

For a non-aligned Australia

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Australian workers' organisations should evaluate the foreign policy of their country in a spirit of internationalism. A defeat for imperialism in one country weakens the reactionary forces everywhere, and national liberation and socialist revolutions succeeded often in the past because they were strongly supported by solidarity movements in the capitalist world.

Before the second world war, colonial rule, severe encroachments on the sovereignty of the few 'independent' under-developed countries, and the presence of imperialist forces on foreign soil, were regarded as essential features of imperialism. Since then, the imperialist powers have been compelled under the pressure of the masses, who were becoming radicalised, to grant 'independence' to the developing nations by transferring the power to the pro-imperialist native bourgeoisie.

After the second world war, the USA and other imperialist powers endeavoured to combine neo-colonialism with anti-communist security pacts, military bases on foreign soil, and the use of interventions. This policy largely failed. The anti-imperialist

victories of Chinese, Arab, Cuban and Indochinese people, strengthened the opposition of the third world masses to the military alliance with the imperialist powers. Consequently, many developing countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa got rid of military bases and treaties.

This did not bring an end to imperialism for, notwithstanding all changes, the main features of imperialism still exist in most developing countries.* They still function as economic appendices of the imperialist powers, that is chiefly as producers of a limited range of low-priced food and raw materials designed for export to imperialist countries. These developing countries are still an area for investment by the multi-nationals in financial fields and in extractive and light manufacturing industries. They are also still subject to under-industrialisation, under-employment, outflow of capital, exhaustion of natural resources, negative balances of payment, and growth of foreign debts. The imperialist exploitation of these countries is thus perpetuated mainly by the chain of debts and market ties, which bind these economically dependent states to the imperialist powers.

The economic dependence and the imperialist exploitation of these developing

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countries have been strengthened by the threat that the US might will be used, if American interests are impaired. And indeed, there have been many cases of direct and indirect US intervention in the Third World. The events in Latin America and the Middle East could serve as an example.

Neither has the attitude of the native bourgeoisie of the developing countries radically changed since independence. The landlords, merchants, and other sections of native bourgeoisie, which were put and kept in power by imperialism (they form the ruling class of the Association of South-east Asian Nations) continue to co-operate with the multinationals and the imperialist powers.

But even the industrial bourgeoisie, whose interests clash in some fields with imperialism, is usually unwilling to mobilise the masses and take measures which would seriously undermine imperialism. It is frequently satisfied with limited measures, such as raising tariffs and royalties, and getting some equity in enterprises owned by foreigners. This, for instance, is the case in India, where the industrial capitalists are the main force in the regime.

At most, if pressed by the masses and the economic difficulties, the native bourgeoisie may in some developing countries nowadays nationalise with compensation some imperialist enterprises, while usually opening some new opportunities for imperialist investment in other fields.

Thus the developing countries cannot get rid of the economic backwardness and dependence on imperialism, without introducing basic socio-political changes and going through the process of a socialist revolution. Indeed, in many developing countries (ASEAN states included) which are presently strongly affected by the world-wide capitalist crisis, the social liberation* movements are gaining in strength. These movements, involving workers, youth and peasants are not limited to nationalisation of foreign industries. Basically, they stand for a people's state, a complete agricultural reform, expropriation of foreign monopolies and of the native big bourgeoisie, and for control of the economy by the workers and their allies.

In the aftermath of Vietnam some changes occurred in the foreign policies of the ASEAN countries. The authoritative, corrupt, and the pro-imperialist regimes of South-east Asia,

controlled by landlords, merchants, and generals are establishing diplomatic relations with China and Vietnam. Acting under the pressure of the masses, they have also announced their intention to be 'neutral' and to eliminate gradually the US bases and treaties. The reason behind these moves is to placate the growing internal opposition to the deepening economic crisis and to the foreign pro-imperialist policies. The South-east Asian regimes also anticipate that by 'neutrality' they will succeed in restricting international support for the expanding social liberation and insurgency movements.

The South-east Asian countries hope that, by these measures, they will be able to stabilise their shaky regimes which have been affected by the US defeat in Indochina. But will these hopes come true? In 1974 there were numerous demonstrations and riots by students, peasants and workers in Thailand and Malaysia, and by students and youth in Singapore and Indonesia. There were also extensive guerrilla activities in Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.

The recent events in Indochina, and the opposition of the American people to direct military intervention, compels the US to use, to a greater extent, indirect methods of intervention, and to supplement these activities by manifestations of growing military strength. Thus, in Latin America, the US relies on military coups by armies equipped and trained by the Americans. Elsewhere, it seems, the US intends to use the allied countries either as cat's paws, or as powers which would give military aid to bourgeois governments threatened by social liberation. (Australia is envisaged as acting in this capacity in our region.) There is a danger that the US, in its striving to dominate and exploit the capitalist world, may use its formidable military power in a highly dangerous way. Schlesinger's threats to "go for the heart of your opponent's power", and the Mayaguez affair, have shown that this could take place.

Australia's military arrangements with Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia involve training of servicemen, military aid, and frequent military manoeuvres. Some people don't attach much significance to these arrangements. They say that these were inherited from the Liberal governments and that, according to Whitlam's statements, the Australian forces will not be used against internal dissent.

The actual practice, however, is not reassuring. Two Mirage fighter squadrons of the RAAF are still stationed in Malaysia. In October 1974, for the first time, Malaysian troops came to Australia for a joint exercise. The military aid and the political co-operation with Indonesia have greatly increased since Labor came to office. Last year, when Mr. Barnard visited Indonesia, he proposed joint troop manoeuvres. And in September 1974, Mr. Whitlam declared to the Australian journalist Mike Richardson, that "Australia is willing to consider practical defence co-operation with the Philippines and Thailand."

There is no guarantee that the military aid given to the South-east Asian countries will not be used against internal dissent. Moreover, if the situation did become desperate for the pro-imperialist South-east Asian regimes (and tendencies exist in this direction), then, notwithstanding Whitlam's assurances, under pressure of the US, our own industrial-military complex, the Liberals and other rightwing forces, Australia could become involved in military actions in South-east Asia.

In respect to our foreign policy, Australian workers are faced with a double task. On the one hand, they should press for an end to the Australian-US alliance and to the presence of foreign military bases on our soil. These constitute a threat to other nations (socialist countries in the first place), and make this continent a nuclear target. They facilitate US intervention in our internal affairs, and thus impede our socio-political development. They also tend to make Australia an imperialist base which would provide military assistance to South-east Asian pro-imperialist regimes.

On the other hand, supporting the social liberation movements in South-east Asia, as elsewhere, Australian workers should oppose Australia's military arrangements with South-east Asian powers (involving training of servicemen, military aid, and frequent military manoeuvres) which could be used against internal dissent in South-east Asian nations and drag us into new Vietnams.

This double task finds its expression in the non-alignment policy adopted by the Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. This policy is supported by a substantial section of the Victorian ALP and the trade unions. It seems also to be in agreement with the principles on foreign policy adopted in 1974 by the CPA Congress. The non-alignment policy stands for: mutual

respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of all nations; equality of national rights; opposition to military alliances, foreign military bases, and military interventions; and support for national and social liberation. (See CICD's publication, **Australian Policies in South East Asia**).

This policy, in one vital aspect, differs from the official non-alignment policies of many developing bourgeois states - support for national and social liberation movements. There are many developing countries which claim to be non-aligned and even anti-imperialist, primarily because they are aligned neither to NATO, SEATO, nor the Warsaw Pact, and because they have no foreign military bases on their soil. Nevertheless, these bourgeois states are tied to the multinationals and the imperialist powers. Moreover, social liberation forces combatting the pro-imperialist regimes are active in many of these states.

While welcoming the refusal of these states to have foreign military bases on their soil, the Australian working class should still give its full support to the internal liberation movements opposing the pro-imperialist regimes. This policy of non-alignment tied to support of national and social liberation movements can thus be regarded as a front of Australian people, united in opposition to the Australian-US Alliance and pro-imperialist policies, and in support of national and social liberation movements.

There are some revolutionary socialists who advocate for Australia a policy of alignment with socialist countries. Such a policy, however, would be much ahead of the present consciousness of the masses. Besides, even if we were a socialist country, we would still probably stick to the non-aligned policy described above because of reasons similar to those which caused South Vietnam and Cambodia to adopt a non-aligned policy.

The reasons seem to be: firstly, such a policy would secure a greater opposition of the American people to US intervention; secondly, an alliance with China would alienate the Soviet Union and vice versa; thirdly, an alliance with a socialist great power under present conditions could unfortunately mean undue interference with the socio-political development of the country, as was the case in the past with Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, for instance.