want to do everything possible to uphold U.S./NATO domination of the world – and right now that includes turning the screws on the U.S.'s emerging Russian competitor.

Australia's capitalist rulers are not just puppets of the U.S. but are, rather, willing junior partners in the same way that medium-sized criminal bosses always want the particular mafia godfather that they are allied with to be the number one mobster. Yet, while it is rational for the likes of Andrew Forrest, Clive Palmer, Gina Rinehart, the Lowy family, James Packer and the greedy major owners of BHP, Rio Tinto and Woodside to back Canberra's support for Washington's great power machinations, it is completely

against the interests of the Australian working class to do so. The more that the Western imperialist gang that the Australian ruling class is allied with is successful in its quest to strengthen its world domination, the more arrogant will the Australian capitalist rulers become at home. That means more aggressive attacks on our unions, more severe cutbacks to entitlements for the very poor, more anti-working class privatisations of infrastructure and public housing and further measures to exclude working class people from access to decent healthcare and education. It means more extreme all-sided racist oppression of Aboriginal people and still more brutal government attacks on refugees. That is why it is in the interests of the working class and all of the downtrodden to see the predatory international schemes of their ruling class oppressors suffer setbacks – setbacks in Ukraine/Russia and setbacks everywhere else. **The Australian workers movement and left must demand: Down with NATO/Australian meddling in Ukraine! No to the plan to station Australian Federal Police officers in Kiev – Down with the Abbott government's threat to send military aid to the right wing Ukrainian regime! Lift all U.S., EU and Australian sanctions on Russia! U.S./Australian imperialism: Hands off Iraq and Syria! Defend Syria against NATO and their "Free Syrian Army" and religious fundamentalist "rebel" proxies!**

UKRAINE'S RIGHT WING COUP: PLOTTED BY WASHINGTON, SPEARHEADED BY FASCIST THUGS



Ukrainian fascists have been boosted by the February 2014 right wing coup which they spearheaded. Many of these fascist outfits sport the Wolfsangel (Wolf's Hook) - a favoured symbol of modern Neo-Nazi groups.

Until earlier this year, Ukraine actually had a government that maintained fairly friendly relations with its Russian neighbour. That government was headed by then president Viktor Yanukovich who, following his election victory in the 2010 presidential polls, sought to balance relations with Russia and the West. However, when Yanukovich announced in November 2013 that he was putting off close integration with the EU in favour of stronger ties with Russia (highlighted by his acceptance of a huge loan offer from Russia), pro-Western anti-government protests erupted. The protests were able to ride on anger at the high unemployment and high poverty rates – especially in Western Ukraine – overseen by the corrupt, capitalist government. Yet from the start, the "solutions" offered by the groups leading the protests were right wing and dominated by aggressive Ukrainian nationalism.

Behind the then opposition movement stood Washington which, seeing a chance to undermine Russian influence in Ukraine, backed the movement with both massive funding for opposition "NGOs" as well as with tactical direction. The U.S. government's intervention was so blatant that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, and Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, openly joined the then opposition protests – even handing out cakes to the right wing protesters. The extent of this U.S. intervention is also readily apparent in a recording of an intercept of a phone conversation between Nuland and Pyatt (see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbOwfeoDX2o>). The conversation begins with the ambassador saying, "I think we're in play" (i.e. their efforts to affect regime change and determine the next government of Ukraine are *in play!*) Nuland and Pyatt express satisfaction that American diplomat and UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeff Feltman, had succeeded in getting the UN to agree to send Dutch UN diplomat Robert Serry to Ukraine to promote the regime change or, as Nuland puts it, "help glue this thing together." Later, Pyatt speaks of the need to



Blatant! U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, hand out bread to the Ukrainian right wing, then opposition, forces in the lead up to their seizure of power in February 2014.

get an international personality to come to Ukraine "to help midwife this thing." Yet U.S. imperialism's officials were not only speaking of how to affect the regime change but, in fact, who should be in the new government! Thus, they decided that "Yats" (i.e. conservative politician Arseniy Yatsenyuk) is "the guy" and Nuland insisted that "Klitsch" (i.e. rival conservative politician Vitali Klitschko) should not be in the government. And guess what happened in the end: "Yats" became the new prime minister and "Klitsch" decided not to be part of the new government!

This was not the first time that the Western powers had orchestrated events in post-Soviet Ukraine. In 2004, after Yanukovich won presidential elections, opposition groups massively financed and trained in "non-violent resistance" by U.S. government agencies – like the notorious National Endowment for Democracy – instigated mass protests against the election results. The movement, dubbed the Orange Revolution, resulted in Yanukovich's victory being annulled by the courts and a re-run being conducted which resulted in strongly pro-Western candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, winning office.

If the U.S. rulers were the generals of the opposition forces, the shock troops were the local fascist squads. They came mainly from two groups: the Svoboda party and the Pravy Sektor (Right Sector). The Svoboda party was formed as the Social National Party of Ukraine in order to identify with

the “National Socialist” ideology of Hitler’s Nazis. The party spews hatred against immigrants, Jewish people and Russians, espouses extreme hostility to women’s right to abortion, calls for legal discrimination in economic and social matters against non-ethnic Ukrainians and glorifies the Nazi 4th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Galician) that was made up of Ukrainians who volunteered to fight on Hitler’s side against the Soviet Red Army. Pravy Sektor, for its part, is composed of various street thug groups notorious for attacks on international students and immigrants. The prominence of Svoboda and Pravy Sektor in the opposition protests grew with time and became decisive as the movement turned violent in January. The fascists then unleashed a series of brutal attacks on opponents of the movement – including government supporters, journalists, state security forces and the offices of Yanukovich’s Party of Regions. The U.S. “democratic” imperialists were fully aware of and accepting of this fascist factor. Ambassador Wyatt said of the Svoboda neo-Nazis: “They have demonstrated their democratic bona fides.” Meanwhile, when prominent U.S. Senator John McCain came to Kiev’s Maidan square to salute the then opposition movement, he made a point about greeting and standing shoulder to shoulder with the leader of the fascist Svoboda party Oleh Tyahnybok. And in that intercepted call between Nuland and Wyatt, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State declared that, “I think Yats is the guy whose got the economic experience, the governing experience. He’s the guy... You know, what he needs is Klitsch and Tyahnybok on the outside, he needs to



Kiev: Prominent US Senator John McCain openly supporting the Ukrainian right wing then opposition forces that took power in the February 2014 coup. Among the groups McCain lionised are outright fascist parties. Here pictured to McCain's left is the fascist Svoboda party leader, Oleh Tyahnybok.

be talking to them four times a week.” So a pro-Western, conservative government that regularly consults with and takes advice from fascists was on Washington’s order of the day!

Up until a late stage of the anti-government protests, the U.S. was actually quite happy to see an arrangement where Yanukovich would retain the presidency while other key government positions would be filled by their men so that the West’s agenda could gradually take over. The EU had also negotiated a compromise deal between Yanukovich and the then opposition. However, the fascists and other hardline sections of the movement refused to accept any compromise and stepped up their violence and their occupation of government buildings. Under the impact of this offensive led by fascist paramilitaries and under pressure from Washington, large chunks of Yanukovich’s Party of Regions abandoned support for him and many defected to the



October 2013: Supporters of the Ukrainian fascist Svoboda party with a portrait of Stepan Bandera. Bandera was the bloodthirsty leader of anti-Soviet, Nazi-collaborating Ukrainian fascists during World War II.

opposition. On February 21, the Ukrainian parliament ousted Yanukovich. Although large numbers of people had participated in the opposition movement, in effect what had happened was that the elected president was overthrown by a right wing movement overseen by Washington and spearheaded by fascists. Oleg Turchynov from the conservative Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party became Acting President and, yes, “the man” Yats was appointed Prime Minister.

The days leading up to and immediately following February 21 saw a series of frightening fascist attacks on civilians including violence against Jewish people, the desecration of Soviet war memorials, the tearing down of some 25 Lenin statues, the ransacking of the Communist Party of Ukraine’s (KPU) office in Kiev by masked fascists carrying batons and violent attacks on members of the KPU. As a result of the leading role played by fascists in the right wing coup, fascists were appointed to key posts in the new government. Of the 20 ministries in the cabinet, four were initially taken up by Svoboda members. Only the mainstream conservative Fatherland party had more ministries. The fascist Svoboda figures in the new government included the number three figure in the new regime, Vice Prime Minister Oleksandr Sych as well as Defence Minister,

Ihor Tenyukh. Additionally, Svoboda fascist Oleh Makhnitsky was appointed Attorney General. Pravy Sektor leader Dmitry Yarosh was offered the deputy national security position but declined the offer.

This fascist representation in the Ukrainian government has declined somewhat over time. Svoboda’s Tenyukh resigned as Defence Minister after less than a month in office a day after the coordinator for Western Ukraine for the neo-Nazi Pravy Sektor was killed in a shootout with Ukrainian police. In June, the Svoboda member acting as Attorney General resigned and this post is now filled by a member of the conservative Fatherland party. Yet the fascist paramilitaries still make up a large portion of the newly formed Ukrainian National Guard and Svoboda has continued to exert a strong influence on the agenda of the government. On July 24, the Communist Party of Ukraine’s parliamentary faction was dissolved by the parliament and 308 criminal proceedings against the party were launched as part of attempts to ban any activity by the party. Furthermore, the authorities have carried out arrests and some in case beatings of KPU members. **The international workers movement and left must demand an end to all persecution of the KPU and the restoration of its parliamentary faction!**

RACIST OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE IN UKRAINE

The fascist influence was also seen in the move to enshrine legal discrimination against non-ethnic Ukrainians. Thus just two days after Yanukovich was ousted, the post-coup parliament voted to repeal the law on regional languages which had stipulated that although Ukraine was the sole national language, a minority language with the status, “regional language,” could be used in courts, schools and other government institutions in areas of Ukraine where the percentage of representatives of national minorities exceeds 10% of the total population of a defined administrative district. In practice the law on regional languages meant that the large areas of the South and East of Ukraine, including the Crimea, with heavy populations of Russian speakers could also use Russian for education and public affairs as well as three small administrative

May 2, Odessa: Mass murder! Ukrainian fascists set alight the city’s Trade Union Hall where embattled anti-government activists were holed up. Over 40 opponents of the post-February right wing regime were murdered.



areas where Hungarian, Moldovan and Romanian could be used. Although acting president Turchynov vetoed the repeal bill, the racist parliamentary vote, the violent fascist attacks on people of non-Ukrainian ethnicity and the terrifying presence of neo-Nazis in the government all combined to convince many of the Russian-speaking people concentrated in the South and East of Ukraine to revolt against the new regime. Their struggle is a just struggle for liberation from a racist regime and quickly won support from the local populations.

In the Crimea peninsula in southern Ukraine whose port city of Sevastopol hosts Russia's strategic Black Sea Fleet (Russia had been allowed to have control of this base under a 1997 agreement with Ukraine), tens of thousands demonstrated against the new government on the night of the day that the parliament voted to repeal the law on regional languages. Within days pro-Russian supporters took over key government buildings as a majority of Ukrainian soldiers in Crimea defected to the pro-Russian side. On March 16, an overwhelming majority of the population of the Crimean peninsula voted for independence from Ukraine in an act of self-determination. The next day, Crimea's parliament, which is dominated by hardline Russian nationalists, declared independence and asked to join Russia. This was accepted by Putin and secured by the Russian military. Although the Ukrainian regime and Western powers continue to demand the return of Crimea to Ukraine, this is empty rhetoric. No one seriously thinks they can wrest Crimea from Russia for the foreseeable future.

In the south-eastern part of Ukraine – centred on the districts of Donetsk and Luhansk that are together known as the Donbass region – a Russian speaking resistance movement also started taking over government buildings after the February right wing coup. They proclaimed a Peoples Republic of Donetsk and a Peoples Republic of Luhansk. However, they were opposed by a military onslaught by the Ukrainian military and Ukrainian volunteer battalions. The latter battalions are largely dominated by fascists, such as the Azov Battalion led by Andriy Biletsky, the leader of the Neo-Nazi, Social National Assembly. The Social National Assembly calls for “struggle for the liberation of the entire White Race” and seeks to “punish severely sexual perversions and



May 2014: The reality of Ukraine's Western-backed "democracy." Anti-government activists burnt to death in the Odessa Trade Union Hall.

any interracial contacts." The Azov Battalion uses the Wolfsangel (Wolf's Hook), a favoured symbol of modern Neo-Nazi groups (as the symbol was used by several military units of Hitler's Nazis) and has attracted to its ranks white supremacists from Sweden, Spain and Italy.

The war has raged on for several months with one side gaining the upper hand and then the other. So far the death toll has exceeded 3,000 people. As we go to press a shaky ceasefire is largely holding with the resistance holding on to chunks of territory in Donetsk and Luhansk. The Ukrainian parliament has also just voted to offer the rebel regions regional autonomy. It is too early to evaluate the extent of this offer and the response from the Donbass people. The Russian government has welcomed the offer but as yet a comprehensive political settlement has not been implemented.



Donetsk, April 2014: Protesters fly the flag of Belarus alongside Russian and Ukrainian flags at this anti-government rally. Alongside ethnic Russians, many people in the Donbass – including ethnic Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Byelorussians – use Russian as their main language. Thus, the Donbass rebel movement, based on Russian speakers, incorporates more than simply ethnic Russians alone.



As the opposing sides were negotiating the ceasefire, the U.S. stepped up its rhetoric against Russia and then it and the EU announced new sanctions on Russia only days after the ceasefire. It seems that the Ukrainian government's imperialist patrons were trying to scuttle Ukrainian president Poroshenko's efforts to negotiate a ceasefire with the Donbass rebels. Washington is prepared to fight to the last drop of Ukrainian blood to curb the influence of its Moscow rival.

The Ukrainian pro-government forces' assault on the Donbass rebellion was brutal and has caused the deaths of over 1,000 civilians. In order to capture towns, the Kiev regime's forces have shelled civilian areas and bombarded them with rocket attacks from both ground and air. Especially murderous have been Ukraine's fascist irregulars. The extent of their barbarity was seen on May 2 in Odessa, a Black Sea port city with a mixed Russian and Ukrainian population. It was there that over a 1,000 fascists, many under the guise of being soccer fans for a local match, held a provocative march through the city denouncing the Southern and Eastern Ukraine-based rebel movements. Among the marchers were large contingents from the Pravy Sektor and over a hundred thugs wearing masks and armed with sticks and shields. After a clash with anti-government activists elsewhere, the fascists marched upon a tent city of anti-government protesters at Kulikovo Field in the centre of

Odessa city. They then completely torched the tent camp and forced the terrified protesters to flee into the adjacent Trade Unions House building. What followed was a horrifying massacre. The fascists threw petrol bombs into the second and third stories of the building setting the whole place on fire. As the anti-Kiev activists were being burnt to death, the fascists outside sung the Ukrainian national anthem! Other chanted “burn Colorado, burn” (*The New York Times*, 4 May 2014) – “Colorado” being a derogatory term for Russian-speaking rebels as it refers to the Colorado potato beetle, striped red and black like the pro-Russian ribbons. Some of those in the building tried to leap down to escape the inferno. Of these some died from the fall but others survived only to be chased down and brutally beaten. The police were complicit in the slaughter. They simply stood aside and watched the pro-Russian activists get murdered and the fascists block the firefighters from using their equipment. Later, 38 of the activists who survived the inferno were outrageously arrested by police as they left the building. In all at least 42 pro-Russian activists were killed at the Trade Unions House building and at least another three were shot dead in the earlier clash. The response of the Kiev regime was initially to blame the activists and later to try and cover up the massacre while cynically shedding crocodile tears “mourning” the dead.

Every atrocity committed by the Ukrainian military and the fascist volunteers against the

Opposite: A large rally in Donetsk celebrates the anniversary of the liberation of the Donbass from fascism during World War II. The Donbass rebel movement combined just opposition to discrimination against Russian speakers with, on the one hand, reactionary Russian nationalism and, on the other hand, healthy sympathy for the former Soviet Union and hatred of fascism. However, the bitterness of the recent war and the presence of fascists fighting on both sides have served to increase the strength of Russian nationalists/chauvinists in the rebel movement as the war has progressed.

Russian-speaking minority has only served to strengthen that minority's separatist feelings. The struggle of the Russian speaking people in the South and East of Ukraine is a just struggle for self determination and thus can be compared in some ways to the Palestinian struggle, the Kurdish separatist struggle in Turkey and the Tamil struggle for a Tamil "Eelam" homeland in Sri Lanka. However, there are also some significant differences with the latter struggles. Firstly, unlike the Tamil and Palestinian struggles, the revolt of the Russian-speaking people in the South and East of Ukraine is not simply that of one ethnic community. Although ethnic Russians are by far the dominant force in the movement, the section of the Ukrainian population whose main language is Russian extends beyond ethnic Russians. According to the 2000 Ukraine census, over five and a half million ethnic Ukrainians speak Russian as their first language. Thus, in the Donetsk Oblast (District), although 57% of the population identify as ethnic Ukrainian, only 24% of the population use Ukrainian as their native language. Russian is also the main language of the majority of the small Belarussian, Jewish, Greek and Tartar communities of Ukraine as well as large minorities of the Bulgarian and Armenian communities. Thus, in photographs of rallies by supporters of the Luhansk Peoples Republic one can see flags of Belarus alongside Russian flags and other Russian nationalist flags.

Secondly, unlike in the West Bank and the Gaza strip which is overwhelmingly Palestinian or the north of Sri Lanka which is overwhelmingly Tamil, the Southern and Eastern parts of Ukraine (other than Crimea which is now part of Russia) are not overwhelmingly ethnic Russian or even Russian speaking. Thus, in the Luhansk Oblast, 58% of the population are ethnic Ukrainians and 30% of the population use Ukrainian as their native language. In Odessa, 46% of the population use Ukrainian as their native language and in Kharkiv 53%. Therefore, the appropriate demand for the movement of the Russian-speaking people is for self-rule with the most deep going autonomy possible. This is what most of the rebels are demanding themselves and apparently what the majority of the population want, although the most

hardcore Russian nationalists within the movement sometimes call for accession to Russia.

Thirdly, although the struggle against ethnic and language repression that became sharply posed after the February 21 right wing coup forms the central part of the emergence of the Donbass movement, there are additional factors involved. Some of these factors are directly tied up with the ethnic/linguistic issue. Thus, the ethnic Russian and other Russian speakers based in the South and East for cultural and patriotic reasons prefer a government that maintains close ties with Russia than the anti-Russia regime that took power on February 21. The Donbass region was a stronghold for Yanukovich's more Russia-friendly Party of Regions and its removal from power in a coup was therefore most strongly opposed in this part of the country. More interestingly for socialists is the fact that the industrial and thus more proletarian South and East of Ukraine had a greater percentage of people who were favourable to the former Soviet Union and to communism than in other parts of the Ukraine. Despite the reformist nature of the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU), these sentiments among significant parts of the region's masses were in part expressed in electoral support for the KPU. In the 2012 parliamentary elections, the KPU won nearly 30% of the vote in the Crimean Peninsula's main city, Sevastopol, and over 25% of the vote in the Luhansk Oblast. This compares with under 2% of the vote in the western Oblast of Lviv. For those pro-Soviet, subjectively pro-communist individuals in the Southern and Eastern parts of Ukraine who are deeply passionate about the heroic Soviet Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany, hearing of Soviet war memorials being desecrated, communists being attacked and Lenin statues being torn down by neo-Nazis in Kiev and Western Ukraine encourages not only strong feelings of hostility to the new regime but also, in the absence of an internationalist approach to unite the Ukrainian and Russian speaking toilers in joint revolutionary struggle, the urge to separate from these parts of Ukraine. The exact weight of this factor is hard to gauge from a distance. Unfortunately, as the

Moscow, June 2014: A rally in Russia in support of the Donetsk uprising. The rally was dominated by Russian nationalist and chauvinist symbols including the black, gold and white monarchist flag. Such displays of predatory nationalism serve to push the Ukrainian masses into the arms of their own chauvinists and undermine inter-ethnic working class unity.



war has progressed and the atrocities by the Ukrainian military and fascist irregulars mounted, the ethnic/linguistic tensions have hardened. As a result, the dominance of aggressive Russian nationalist elements in the rebel movement has alarmingly increased and less and less Soviet flags and emblems are seen in the rebel political rallies. This is certainly the case in current demonstrations in the Donetsk region, whereas a few Soviet flags were seen in the earlier protests in Odessa in particular.

Fourthly, in the Ukraine war, rival billionaire oligarchs are playing a major, direct role independently of the state power representing their interests in a manner much more overt than in other similar conflicts. Some of these oligarchs are directly funding the pro-government militias and fascist irregulars while others are backing the pro-Russian rebels, while at the same time trying to control their agenda.

Fifthly, unlike the Palestinian and Tamil struggles, the Donbass struggle is being conducted in a region which borders a capitalist power whose main language/ethnicity is the same as that of the rebel movement and which is providing some support to that movement. This fact does colour things somewhat, even though the rebel movement has not been simply subordinated to Russian interests and thus does remain a progressive movement overall. So, while national rights movements often use the rhetoric of anti-oppression and defensive nationalism, large parts of the Donbass movement leadership use aggressive Russian nationalist and national-supremacist

rhetoric reflecting their proximity to a power based on the same ethnic/language group. Until recently, the commander of the Donetsk Peoples Republic was one Igor Girkin (known as "Strelkov") a reactionary nationalist and monarchist whose hero is a Russian White general (the Whites were the right wing counterevolutionaries who fought in the 1918-1921 Civil War against the Red communist forces in a failed attempt to overturn the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution). As a result of the character of the Donbass rebel leadership, the neo-Nazi Russian National Unity and clerical-fascist Slavic Union have sent volunteers to support the Donbass rebels as have the Serbian Chetniks (the Chetniks are right wing monarchists who were defeated by Tito's communist partisans). The Donbass rebellion has also won the enthusiastic support of the Hungarian neo-Nazi Jobbik Party and the fascist British National Party. Most disturbingly, elements of the Donbass pro-Russian forces have been accused of committing horrific racist violence against the region's Romani (Gypsy) minority as well as attacks on church goers who don't attend Russian Orthodox-affiliated churches. All this is not only terrifying for the non-Russian communities in the Donbass but is harmful to what is overall a just struggle against racist/linguistic discrimination and repression of the Russian-speaking people of the region. For one, it repels the many pro-Soviet, anti-fascist working class people in the Donetsk and Luhansk districts from supporting the rebel movement. Secondly, it drives the Ukrainian-speaking masses in the West of Ukraine into the arms of the reactionary Kiev regime, as the excesses of

the rebels recalls to them the subjugation of Ukrainian people in pre-Soviet, Tsarist Russia. Therefore, it is urgent for there to be a political struggle to replace the reactionary nationalist leadership of the Donbass masses with an internationalist, pro-working class leadership. Such a leadership would pose the struggle solely as a struggle against racist and capitalist oppression, would completely reject great power Russian nationalism, would stand resolutely in defence of the well-being and rights of the region's Romani, Jewish, Ukrainian-speaking and other minorities, would drive out fascists from the movement, would appeal to the class interests of the Ukrainian-speaking workers in the rest of the country in opposing the regime's onslaught against the region and would fight for the revolutionary unity of Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking workers in the struggle against the capitalist exploiters of all ethnicities.

The objectively progressive nature of the anti-regime struggle in the South and East of Ukraine has meant that, although it's still only a relatively small component of the movement as a whole, there has been leftist participation in it. Active in Odessa and Kharkiv is the Borotba group which is pro-Soviet and openly describes itself as Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary. Borotba correctly denounces the November 2013 to February 2014 then opposition movement for bringing to power a very right wing, "neo-liberal and nationalistic government", while correctly also opposing the previous capitalist Yanukovich government and the capitalist Putin government in Russia. Borotba members have courageously withstood fascist attacks and state repression and have today been driven underground. Borotba comrade Andrey Brazhevsky was murdered in the fascist attack on the Trade Unions House building in Odessa when, after jumping off the burning building, fascists beat him to death with sticks. From this distance we cannot give a broader appraisal of the politics of this group. Unfortunately, although the group has expressed strong opposition to both Ukrainian and Russian fascists, a Borotba leader founded a joint committee for the "Liberation of Odessa" with the Russian bourgeois Rodina party and the Russian fascist party Slavic Union.



Members of the Russian fascist group, Russian National Unity, fighting as volunteers in support of the Donbass rebels. The presence of fascists in the rebel movement is an obstacle to winning the support of the ethnic Ukrainian working class and serves to drive the Ukrainian masses into the arms of reactionary nationalists.

Despite the dominance of right wing Russian nationalists in the Donbass rebel leadership, the struggle of the Russian-speaking people in the Donetsk and Luhansk districts is still, objectively, a just struggle against racist/linguistic discrimination and repression and, what is more, includes to some degree a progressive, pro-Soviet hostility to the desecration of Soviet war memorials, the presence of neo-Nazis in the Kiev regime and the tearing down of Lenin statues in western Ukraine. **That is why the international working class movement must defend the just anti-regime struggle of the people of the Donbass and demand the right to the broadest self-rule for the people of this region.**

The Ukrainian working class outside the Donbass, including the Ukrainian-speaking masses, must especially take up this cause. Only by positively opposing the anti-Russian chauvinism promoted by the regime can they unite on a class basis and focus on the struggle against the capitalist exploiters – those true enemies of the workers of all ethnicities who are consigning the masses to high unemployment and poverty and whose regime is preparing to unleash EU and IMF-

Mykolaiv, southern Ukraine, 2 September 2014: Relatives try to prevent conscripted Ukrainian soldiers from being sent to the eastern Ukraine front. The conscripted troops were only able to be taken away after police violently dragged away the protesting mothers and other relatives.



dictated austerity that would hit working class people with social service cutbacks, price rises and still deeper job losses. Such a perspective is possible even given the right wing, nationalistic climate in Ukraine and the polarising effect of the bitter and bloody war. It is striking that wives, mothers and other relatives of those drafted into Kiev's war on the Donbass have staged a series of militant protests against conscription and in many cases against the war itself. The protests began in July in response to a government decision to announce a new wave of conscription orders. The protests took hold initially in the Chernivtsi region, a heavily ethnic Romanian region, near the Romanian border. There protesters blocked roads in protests at conscription orders given to 280 young men in the Ostryzja village. "We want peace, we really do not need war. Ukraine must have peace," was the typical sentiment of the protesters. Soon the protests spread including importantly to ethnic Ukrainian regions as well. From the Obukhiv'skyi district near Kiev to the village of Hamaliivka near Lviv to the villages of Rakoshyno and Znyatsevo, near the border of Slovakia and Hungary, anti-war and anti-conscription protesters have blocked roads. Among the slogans and retorts of the demonstrators have been, "Send call-up notices to the children of the higher-ups!", 'Return our children to us', 'Stop the bloodshed' and 'Go fight your own wars.'" On July 22, farmers protesting the conscription of their children in the town of Bohorodchany in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, in south-west Ukraine, attacked the military registration office

Ukrainian mothers of conscripted soldiers protest against conscription and Ukraine's war in the Donbass. Spirited anti-conscription protests and desertions by Ukrainian soldiers have pushed the Ukrainian regime to offer concessions to the rebel forces.



DON'T LET ABBOTT DIVERT US FROM TARGETING OUR MAIN ENEMY: THE AUSTRALIAN REGIME AND THE CAPITALISTS THAT THEY SERVE



Left: Australian and American troops in Darwin listen to the November 2011 speech by Obama where he outlined his agreement with the Australian government to station thousands of U.S. troops in Darwin in a move clearly aimed against socialistic China. NATO and its Australian ally have used the standoff over Ukraine to justify increased military deployments that are, in good part, aimed against China.

Right: American aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, in the South China Sea. A very long way from home but not so far from China!

What we have at this point in time is not an inter-imperialist war between the NATO powers and Russia or even a war between Kiev and Moscow. The Russian-speaking rebels in the Donbass region are not, at the moment, simply acting as Moscow's proxies. The Moscow government has a different agenda to the rebels. The Russian-speaking people of the Donbass want to protect themselves from discrimination and a very right-wing government whereas Moscow wants to promote its great power capitalist ambitions. Indeed, many of the rebels are angry that Russia has not supported them adequately. Notably, when Donetsk and Luhansk organised referendums demanding self-rule, Putin tried to pressure the local leaderships to delay the referenda.

What we have today is a just, defensive struggle of the Russian-speaking people of the Donbass in the context of great power capitalist tensions between the U.S. and Australia on the one hand and Russia on the other. The tasks for the international workers' movement and left that flow from this is to, on the one hand, defend the just struggle of the Donbass rebels and, on the other, to oppose as the **main enemy** one's "own" capitalist rulers in the capitalist political standoff. That means that socialists in Australia must oppose first and foremost the sanctions on Russia and the anti-Russia propaganda of Canberra and Washington and Co. We must point out the irrationality of the Western claim that Russia invaded Crimea when a massive 96% of voters in Crimea opted to join Russia in the March 16 referendum that had a high voter turnout of 83.1%. We should also challenge the claim that large numbers of Russian troops have entered Eastern Ukraine to fight alongside

Donbass rebels when, in fact, there is no actual hard evidence of it whatsoever. Indeed, if there was such a huge direct Russian military role in the Donbass as Washington, Canberra and Co. claim then the Ukrainian forces, as formidable as they are, would not have been able to achieve the major victories that they did in their late July offensive into an area where much of the local population is hostile to them. The Kiev regime's war later ran into difficulties not because of Russia but because many of its own troops either do not want to fight this war or, if they do, are not enthusiastic enough about the war to fight with the necessary conviction. With many regular Ukrainian troops half-hearted about fighting, the Kiev regime had to rely on the fascist irregulars – drunk as they are with rabid nationalism and hatred of Russians – to be in the frontlines of many difficult battles. Thousands of regular Ukrainian soldiers have, in fact, deserted. Some of these have taken asylum in Russia. Some

have even defected to the rebels. The fact is that despite the intense nationalism of the post-Soviet period, many Ukrainian soldiers, a large percentage of whom are conscripts, are shaped by the stories that their grandparents have told them about the Soviet Red Army's heroic struggle against Nazi Germany. Although they are still indoctrinated in the pro-capitalist and nationalist traditions of a capitalist army, it is difficult for such soldiers to fight with much enthusiasm a war in which they are taking orders from a government that includes neo-Nazis and in which they have to fight alongside neo-Nazi irregulars. Indeed, Ukrainian president Poroshenko ended up agreeing to a ceasefire with the resistance and offering autonomy for the Donbass not because of fear of Russia but because of fear of the breakdown of morale in his own army and fear at the militancy of anti-conscription protests on the home front.

We must also expose the sickening hypocrisy of the U.S., British and Australian rulers when they attack Russia's supposed "incursion" into Ukraine. It is these same Western imperialist rulers that caused the deaths of over a million people in their brutal invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. It was the NATO powers that killed tens of thousands of Libyans in their 2011 air and special forces campaign to spearhead the overthrow of the Gaddafi government. Today, the U.S., backed by its allies like Australia, grossly violate Syria's sovereignty by bombing (supposed) ISIS targets inside Syria without the Syrian government's permission – all as part of a broader plan for regime change in Syria. And they have the hide to attack Russia over its alleged, but completely unproved, actions in eastern Ukraine!

Now, of course, understanding that the **main** enemy of the Australian working class are the Australian capitalist rulers and their senior partners does not mean that they are the **only** enemy. As Marxists-Leninists we understand that the ruling class of **every** capitalist power is our enemy. Therefore, capitalist rulers of the West's rival, Russia, are also an enemy. Putin heads a right wing capitalist government that oversees exploitation of workers, repression of leftists, brutal police attacks against migrants and

Russians of non-European ethnicities and persecution of gay and transexual people. Indeed, Putin has much in common with Tony Abbott! However, it is **primarily** the job of the Russian working class to oppose the predatory ambitions of their "own" rulers just as it is primarily the duty of the Ukrainian toiling masses to fight against the murderous, fascist-infested, capitalist regime that oversees *their* exploitation. The class struggle in these countries does, indeed, matter and should not be ignored for the sake of the "big picture" – as it is, in fact, a significant part of the "big picture." Ukraine and Russia together have a population of over 190 million and as both countries are industrialised, they have some big centres of industrial working class concentration. The strategic importance of these countries to the struggle for world socialism is highlighted by the fact that Russia is the second strongest military power in the world, the world's largest country by area, arguably the pre-eminent world space power and closely rivals the U.S. in nuclear warfare capability. Just as importantly, given that the counterrevolutionary destruction of socialistic rule in the ex-USSR was such a massive propaganda windfall for the capitalist rulers of the world – used by them to claim that "communism is dead" and capitalism is inevitable – the revolutionary socialist restoration of workers state power in any of these countries would be a terrific propaganda and moral victory for the fight for international working class liberation.

However, for Australian leftists to today **focus** their attack on the crimes of the Russian ruling class in the context of the current great power capitalist tensions only serves to support the agenda of the Australian capitalists and to enhance their legitimacy. It would push our audience into thinking that Abbott and Shorten are right on major world issues like Ukraine and so maybe we should start listening to them on domestic issues as well. Yet, **focusing** on the crimes of the Russian ruling class and retailing Western imperialism's propaganda against Russia is what the various reformist socialist groups in Australia do. Their orientation can be summarised as: the main enemy is the rival of my "own" bourgeoisie! In carrying out such a perspective, these socialist groups

are serving to bolster the credentials of the Australian capitalist ruling class and thus act to undermine the class struggle against them.

Some Western leftists, as an excuse for taking the more socially acceptable position of favouring the ally of their own bourgeoisie, argue that Ukraine should be defended as a weaker country than powerful Russia. However, such a stance is very wrong. Firstly, Ukrainian capitalist rulers are at least to some extent acting as a proxy of Western imperialism. Secondly Ukraine is itself not a weak semi-colony. Although Ukraine later gave up its nuclear weapons, as the second largest republic of the former USSR, Ukraine inherited from the ex-Soviet Union a large, well-trained and well-equipped military. Although capitalist restoration devastated its military and industrial strength, Ukraine retains an advanced independent arms industry. It manufactures, among other goods, ballistic missiles, submarines and tanks and is a major arms exporter. Ukraine has also retained some of the highly skilled technical personnel as well as the highly educated workforce of Soviet times and has the fourth highest number of IT professionals in the world. It has also retained a portion of the powerful and high-tech industrial plants built in Soviet times. This is indicated by its level of steel production, which is commonly used worldwide as a gauge of industrial capacity, since steel is the base material for much heavy and medium manufacturing as well as most infrastructure construction. Ukraine, although only being the 31st most populous country in the world is the globe's 10th largest steel producer. Ukraine also has a sizeable automotive industry as well as a space vehicle industry and is one of the few countries in the world able to design and

produce a complete aircraft. All this means that Ukraine does not have to accept capital from overseas capitalist powers simply in order to get access to the technology that it needs. And it has sufficient military deterrent to make it costly and risky (although, of course, not anywhere near impossible) for a foreign power to use military threat to force it into repaying debts, for example. In summary, 75 years of industrial, educational and military development as part of the Soviet workers state transformed the Ukraine from a weak nation subjugated by Russian imperialism in Tsarist times into a country that even after being decimated by capitalist counterrevolution would be difficult for Russia, or anyone else for that matter, to turn into a semi-colony. Over 22 years of capitalist chaos since the destruction of the USSR has meant that Ukraine today is debt ridden and is being dictated to and bullied by the IMF and Western banks but then so are even imperialist countries like Spain and Italy. Yet, today Ukraine's prized enterprises like the Antonov aerospace company and the giant PA Yuzhmash, a producer of rockets, satellites, buses and trams, remain in domestic Ukrainian hands. Furthermore, although there is considerable Russian investment – often via Cypriot banks – in Ukraine's financial and service sector, other than for Russian-owned resource giant TNK-BP and the part-Russian ownership in Ukraine's major mobile phone operator Kyivstar, most of the biggest firms operating in Ukraine are domestically owned (most often by fabulously wealthy oligarchs).

The Western imperialist huffing and puffing against Russia is not only about Russia itself. The Western rulers are using the myth of the Russian bogeyman that they have created

as an excuse to bolster their militaries and to exercise their imperialist political and diplomatic muscles for future use against other targets as well. This month's NATO summit used the supposed "Russian aggression" in Ukraine as justification for creating a "Spearhead" rapid reaction force of several thousand troops ready to deploy anywhere in the world in less than 48 hours. The summit also enshrined a commitment by member states to significantly increase defence budgets. For its part, the Australian rulers used the horror of the MH17 plane disaster as an excuse to send Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers tramping around the crash site in war torn Eastern Ukraine. If they were really interested in recovery of the dead bodies and determining the cause of the disaster they would have sent pathologists and air crash investigators after diplomatically and politely negotiating with the Donetsk rebels who were holding the territory. Instead, they sent in cops after they and their Western counterparts made aggressive demands upon the Donetsk rebels. For the Australian government, demanding the "right" to send in cops to an area controlled by a force – the Donetsk separatists – that they oppose was a chance for some good old fashioned imperialist bullying (how would the Australian regime like it if the Chinese government was this aggressive and demanded that Chinese police take over sites in Australian cities whenever a redneck racist bashes or murders a Chinese student in Australia). This was a chance for the Australian state forces to show that they have the right to maraud anywhere they choose. For the Australian ruling class this exercising of imperialist muscles was mainly in order to prepare for future expeditions in the Asia-Pacific region. In recent years the AFP has been deployed to lord it over the peoples of the Solomon Islands, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. However, they are quite prepared to also unleash their state forces in operations around the globe to support their U.S. godfather. The Liberal/National Coalition government, with Labor's full support, sure couldn't wait to send troops to the Middle East to support the U.S.A's latest military adventure there.

The **most** important reason for all this Western imperialist diplomatic and military exercising – including NATO's planned military build-up – is to target not so much Russia but China, socialistic China that is. When Clive Palmer recently ranted against China and the Communist Chinese government he was, in fact, expressing the real opinion of the entire Australian capitalist class. The trouble is that this capitalist class is simultaneously relying on China's booming state-owned enterprises to keep on buying enough of Australia's exports to hold up the Australian economy. So other Australian politicians publicly told Palmer to shut it while no doubt wanting to whisper in his ear, "we're with you brother." After all, with the enthusiastic support of both the ALP and the Liberals, the U.S. has 1,300 troops stationed in Darwin which are squarely aimed against China and her socialistic North Korean ally. The continued presence of a socialistic state in China, however corrupted and weakened by a degree of capitalist penetration, is an obstacle to the imperialist designs to turn China into a huge sweatshop for imperialist exploitation. Meanwhile, the presence of a **socialistic** world power is an obstacle to imperialism running amok in the world. These are the reasons why the capitalist powers are building their forces to put pressure on China. Equally, it is the reason why **the international working class must urgently rally to the defence of the Chinese workers state, however deformed from the ideal that it may be.**

The Abbott government has also been using the MH17 disaster and the events in Ukraine for domestic purposes. Abbott and Labor Opposition leader Shorten claimed to feel intense grief for the pain borne by families and friends of the Australians killed aboard MH17. In truth these pro-capitalist politicians only ever feel true solidarity for some Australians – those in the big end of town! They both certainly don't feel any sympathy for the close to 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been killed in state custody over the last 35 years. Both their parties running state and federal governments have overseen brutal police and prison guard terror against Aboriginal



Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) flags at a May Day 2014 rally in Ukraine. This party has faced vicious state repression and violent fascist attacks since the February 2014 right wing coup. The international workers movement must stand in solidarity with the KPU against right wing attacks.

people. They definitely do not feel any sympathy for low-income, single mothers either. At the start of last year, Shorten's ALP, when in government under Gillard, drove 80,000 low-income single parents and their children into dire poverty and in some cases even homelessness when they cruelly slashed their payments – a move maintained by the current Abbott government. And Abbott could not care less for unemployed youth – as he plans to drive unemployed people younger than thirty into starvation by cutting off their dole payments for six months per year. Yet Abbott cynically manipulated people's genuine sympathy for the victims of MH17 to gain a boost in opinion polls by portraying himself as a person who cares for and stands up for the interests of Australians.

The Coalition government's tough talk over MH17 and denunciations of Russia and the Donbass-based rebels are, however, not purely about gaining electoral advantage. As with Abbott's ranting backing Australia's war moves in the Middle East, the focussing on an external adversary is meant to unite the population on a nationalist basis – into a "Team Australia" as Abbott calls it. Except that in this so-called *team*, a small number of *team* members – that is, the capitalist tycoons likes Andrew Forrest, Gina Rinehart, Clive Palmer, James Packer and Frank Lowy – are exploiting the majority of the *team*: the working class. The idea that we are all together as Australians against the external adversary – whether that be Russia or ISIS – is meant to make the exploited masses accept their oppression for the sake of the "team." Abbott and Co. want us to hold the hands of the corporate bigwigs while the latter kick us in the guts. He wants public housing tenants to consider the housing authorities that are booting them out of their homes and the greedy developers that are buying them up as part of their "team." This government is also foisting upon working class people loyalty to "Team Australia" in order to make them accept, for the sake of the "team," a federal budget that will slash payments for the unemployed, make the masses pay for

doctors' visits and further reduce funding for Aboriginal services all the while cutting taxes for mining billionaires.

Yet, even though Shorten's ALP and Adam Bandt's Greens claim opposition to some aspects of the budget and would seemingly have an interest in stopping Abbott's attempts to divert mass hostility to the budget, they too have joined in creating the myth of the Russian bogeyman. Why is this? Although the ALP rests on the working class it is opposed to militant class struggle and instead sees improvements coming through collaboration with the capitalists. Thus, it too wants to tame class struggle by tying the masses to their exploiters through the notion of a common "national interest" uniting all Australians. The Greens, who are based on the liberal/progressive middle class and students, also reject class struggle. Both the ALP and Greens, whose strategy for progressive social change is based on getting elected to parliament, are desperate to win the blessing of the wealthy capitalists whose funding, economic clout and media dominance greatly shapes who can win elections. Thus, both the ALP and Greens are always keen to prove to the capitalist elite that they are "responsible" parties committed to doing what is best for Australian capitalism – like standing alongside Australian imperialism's U.S. senior partner in the Ukraine conflict. However, those who understand that the only way to advance the interests of working class people is through class struggle against the ruling class must oppose every scheme to tie the masses to their exploiters on the basis of a fictitious "national interest." Down with the ruling class' attempt to create the spectre of a Russian bogeyman! Don't let them use the threat of the, indeed thoroughly reactionary, ISIS movement to divert the working class from the central task of opposing the attacks of the Australian capitalists – from their imperialist expedition to the Middle East to their drive to further degrade workers' standard of living and access to social services.

SUFFERING, RACISM AND CHAOS IN UKRAINE: A DIRECT RESULT OF CAPITALIST COUNTERREVOLUTION

To many older Ukrainians and Russians who remember life in the days of the former Soviet Union, the current war, economic chaos and fascist rampages are especially hard to stomach. Although things were not perfect, in the heyday of the USSR from the 1950s to the early 1980s not only was there no nationalist bloodletting but fascists barely existed let alone dared to show their colours in public – certainly they were not able to rampage on the streets and gain ministries in government as they do now in Ukraine! Despite a moderate degree of Russian-centredness of leading elements of the ruling Soviet bureaucracy and at various times this bureaucracy making concessions to Russian nationalism, the socialistic USSR in its prime really was a land of the friendship of peoples. Many international students from Asia, Africa and the Middle East studied in the USSR on scholarships or for nominal fees. They were treated with generous hospitality and genuine warmth. However, after the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the USSR, the life of international students in both Russia and Ukraine has been one of fear and terror. Dark-skinned international students and migrants are regularly harassed and abused and countless numbers have been murdered or brutally bashed by fascist gangs. In Russia, fascist gangs are notorious for going out on nightly "street cleansing" operations where they premeditatedly bash or murder dark-skinned immigrants, stall holders from the Caucasus, Romani people (Gypsies), people from Central Asia, gays, people with long hair and anarchists. These fascists have committed over 1,000 premeditated murders in Russia in the last 10 years -including those of 200 international students!

The creation of the Soviet workers state itself involved a conscious struggle against racism and national oppression. Tsarist Russia was an empire centred on the ethnic Russians (then known as "Great Russians") that brutally oppressed the non-Russian nations including Ukraine. As an essential part of uniting the working class of all ethnicities Lenin's Bolsheviks insisted on the need for the ethnic Russian working class to strongly defend the rights of the downtrodden non-Russian peoples and to oppose the Russian fascist Black Hundreds group:

Amidst the alarms and turmoil of the struggle for existence, for a bare livelihood, the Russian workers cannot and must not forget the yoke of national oppression under which the tens and tens of millions of "subject peoples" inhabiting Russia are groaning. The ruling nation—the Great Russians—constitute about 45 per cent of the total population of the Empire. Out of every 100 inhabitants, over 50 belong to "subject peoples".

And the conditions of life of this vast population are even harsher than those of the Russians.

Right wing capitalist rulers of Ukraine and Russia are political heirs of – or were often directly part of – the forces that destroyed the former socialistic USSR. The current nationalist Ukrainian regime consists of the political descendants of the Ukrainian Rukh "Popular Front" that opposed the former USSR. Left: Anti-Soviet protest in the former Soviet Ukraine calls for Ukraine to exit the USSR. Centre: Putin with former Leningrad/St Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak. Putin was an adviser to Sobchak when the latter was a key figure in promoting the counterrevolution that destroyed the former USSR. Right: Putin with anti-communist, former Russian president Boris Yeltsin. For nearly three years before becoming president himself, Putin served as a high-ranking official in the Yeltsin regime.



The policy of oppressing nationalities is one of dividing nations. At the same time it is a policy of systematic corruption of the people's minds. The Black Hundreds' plans are designed to foment antagonism among the different nations, to poison the minds of the ignorant and downtrodden masses. Pick up any Black-Hundred newspaper and you will find that the persecution of non-Russians, the sowing of mutual distrust between the Russian peasant, the Russian petty bourgeois and the Russian artisan on the one hand, and the Jewish, Finnish, Polish, Georgian and Ukrainian peasants, petty bourgeois and artisans on the other, is meat and drink to the whole of this Black-Hundred gang.

But the working class needs unity, not division. It has no more bitter enemy than the savage prejudices and superstitions which its enemies sow among the ignorant masses. The oppression of "subject peoples" is a double-edged weapon. It cuts both ways—against the "subject peoples" and against the Russian people.

That is why the working class must protest most strongly against national oppression in any shape and form.

- *National Equality*, V.I. Lenin (1914), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/apr/16.htm>

As part of this struggle, Lenin trained the ethnic Russian working class to physically smash the fascist Black Hundreds and to defend the right to self-determination of the oppressed peoples in imperialist Russia, like the Ukrainians:

Accursed tsarism made the Great Russians executioners of the Ukrainian people, and fomented in them [the Ukrainian people] a hatred for those who even forbade Ukrainian children to speak and study in their native tongue.

Russia's revolutionary democrats, if they want to be truly revolutionary and truly democratic, must break with that past, must regain for themselves, for the workers and peasants of Russia, the brotherly trust of the Ukrainian workers and peasants. This cannot be done without full recognition of the Ukraine's rights, including the right to free secession.

We do not favour the existence of small states. We stand for the closest union of the workers of the world against 'their own' capitalists and those of all other countries. But for this union to be voluntary, the Russian worker, who does not for a moment trust The Russian

or the Ukrainian bourgeoisie in anything, now stands for the right of the Ukrainians to secede, without imposing his friendship upon them, but striving to win their friendship by treating them as an equal, as an ally and brother in the struggle for socialism.

- *The Ukraine*, V.I. Lenin (1914), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/jun/28.htm>

Through such a policy the Bolsheviks were able to unite the toilers of different nationalities in a socialist revolution that shook the world. Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks taught the Soviet masses to understand that their interests were completely synonymous with those of the toilers of the whole world and to see the October 1917 Russian revolution as the first step in the world revolution. However, the communist parties in other parts of the world were too weak and too recently formed to take advantage of the revolutionary wave that swept Europe after the October Revolution. As a result the young Soviet workers state was isolated and then devastated following the bitter, but ultimately victorious 1918-1921 Civil War against the defeated capitalists who waged a violent bid to recapture power with the assistance of invading armies from fourteen capitalist countries. Under these conditions of isolation and scarcity a more rightist, less revolutionary faction of the Soviet Communist party grabbed political power in the mid-1920s promising they would give the masses a respite from the tumult of revolutionary struggles by establishing "peaceful coexistence" with world imperialism. The new leaders rested on the more conservative workers and the rural peasants and especially on the governmental/administrative bureaucracy. Gradually they began securing some material privileges for the emerging bureaucratic elite which they became an organic part of. They murderously persecuted the Trotskyist Left Opposition and countless other communists who spoke out (or even were as seen as potentially speaking out in the future) against the course away from Leninist egalitarianism and internationalism. However, the bureaucracy had to base itself on the progressive, socialist economic relations centred on public ownership that sprung from the 1917 revolution.

Moscow, March 1972: Celebration of International Women's Day at the former USSR's Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University which, in particular, served students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. International students were treated with great respect and warmth in the former USSR. Today, following capitalist counterrevolution, international students in the ex-Soviet republics face abuse and violent attacks.



Furthermore, although the bureaucracy often (with some important exceptions) pushed Lenin's perspective of supporting the international socialist revolution down to the second row in the vain hope of achieving peaceful coexistence with imperialism, the Soviet masses remained imbued with Soviet patriotism – that is, a strong pride in the socialistic character of the USSR and in its principle of friendship among the different peoples of the multi-ethnic republic. It was through this Soviet patriotism that the Soviet masses, with incredible heroism and at great cost, defeated Nazi Germany in World War II. Meanwhile, the USSR's friendship of peoples was secured by its economic system based on common ownership and co-operation between people to achieve central plans. This brought people together, in contrast to the system of individual ownership of capitalism which tears people apart.

Nevertheless, over time the imperialists subjected the Soviet workers state to immense military, economic and political pressure. This pressure was at least 50 times what capitalist Russia is being subjected to today by its Western rivals. The ruling bureaucrats in the USSR would respond to these threats when they directly manifested themselves within the USSR. However, these Soviet leaders who retained great authority over the international workers movement through being the heads of the world's first and most powerful workers state, held back the most powerful counterpunch to the capitalist states threatening the USSR – the revolutionary workers within these capitalist countries themselves. Instead, they extended this arm of the international workers movement to shake the hands of the imperialists in friendship and offer them "peaceful coexistence." The capitalists powers responded by first grabbing this

arm, then twisting it and finally snapping it in half. Panicked, the Soviet bureaucracy also offered the other arm to the imperialists. The imperialists did the same to that arm as well. With the USSR and the international workers movement thus weakened, the Soviet leadership from the time of Gorbachev's ascendancy in the mid-1980s began backpedalling in the face of the imperialist threat. Gorbachev allowed greater freedom for capitalist counterrevolutionary political forces to operate and introduced right wing *perestroika* market reforms. All this created a new layer of petty capitalists – and associated with them a sizeable layer of pro-capitalist intellectuals – demanding more "rights" for capitalism. They pushed the bureaucracy to the right and with each new concession this counterrevolutionary layer became more powerful and more demanding. Eventually, when these counterrevolutionaries with tremendous backing from Washington, London, Canberra and co. made their bids for power in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, the ruling bureaucracies committed their ultimate betrayal of socialism when they (although not all that happy about what was happening) simply stood aside and allowed the pro-capitalist forces to storm in and take power. Even those bureaucrats that did try to mount some form of resistance – like the top Soviet leaders who staged the so-called coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 in opposition to his counterrevolutionary course – capitulated at the first sign of any significant opposition.

Some in the bureaucracy went further and broke away from the mainstream of the Soviet apparatus to become direct agents of the capitalist counterrevolution – like Russian counterrevolution leader Boris Yeltsin and like Putin, who was an adviser to counterrevolutionary Leningrad mayor, Anatoly Sobchak, during the counterrevolution. Others like the first president of post-Soviet capitalist Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, remained with the mainstream of the bureaucracy and then promptly jumped over from being an administrator of a workers state to an administrator of a capitalist state. There were, to be sure, a great many in the bureaucratic establishment, including officers in the Red Army, who were incensed and bewildered at the counterrevolution. These elements were either purged from their positions or retired. However, even though the period from November 1991 to March 1992 saw mass pro-Soviet rallies, proudly, pro-Soviet individuals within the bureaucracy were unable to mount a decisive challenge to the counterrevolution because they lacked any perspective of relying for their strength on the working class masses. It was the Soviet working class that could have stopped the capitalist counterrevolution. However, lacking a genuine communist leadership and having its independent initiative degraded by having been excluded from a vanguard role in active politics for decades by the bureaucracy, the working class did not take the initiative to mobilise decisive action to stop the counterrevolution. This was despite the fact that major portions of the Soviet working class were very worried about the ascendancy of the pro-capitalist forces.

Although the decisive events in the counterrevolution that destroyed the USSR were centred on Russia there were significant counterrevolutionary movements in other republics as well. In Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, Moldova, Azerbaijan and elsewhere, “Popular Fronts” were formed to push for independence from the USSR. These were nothing like the national liberation movements that fought against the Great Russian chauvinism and subjugation of Tsarist times. In Soviet times, although there was a degree of Russian centredness on the part of the bureaucracy, the non-Russian masses did not face significant national oppression. The nationalist “Popular Fronts” in Ukraine and elsewhere were really simply capitalist restorationist movements that used the cover of national independence to promote a call to break from the socialistic USSR and establish capitalist rule. These movements were fed by Gorbachev’s *perestroika* market reforms which by turning away from the even, planned distribution of resources between different republics and regions led to greater competition and income differentials between different republics and thereby exacerbated national divisions. The “Popular Fronts” harked back to anti-Soviet or non-Soviet national figures of their respective republics and insisted on the exclusive use of their national languages as opposed to the bilingualism encouraged in the USSR. The aggressive nationalism, anti-communism and hostility to the use of the Russian language of the current Ukrainian ruling parties is really an extension of the politics of the Ukrainian Popular Front (known as Rukh) that fought to undermine socialistic

rule in the last years of the USSR.

If reactionary nationalism was used as a tool to promote counterrevolution in the various Soviet republics, the effect of the counterrevolution itself was to increase this nationalism many fold. Counterrevolution saw these republics go from being areas of zero unemployment in the mid-1980s to being regions of massive unemployment. In Ukraine capitalist restoration caused its GDP and its industrial production to collapse by a stunning 60%! Under conditions of such scarcity, nationalism flourished. Furthermore, the corrupt new rulers had to whip up reactionary nationalism as a matter of their own survival. Capitalist restoration had been such an all-round disaster – causing immiseration of the masses, an alarming drop in health levels and a massive increase in crime and street violence. Only by offering the masses the “solace” that

they were part of building a strong, new nation and, what is more, standing up to national adversaries could the new ruling class ward off the prospect of being toppled from power. In countries like Ukraine, these new capitalist rulers have stirred up such reactionary nationalism in part by pointing to the ambitions of capitalist Russia and by thus appealing to real fears among “their people” that they would be again subjugated under the thumb of Russia as in the old Tsarist times. However, the lasting effect of some aspects of Soviet development in these countries and the equalisation of development among the different republics of the USSR through central planning mean that it is now not easy (although not impossible in the least developed of the former Soviet republics) for capitalist Russia to replicate the *Great Russian* tyranny last seen in Tsarist times.

WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE MH17 DISASTER AND THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE?

If we now step back and consider who is, ultimately, to blame for the horrific crash of MH17 – regardless of who actually fired the projectiles that downed the aircraft – first and foremost responsibility must fall upon the imperialist ruling classes from the United States to Australia to Japan, Germany and Britain. They mobilised massive financial, military and diplomatic power in order to squeeze the socialistic USSR hard enough to trigger her internal collapse and, consequently, create the misery, racism and chaos out of which the current war in the Donbass – and, thus, the downing of MH17 – grew. The Western imperialists also orchestrated this February’s right wing coup that brought in the new hardline nationalistic regime that provoked the Donbass conflict. Also, major responsibility for the current tragedies lies with the likes of Boris Yeltsin and the Ukrainian Popular Front who, on the ground, spearheaded the capitalist counterrevolutions in Russia, Ukraine and the other former Soviet republics. Then there is the direct responsibility of the political heirs of the Ukrainian Popular Front – from conservatives like Yatsenyuk and the Fatherland Party to outright fascists like Tyahnybok and Yarosh - who conducted the February right wing coup and then unleashed brutal repression against the peoples of the Donbass.

Putin has some responsibility too but less than the Western imperialists and their right wing Ukrainian allies. Furthermore, Putin’s main fault lies in having acted as a *partner* of Washington, Canberra and Co. in being part of the imperialist-orchestrated, Yeltsin-Sobchak counterrevolution that destroyed socialistic rule in the former USSR and thus paved the path for the emergence of the reactionary Ukrainian nationalism of the February coup regime and outright fascists like Svoboda and Pravy Sektor. Then, later, as the chief administrator of capitalist Russia, Putin oversaw the continued immiseration of the Russian masses while spewing reactionary nationalism to help

maintain capitalist rule: both of which have helped to raise large fascist movements within Russia. In turn, the abundance of vile Russian fascists and the great power nationalism of the mainstream Russian ruling class has indirectly bolstered the strength of Ukrainian nationalists and fascists by allowing them to exploit – and hysterically incite – fears of Russian domination.

The criminal role of the Western-based social democrats in the tragedy that has unfolded in Ukraine cannot be underestimated either. These social democrats not only supported the right wing February coup in Ukraine but throughout the Cold War fully supported

Left: In January 1918 armed Ukrainian workers stage a heroic revolt in support of the advancing Soviet Red Army. By unflinchingly opposing the Great Russian chauvinism that had subjugated the Ukrainian people in capitalist Russia, the Bolsheviks were able to build the revolutionary unity of the Russian and Ukrainian masses and ensure the triumph of Soviet forces in Ukraine. Right: Red Army troops march triumphantly through Kiev. The partly shown banner on the left of the photo displays a key slogan of the Bolshevik Revolution which translates as “Proletarians of All Countries Unite.” Ukrainian and Russian workers must again be organised under the internationalist banner of the 1917 Russian Revolution.



their own ruling class' efforts to destroy the Soviet and East European workers states. Here in Australia, pro-ALP union leaders treacherously lined up our workers' unions behind the anti-communist – and, thus, anti-working class – Solidarnosc “union” which with the ardent backing of the Vatican and right wing Western leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher unleashed the counterrevolutionary wave that toppled the workers states in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. Meanwhile, the Hawke-Keating ALP government that came to office in 1983 aggressively supported the U.S.-led Cold War against the USSR both through hosting joint U.S.-Australia military bases in Pine Gape and elsewhere and through politically backing the various anti-Soviet movements from the women-hating Afghan *mujahedin* (out of which the Taliban emerged) to the Ukrainian and Baltic “Popular Fronts” to the Yeltsin-Sobchak counterrevolutionaries in Russia. Right behind the ALP's Cold War drive were the reformist, far-left groups. Most enthusiastic in their opposition to the Soviet workers state was the Cliffite, International Socialist Organisation (ISO) – the parent organisation of both the Socialist Alternative and Solidarity groups. The ISO wielded the bogus theory that the Soviet and East European states were in fact “state capitalist” in order to justify giving enthusiastic support to all the counterrevolutionary movements. When the openly counterrevolutionary Yeltsin forces grabbed governmental power in Russia after opposing a timid, pro-Soviet coup against the sellout Gorbachev and anti-communist mobs then went around Moscow tearing down statues of Russian Revolutionary leaders,

and while Western mainstream newspapers cheered that “Communism is Dead,” this parent group of Socialist Alternative and Solidarity chimed in with: “Communism is dead' It's a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*Socialist*, September 1991). The Democratic Socialist Party (the DSP has now become the Socialist Alliance) was little better, even though, unlike the Cliffites, the DSP recognised **in theory** that the USSR was a workers state. Although the DSP took a progressive position of opposing the CIA-backed *mujahedin* fundamentalists in Afghanistan (a good position which the Socialist Alliance appears to be embarrassed about today), the DSP supported almost every other counterrevolutionary movement that sought to overthrow the Soviet and East European workers states. Among the movements that the DSP were most enthusiastic about were the nationalist and anti-Soviet Ukrainian Popular Front and the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Popular Fronts. This was despite the fact that the DSP were simultaneously cheering for capitulatory Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev who for a time as the leader of the workers state was opposed to these “Popular Fronts.” When the Yeltsin-led open counterrevolutionaries made their bid for power in August 1991, the DSP then committed the ultimate betrayal of socialism by not only “critically” supporting the ascendancy of the Yeltsin forces but actually having a leading DSPer physically join Yeltsin's barricades during the decisive events. This DSP representative, Renfrey Clarke, actually boasted about how he tried to help deliver a letter of solidarity to Yeltsin from then British Labour Party leader

Left: Russian fascists, brandishing the “White Power” symbol, hold a large march in Moscow. The capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the USSR has led to the terrifying growth of fascist forces in Ukraine, Russia and other ex-Soviet republics. Right: Twenty-four year-old Maira Makana was stabbed seven times with a knife in a racist attack by Russian fascists and lost a kidney as a result. In the last ten years, over 1,000 people have been killed in premeditated murders by Russian fascists alone!



Neil Kinnock (see the article, “Eye witness report; Moscow during the coup,” *Green Left Weekly*, 4 September 1991, <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/690>). Even the Communist League (who sell the paper *The Militant*), who are often less inclined to capitulate to imperialism than Socialist Alternative, Solidarity or Socialist Alliance,

joined the counterrevolutionary united front. Thus, their newspaper's description of the victory of Yeltsin's alliance of hardline anti-communist students, small-time capitalists, Orthodox priests and outright fascists was headlined: “Soviet workers defeat coup”!

ADVANCE THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN UKRAINE & RUSSIA!

Kharkiv, May 2014: Communist flags and emblems at the May Day rally. It is Ukraine's ethnically integrated, industrial cities like Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk where a class struggle movement uniting workers across ethnic and linguistic lines could take hold and spearhead the struggle for socialist revolution throughout Ukraine.



Given that it is so obvious that it was the destruction of socialistic rule in the former USSR that has led to the suffering and bloodletting in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics it is clear that what is needed is to fight for new socialist revolutions to restore working class state power to Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Georgia and all the former Soviet republics. Whether the resulting new workers states choose to join into a union - or several unions - and in what combination is a separate and in many ways secondary question. It will depend on the manner in which the poisonous nationalism unleashed by counterrevolution is overcome in the course of the revolutionary struggles. Some may ask: how can we guarantee that new workers states will not again degenerate and be defeated. That would be like a worker asking for an iron-clad guarantee that a strike against bosses will succeed before engaging in it. There are no guarantees in the class struggle. A strike's outcome depends on how decisively the workers act, how far-sighted and resolute their leadership are and how much support the action wins from other workers. Similarly, the integrity and survival of a workers state depends on how secure the workers hold on power is and how much the revolutionary struggle in other countries can come to their assistance. The Soviet workers state first degenerated and many decades later collapsed because the revolutionary working class movement was not powerful enough to overcome the political, economic and military onslaught of world capitalism on the workers state. Ensuring that future workers states are protected against degeneration and collapse requires fighting to ensure that the international revolutionary workers movement is as strong as possible. For ultimately the defence of workers states and the fight to win them are achieved by one and the same method – the method of the revolutionary class struggle.

Key to the struggle for socialism in the former Soviet republics is the fight against the nationalist influence that divides workers of different ethnicities and lines them up behind their “own” exploiters. In the Ukraine, it is urgent for workers to oppose reactionary Ukrainian nationalism with its strong anti-Russian and anti-Semitic bent. However, as each of the competing nationalisms feed off each other it is not possible to defeat simply one of the opposing nationalist ideologies by themselves. Ukrainian and Russian nationalists hate each other but both rely on the existence of the other to justify their own existence. Not only has extreme Ukrainian nationalism come to the fore but Russian nationalism has also surged since the February coup in Ukraine and then further increased with Crimea’s return to Russia and the eruption of the Donbass conflict. Putin has been whipping up this nationalism, which has served to divert the Russian masses’ frustrations at their hardships caused by capitalist inequality and a stagnant economy away from the capitalist exploiters whom Putin serves. Aggressive Russian nationalism is also being promoted by more hardline forces than Putin including the fascist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s misnamed Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. The last few months has seen mass, extreme nationalist rallies in Russia full of reactionary symbols from the Tsarist era such as the black, gold and white monarchist flag used by the Russian empire from 1858 to 1883. Such Russian nationalist mobilisations can only play into the hands of the Ukrainian extreme nationalists who raise the spectre of a return to the subjugation under Russia of the Tsarist times. On the other hand if there were mass workers mobilisations in Russia opposing this reactionary nationalism it would give a great boost to those Ukrainian leftists standing against Ukrainian nationalism and fascism just as a struggle against the anti-Russian ravings of Ukrainian nationalists and their bloody war on the Russian-speaking people of the Donbass would cut the ground from under the Russian nationalists. **For the revolutionary unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers!**

Key to dispersing the poisonous fumes of nationalism and to organising the working class for the struggle for power is to mobilise

working class actions to defend ethnic minorities, dark-skinned immigrants, leftists and gays from the fascists. To be successful such actions must be mass mobilisations. Small scale anti-fascist actions cannot defeat the fascists because in both Ukraine and Russia the fascists are well and truly out of the egg. In Russia not only is there a terrifying level of murders by fascists but Zhirinovskiy’s fascist party received nearly 12% of the vote in Russian parliamentary elections. In Ukraine, the fascists are a component of the actual government. However, they are now threatening to overthrow the government and establish a fascist dictatorship. The slogan of the fascist Ukrainian irregulars fighting in the Donbass conflict is that: once we finish with the Russians we’re coming for the government in Kiev. Although they are part of the government, the fascists think that the conservative majority in the government are not extreme enough in opposing ethnic Russians and Jews. They point to the fact that both the prime minister Yatsenyuk and one of the two vice prime ministers, Volodymyr Groysman, happen to be of Jewish origin to create a fanciful notion of Zionist domination – ironically the very same claim made by Russian fascists within the Donbass rebel forces! The recent offer of regional autonomy for Donbass made by president Poroshenko and the parliamentary majority has further incensed the fascists.

Although the Ukrainian fascist paramilitary forces are a serious threat it is important to note that they do not currently have anywhere near majority support from the Ukrainian people. In the May presidential elections, the two fascist candidates, Tyahnybok of Svoboda and Yarosh of Pravy Sektor, received just a meagre 1.2% and 0.7% of the votes respectively. In the case of Svoboda, this was a notable setback as in the last parliamentary elections in 2012, they received over 10% of the vote. To put the recent electoral showing by the fascists in perspective, in the German elections prior to Hitler taking power in November 1932, Hitler’s Nazis received over 33% of the vote. And in the subsequent elections four months later, before the Nazi forces actually established their fascist dictatorship, the Nazis secured nearly 44% of the vote.

However, the danger of fascists seizing outright power in Ukraine should not be underestimated. In the absence of a class struggle fight on the behalf of the masses’ interests and the building of unity between Ukrainian, Russian, Jewish and other workers, it is certain that fascist demagogues will be able to exploit the economic crisis in Ukraine. Furthermore, even with the limited popular support that they have, the fascist paramilitary forces in Ukraine are right now terrorising leftists, Jews, Russian speakers and dark-skinned migrants and students. What is urgently called for is working class-centred mass actions to defend groups targeted by the fascists. Such a mass working class, anti-fascist movement could first emerge in ethnically integrated, industrial cities like Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk and then spread on to Kiev and other cities. What would give such a movement real authority too is if workers in the Donbass simultaneously mobilised to defend Romani and Ukrainian speaking people from attacks by Russian fascist factions within the rebel forces.

Especially given the penetration of fascists into the Ukrainian state forces, it is crucial for anti-fascist actions to be independent of the state and all wings of the capitalist class. In this way, working class-centred defensive actions against the fascists can become a springboard for a working class offensive against the capitalists and their impending austerity drive. However, to realise such a perspective requires the building of an authentic communist party in Ukraine. The Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) won much support in the past because it was identified with the former USSR. Sympathy

for the KPU reflected the people’s longing for the days of the Soviet Union. However, the KPU squandered this sympathy by seeking alliances with – and thus being tarnished in the eyes of the masses – one or other wing of the capitalist class. In 2010, the KPU became one of the parties in a parliamentary coalition supporting the government led by Mykola Azarov of Yanukovych’s, capitalist Party of Regions. Following the 2012 elections, although trying to distance itself somewhat from this government, the KPU again voted in parliament for the second Azarov government. In earlier years, the KPU had not only supported other corrupt Party of Regions governments but had even once joined a bloc with the conservative, pro-Western parties. Constantly allying with one or other wing of the capitalists, many KPU leaders are careerists who seek the privileges associated with being part of the political elite. At the same time many grassroots and mid-level KPU cadre have shown considerable courage in the face of the right wing repression and fascist attacks of recent months. Yet the KPU itself bows to reactionary nationalism and some KPU cadre have publicly opposed emulating European countries on the grounds that this means accepting African migrants and permitting homosexuality! Against such vile backwardness, a truly communist, internationalist party like Lenin’s must be built. Ukraine needs a party that will train cadre to follow in the revolutionary footsteps of devoted Ukrainian communists of the past like Leon Trotsky and Christian Rakovsky: a party that can unite the toilers of all ethnicities to smash the filthy fascist forces for good by overthrowing capitalist rule.

Crimea, March 2014: Ukrainian colonel leads his troops to try and take back the Belbek Airfield from Russian forces. His troops marched both behind the capitalist Ukraine flag and a communist, Soviet Red Army flag. Continued sympathy for the former Soviet Union amongst the masses of the Ukraine and Russia means that even bourgeois, anti-working class forces like the Ukrainian and Russian militaries sometimes use Soviet symbols in order to gain acceptance.



ONLY SOCIALIST REVOLUTION CAN SAVE HUMANITY FROM THE THREAT OF WORLD WAR THREE!

Since the collapse of the USSR, the U.S.-led Western imperialists have gotten used to bullying the world with little hindrance and little competition. They don't want an emerging Russian capitalist rival spoiling the party and, thus, want to isolate and contain Russia. They know full well that Russia's military strength presents a problem. Late last month, sick of the Western powers' aggressive posture against Russia over Ukraine, Putin boldly declared: "I want to remind you [the West] that Russia is one of the most powerful nuclear nations. This is a reality, not just words." Everyone, indeed, took note because that is indeed the "reality, not just words"!

In the early period after the destruction of the USSR, the new Russian capitalist rulers, while trying to assert their independence – for example in respect to the conflicts in Yugoslavia – were very much junior partners to the U.S. A. It was the U.S. that had orchestrated the capitalist counterrevolution that brought the new rulers to power and they still needed Western help to consolidate their rule. For example, take the 1996 Russian presidential elections for which the Communist Party of the Russian Federation's candidate Gennady Zyuganov was set for victory. Although the Communist Party's program was not revolutionary and Zyuganov's victory would not have spelled the end of the new capitalist state it, nevertheless, would certainly have impeded Russia's free market economic reforms and would have been a stunning propaganda blow against world capitalism. To stop this, the capitalists' chosen candidate, then president Yeltsin relied on massive cash injections from the West to fund his campaign as well as the U.S. pressuring the IMF to grant a \$10.2 billion loan to Russia so that Yeltsin could pay Russia's long overdue wages and pensions on the eve of the elections. Additionally, Yeltsin had to rely on a CIA-assisted dirty tricks campaign against Zyuganov as well as Western and Russian agencies organising massive electoral fraud to "win" the election. More generally, with the destruction of socialistic rule sending the Russian economy into free fall, the new Russian capitalist rulers relied on their Western senior partners for the capital and investments needed to try and stabilise the capitalist economy.

Although at a level far below the relative position of the former USSR, eventually the capitalist Russian economy did stabilise. Putin brought more discipline to the mafia capitalists that ruled Russia – forcing them to give up some of their individual interests and bloody competition between each other

for the sake of the overall interests of their class. Meanwhile, with Russia a huge oil/gas supplier, the strength of Russian capitalists grew as the price of oil and gas surged. Today, world oil prices are well over four times what they were when Putin first became president in 2000! This has been a decisive factor in shaping the Russian capitalist class' outlook. Thus, while Putin does have a slightly different outlook to what Yeltsin did, the main difference in their governments is not due to differing personal political proclivities but due to the different positions of Russian capitalism during their rule. Putin, after all, had been Yeltsin's deputy and heir apparent.

The growing strength of Russian capitalism was highlighted when ten years after a 2003 joint venture between Russian oil tycoons and British petroleum giant BP that produced a company called TNK-BP, this same TNK-BP was taken over by a Russian firm. Today, Russian tycoons with interests in oil/gas, steel and banking are splashing their cash around in investments in the Mediterranean, Middle East, Britain and even Asia. Despite having just 2% of the world's population, nearly 10% of the world's richest 250 people are Russian citizens. Due to the concentrated nature of Russian industry, these oligarchs are so wealthy that they have personally amassed capital of the size held by banks and can often acquire decisive stakes in corporations by themselves or through partnerships among themselves. Russian capitalists are known for buying up big in companies listed on the London Stock Exchange and for buying huge holdings in London property and banks. All this has been of little benefit to working class Russians. However, what its growing economic strength has meant is that Russia has been able to re-modernise its military which had been ageing and deteriorating since the collapse of the USSR.

Some people, noting how the Soviet superpower stayed the hand of the Western powers and prevented these imperialists from riding roughshod over the world to the extent that they wanted to, hope that Russia with its immense military strength and its growing economic clout and self-confidence can now do the same. Indeed, Russian military aid is today, to some extent, assisting Syria to ward off a takeover by the NATO proxy "rebel" forces. Throughout history there have been such examples of capitalist powers providing assistance to a people fighting a just anti-colonial war against one of their rivals in a situation where they were **not** in a position to become the new masters of those people. They did this purely to weaken their rivals. The British imperialists often did this to their rivals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century while during the Second World War, Hitler's Nazis offered some modest assistance to the Indian independence activist Subhas Chandra Bose in his struggle against British colonialism. However, Russia's backing of Syria is largely an exception. Since the emergence of the Putin era, the U.S.-led Western imperialists have continued to trample all over the world's peoples. In 2001 the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and then two years later they invaded Iraq and occupied it for a decade. Russia has also not directly impeded the imperialist drive to destroy the Chinese workers state. Moscow's position with respect to China is, to be sure, nuanced. It is the only world power that does not threaten China either militarily or politically and has built lucrative trade arrangements with China. At the same time it notably refused to stand by socialistic China in its disputes with imperialist Japan over the South China Sea, has supported Washington's push against China's socialistic DPRK ally and did not stand against the anti-communist campaign against China in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics (in turn it has been striking how up to now China has refused to take any stand in defence of its Russian economic partner against the Western attacks on it over the Ukraine crisis). Meanwhile, when NATO moved to bomb Libya and impose regime change on it in 2011, Russia stepped aside and allowed this to happen. And, in general, Russia has not opposed the numerous imperialist military adventures in Africa over the last few years, such as those conducted by the French imperialists in the Ivory Coast and Mali.

In part, this is because Russia's military strength with respect to the NATO powers is slightly below what the USSR's was and so is its relative economic position. However, this is not the only reason. The main reason that Russian power has not been able to play the same curbing role on imperialism that the former USSR did is because Russia is a **capitalist** power whereas the former Soviet Union was a **socialistic** power. And when examining this question, this difference means almost **everything!** This is not to say that we should not welcome Russian support for Syria. Even while maintaining their struggle to overthrow their "own" capitalist rulers, communists in Russia should make sure they do not obstruct whatever arms Russia sends to Syria (while not calling for this themselves) or for that matter the Donetsk and Luhansk separatists. However, in general, in global terms we can have no expectation of Russia being a strategic deterrent to Western imperialism. Russia being a capitalist power means that it will seek out – and has achieved – deals with the Western imperialists to allow the latter's subjugation of "Third World" peoples in exchange for modest stakes for Russia in the resulting loot there or in other theatres of exploitation.

Most importantly, consider the difference in the domestic response when the USSR obstructed imperialism to those cases when Russia defies Western powers. When the USSR crossed imperialism, the response amongst class-conscious workers in imperialist centres like Australia was inspiration and increased sympathy for communism while amongst reactionary elements it brought increased hatred for communism. In short, when the USSR did impede imperialism the battle was reflected domestically as part of the class struggle. A struggle between the working class whose interests lie in fighting for socialism and capitalism whose interests are in crushing communist influence. However, when today Russia (or some other capitalist power) gets in the way of a rival, the effect is to encourage reactionary great power nationalism on all sides. Such reactionary nationalism is poison to class struggle – and **as Marxist-Leninists we understand that ultimately only the class struggle leading to the revolutionary overthrow of imperialist states from within can decisively stop imperialism.**

We, of course, do support the struggle of the masses of the neo-colonial and semi-colonial countries against imperialism. Thus, we defend the Syrian Army's struggle against the Washington-proxy "rebels." However, we do so largely from the point of view that the defeat of the pro-imperialist "rebels" would firstly weaken the imperialist rulers at home and thus encourage the class struggle within the imperialist centres. Secondly, because the defeat of the "rebels" would energise the anti-imperialist, liberation sentiments of the Syrian masses, this could open the door to the Syrian working class taking power from their "own" *economically-tied-to-imperialism* capitalist rulers.

However, there is an emerging left-liberal trend that looks instead to capitalist opponents of the West to be part of a force that can stop the tyranny of Washington-led imperialism. This trend, which is often composed of some very articulate and well-read intellectuals and academics, is not organised or even coordinated and the individuals concerned do not necessarily even consider each other as part of a common trend. However, it consists of people who are co-thinkers on several issues and share certain common features. Firstly, while they also side with socialistic states like China and the DPRK when they are in standoffs with imperialism, they make no distinction between such states and capitalist countries – like Russia and Iran – that clash with Western imperialism, ascribing to each an equal progressive status. Thus, they often have rather unrealistic hopes that the BRICS countries which group together socialistic China with capitalist power Russia, semi-colonial India and capitalist countries in between can actually become a bulwark against imperialism. Secondly, their hopes that certain capitalist countries could become serious impediments to the Western imperialist juggernaut are based on their lack of belief in the revolutionary capacity of the working class in the Western imperialist centres. This springs from the lofty middle class, academic circles that they inhabit from which (looking at the working class from the outside) it is easy to be dismissive of the possibility of revolutionary class struggle. For some within this left-liberal, anti-Western-imperialist trend, their dismissal of the class struggle in the West is all too convenient.

Their relatively privileged position makes them quietly half-satisfied with the domestic reality in the West while finding the Western rulers' entire foreign policy – as well as certain particular excesses at home – cruel and illogical. Thus, some elements within this trend are prone to labelling far-left groups that capitulate to imperialism – like the Cliffites – as "ultra-lefts" rather than as the right-opportunists that they are. This false retort of "ultra-left" allows these middle class, anti-imperialists to, on the one hand, correctly attack left groups for lining up behind Western imperialist regime-change schemes by simply backing every anti-government movement abroad while, on the other hand, maintaining a rotten, liberal critique of these far left groups for being too irreconcilable to the capitalist rulers at home. Yet, in fact, groups like Socialist Alliance and the Cliffite groups (Socialist Alternative and Solidarity) are far from irreconcilable enough *against* the rulers at home – tailing after the ALP and the Greens and promoting strategies for change that rely on organs of the capitalist state. It is, in fact, these groups' rightist adaptation to the imperial rulers at home from which their conciliation to imperialism's agenda abroad arises.

Of course, the individuals who can be considered part of this left-liberal, anti-imperialist trend do make some very well-informed and effective critiques of Western imperialism. Thus, when necessary we should join in united front actions with them, for example against the imperialist drive for regime change in Syria. At the same time we must maintain our clear political independence from them and should criticise their political shortcomings. We need to be clear in the current conflict in Ukraine that while we defend the just struggle of the Donbass separatists and oppose the Western sanctions, bullying and propaganda against Russia, we do so not because we invest in capitalist Russia any progressive mission or because we hope that Russia can, even for its own reasons, become a bulwark against imperialism. We take our positions because this is what is necessary to weaken our "own" imperialism and the nationalism it uses to poison class struggle and because this is what is necessary to advance the struggle for socialism in Ukraine and Russia as well.

We repeat that as Marxist-Leninists we understand that **only** the working class united and drawing behind it all the oppressed in class struggle – alongside socialistic states where the working class masses already hold state power – can ultimately stop imperialism.

As Leninists, we also understand that capitalist powers clashing with rival powers will eventually lead to world war. Capitalist rivalries brought us two world wars last century. If the capitalist system is not overthrown it will lead to a new world war – this time one fought where all sides have nuclear weapons at the **start** of the war. During the Occupy protests in 2011, some liberals and conspiracy types promoted theories, still prevalent today, that capitalism is simply a system of financial schemes where people in three piece suits dream up devious monetary plots to rip off the population. However, there is much, much more to it. Capitalism is a system of exploitation of labour ultimately enforced not only by propaganda but by the use of, or threatened use of, force against those who dare to resist. It also involves the capitalists of the more powerful countries exploiting the masses of the poorer countries again through the actual, or threatened, use of military force. Furthermore, this imperialist tyranny abroad is protected from rivals and *would be* rivals also by the use, or threatened use, of military force. In summary, violence is at the heart of capitalism especially in its final and highest stage – the stage of imperialism.

To put things in perspective, the tensions between the U.S.-led Western imperial powers and their Russian would-be capitalist rival are, currently, nothing like the level they were between the rival capitalist powers at the start of World Wars I and II. Indeed, the current tensions between the Western powers and capitalist Russia are not yet, at the time of writing, a quarter of what they were at the height of the Cold War between the imperialist powers and the socialistic USSR. It was then that huge, heavily armed, military forces faced off against each other on the borders between the U.S.-led imperialist countries and the Moscow-led, Warsaw Pact socialistic countries. However, the heightened capitalist tensions do point very much to the future slide towards world war. The expected line-up and combinations in such a possible conflict can

quickly change. The capitalist powers have no real loyalty to each other. Although, currently, the NATO countries are all arrayed against Russia, we can see how France and especially Germany eye up Russia's military strength and wonder how nice it would be to combine their economic clout with Russia's military power to stop the Americans from dominating everything. Indeed, it was notable that Germany, which has close economic ties with Russia, was not happy with the recent NATO meeting that approved a tougher line against Russia. France, for its part, had to be pressured by the U.S. to postpone – for the time being – the delivery of two, highly advanced Mistral navy assault ships to Russia. Meanwhile, the extent of friction between the U.S. and its German "ally" is evident in the recent revelations of extensive U.S. spying on German government leaders and in the angry response it provoked from the German government. In July, the stakes were raised further when Germany expelled the CIA representative at the U.S. embassy in Berlin. As for what the U.S. really thinks of its EU "partners" this was colourfully expressed in U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland's now famous, "F_ck the EU!" statement to the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine that was recorded in the phone intercept, referred to earlier. There are indeed some elements within the Washington establishment that wonder why it is not Russia that the U.S. is allying with. They think having Russia aboard could put their West European potential competitors on the back foot and, what is more, secure Russia's co-operation for the anti-communist drive against China.

Odessa, April 2014: Mass protest against the post-February 2014 coup regime.



Odessa, 4 May 2014: Heavily armed Ukrainian police unleashed against anti-government protesters.



It is the question of China that moderates and conditions inter-imperialist tensions. What unites the various imperialist powers is their common need to ultimately destroy the socialistic state in China. Thus, the drive against China somewhat retards the inter-capitalist rivalries. The extent to which rivalries flare up is, therefore, also conditioned by the extent to which the imperialists are confident that the current degree of capitalist economic penetration within China can open the way for capitalist counterrevolution there. The renewed pro-market reforms being flagged in China by rightist premier Li Keqiang – most significantly ones that involve sales of minority stakes in some state-owned enterprises to private investors – and the replacement of the former Hu Jintao government by a more right-leaning one headed by Xi Jinping has, no doubt, given the imperialists renewed hope. Yet they would also recall that every time in the past that they feel that they are making progress towards the goal of precipitating the collapse of socialistic rule in China, the goal posts seem to move further away as the intervention of the Chinese working class and determined leftists force a retreat in pro-capitalist measures. Xi Jinping's recent unequivocal statements that China must stick to socialism would have again recalled these disappointments amongst the imperialists. In December last year, a U.S. warship almost rammed into a Chinese naval vessel in the South China Sea, highlighting that Washington understands that the collapse of socialistic rule in China can only be possible if the imperialists maintain military and political pressure on the PRC.

Even given the moderating of inter-capitalist tensions due to the existence of a socialistic power, the capitalist system, if not overthrown first, will ultimately, soon or latter, lead to world war. For the only way that the capitalist powers can make up for the decay of their system at home – which has seen major parts of the capitalist world lurching from one economic crisis to another over the last 6 years – is through increasing their plunder and exploitation of the peoples of the “Third

World.” However, there is only a finite amount of bounty to loot and each of the capitalist powers want as great a share of it as possible. It is this intense competition for spheres of exploitation that will inevitably lead to a new world war unless the system that causes it is not first swept away through socialist revolution.

Right now, one set of tasks for Western leftists that are necessary to advance the struggle for socialist revolution is to demand the lifting of Western sanctions against their Russian rival, to oppose their military aid to their Ukrainian junior partners and to oppose the Western imperialist propaganda and diplomatic campaign against Russia. Let's not allow Tony Abbott – and the pro-capitalist ALP – to get away with diverting working class anger at the ruling class' vicious attacks on low rent public housing and its planned assault on medicare and unemployment payments by whipping up national-chauvinism against Russia. As communists, who passionately support what the former Soviet workers state represented, we of course have a special hatred for the Ukrainian and Russian capitalists whose rule was founded on the destruction of our USSR. But we understand that behind this counterrevolution stood the Western imperialists – who remain the most powerful, brutal and dangerous forces on the planet today. One of the partners in this Western imperialist alliance happens to be the Australian capitalist class – the main enemy of this country's working class, Aboriginal people, non-white working class youth, the unemployed and all the poor. Let's make sure workers are not lined up behind the predatory schemes abroad of Australian imperialism. Let's instead do everything to weaken this main enemy at home so that the working class and the downtrodden can eventually sweep away from power this nasty, racist and ambitious exploiting class for good.



ANTI-FASCISTS GIVE VIOLENT RACISTS A DRUBBING IN MARRICKVILLE **BUILD TRADE UNION-CENTRED MASS ACTIONS TO CRUSH THE FASCISTS!**

26 July 2014 - The pathetic group retreated in defeat. The extreme racists of the “Party For Freedom”. Today, they had tried to picket the Woolworths store in the multiracial Sydney suburb of Marrickville in protest against the Muslim festival of Ramadan. However, their efforts to whip up hatred and violence against Muslim people were thwarted by a counter-action of about 80 anti-racist Marrickville residents, trade unionists, Aboriginal activists, anarchists and socialists. Despite a line of police protecting the violent racists, the determined anti-fascist counter-demonstrators, chanting “Drive Out, Drive Out, Drive Out the Racist Filth!”, ensured that the white supremacists lost possession of the two large bags of racist leaflets that they had as well as many of their placards. Before long the demoralized “Party For Freedom” scum abandoned their demonstration. This was an important victory against extreme racism – fanatical racism that sprouts from atop the official racism of the Abbott gang as well as the ALP Opposition and which finds fertile soil in the conditions of economic insecurity, unemployment and casualisation of work created by decaying capitalism.

Following the victory in Marrickville, the core of the anti-racist demonstrators marched to nearby Tempe to picket a meeting of the fascist Australia First Party held at their heavily fortified shop/bunker. The picket was able to ensure that no one responding to the advertising leaflets for the meeting could have entered through the main entrance of the shop front on Princes Highway. However, protected by a cordon of police, including riot police, the neo-Nazis entered through a back entrance. Police also outrageously arrested and charged one anti-racist demonstrator. All anti-racist activists must demand the immediate dropping of all charges against our anti-fascist brother.

In response to the chants of anti-fascists, the Australia First Party filth shouted out from their store, “White Australia!” This highlights how anyone who is not of white skin is an immediate target of these groups. Thus, while today's Australia First Party meeting was

aimed against mainly East Asian and Indian international students, tomorrow their main target could be Aboriginal people, the next day people of Middle Eastern background and the day after that those of an African origin.

The fascists are the most extreme of backward elements amongst economically uncertain small businessmen/individual contractors and amongst unemployed/under-employed layers of society who fanatically take their insecurities out on ethnic minorities and the organised left and workers movement. Fascism when it becomes a mass movement mobilises the most reactionary layers of the middle class in fearful rage against those below them on the socio-economic scale. Sometimes certain fascist groups claim to also represent middle class hostility to the bankers. However, their extreme opposition to the workers movement – the only movement able to defeat the financial elite – means that they end up pandering to the finance



July 26, Marrickville, Sydney: A planned rally by the vile racist Party For Freedom (on the right of photo) was swamped by a much larger anti-fascist mobilisation.

capitalists as well. Thus fascists end up being the crudest and most rabid enforcers of capitalist interests in every way imaginable. When fascist movements in Australia reached their high point in the late 1920s - early 1930s - in particular the Old Guard and New Guard outfits - these paramilitary fascist squads were notorious for attacking workers' strikes, bashing union leaders, violently storming communist meetings and even targeting left ALP events and politicians.

Today's fascists in Australia are seeking to acquire the strength to replicate the anti-union and anti-Left violence of the Old Guard and New Guard days. They are also the most fanatical champions of one of the capitalist class's key strategic goals - to destroy socialistic rule in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). Both the "Party for Freedom" and the Australia First Party seek to whip up hostility to the PRC by promoting the myth of an impending "Chinese takeover" of Australia. The "Party for Freedom" also rails against communist "atrocities" in China and on May 14 hosted a film night in Sydney featuring whacko claims that the Chinese government was harvesting the organs of political prisoners (<http://www.partyforfreedom.com.au/2014/05/06/film-night-on-chinese-government-harvesting-organs/>). The meeting hosted by former One Nation NSW Chairman, Bob Vinnicombe, included Chinese Falun Gong members and featured a film about supposed cruelty to Falun Gong members in China. What unites the white supremacist Party For Freedom fascists with the right wing, Washington-

funded Chinese group Falun Gong (which poses as simply a harmless religious group) is fanatical hatred of communism and a shared belief in unscientific, fascist notions of racial purity. Thus, when he toured Australia in 1996 the Falun Gong fuhrer, Li Hongzhi, ranted that mixed race children are the spawn of the "Dharma Ending Period," a Buddhist phrase that refers to an era of moral degeneration. He even disgustingly claimed in a speech in Sydney that heaven itself is segregated: "the yellow people, the white people, and the black people have corresponding races in heaven" (*The New York Times*, 30 April 2000) and thus mixed race people have no place in heaven! Falun Gong also share the fascists' reactionary program on other social questions. They spew fanatical hatred of homosexuality and denounce the anti-capitalist, 1949 Chinese Revolution for destroying traditional Confucian values - values that justified the cruel oppression of women and children in pre-1949 China.

This alliance between the Australian fascists and Chinese hard line, anti-communists explains why a Chinese looking man was amongst the white supremacists participating in the aborted Party for Freedom rally in Marrickville today. It seems that a non-white person is acceptable to the white supremacist filth as long as they are an extreme anti-communist who is sufficiently fanatical in their commitment to the fascists' - and, indeed, the mainstream capitalists' - strategic goal of smashing socialistic rule in China. Whether non-white, right wing allies of the white supremacists would escape the gas chambers in the event of a fascist takeover of Australia is, perhaps, another story!

THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE JULY 26 ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

Currently, the fascist groups in Australia are not a mass movement as they are in large swathes of Europe. However, the inevitable deepened economic crisis that capitalism will engender in Australia could give them an opportunity to also rapidly spread here. Furthermore, even now these groups can play a dangerous role by at times igniting the widespread racist sentiments within Australian capitalist society into burning and violent racist hatred. An example of just this was the role that the Australia First Party played in inciting the horrific December 2005 white supremacist riot at Cronulla Beach. More frequently, extreme racist political groups can push the many individual, garden-

variety apolitical racists out there into a more conscious and violent bigotry. On the other hand, every public blow landed against the violent racist groups sends a message to the unorganized bigots as well that it is not in their interests to bully non-white kids at school, abuse Asian passengers on public transport, spit on Muslim women on the streets or pick fights with African youth in nightclubs. While white, middle class liberals can comfortably preach the virtues of "ignoring" the fascists, for Aboriginal, Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Islander people, crushing the fascists is a matter of enforcing their right not to have to face constant racist harassment. For activists standing for the interests of the working class, stopping the fascists is absolutely vital. If fascists are allowed to spread racial hatred, efforts to unite workers to fight for their rights will be sabotaged.

That is why we congratulate all those who sincerely participated in the anti-racist victory in Marrickville today. Special mention must go to the Red Anarchists ("anarcho-communists") and anarchists who took the important initiative of calling for and building today's anti-fascist action. We Leninists in Trotskyist Platform are happy to have been able to contribute to driving today's action forward and to have worked hard to promote the action in working class suburbs in the days leading up to it. Two other socialist groups also joined the Marrickville anti-fascist action: Socialist Alliance and Solidarity.

We should, however, not become complacent following today's victory. Although the humiliating retreat they were forced to make today will surely demoralize the fascist Party For Freedom and discourage unorganized racists from joining them, the next time they will surely be more prepared. Given the violent essence of the fascists and the fact that they have the police on their side, we need to ensure that every anti-fascist action is properly planned and built. It follows then that we should not at this stage think we can simply respond to every single fascist provocation but should, instead, respond only to those provocations where we reasonably believe that we have the required lead time and means to build actions that can overwhelm the fascists with numbers. What we should avoid is the situation that occurred in Doonside in Western Sydney on May 24. Then, despite the sincere efforts of rally organizers and participants, an anti-fascist picket (of an Australia First Party meeting) that was only built up in a short space of time ended up with a smaller number of people participating in the picket than were at the

violent racists' meeting. This not only put the anti-racist activists in a physically dangerous situation but it did little to encourage the development of the anti-fascist movement for the future. Victories over the extreme racists like today's at Marrickville strengthen the anti-fascist movement and demoralize the enemy. But defeats or impotent actions have, unfortunately, the very opposite effect.

To build a powerful anti-fascist movement we must, of course, learn lessons from every action that we take. Even a victorious action like the one today provides valuable lessons and shows up the current weaknesses of the movement. One of the key lessons from today is that it showed once again that in the struggle between extreme racists and anti-racists, the Australian police are clearly on the side of the violent racists. It was obvious to nearly all anti-racist demonstrators today that the police were protecting the fascists in both Tempe and Marrickville. Furthermore, not only did they arrest one anti-fascist demonstrator but while we were outside the Australia First Party store in Tempe they provocatively videoed us while not doing the same to the racist filth hurling abuse from inside their lair. This is little surprise as police act to defend the same capitalist class whom the fascists actually serve. As Trotskyist Platform comrades stressed when addressing



July 26, Tempe, Sydney: Anti-fascists picket a meeting of the neo-Nazi Australia First Party held at their headquarters in Tempe.

today's demonstration, to force the police to stand aside so that the fascist threat can be crushed requires the power of the multiracial workers movement to be brought to bear. And the numerical strength and industrial power of the workers movement is all the more important when the fascist enemy is fortified in a bunker as they are in Tempe.

To win sections of the union movement to the anti-fascist struggle requires persistent work. We need to show active workers that defeating the violent racists is part of building the unshakeable workers unity that is so indispensable to the struggle for workers rights. That is why the official calls for anti-fascist actions must in this way appeal to the class interests that the workers movement has in stopping the fascists. The official call for today's action did not do this and this must be rectified for the next anti-fascist action. Of course, appealing to the class interests of the working class necessarily means turning off anti-union, small-l liberals. But so be it! The fascist threat is not going to be stopped by well-heeled pacifist liberals but by the mass power of the working class united with Aboriginal people, non-white "ethnic" communities and committed anti-racist activists.

A powerful union presence on our side would also help rectify a weakness in the anti-fascist

movement that was to some extent evident today. That problem was a tendency for a portion of the anti-fascist activists to sometimes move to a different geographical area without taking the rest of the demonstration with them. Although there were no adverse consequences from this today, it sometimes left parts of the demonstration in Tempe in a state vulnerable to a potential violent fascist counter-attack (and one would be foolish to rely on the police to protect us anti-racists from this). For the future, those planning anti-fascist actions should organize a small, respected leadership team and marshalls for the day to ensure that all demonstrators move together as one and also to be able to make quick decisions when the need for either a rapid offensive or a quick retreat does not allow for consensus discussions to take place. The workers movement has an innate ability to organize in such a disciplined manner because workers' own experience in daily struggles against the capitalist bosses teaches them that only through collective, tightly united action can they defeat their enemy.

We reprint the leaflet that Trotskyist Platform issued to help publicize today's anti-fascist action. The leaflet was mass distributed in multiracial working class suburbs and worksites.

UNION CONTINGENTS UNITED WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, LEFTISTS & "ETHNIC" COMMUNITIES CAN GET THE JOB DONE JUST LIKE ON MAY 2ND IN BRISBANE!

DRIVE THE EXTREME RACISTS OUT OF MARRICKVILLE

22 July – Sinister forces are trying to infect society with a dangerous disease. The disease of fascism. On July 26th in Sydney two extreme white supremacist groups are planning provocations aimed at inciting racist violence. Firstly, at 11^{am} the Freedom Party of Australia plan to picket outside a Woolworths store in Marrickville in opposition to Woolworths putting "Happy Ramadan" signs on some stores as a marketing method. This protest by the fascists has nothing to do with supporting secularism and everything to do with whipping up hatred against Muslims, Arabs, North Africans and South Asians. Thus, the call for the fascist demonstration features inciteful and ridiculous claims that celebrating

Ramadan is equivalent to supporting terrorism, paedophilia and world domination by Muslims. Then at 1:30^{pm}, the Australia First Party, led by former Australia Nazi party activist Jim Saleam, plan to hold a forum at their Tempe bunker titled, "Overseas Students Go Home." This group no doubt hopes to stir up a wave of violent assaults and even murder of Indian and Chinese students like the horrific wave that swept Australia in the 2009-10 period.

The two fascist events on July 26th are aimed at recruiting to and organising for racist violence. They present an immediate danger to Asians, Arabs, Africans, Aboriginal people and other non-white people. These events are also an

immediate threat to the interests of the entire working class. The extreme racism that they will pour into society is absolute poison to workers' unity – the unity without which workers cannot organise to fight for their rights against exploiting bosses. Thankfully, left-wing autonomous-minded activists around the Black Rose library have taken the worthy initiative of calling for a counter-action against the July 26th fascist provocations. They are calling **for people to gather at 11^{am} outside the Woolworths at 463 Illawara Rd, Marrickville to stop the disgusting anti-Muslim action by the "Freedom Party."** After that provocation is dealt with, anti-racists may then move on to picket the sinister AFP meeting in Tempe. It is expected that many anti-racists, leftists and trade unionists will participate. **We in Trotskyist Platform call on trade unions to take the lead in supporting the July 26th anti-fascist counter-demonstration. Trade unionists must join together with Aboriginal people, Asians, Africans, Middle Eastern people, Islanders, leftists, feminists, Jews, Muslims, gays and lesbians as well as other members of the LGBTI community, anti-racists and all other intended victims of the fascists in a mass action that sweeps the "Freedom Party" filth off the streets.**

Fascist groups in Europe like the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn Party in Greece and various sinister outfits in Ukraine have been growing by feeding off the massive unemployment and insecurity caused by the capitalist economic crisis. Their counterparts here are seeking to emulate this. Some of them are following the road of the likes of the Front National in France, the British National Party and Jobbik in Hungary who have tried to hide their neo-Nazi essence in order to win greater electoral support. Yet these parties find it hard to hide their Hitler-like hatred for non-Aryan people. The Freedom Party of Australia policy while welcoming immigration from Europe and North America calls for banning immigration from Muslim or Third World countries. They then go on to "justify" this with nutty claims that "third world populations" have disproportionately higher crime rates. The Australia First Party is even more fanatical – if that's possible. The featured section of their website dealing with immigrants includes links with such "civilised" headings as "Barbaric Cultures," "Ethnic Crime Wave" and "Foreign Monster Doctors." What this kind of propaganda is aiming to achieve was seen in December 2005 when the Australia First Party played a prominent role in organising the Cronulla riot

where a horde of white supremacists unleashed shocking violence against Middle Eastern, South Asian and Aboriginal youth who went to visit the beach. And this very year on January 26th in Brisbane, the AFP attacked the Invasion Day protest march which was being led by Aboriginal people. That is why it is not possible to debate these fascists. They are organising for racist violence. The physical threat that they pose must be met with a powerful physical response. Mass action must show those considering joining these outfits that it is a serious health hazard to be associated with these fascist groups.

The violent racism of the fascists goes hand in hand with their hostility to the workers movement. The Freedom Party want to turn the long term unemployed into a slave labour workforce by making them work for private businesses who, according to the Freedom Party's policy, will only have to fork out 25% of market wages. The AFP for its part rabidly joins the bosses' campaign against the construction workers union by railing against "CFMEU thugs." Just like Mussolini and Hitler, if these fascists ever came to power they would smash all independent unions and would jail or execute union leaders and activists. That is why it is in the direct interest of the working class to smash the fascists. The workers movement here is key both because of its numbers and also because the day to day experience of working together at the same workplace gives the proletariat the unique ability to organise and to act in a disciplined and unanimous manner – the disciplined unity in action needed to physically stop the violent fascist threat. This power of the organised working class was evident in glorious form on May 2nd in Brisbane when over a hundred construction workers from the BLF, CFMEU and ETU trade unions formed the core of a demonstration of 200 anti-racists that successfully shut down an attempted march by the fascist Australia First Party through the streets of the Queensland capital.

In combating the white supremacists, we should not make any appeals to capitalist governments of any stripe to act against the fascists. These governments, like the capitalist state in general, serve the same capitalist exploiting class whom the fascists – with their divisive extreme racism and hostility to the workers movement and the Left – also serve. It is the official racism of Liberal, ALP and, indeed, even ALP/Greens coalition governments – with their racist war on refugees and their

paternalist Intervention against Aboriginal communities – that is fuelling the fascist fire. The police who murder Aboriginal people in custody and regularly harass working class African, Asian, Middle Eastern and Islander youth and the courts that disproportionately jail Aboriginal people and Asians for minor offences have far more in common with the white supremacist thugs than they do with anti-fascists. That is why, every time that anti-fascists have mobilised against a neo-Nazi threat in Australia the police have protected the fascists – and often have attacked the anti-racists as well. Police planned to do the same in Brisbane on May 2nd but the presence of large contingents of construction unionists at the anti-fascist counter-action gave them pause. For the workers contingents had not only physical muscle but industrial muscle – the power to shut down production through collective industrial action. The police knew that if they attacked such a large amount of trade unionists they risked provoking strikes that would hurt the profits of their capitalist masters. That is why the struggle to defeat fascism must be centred on a perspective of mobilising the working class. Should the capitalist state, in order to preempt an anti-fascist mobilisation, decide to pull the leashes in on their fascist dogs for a while we would not get in the way of this. However, we certainly should not be directly appealing for this to happen as that, ultimately, would only build dangerous illusions in the capitalist state. It would have the effect of demobilising the necessary mass anti-fascist actions by making people believe it is the state that can stop the violent racists for us.

Similarly, we should not be appealing to Woolworths bosses to take action against the fascists. Instead, we should be appealing to Woolworths storemen and women and service staff who are not only part of the working

class that is threatened by the fascists but, moreover, are immediately threatened by the Freedom Party's planned picket. In contrast, if the Woolworths bosses do take legal action against the fascists for their own commercial reasons then this would be a hollow victory for our side. It may well impede the immediate fascist provocation but by circumventing the necessary mass mobilisation it undermines the energisation and organisation of the masses against the fascists that alone can, in the long run, combat the overall threat of fascism.

In the end, to bury fascism for good, the working class must lead all the downtrodden in overturning the capitalist system whose unemployment, poverty and official racism are the bedrock on which the fascists grow. In that struggle the Woolworths bosses as well as the capitalist courts, police and governments are on the opposite side of the barricades. When the toiling masses take power they will establish a new state that in place of killing Aboriginal people, protecting fascists and attacking workers' picket lines will, instead, crush violent racists and enforce the creation of a classless socialist society. A society of such abundance, egalitarianism and anti-racism that the need for a coercive state itself will, one day, eventually wither away.

The struggle to build militant working class action against the neo-Nazi threat is an important part of the struggle for workers' rule because it trains the masses to rely only on their own collective power, increases their self-confidence and tightens unity both within the working class and with their brothers and sisters in oppressed ethnic and religious communities. It is also in the first place a matter of simply defending the working class and its allies against the threat of racist violence. So let's work hard to build a mass action of trade unionists, Aboriginal people, non-white "ethnic" people and anti-racist activists of all colours to crush the planned white supremacist provocations on July 26th. **Let's ensure that the working class-centred May 2nd victory in Brisbane is repeated on July 26th in Marrickville!**

Cronulla Beach, Sydney, December 2005: Racist cowards bash a non-white person visiting the beach. The disgusting white supremacist riot was incited by the Australia First Party among others.



SYDNEY RALLY OPPOSES ENTIRE U.S. AND AUSTRALIAN IMPERIALIST INTERVENTION IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

Dozens of people rallied on November 29 in the inner-western Sydney suburb of Ashfield to oppose the U.S. and Australian military intervention in Syria and Iraq. The united front action was held under the main slogans, "Obama, Abbott and Shorten's Military Intervention Is Bad For Working Class People - Oppose the U.S. & Australian Ruling Class and Down with Their War in the Middle East!" The demonstration called to "Defend Syria against Western Imperialism and its 'Rebels!'"

In introducing the demonstration, rally chair, Sarah Fitzenmeyer, who is also the chairwoman of Trotskyist Platform, demolished the various "rationales" used by ruling class politicians to justify their war drive:

"The rulers of Australia, the United States, Britain and other Western powers are slamming bombs into Iraq and Syria. To save the world from a deadly threat or so they say. But why should working people even think of believing them? Look at what these 'great leaders,' these rulers are doing here!

"... **Slamming** the poor by making them **pay** for doctors visits.

"**Increasing** the cost of going to university.

"**And** they want to leave jobless people up to the age of 30 with absolutely no financial support whatsoever for six months every year that they're unemployed!

"And low-income single-mothers will never forget how the last Labor government cruelly and treacherously **slashed** their parenting payments.

"Meanwhile, the ruling class is using a Royal Commission into **our** trade unions as a precursor to a full-blown union busting attack.

"In this country there is the shocking fact that **not one** murdering police enforcer has **ever** been jailed for the hundreds of Aboriginal people that have been killed in custody. In America right now our Black and Hispanic working class sisters and brothers are under a state of siege. They are under

siege by a heavily militarized police force. A couple of days ago, *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran a picture of Ferguson, Missouri looking like some kind of snowy Fallujah at the height of the Iraq War. National guardsmen are patrolling the streets of this American mid-West town in combat gear. All in order to repress the 100% justified acts of outrage after the murder of an unarmed Black teenager, Michael Brown, and the subsequent exoneration of the racist white pig police officer, Darren Wilson, who murdered the boy.

"Sisters and brothers, the fact is that the governments involved in the U.S.-led bombing campaign do not serve the interests of ordinary working class people. Capitalist institutions are the enemy of workers and the oppressed. They are the servants of the big business owners - the lackies of the capitalist big end of town. And there is no bigger, more brutal lackey and one that is more dangerous to the working people than the military machine of the capitalist state, armed to the hilt with its monstrous weapons of mass destruction.

"The war that the U.S. and Australian rulers are waging in the Middle East is **not** in the interests of working class people. It **is** in the interests of the Andrew Forrests, the Gina Rineharts, the Packers, Lowys, Murdochs and all the other corporate bigwigs. This war is **against** the interests of working class people, Aboriginal people and all of the oppressed.

"When the U.S. and Australian regimes act abroad, they act with the same hostility to the interests of all working class people



Protestors at the November 29 anti-imperialist rally in Ashfield, an inner western suburb of Sydney.

as they do at home. But they act with even more brutality. They have arrogant contempt for the masses of the so-called 'Third World.' The big business owners, who the Washington and Canberra regimes actually serve, exploit workers at an even greater rate in the poorer, ex-colonial countries that largely make up what's known as the 'Third World.' 'Fighting terrorism' is the pretext for looting natural resources and subjecting these countries to the tyranny of debt bondage. To further the imperialist plunder in the Middle East is the reason why they are bombing in Syria and Iraq. Enforcing their predatory, neo-colonial goals is their **MAIN** aim."

The theme of the demonstration was that standing against the U.S. and Australian capitalist rulers' war in the Middle East is part of fighting against their attacks at home on the working class, Aboriginal people, coloured "ethnic" communities, public housing tenants and all the poor. As the rally chair explained:

"It goes without saying that it is the people of the Middle East who will suffer the most from this war. But every bomb landed by the U.S.A and Australia in the Middle East will reverberate at home too. When the capitalist ruling class wages a bullying imperialist war abroad it means they also wage a war at home, a war against our trade unions, against Aboriginal people, against refugees, against single mothers and in fact

against all the poor.

"Already, the war fever and the "terrorism" hysteria has helped Abbott to churn up a rabid nationalist and racist climate that has helped him to divert mass frustrations away from his government's anti-working class budget.

"There have been so many grotesque attacks on Muslim men, women and children ...

"Racism is poison to the unity that working class people need to stand up to their exploiters. Racism is absolute poison to workers unity: an evil brew that the capitalist class likes to concoct and stirs up so intently, practically every passing hour of the working day, in order to try to divide and conquer the working masses. For the working masses of Australia, in fact of the whole world, are a people of a myriad creeds and colors who, by a singular turn of the wheel of history, now find themselves working side by side on the production line. Just as, arms linked - black to white to yellow to white and back to black again - they are fighting together on the picket line, fighting for their common rights as workers. This is the multi-racial, multi-national and united working class that the capitalist robber barons fear the most. Racism is the capitalist class' final key, a knife that they intend to use to cut this multiracial unity of workers into countless irreconcilable, squabbling and ultimately warring pieces. Right now the bosses are gearing up for

a full-scale union-busting attack on the proudly multi-ethnic CFMEU construction workers union as well as other unions. Only a united union, undivided by the scourge of racism and its nasty twin, nationalism, can hope to withstand the union-busting storm that's on its way. The ruling corporate class wants to wage imperialist war abroad not only for their predatory search for super-profits and world domination of resources and markets but because it helps them to stir up racism and nationalism and thus to suppress the working class and anti-racist movements at home.

"That's why we must mobilise the working class and all the downtrodden in mass action against this latest neo-colonial war. Today marks the very beginning of the struggle to build a pro-working class movement against the neo-colonial intervention by the U.S. and Australian ruling classes in Syria and Iraq."

In motivating the need to oppose this latest U.S.-led predatory war, rally chair Sarah Fitzenmeyer stressed that

"... a major aim of their latest intervention is to push for the overthrow of the Assad government in Syria. The Assad government is itself a capitalist government - except that it is too independent from the Western imperialist powers for the USA and its coalition of the greedy and the ruthless to tolerate."

This latter point about how the Western powers are using the pretext of opposing ISIS to manoeuvre towards imposing regime change in Syria was explosively underscored just eight days after the Ashfield rally when Washington's Israeli attack dogs unleashed fighter aircraft to bomb targets inside Syria including the international airport in the capital Damascus.

Addressing the November 29 rally, Behrooz, spokesman for the Supporters of the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas, also powerfully rebuffed media propaganda that the U.S.-led military intervention in the Middle East is about "fighting terrorism":

"Is this action in response to terrorism and stopping the reactionary ISIS group, or is it a plan to dominate the Middle East by redeploying its forces in Iraq and occupying Syria?

"United States in the past three and half years actively mobilised and trained all reactionary opposition groups in Syria in cooperation with totalitarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, UAE and Turkey. These murderers have free movement in all of the above mentioned countries and military bases with active support of the army and full support from the USA.

"The Liberal, National and Labor governments in Australia unconditionally have supported the invasion of Iraq and destruction of Syria, Australia has aligned itself with the most jingoistic warmongers in the USA; ignoring the loss of lives and devastation of many countries such as Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, these are just a few examples in only the past few years."

Representing the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) at the November 29 action, Wayne Sonter, Secretary of the Sydney District Committee of the CPA, convincingly took on the arguments he has heard from what he called a "Right Opposition" within the Western Left and the expatriate Syrian



One of the calls of the 29 November demonstration in Ashfield was to "Defend Syria against Western Imperialism and its 'Rebels!'" Protestors hold up a Syrian national flag at the rally.

community. These people justify their refusal to campaign against the U.S.-led airstrikes with the argument that the Syrian government has not attempted to shoot down the Western fighter aircraft. Sonter pointed out, for one, that Syria is not in a military position to take an action which would trigger a direct war with the U.S. and its lackeys. The fact that Syria has not at this point tried to shoot down NATO aircraft does not make the U.S. empire's blatant violation of Syrian sovereignty any less a threat to Syria and its independence. And this is a fact regardless of the Syrian government's immediate stance towards this Western intervention. The CPA representative especially skewered those refusing to oppose the U.S.-led war drive from a seemingly opposite direction to the "Right Opposition." He emphasised that left groups such as the Cliffite Socialist Alternative are cheerleading for imperialism when they cheer for the imperialist proxy Syrian "Rebels."

The weekend prior to the Ashfield rally, some of the groups backing the pro-imperialist "Rebels" in Syria that the CPA spokesman referred to held a protest in Sydney's Town Hall Square that opposed the bombing of Iraq but was pointedly silent on the imperialist intervention in Syria. These groups – like Socialist Alternative, Solidarity and Socialist Alliance – do not want to squarely oppose the imperialist intervention in Syria because, for one, a major part of that intervention is the U.S. government's scheme to greatly increase

arming and training of the pro-imperialist Syrian "Rebels" – the same ones that these left groups back. Secondly, after having said little in solidarity with the secular, Syrian-based Kurdish groups for two years when those Kurdish parties were in a defacto alliance with the Assad government against the religious fundamentalist "Rebels," now that Syrian Kurdish factions have descended into an alliance with the U.S.-led imperialists against ISIS, the reformist left have suddenly rediscovered the cause of the Syrian Kurds and have rushed to join "Solidarity with Kobane" rallies in Australia. Not wanting to alienate their new found Kurdish allies, the *soft-on-imperialism* socialist groups thus refrain from opposing the U.S.-led airstrikes in Kobane and Syria more generally. Thirdly, even though some healthier gut-level impulses to oppose the U.S.-led airstrikes in Syria may exist within individuals inside these reformist left groups, they are so tainted by their years-long support for the imperialist-proxy "Rebels" in Syria and so exposed and embarrassed by the fact that NATO backing for these "Rebels" has become even more blatant that they would rather not even talk about Syria. In fact, they'd probably prefer that the very word "Syria" wasn't mentioned in polite company at all!

The November 29 Ashfield demonstration was thus the very first action – and unfortunately as we go to press thus far the only action – in Australia to oppose the **entire** U.S./Australia imperialist intervention in the Middle East: from their bombing campaigns in both Iraq **AND** Syria to their arming of proxies in Syria. Yuri Gromov, editor of Trotskyist Platform, outlined the necessity to take such a consistent, anti-imperialist stance when in the course of motivating the need to defend Syria against imperialist-imposed

regime change, he demolished the arguments used by those refusing to oppose the entire imperialist intervention:

"... most nominally left wing groups in Australia have, while correctly opposing the bombing of Iraq, failed to oppose the imperialist intervention in Syria. These groups, many of whom falsely claim some connection with the glorious program of Trotskyism, are tainted by their years-long support for the Western-backed 'Rebels.'

"Unfortunately, some who have laudably defended Syria against the pro-imperialist 'Rebels' are also refusing to oppose the U.S.-led airstrikes in Syria. On this, they ironically take a similar stance to the pseudo-Trotskyist groups and use a similar rationale for their position: that is that 'we can use imperialism.' But **imperialism cannot be used for progressive purposes. Never ever! There are no exceptions!** If you allow imperialism to strengthen it is more readily able to carry out its predatory goals. Those who think that imperialism can be used to bolster Syrian independence by weakening ISIS are like a person in a tiger-infested village who thinks he should guide a hungry tiger to eat his cruel, hated neighbor. Except that the hungry tiger then gets a taste for human flesh ... and guess who will be up next on the tiger's menu? **If the Western imperialists succeed in their current campaign it will only embolden them for an open attack on Syria.** It is worth recalling that what deterred the U.S. rulers from a planned invasion of Syria ten years ago were the blows that their military was taking from insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq. The historical irony that all the insurgents striking those blows in Afghanistan and some of the ones involved in Iraq were religious fundamentalist reactionaries quite similar in ideology to the Syrian proxies backed by the West today does not change this fact. That is why it is in the interest of the Syrian people's struggle against neocolonialism to see the U.S. and Australian regime suffer setbacks in their war that is nominally against ISIS.

"We must stand for the defeat of the U.S. and Australian capitalist rulers in their war in both Syria and Iraq. We must fight for the defence of Syria against Western imperialism and its 'Rebels.'

If the imperialist-imposed regime change drive is defeated in Syria then it will spur on the Arab masses to depose the Western puppet governments in places like Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. It will encourage the Syrian working class itself to say: now that we have defeated imperialism and its open agents, we should also take away power from the half-baked, *neither here nor there* Baathist rulers who are themselves economically dependent on imperialism."

Also addressing the Ashfield demonstration was Samuel Russell, a trade union activist who happens to be the UNSW Branch Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union. Speaking at the event in a personal capacity, Russell emphasised the role that the Australian working class movement and the trade union movement in particular must play in opposing this war. He noted that there has been mass opposition to other imperialist wars. In the lead up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq there were huge protests. In that case they were not able to stop the invasion but Russell stated that the Great War (World War I) which just had its centenary was stopped largely due to workers' strikes and mass actions in many countries - including Russia, Germany, Britain and in the colonies of the European imperial powers.

The speakers at the Ashfield demonstration were listened to by working class people who joined the rally from Western Sydney suburbs like Auburn and Parramatta as well as local people from multiracial, working-class Ashfield, Trotskyist Platform supporters and other anti-imperialist minded leftists. There was no presence at all from people from the middle class and university-based left groups/left milieus. The participants, instead, were mainly working class and/or from Asian, Middle Eastern, African and South American backgrounds. Many locals from Ashfield passing the rally stopped to listen and take leaflets and several expressed sympathy with the action.

The important thing now is that we take the message emphasised in the Ashfield action out to people in our workplaces, trade unions, activist milieus etc and start preparing for the actions that we must build in the future to oppose the warmongering imperialists



A speaker addresses the anti-imperialist rally in the working class Sydney suburb of Ashfield.

and to defend Syria against neocolonialism. As the Trotskyist Platform spokesman, Yuri Gromov, concluded in his speech, the only way we can achieve these tasks is through the methods of the class struggle:

“Some say that the problem with this war is that Canberra does not pursue an ‘independent foreign policy.’ However, the problem is actually much deeper. The Australian ruling class backs Washington in the Middle East because it relies on the might of its U.S. godfather to defend its own looting and jackbooting in neighbouring countries from Fiji to East Timor to PNG. Simply put, Australia’s imperialist rulers are supporting Obama’s war because it is in their interests do so. **They cannot be won over to take another road. To defeat their war we need to mobilise the class whose interests lie with opposing their military adventures: the working class.**

“And the interests of the exploited masses really do lie in defeating Abbott and Shorten’s war. Every bit of blood that the regime here draws in the Middle East will make them more savage in their attacks on the oppressed at home: More vicious in their bashing of our unions; still more cruel in their violent attacks on Aboriginal people; more ruthless in cutting public services like public housing, public education and women’s refuges....

“Sisters and brothers, we must understand that unleashing wars is not simply a policy decision for the greedy ruling classes. For it is part of their very DNA. They must seek out new territory to loot in order to make up for the crumbling of their capitalist system at home. From their point of view, unleashing predatory wars is something that they simply must do just as attacking our unions is also something that they must do. But from our point of view, we must wage class war on the capitalist rulers’ wars abroad just as we must wage class war on their attacks on the toilers and downtrodden at home. From the storming of Canberra’s parliament house in 1996 by trade unionists and Aboriginal people to the courageous multi-racial protests in the U.S. against the racist whitewash of the police murder of Michael Brown, we certainly see potential for such struggle. **Let’s today build mass working class sentiment to the point that there can be trade union political strikes in opposition to Obama, Abbott and Shorten’s military expedition. Let’s stand for the defence of Syria against neocolonialism. Let’s reject the capitulations of ALP social democracy and Greens progressive liberalism to build a real alternative, that is a revolutionary socialist alternative, to the murderous capitalist order!”**

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