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TO : SENATOR LEE RHIANNON
FROM : GERARD HENDERSON
DATE : 28 SEPTEMBER 2011

Dear Senator Rhiannon

Introduction

I refer to your letter in yesterday's *Sydney Morning Herald* in which you denied that you said your parents (Bill and Freda Brown) never supported Josef Stalin. In the conclusion of your letter, you wrote that "Gerard Henderson is obsessed with linking me and my deceased parents with the worst of Stalin".

I note that you have also written letters about me in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 28 July 2010 and *The Australian* on 12 April 2011. On both occasions you wrote: "Neither my parents nor I were Stalinists." You also referred to me both in a document titled *Responding To Attacks On My Family And Political Background* which was placed on your website on 3 September 2010 and when you were interviewed on *Meet the Press* on 3 July 2011.

In your letter to *The Australian* you wrote: "Henderson has written about my political history many times but has never interviewed me."

In view of your apparent willingness to be interviewed by me, it would be appreciated if you would answer the following questions – in interview format. Your responses will be cited in any future articles I might write about your political past.

One Dozen Questions

1. You claim that neither Bill Brown nor Freda Brown were ever Stalinists. (*SMH*, 28 July 2010; *The Australian*, 12 April 2011).

How could this be the case? Your mother, Freda, joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in 1936. Your father, Bill, joined the CPA in 1940. Josef Stalin dominated the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s and assumed absolute power around 1936. He died in 1953. The first Soviet leader to criticise Stalin was Nikita Khrushchev during his so-called "secret speech" to the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

Between 1936 and 1956 all members of the Communist Party of Australia supported the Soviet Union in general and Josef Stalin in particular. Yet you have written "neither my parents nor I were Stalinists".

Question 1 : What is your evidence that Bill Brown and Freda Brown were not Stalinists? Did they ever distance themselves from Stalin or Stalin's policies? If so, when and how?

2. In your letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 27 September 2011, you wrote, inter alia:

I have not claimed that my parents "never, ever supported" Josef Stalin. Along with my parents, most in the Western world supported Stalin in the war against Nazi Germany. My parents also supported his efforts to raise the standard of living of ordinary people, but were horrified by his crimes.

Question 2 : Why did you change your position? Why did you once maintain that your parents were not Stalinists but later claim that, like many others, they supported Stalin?

3. In your *SMH* letter of 27 September 2011, you wrote that like "most in the Western world" your parents "supported Stalin in the war against Nazi Germany".

As you know, the Second World War commenced on 3 September 1939 when Britain and France – and some other nations (including Australia) – declared war on Germany. The Soviet Union did not enter the war until 22 June 1941, when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

As you are aware, between August 1939 and June 1941 Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were partners as a consequence of the Hitler-Stalin Pact – which came into effect on 23 August 1939. Both Freda Brown and Bill Brown supported the Nazi-Soviet Pact between 23 August 1939 and 22 June 1941.

Question 3 : Why did you fail to mention that your parents supported Stalin when Stalin supported Hitler?

4. In your *SMH* letter of 28 July 2010, you wrote that you "joined the 1968 protest against the [Soviet] invasion of Czechoslovakia". Yet, in a letter published in the University of New South Wales student newspaper *Tharunka* on 2 May 1972, you specifically declined to take up a challenge from Brian Aarons to say whether you "supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the shooting of the Polish workers and the suppression of socialist democracy in the Soviet Union". As you are aware, both your parents supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Question 4 : In what sense did you join the 1968 protest against the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia? Did you march in a protest – if so, when? And where? Did you make a verbal or written protest – if so, when and where? Did you ever advise your parents that – unlike them – you opposed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia?

5. In the *SMH* on 27 September 2011 you wrote that Bill and Freda Brown supported Stalin's "efforts to raise the standard of living of ordinary people, but were horrified by his crimes".

Both your parents contributed to the communist press and Bill Brown wrote a book in 1986 titled *The Communist Movement and Australia* – which was dedicated to you. Your father did not condemn Stalin's crimes in this book.

Question 5 : What is your evidence that Bill Brown and Freda Brown ever indicated that they were horrified by the crimes of Stalin? When and where did they condemn Stalin's crimes – either before or after Krushchev's 1956 speech?

6. In *The Australian* on 24 April 2011 – and in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 28 July 2011 and again on 27 September 2011 – you wrote that you "condemn" the crimes of Stalin.

As you are aware, Bill Brown was the inaugural editor of the pro-Moscow magazine *Survey*, which was established in 1975 and which ceased publication in 1990. As you will recall, you wrote the editorial for *Survey's* last edition.

Question 6 : Did you, or your parents, ever use the facility provided by *Survey* between 1975 and 1990 to condemn the crimes of Stalin? If so, when? If not, why not?

7. You joined the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA), the pro-Moscow group (led by Bill Brown) which was expelled by/broke away from the Communist Party of Australia in 1970-71. As you are aware, the SPA itself split in 1980-81, with a pro-Moscow group (again led by Bill Brown) breaking away from/being expelled by the organisation. Around 1985 the pro-Moscow group which left the SPA set up the Association for Communist Unity – which was supported by Bill Brown among others. The Association for Communist Unity held its founding meeting in Sydney on 3 February 1985.

Question 7 : Did you attend the founding meeting – or any other meeting – of the Association for Communist Unity?

8. On 28-31 March 1986, a Broad Left Conference was held in Sydney – comprising those belonging to the Association of Communist Unity and members of some other left-wing organisations.

Question 8 : Did you attend this Broad Left Conference in March 1986? If so, as a representative of which organisation?

9. Bill Brown and you were involved in the pro-Moscow magazine *Survey* from 1975 to 1990.

Question 9 : Did *Survey* receive financial contributions from the Soviet Union or any other communist regime in Eastern Europe at any time between 1975 and 1990? If so when – and how much?

10. In his article in the May 2011 issue of *The Monthly*, Mark Aarons wrote that in the 1970s you "developed close relationships with the Soviet, Czechoslovak and East German communist youth groups" and that in 1977 you "led an SPA delegation to Moscow at the invitation of Leonid Brezhnev's neo-Stalinist regime". Also, according to reports in *Survey*, you made other trips to Eastern Europe in the 1970s and/or the 1980s.

Question 10 : Were any of your visits to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe fully, or partly, funded by the Soviet and/or East European communist regimes? If so, what was the amount of any such financial support?

11. On your blog you write that "my Mum and Dad worked hard for a more just and peaceful society".

Question 11 : How do you regard this statement as consistent with the fact that Bob and Freda Brown supported (i) Stalin's purge trials which commenced in 1936, (ii) the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 which divided Eastern Europe between Hitler and Stalin and effectively commenced the Second World War, (iii) the suppression of Eastern Europe after the end of the Second World War by the Red Army, (iv) the murderous crushing of the workers' uprisings in East Germany and Poland in 1953, (v) Stalin's anti-semitic Doctors' Plot in 1953, (vi) the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and (vii) the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968? How did such events contribute to a more just and peaceful society?

12. During your *Meet the Press* interview on 3 July 2011, you were asked about your involvement with *Survey* magazine. Huw Riminton queried whether you wrote for, and edited, "a newspaper called *Survey* that was funded, in whole or in part, by the Soviet Union". You responded that you "assisted" with *Survey* "to some extent". You also referred to being "young" at the time.

Question 12 : The final editorial in *Survey* – which was signed by you – was published in July-August 1990, when you were aged 39. Do you regard the age of 39 as being so young that it should provide an excuse for editing a magazine which supported the communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

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Conclusion

In conclusion, I am happy to interview you face-to-face about the above matters. However, if such a meeting cannot be arranged, it would be appreciated if you could answer the 12 questions posed above about your political life.

Best wishes



Gerard Henderson