



My Health Record

Still time to opt out

You have up until January 31, 2019 to opt out of My Health Record (MHR). If you don't opt out, then the government will automatically "opt you in". My Health Record (MHR) is flawed in its design with no guarantee of privacy and lack of informed consumer choice. There is also the very real danger and likelihood of it being privatised at some point in the future.

MHR is an online summary of your health information, such as medicines you are taking, any allergies you may have and treatments you have received. It is not a full medical record.

The system involves a centralised database. It is designed for people who are computer literate. If you are not computer literate and have a MHR it will be up to others to assist you such as a GP who is not busy (!) or it operates by default and all the talk about you having control becomes nonsense.

Dangers

Healthcare and social security groups have raised concerns about future use of MHR and the lack of privacy safeguards in the *My Health Record Act 2012* which governs the system. They fear it could be used by other government departments such as Medicare, Centrelink, the Australian Taxation office, Defence Forces and others.

They have good reason to be concerned. There are many similarities with attempts to introduce centralised systems in the past.

In 1985, the Hawke Labor government attempted to bring in the Australia Card, a form of ID card which would be required to operate a bank account or receive social security payments and for taxation purposes. It was shelved largely because of its unpopularity and replaced by the Tax File Number.

The Howard Coalition government proposed the Health and Human Services Access Card in the early 2000s as a form of identity card. This was to address terrorism and cross-reference social security benefits with tax paid by individuals. The Howard government was thrown out of office in 2007, before passing the highly unpopular and controversial legislation.

The Access Card was presented as opt-in and voluntary but it was a pre-condition for access to health (Medicare, PBS, etc) and social service benefits. So much for voluntary!

Privatisation

There is also the very real possibility that personal information will be on-sold to the private sector – life and private insurance companies, workers' compensation providers, employers, pharmaceutical companies, etc.

In Britain, a very similar scheme was abandoned in 2016 because it was discovered that medical records were being sold to private insurance and pharmaceutical companies, contrary to the privacy provisions of the Act.

Once registered with an MHR, there is little

you can do when this or a future government changes to the rules or when any of the rules are breached. If you opt out later, then your data will become inaccessible to you and your medical practitioners but the government, researchers and others will still have access. It is still not deleted until 30 or more years after you die.

When a breach is not a breach

No matter what it says, the government is not in a position to guarantee the security of patient information. There are potentially 900,000 practitioners and organisations that could register as healthcare providers. According to the government's MHR website around 14,000 of these have registered – hardly an overwhelming vote of confidence.

No audit has been done of how they protect data. The security of a system is only as good as its weakest link.

The government has anticipated security breaches at this level in its legislation for MHR. Where information in a MHR is obtained from a health carer who has downloaded the record, then it is not considered to be a breach of MHR!

In other words breaches on the edges of the system are not considered breaches, not punishable under the Act.

Better system

"The issue is not a resistance by the health profession to e-health; the fundamental issue is the centralised database model controlled by government and from which all other issues flow," Marie Johnson, the former chief technology architect of the Access Card, said. ("Why My Health record is flawed", cio.com, 21/08/2018)

The Australian Privacy Foundation takes a similar common-sense position: "Most clinicians already use an electronic medical record system. These can be improved by better communication between existing systems, not by introducing another, less useful, less secure copy in a system that has some of the hallmarks of a scheme designed for surveillance and less-controlled disclosure, rather than your healthcare." ("The biggest privacy risks to your my Health Record – the Government", 24/07/2018, privacy.org.au.)

All you have to do is write your own, or get your GP to do it for you. It would also mean that, unlike My Health Record, you do actually have full access and control. If you wish, you can have different documents for different purposes.

You can carry a printed copy; put it on a memory stick along with a password; include details of how to get hold of the password in an emergency and hang the memory stick around your neck; if you are into high tech, you can encrypt it and put it in a cloud somewhere; your family and/or partner can have a copy. ☆



New Year's greetings from the CPA

On behalf of the Communist Party of Australia, we would like to wish you every success in your struggles in 2019. This year has witnessed attack after attack on the interests of working people, their incomes and job security, their access to public health and education, housing and other basic needs. The country is still at war, at the service of US imperialism, and the refugees from those conflicts and others are still abused through and during offshore detention. The Aboriginal people of the country still struggle for land rights and basic respect before the law and other institutions. The Australian government has moved to increase surveillance on the people and in every way shore up defences for a system in crisis.

In defiance of this, people are fighting back in Australia and around the world. This year hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets to protest the federal government's war on workers and their trade unions. It is quite likely 2019 will see the end of the Coalition government in Canberra. But the election of a Shorten government does not guarantee that the "rules" currently used to stifle workers' rights will be lifted. It certainly won't change the rotten system that imposed those rules in the first place. All over the world, struggles are crying out for clear leadership to get beyond capitalism to a new system based on workers' interests and power. In 2019 we will be increasing our efforts to build the CPA into such a leading force. If ever you've thought of joining us in this mighty challenge, make 2019 the year it happens!

**Bob Briton, General Secretary
Vinnie Molina, National President**

SHOP PROGRESSIVE!

See pages 6 & 7

This is the last *Guardian* for 2018. First issue in 2019 will be on January 23.

Guardian

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A momentous year

The goodwill that accompanied the passing of the federal marriage equality laws in December 2017 didn't last long. The contradictions underlying capitalism re-emerged with a vengeance this year.

After initial refusal and then a great deal of procrastination the Turnbull government was forced by public pressure to launch a Royal Commission into the conduct of Australia's banks and financial institutions. The outcome has been shocking, with revelations of widespread fraud, misleading conduct and ruthless treatment of customers. Finance corporation AMP and a number of the banks were forced to admit to having charged thousands of customers for services they never received.

The Coalition is intent on financially breaking militant unions. In the 12 months to April this year 38 workers died on Australian building sites and the fatality rate is rising 25 percent annually. Nevertheless, the government wants its star chamber, the Australian Building and Construction Commission to impose multimillion dollar fines on the construction unions. The government also approved the abolition of penalty rates for Australia's lowest paid workers, and it was unconcerned when stories emerged this year of gross underpayment to casual and low-pay workers.

There were no significant advances in the government's treatment of Indigenous people this year. It has virtually ignored them, after responsibility for Indigenous Affairs was allocated to the scowling, swaggering former PM Tony Abbott.

This year, the behind-the-scenes battle over climate change and coal-fired energy production claimed the scalp of yet another Australian Prime Minister. Despite mid-winter bushfires, soaring temperatures and wild storms, the government trivialises climate change. It denigrates renewable energy generation and storage as expensive and unreliable, even though wind and solar farms cost relatively little to run and South Australia's \$90 million lithium battery facility saved \$40 million this year while helping to stabilise energy distribution.

The nation's decrepit coal-fired power stations are among the biggest contributors to our rising carbon emission rates. Determined to retain power but caught between growing public concern and the need to placate the Coalition's rabidly pro-coal, climate change deniers, the Turnbull government decided to introduce the National Energy Guarantee (NEG). That feeble scheme paid lip service to meeting Australia's emission reduction commitment under the Paris Agreement, and it failed to give emission reduction top priority.

Morrison in charge

Nevertheless, the Coalition's climate change deniers hated it, and Turnbull axed it to appease them. But it wasn't enough. In August, he himself was axed and replaced as Prime Minister by climate change denier and religious fundamentalist Scott Morrison, who strongly opposes marriage equality.

Despite loud public opposition, the Morrison government continues to defend construction of the huge Adani coal mine. It would threaten Queensland's groundwater reserves and the Great Barrier Reef as well as exacerbate climate change – but the government doesn't give a damn. Climate change will have a terrible impact on future generations. But the government treats with contempt recent nationwide strikes over climate change by schoolchildren, telling them haughtily to get back to their studies. (See page 10)

Last week veteran naturalist David Attenborough warned that climate change is now the greatest threat to the future existence of human life on earth. Labor's position on energy and climate change is far better than the Coalition's but it's still woefully inadequate to deal with the terrible challenges of climate change.

Morrison has shown no compassion for children who have suffered terrible mental damage as a result of years in offshore immigration detention. Last week he organised deferral of an Opposition bill to bring children from Nauru to Australia for medical treatment. In October Médecins Sans Frontières psychologists who were studying the mental health of children on Nauru, including detainees and local resident children, were booted off the island. The government uttered not a word in protest.

The government also converted the benign "opt-in" My Health centralised medical data bank scheme to an "opt out" scheme that threatens patient confidentiality and foreshadows the future privatisation of Medicare. (See page 1)

It threatened the independence of the ABC, pressuring its director to sack certain journalists, and as the *Guardian* goes to press, Cabinet is considering whether to move the Australian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

But its popularity is shrinking. During the year the Coalition was thrashed in a series of by-elections, most memorably in Wentworth, formerly one of Australia's safest conservative seats. In last month's Victorian state elections the Coalition suffered an historically unprecedented collapse in electoral support.

The year's events have set the scene for removal of the odious federal Coalition government. But despite the astonishing by-election and state election results, Labor is still underestimating the strength of public demand for political change.

Last week it caved in and backed legislation that would enable the government to spy on citizens and corporations with wide powers to demand and access confidential data in any form. The legislation had been opposed by Labor itself, as well as many individuals and community organisations, because it would allow the government to breach people's privacy at will and result in the destruction of Australia's IT sector. (See page 3) Labor has accepted the government's promise that it would enact amendments next year to rectify the legislation's shortcomings, but the new law is essentially contrary to the public interest.

Australia now has some of the most repressive industrial relations legislation in the developed world. However, there's no guarantee that Labor will rectify the raw deal workers have received from the Fair Work Commission and the Australian Building and Construction Commission, or that it will back workers in their struggle for better pay, improved and safer conditions, and industrial rights.

At next year's federal elections the public will doubtless wreak vengeance on the Coalition for years of misrule, but Labor must be pressured into adopting better policies, and independent left and progressive candidates with good policies should get our support.

The working people of Australia have no time to lose and everything to gain by seizing the potentially great opportunities for a better political deal that the new year offers.

Eureka and Beyond

Vinnie Molina

Eureka and Beyond was the topic for this month's Politics in the Pub in Perth (PiP), the last session for 2018.

In celebration of the 164th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade, the panel was made up of Bobbie Oliver from the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Perth branch, Meredith Hammat, Secretary of Unions WA and Peter Limb, a historian and activist against apartheid.

PiP-goers enjoyed presentations from the historic background, the politics of the Eureka Stockade to the legacy for the trade union movement today. The speakers were united that there is a need to reclaim Eureka to improve the lives of working people in Australia. History is often told from the "winners" perspective and we have seen the legacy of Eureka slip from the education curriculum and no longer taught in our schools.

The media has also played a role in undermining the significance of Eureka for working people today. The system tries to bury Eureka in history portraying it as an event that took 15 or 20 minutes and ended there.

However, the Eureka Stockade and the sacrifice of those who participated in a multicultural rebellion laid the foundation for our democratic

rights and the right to rebel against injustice. The media has ignored the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for their political rights and liberties.

Miners and other supporters fighting against unjust taxes took the Diggers Oath on 29th November 1854 in front of the Eureka flag: "We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties."

Monty Miller was remembered for his role in the rebellion and his lifelong commitment to activism. As an elderly man he faced a prison term for his anti-conscription stand during WW1. A Memorial to Monty Miller has been placed in Garden Bed W, plots 0016 & 0017 at the rear of Serenity Gardens at Karrakatta Cemetery.

Guardian readers who would like to know more about Monty Miller and read his first-hand account can purchase *Eureka and Beyond: Monty Miller his own story* edited by Vic Williams from the Communist Party of Australia bookshop. (\$20 including p&p within Australia)

More than 40 people from different walks of life attended the function, including a number of young people who lamented that they had not heard the stories either at school or university. ☘



QUOTE OF THE WEEK



Knowledge is the eternal endless approximation of thought to the object. The reflection of nature in man's thought must not be understood in a dead manner, abstractly, without movement, without contradiction, but as an eternal process of movement – as the emergence of contradictions and their resolution.

Lenin on Dialectics



SolidNet.org

News, documents and calls for action
from communist and workers' parties.

Find out more about the

Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au

PRESS FUND

Our sincere thanks to everyone who supported the Press Fund this year. Our task is to cover the news and address issues of serious concern for ordinary working Australians, and your contributions are invaluable in helping us achieve those goals. Your fellow-contributors had a wide range of backgrounds; they included industrial workers, public servants, professionals, self-employed people and retirees. Don't forget you can still send in contributions over the summer break to help us pay wages and boost this year's total – or to get next year off to a flying start! Best wishes, stay safe over the holidays and we'll be back for the New Year, when big changes are likely to occur in Australian politics. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Dr G Dittura \$15, NH \$100, KM \$20, "Round Figure" \$15, "Rough Red" \$5, "Sparky" \$10, G Spiers \$100, *Guardian* wrappers \$125

This week's total: \$390 Progressive total: \$8,270.

Big Brother strikes again

Anna Pha

In its dying hours of Parliament's last sitting day for the year, the federal government successfully rammed through a bill to give intelligence agencies and state and federal police new powers to access private and confidential communications and data.

The bill applies across-the-board to businesses and government departments, advocacy and community groups and individuals. It purports to be targeting terrorist and serious criminal activity but the wording is so open and it provides for so little accountability, that it could be used for any purpose.

It was passed despite strong opposition from the technology industry, privacy organisations, the Law Society of Australia, cyber-security firms, civil liberty groups and a range of other organisations, businesses and individuals.

Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, and the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, claimed that the bill had to be passed before the end of the year to save the public from serious terrorist incidents and the acts of paedophiles over the Christmas-New Year period.

Apparently over the Christmas period there is a heightened danger of terrorism. That might be true, but then why are thousands of Border Force staff facing the sack just before Christmas? There will be fewer Border Force staff at airports and patrolling the seas!

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS), which was reviewing the bill, was due to report on April 3, 2019. Its work was cut short.

Labor had previously agreed in principle to the bill, but indicated it would not vote for it until after the review was complete next year and a number of amendments made. As it stood the bill was vague in parts, failed to offer the protection that was promised and could threaten the security of Australians and Australian businesses.

But on December 6, not waiting for due process to be completed, Bipartisan Bill did a backflip and Labor supported it and over 50 pages of amendments that had been agreed to behind closed doors. MPs were not given enough time to even read the amendments!

In the House of Representatives, only two MPs voted against it – Australian Greens Adam Bandt and Independent Andrew Wilkie. It is significant that Wilkie has spent

more than 20 years in the military and intelligence services as well, but still spoke strongly against it.

Labor behaved like a cornered mouse, ready to agree to almost anything to avoid a Coalition election campaign accusing them of not taking Australia's "National Security" seriously.

Labor leader Bill Shorten tried to save face claiming the government had agreed to the PJCIS resuming its review in 2019 and the holding of a separate statutory review by the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor within 18 months of the legislation coming into effect.

Encryption

In computing and electronic communications, encryption is the method by which text or any other type of data is converted from a readable form to an encoded version that can only be decoded by another entity if they have access to a decryption key. Data is a term for information that has been converted into digital form.

Encryption is used to protect the security and privacy of data in transit, sent from all sorts of devices across a variety of networks, not just the Internet.

Encryption has become part of our day-to-day lives, although we might not always be aware that it is occurring. For example, it takes place every time someone makes an online payment or bank transfer, withdraws cash from an ATM, as well as sending and receiving emails, uses various applications such as Skype, WhatsApp, or WeChat for communications, books a taxi using a mobile phone, and so on.

Decryption keys are also in common usage. For example, the PIN is used for unlocking a mobile phone, making a credit card payment, withdrawing money at an ATM, for online banking, or the password for accessing a computer.

Encryption systems range from quite simple ones that provide little security through to extremely complex ones. Likewise decryption keys come in a variety of forms and types, some that are relatively easy to break and others which are extremely complex and even the company providing them cannot access.

It is this latter type that the government wants to be able to decrypt or decode and gain access to the data. To do this, it is necessary for the technology company to insert software capable of breaking the encryption – a backdoor way in.

New powers

The *Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (Assistance and Access) Bill 2018* contains three key powers to make it possible for the government to access decrypted communications and data:

A technical assistance request (TAR): A company is asked to "voluntarily" help, such as give technical details about the development of a new online service.

A technical assistance notice (TAN): A company is required to give assistance. For example, if they can decrypt a specific communication, they must.

A technical capability notice (TCN): The company must build a new function to help police get at a suspect's data.

There are hefty fines and jail terms of up to 10 years for failure to comply with TANs and TCNs.

Australian Greens MP Adam Bandt pointed out that the bill would make Australians less secure.

"But the basic principle is there's no such thing as requiring companies to be able to create a key that unlocks secure communication that doesn't also create a systemic weakness."

"It's a very simple proposition: once you introduce a weakness and you require by law the introduction of a weakness into otherwise secure communication, you lose control over who can exploit that weakness."

It not only threatens Australia's technology industry but also is an attack on democratic rights by opening up a door into people's private communications that can be secretly and remotely accessed or by the seizure of computers and stored data.

Police state

Wilkie was just as strongly opposed. "So I think ... it's a bad idea to, by law, [to] require all the encrypted communications in this country to have a vulnerability by design that can be exploited by wrongdoers."

"I think it is a reasonable conclusion to draw that there will be concern in other countries and in multinational businesses that have operations in Australia that they will then be partners with a country that has this vulnerability within our ICT (information and communications technology)."

"I think this is another case of an excessive extension of the power of the state, and it's another case of the government and the alternative



government being in lock step," Wilkie warned.

"It will make us less safe. It will be because of a government – this government, this opposition – seeking to extend the power of the state just that bit further, and, frankly, to take us that bit closer to a police state, because in so many ways we have already reached a pre-police state – too many laws, too much power for the state and too much power for the security services."

In fact, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, well over 60 security reforms have been passed by federal Parliament and hundreds more at the state level, mostly purporting to address terrorism.

Cyber-security experts have warned the laws could now create a "global weak point" for companies such as Facebook and Apple. There are fears that some global firms could withdraw from the Australian market and Australian technology companies be forced to move offshore.

But the biggest problem raised by critics is that any new vulnerabilities built to access a suspect's messages could damage the security of smartphones or the internet more generally, making us all less safe online.

No other country has adopted such legislation, for good reason.

Counter-productive

Representatives from Senetas Corporation, told a public hearing of the PJCIS, that the bill, "... compromises the security of citizens, businesses and governments because there will be weaker cybersecurity practices. It will be easier for cyber-criminals, terrorists, to target systems and be able to break into those systems ..."

Senetas is no amateur when it comes to encryption technology. It

is responsible for securing the systems of Australian law enforcement agencies; royal commissions, including the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; a number of Australian banks; and Australia's defence forces.

So why don't the government and Labor listen to one of their most trusted security experts? It beggars belief.

Major employer bodies, including the Australian Industry Group, the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, the Australian Information Industry Association and the Communications Alliance, also warned the PJCIS:

"The proposed legislation, through its mere existence, will make Australian exports of IT and communications products and services, or even every Australian website, subject to the same concerns by overseas governments and organisations that recently moved the Australian government to ban certain vendors from supplying hardware for Australia's future 5G networks.

"Therefore, the draft bill poses a real risk for the IT communications export industry, which Austrade values at AU\$3.2 billion for 2016-17 and this figure does not include the value of other exports enabled by Australian websites, IT and communications products."

The government claims encrypted communications are increasingly being used by terrorist groups and organised criminals to avoid detection and disruption and hence the need for the new laws. However, criminals and terrorists will always find new ways to avoid detection and build their own encrypted messaging platforms and means of communications. ☹

From the Archives

The Guardian, April 2003



World Federation of Democratic Youth



www.facebook.com/wfdymjd

Rally in support of Iranian workers!

Wayne Sontor

Workers in Iran are currently engaged in a fight for their livelihoods, and for their basic human rights as workers. In doing this, the workers are forced to confront employers and a state apparatus that treats them and their organisations cruelly.

In the last few weeks:

Workers such as those at the Haft Tappeh sugar mill are taking strike action over unpaid wages, in support of a return of the mill to public ownership and workers' control. Their aim is to replace the corrupt management who have sacked, beaten, arrested and tortured workers at the hands of security forces.

Likewise, steelworkers at the massive INSIG steelworks in Ahvaz have been protesting for unpaid wages, against unsafe work conditions and lack of materials for production. Protestors have been attacked by riot police, arrested, imprisoned and beaten.

Workers at the once prestigious HEPCO engineering plant are also striking over wage arrears, mismanagement and a decline in safety standards since privatisation. They have been arrested and flogged.

Teachers on a peaceful national strike for higher wages, educational reforms and the release of teachers already imprisoned for previous industrial action, have been met with arrests, summons and threats by security forces in several cities across Iran.

Two hundred and sixty-two truck drivers,

following national strikes in May, July and September, have been arrested by Iranian authorities and charged with "waging war against God" and "threatening national security" – charges that can carry the death penalty. Truck drivers have now commenced their fourth national strike of the year, demanding release of the prisoners – as well as continuing to press for unpaid wages, pay increases and better work conditions.

Since late 2017, when mass protests broke out against austerity and widespread joblessness, especially amongst youth, class contradictions have only deepened and Iran's working class has grown increasingly militant.

This year, workers' organisations have commemorated the 30th anniversary of "the national catastrophe" – a massacre of thousands of political prisoners carried out by the same theocratic regime that beheaded the popular revolution that overthrew the US puppet regime of Shah Pahlevi in 1979.

The regime at that time slaughtered workers, unionists, socialists and communists, as well as members of other democratic and progressive organisations, to enforce its hold on power.

Now that the criminal US state is targeting Iran for economic destruction and regime change, as part an insane strategy to enforce its global domination, this same Iranian state is responding to domestic economic crisis and US destabilisation by further suppressing the Iranian working class.

The only way the Iranian people, at whose

core is the Iranian working class, will be able to withstand imperialist aggression and the threat of subjugation and recolonisation, is to have a government and state they can trust and support.

For the Islamic regime, that would involve massive concessions to the working class in terms of its fundamental rights, such as the right to strike and to organise and increasingly, to exercise the possibility of workers' control over production.

It would mean reversing the trend of placing society's wealth into private hands with one that reorganises the economy under public ownership and control.

This is not going to happen under this regime.

The economic crisis has not come about solely through the actions of the United States and its lackeys, though their actions certainly exacerbate a process that was already underway in Iran. The neo-liberal policies of the Islamic regime over the last two decades, have let a crony capitalism flourish and the people's assets be ransacked, allowed unemployment to flourish and millions to be pushed below the poverty line.

The Iranian workers and popular forces are coming to realise this regime, this theocratic, bourgeois state cannot be reformed. The Iranian people must overthrow it if they are to have a chance for a better future; if they are going to have a chance to withstand the attacks of imperialism.

If crippling sanctions and threat of war from without is matched by repression of popular demands for economic, political and social justice from within Iran, then the most reactionary elements, "both inside the theocratic regime and out" will get to determine Iran's future.

Only the elevation of the struggle of the popular movement into one for a transition from dictatorship to a system based on the economic, political and social demands of the people can prevent this outcome.

Only the progressive, democratic forces can guarantee Iran's future!

Iranian workers' solidarity organisations in Sydney rallied in Parramatta Town Square on Saturday November 30 to express their support for workers in Iran and their upsurge of class action. Both Australian and Iranian activists spoke on the present situation in Iran. Hundreds of flyers were handed out to passers-by to inform them of the current state of affairs.

Participants passed a resolution of solidarity with Iranian workers and a steering committee was established to promote awareness and build relations between Australian and Iranian unions and workers' organisations.

For a strong united front in Iran of national and democratic forces to defend peace, democracy and social justice!

For removal of sanctions and threats of war against Iran by the United States and its allies, including Australia! ✪

CPSU/CSA Delegates wage claim in WA



Photo: Vlad Baltinas.

Richard Titelius*

On December 5, over 100 delegates of the CPSU/CSA representing public servants attended a mass meeting either in person in Perth or online through Zoom to discuss and consider endorsing their next wage claim. In the last wage agreement the members accepted \$1,000 plus \$1,000 for a two-year period, which was less than CPI. This was because the state was in financial difficulty. Western Australia (WA) is now not in such a precarious financial state, so they are seeking a wage agreement to recover from the previous austerity measures and ensure their wages and conditions are not eroded.

New Branch Secretary Rikki Hendon, noted that if members were to accept what is on the table under the government's wages policy, then our wages would go backwards. Hendon also said that officials from WA State Treasury confirmed not only public servant's wages would go backwards but it

would put us below national average wage levels.

The Your Union Agreement (YUA) proposed by the union, seeks a number of improvements in conditions and a wage claim of two percent plus 2.5 percent over two years with no trade-offs. Other conditions being sought include: No Contracting out, No Privatisation, restrictions on labour hire and casual employment, improved ceremonial and cultural leave (especially to improve attraction and retention rates of Aboriginal employees), superannuation on unpaid maternity leave, and salary packaging for use of public transport to and from work, which is a considerable expense for many employees.

A survey from 2,758 members on the proposed claim revealed 94 percent favoured the claim being sought by the union.

Hendon also spoke about a meeting with government on November 14, attended by all union leaders with members in the public sector including the State School

Teachers Union, Hospital Services Union, Prison Officers and United Voice. Senior government ministers, including the Labor Premier Mark McGowan and Treasurer Ben Wyatt and Treasury officials, indicated they would not be budging on their stated wages policy – notwithstanding improvements in Commonwealth-State funding arrangements (ie increase in GST).

Social Debit v Credit

In a comprehensive question and answer session delegates reminded the meeting that the public was already in debit with regards to cuts in services and increases in charges. If members continued receiving wage increases less than rises in the cost of living and state fees and charges increased – who would really bear the cost and who the benefit?

Delegates said union members were entitled to at least maintain their standard of living by retaining their conditions and receiving a pay increase above CPI. The government's Voluntary Targeted

Separation Scheme (VTSS) had also been used to save money by abolishing positions which in some cases left the remaining workers with excessive workloads.

The people of WA were in turn entitled to have access to goods and services which would be a credit to their families and communities, including appropriate social and environmental policies.

These included looking providing for Aboriginal communities, developing renewable energy instead of fracking and, as raised by one delegate from the Department of Justice, appropriate funding for the recommendations of the government's recently released Meth Action Plan Report. In some cases the government needs to spend to later save money by addressing the causes of drug abuse and properly rehabilitate offenders.

Some delegates reported it would be difficult to engage members who were traditionally unaccustomed to taking industrial action. However, Hendon said the government had demonstrated they were

not prepared to move on their wages policy and now, "We need to shift our members." They also said it was imperative our members and delegates become activated – which should be done through a build-up of members' actions in pursuit of our claim. Our unions' claim would also be the first of the public sector unions to challenge the government's wages policy.

The delegates voted unanimously to accept the proposed claim which means bargaining can commence with the government to achieve a satisfactory response.

The Communist Party of Australia supports the CPSU/CSA Your Union Agreement claim, which would ensure union members maintain and improve their wages and conditions and that sufficient resources are allocated to maintain quality public services and infrastructure – including the valuable staff who ensure its ongoing effective operation.

*Richard Titelius is a CPSU/CSA delegate ✪

The 20th International Meeting of the Communist and Workers Parties (IMCWP)

Dorothy Costa

In November, 90 Communist and Worker's parties from 73 countries met to discuss developments at the international, regional and national levels and the tasks of the communist and workers' parties to strengthen their struggle, and the developments in the working class and other popular strata for workers' and people's rights.

Hosted by the Communist Party of Greece, KKE, the meeting issued an Appeal outlining areas of agreement that will provide the basis for stronger co-operation and common activity in the international communist movement in the next year.

It was repeatedly noted by delegates at the IMCWP, that the defeat of the USSR and the Eastern European socialist states in the counter-revolutions of the early 1990s, continues to have enormous negative consequences. The workers' and peoples' popular struggles for their rights, against militarisation of their economies and in preventing the outbreak of imperialist wars have been affected.

The negative realignment of forces which resulted from these defeats, continues to create enormous challenges for the Communist and Worker's parties in every country, regionally and internationally.

For these reasons the 20th IMCWP underlined the urgent need to build international and regional co-operation. To unify actions that resist and ultimately defeat the capitalist offensive against workers, the people and ultimately humanity, with the goal of its replacement with socialism.

Many delegates pointed out that there was evidence of the sharpening of contradictions in the imperialist stage of capitalism and the resulting intensification of the capitalist crisis. This growing crisis is being reflected in growing competition between capitalist states and alliances for markets and control of wealth-producing resources and energy pipelines.

The exploitative and predatory nature of capitalism in its last stage was described clearly in the national realities of advanced and developing countries worldwide. Delegates reported on new levels of exploitation and oppression of workers and other sectors of society. The erosion of people's social and democratic rights, the increasing danger and threats of the outbreak of imperialist wars, violations of sovereignty and national independence and irreversible damage to the environment.

The weakening of the communist and workers' movements nationally and internationally and their slow recovery, in the face of the anti-communist onslaught that followed the victory of counter-revolution in the USSR, was a focus of the discussions. Many parties expressed their concern that ideological confusion and mistakes continue to be a major factor in the weakening of the anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist forces in the context of the sharpening

contradictions of capitalism and the deepening crisis.

The need to address theoretical and ideological mistakes of the past and confront the ideological attacks by reactionary forces on the working class, the revolutionary role of the workers, its alliances and the necessity for a revolutionary vanguard, were identified as primary tasks in re-building and re-grouping the national and international communist and workers movements.

The theme of the 20th IMCWP, "The contemporary working class and its alliance. The tasks of the political vanguard – the Communist and Workers' Parties, in the struggle against exploitation and imperialist wars, for the rights of the workers and the peoples, for peace, for socialism", highlighted the urgent ideological issues confronting the worldwide communist movement.

The working class and class struggle

The ideological attack that sprung off the back of the victory of the 1991 counter-revolutions in the USSR and Eastern Europe expressed itself in the idea that, in modern society and with technological developments, the working class and its movements have lost all relevance. In advanced capitalist countries, the traditional industrial and manufacturing base had shrunk and a new "neutral" non-class stratum of workers arose. The services, IT, telecommunications and managerial roles had supplanted the working class. As a result, the necessity of class struggle against exploitation of the workers' through the extraction of surplus value was denied.

This view was soundly rejected by the communist and workers' parties and exposed as an attempt to deny the ongoing exploitation of workers and hide the class nature of society in the interests of the capitalist class. The changing composition of the working class, as a consequence of the development of the productive forces in advanced capitalist countries, has not changed the exploitative and predatory nature of the class system.

In the experience of the members of the IMCWP, class collaboration through social contracts and the denial of the necessity of class struggle in the last decades has led to greater inequality, not less. This has been accompanied by the loss of industrial, social and democratic rights and the increasing domination of the monopolies across the capitalist world.

The question of intermediate stages

A second major ideological question that came to the fore was the idea that intermediate stages could exist between capitalism and socialism. Many delegates argued this was an illusion, that socialism could not be won through parliamentary reforms and gradual improvement of the electoral correlation of

forces, through a "left" governmental management of capitalism.

Once again, many parties argued that this was an incorrect analysis developed in the international communist movement in the specific difficult conditions in the struggle against fascism. The need for parties to review national and international experiences on "stage theory" and assess its usefulness in developing their strategic direction was discussed.

The KKE argued in their contribution to the IMCWP that this idea, "... still remains as the main issue of the ideological-political struggle in the ranks of the labour movement." They referred to their experience in refusing to join a Syriza-led government to manage capitalism in Greece in 2013. This decision has since been clearly demonstrated as correct. Today the Syriza-ANEL government in Greece, has taken on the key role of managing capitalism in the interests of the big international monopolies and the Greek bourgeois class. It is doing this despite its promises to the Greek people and in the false name of the left.

Social Alliances

The question of how communist and workers parties approach the building of social alliances in the struggle for social progress and peace has always been centrally important in our theory and practice. The IMCWP reflected differences between parties in different countries.

The overthrow of capitalism, led by the working class, serves the interests not only of that class, but also the interests of the majority of society whose rights and interests are limited and denied by the growing power of the monopolies and finance

capital. The anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist direction of social alliances was underlined as essential as was the need for Communist parties to understand and build alliances in a dynamic and non-linear way according to the needs and changing conditions in the struggle.

A strong view expressed by many parties is that within the alliances and through their activity, the ideological struggle will occur. The question of which political line provides a real answer to the problems of the people will inevitably need to be answered. A line in favour of the monopolies or the line against the domination of the monopolies? How the vanguard role of the Communist Party can be realised in the pre-revolutionary phases is an associated question.

The tasks of the communist parties

Communist and Workers' Parties in each country must elaborate their own programmatic and strategic direction based on their theoretical and objective analysis of the conditions that prevail.

The IMCWP comes together every year on the basis of mutual respect of parties and non-interference. The 20th IMCWP, despite some different opinions on ideological, theoretical and strategic issues, was able to successfully agree on a united Appeal because it insisted on compliance with these pre-conditions for the parties' discussions and co-operation within the IMCWP framework.

At the same time differences over some questions, including the character of developments in China, were not hidden but were expressed openly and in a principled way.

Some parties expressed the opinion that the development of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" was in fact hiding the basic fact that China's economy had moved away from the development of the social relations of production.

Delegates raised their concerns that Chinese multinational companies were exploiting workers in countries around the world. One example of this was the operation of the Chinese multinational Costco in the Athens port of Piraeas where aggressive anti-worker tactics have been applied by Cosco against the port workers.

One major task that was identified across the movement was the need for Communist and Workers parties to deal with the widespread and negative influence of social democracy on workers politically and ideologically.

Many parties referred to the history and the relationship of the Communist movement with social democracy as a major cause in the defeat of the socialist countries at the end of the 20th century. This view holds that this problem remains a central political and ideological obstacle to the ability of Communist and Workers' Parties to combat opportunism and decisively, take up their vanguard role in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and for socialism.

The Communist Party of Australia took part in the 20th IMCWP with a four-person delegation, led by Bob Briton, General secretary of the CPA. Contributions to the 20th IMCWP and more information from Solidnet on member parties can be found on the Solidnet site – solidnet.org ✪



SHOP PROGRESSIVE!

Looking for gifts or something to read over the summer holiday period? Then go no further than Shop@CPA. We have new stock of books on offer as well as t-shirts, badges and DVDs at the best of prices. They range from the Marxist-Leninist classics through to Australian history and novels.

Australia

Martin Place, by D H Crick, is an Australian novel, set against the background of a finance company in Martin Place and life in the Sydney suburb of Glebe. A young, ambitious school leaver is excited when he gets a job as a junior clerk in the National Assurance Company. But life in the company is not quite what he expected and throws up choices that challenge his values and ambitions.

In many respects Martin Place has parallels with today although in 1963 paper ledgers took the place of today's computers. It is a great Australian novel. Published by the Australasian Book Society in 1963, hardcover, 249 pages, \$25. Copies are preloved but reasonable condition.

The biography of militant unionist and outspoken politician Percival (Jack) Brookfield is as much an history book as a biography. Brookfield's name is largely forgotten to people outside of the mining town of Broken Hill, yet Brookfield was one of the most controversial and outspoken characters of his time.

He rose quickly from being a miner working underground to local and national fame. He fought on the streets as a unionist and in the anti-conscription campaign, and held the balance of power in the NSW Parliament when he was shot and later died in 1921. Fifteen thousand of the town's 24,000 population followed the coffin from the Trades Hall to the cemetery, such was his popularity amongst those who admired him.

He was also hated by many others, hence the name of the biography, *The Best Hated Man in Australia: The Life and Death of Percy Brookfield 1875-1921*. Written by Paul Robert Adams, this book recounts in a life-like manner his life up until the funeral. Published by Puncher & Wattman Biography, 377 pages, \$26

Revolution

The iconic work, *Ten Days that Shook the World* by John Reed, is a must read to understand the Great October Socialist Revolution. Reed provides a first-hand riveting description of the extraordinary events that occurred in the lead-up to and during the Revolution that resulted in the Bolsheviks seizing power.

The book was first published in March 1919, and this edition for the centenary of the Revolution includes Lenin's introduction written at the end of 1919, the preface written by M K Krupskaya in 1923 and a new foreword by David Laibman. It includes an interesting piece about the author John Reed by Howard Lawson, which raises some questions for today. International Publishers, 430 pages, \$42

The Communist Manifesto is a must for all communists and others interested in learning about and understanding Marxism. *Birth of the Communist Manifesto* contains the full text of the Manifesto and a great deal of other material which contributes to an understanding of the document.

This volume includes an introduction by Dirk J Struik which provides the social and intellectual milieu in which the historical document was conceived and written. This greatly assists in understanding the Manifesto itself.

It also contains all of the prefaces by Marx and Engels, two preliminary drafts by Engels (one only recently found) and other supplementary material. International Publishers, 224 pages, \$23

Women

The Emancipation of Women contains selected writings by Lenin on a wide variety of topics related to the problems of women in society. The origins and persistence of discriminatory and oppressive practices and modes of thought, the family, the important role of women in social movements and the need to combat prejudicial hangovers from the past are discussed.

Lenin "... saw full social equality of women as a principle that no communist could dispute," Clara Zetkin writes in "My Recollections of Lenin", which is also included in this volume.

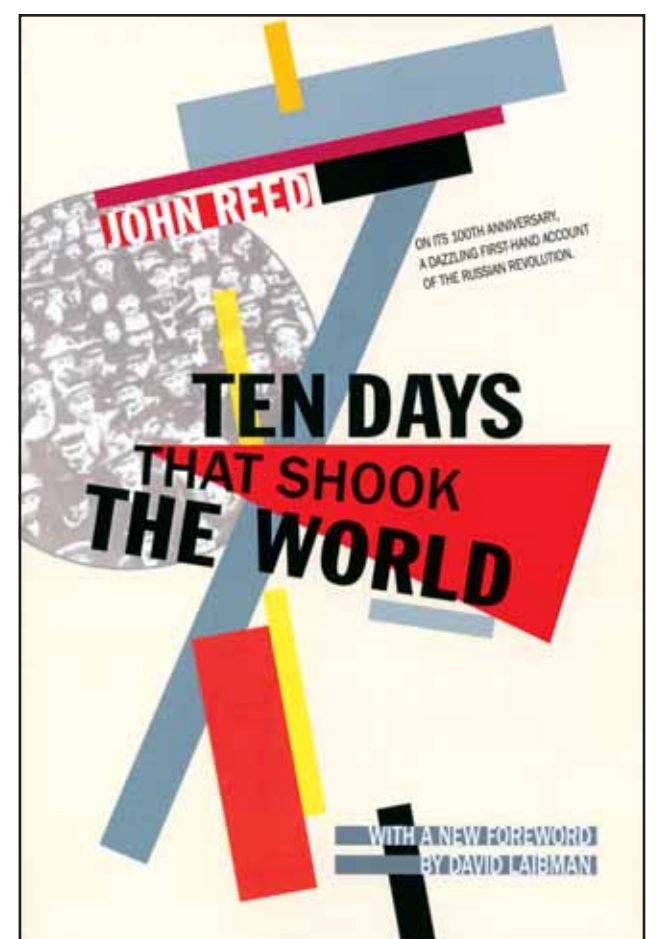
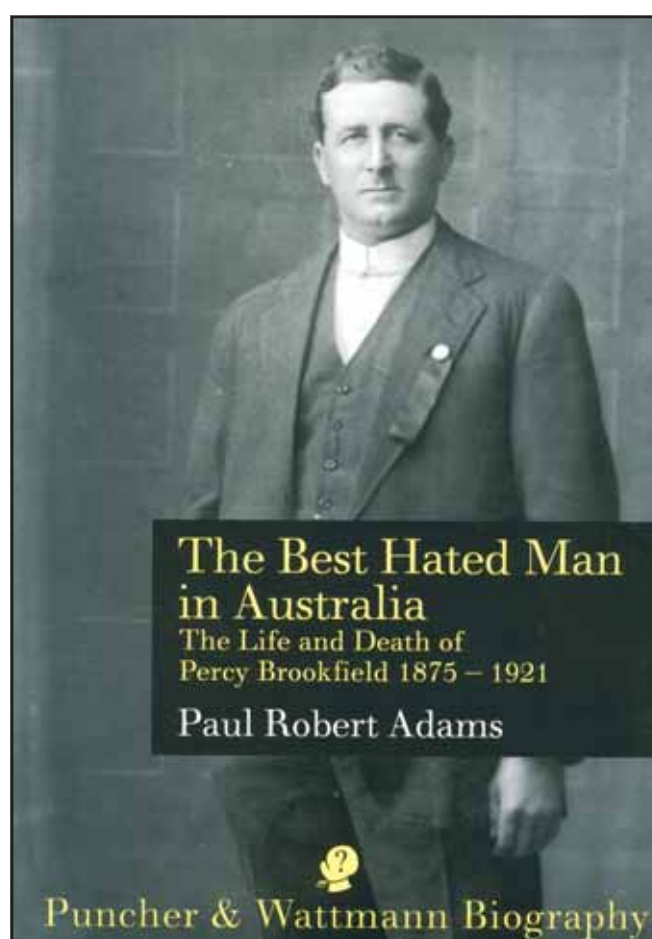
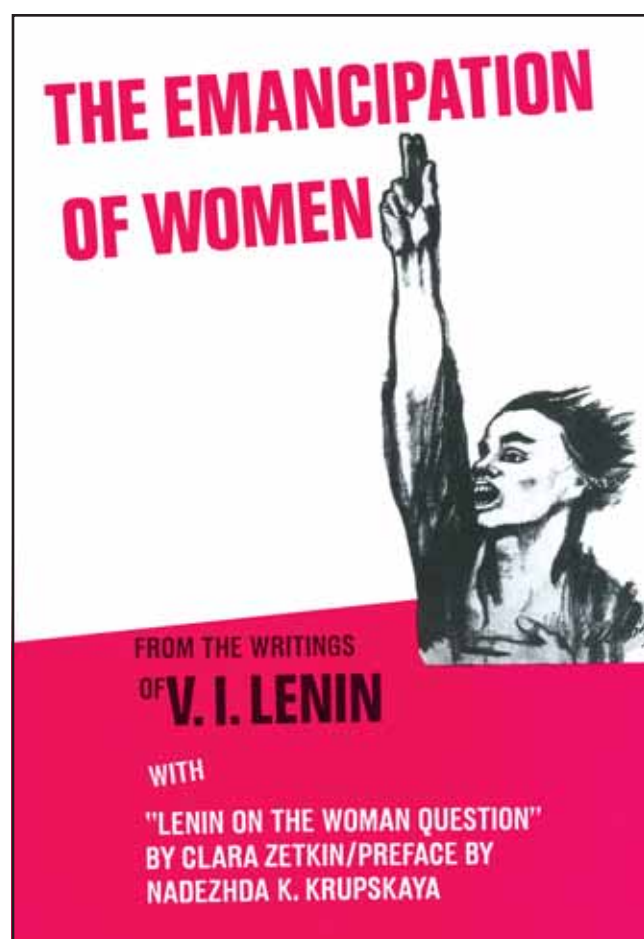
Of particular significance for today is the thought Lenin gave to the need for women to have special demands and organisations of their own, within the movement for socialism and the true emancipation of women by way of victorious class struggle. International Publishers, 136 pages, \$21

Imperialism

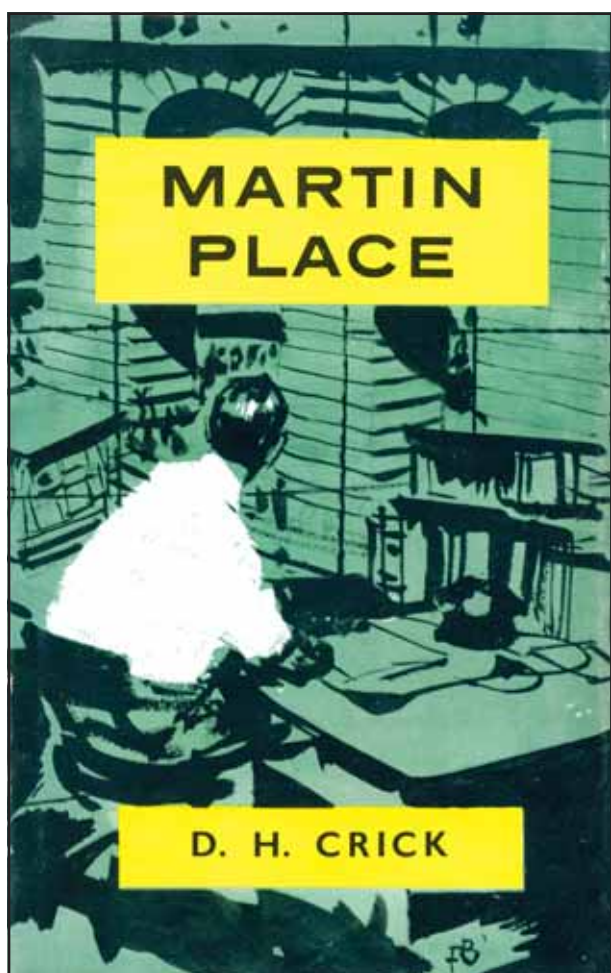
One hundred years after it was written, Lenin's classic Marxist theory of imperialism, as articulated in his publication: *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, remains the best framework to understand capitalism's international political economy.

Subsequent capitalist development shows the key aspects of Lenin's thesis to be correct. Just as the basic ideas of Marx's Capital have been proven correct by developments in contemporary capitalism, so too, have all the fundamentals of Lenin's theory of imperialism. It remains an essential starting point for understanding the principal international developments today. (Sam King)

International Publishers, paper back, 128 pages, \$18



BARGAINS GALORE!



Ethics

There is a widespread misconception that Marxism is limited to material facts, mostly economic in nature, and does not and cannot delve into the realm of values and value judgements. Yet, as the author points out, it is well known that Marx condemned the injustices of capitalism in moral language.

Marxist Ethics: A Short Exposition identifies the kinds of ethical concerns that were deemed important by the young Marx; the question of determinism in Marx's writings; justice and workers' interests; integration of needs and rights of the individual with that of whole society; the intersection of the arts and morality; and much more. By Willis H Truitt International Publishers, 119 pages, \$23

The Nature of Democracy Freedom and Revolution discusses the origins of the bourgeois concepts of democracy and freedom in their historical development. The first chapter deals with the ideas of John Milton, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill and democracy and class. Other chapters look at the nature of and various concepts of freedom. The final four chapters deal with aspects of revolution, including definitions, non-socialist and socialist, the questions of violence and democracy. An important book dealing with concepts that are widely misunderstood.

By Herbert Aptheker, International Publishers, 128 pages, \$18

Leftists

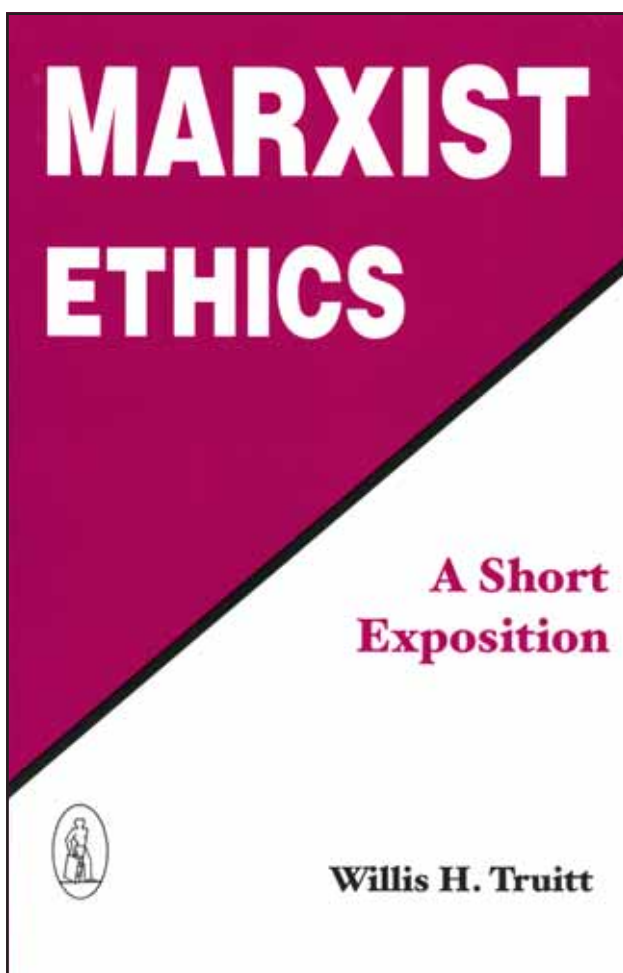
At times the struggle within the Left can be as intense as the struggle against reactionaries. *"Left-wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder* is an essay in Marxist strategy and tactics. It takes up important questions such as whether revolutionaries should work in reactionary trade unions, participate in bourgeois parliaments, use legal or illegal methods of struggle and other important aspects of putting Marxism into practice.

It deals with the question of compromise, whether or not it is acceptable to make compromises. Lenin cites Engels' criticism of the Communard-Blanquists who wanted to attain their goal without stopping at intermediate stations and without any compromises.

By V I Lenin, International Publishers, 95 pages, \$20

Another popular piece by Lenin is *What Is To Be Done?* It takes up some of the same issues as "Left-wing" Communism, and other burning issues of the communist movement, which are just as important today.

Essential reading for any revolutionary in which Lenin analyses the organisational principles of and the tasks facing a revolutionary party and the differences between it and a party of social reform, and struggles based on economism. International Publishers, 206 pages, \$23



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Badges are \$6 each including packing and postage. To order write to info@cpa.org.au or phone 02 9699 8844. If ordering more than one badge ask for a price.



DVDs

Hugo Chávez and the new Latin America

An interview with Hugo Chávez by Aleida Guevara. In Spanish with English subtitles, \$16

Eisenstein - Battleship Potemkin directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein. The story of the mutiny on the Russian ship *Prince Potemkin* during the 1905 uprising against the Tsarist regime. *Battleship Potemkin* is considered one of the most important and influential films of all time, as well as possibly Eisenstein's greatest work.

Its revolutionary zeal led to it being banned in many countries, particularly fascist Germany, Italy and Spain, and even Britain up until 1954! The film brought Eisenstein's theories of cinema art to the world in a powerful showcase; his emphasis on montage, his stress of intellectual contact, and his treatment of the mass instead of the individual as the protagonist.

Get Potemkin and another of Eisenstein's films *The General Line* on one DVD for \$25.

Or how about eight films by Sergei Eisenstein on four DVDs for just \$65. The other films are: *October 1917*, *The Strike*, *Alexander Nevski*, *Que Viva Mexico!*, *Ivan the Terrible* (Parts 1 & 2).

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Yellow Vest movement strikes a victory for working people

John Wight

Though the Gilet Jaunes (Yellow Vest) movement in France may appear to have erupted from nowhere, its arrival has been a long time coming.

“Men make their own history,” Karl Marx reminds us, “but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen, but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted.”

And confronting the thousands of Yellow Vest protesters who’ve been laying siege to central Paris these past few weeks – along with millions of ordinary working people across France – have been and are the deepening consequences of a broken and defunct neoliberal economic model, compounded by the refusal of its prime movers, chief among them French President Emmanuel Macron, to wake up to the deepening dystopia fashioned in its name.

The French government’s decision to suspend the proposed levy on fuel was a victory for the French people, whose tradition of fighting and struggling for the right to a quality of life consistent with human dignity is centuries old.

In forcing Macron – whose disregard for those at the sharp end of the neoliberal god he worships has been inordinate – to back down, the Yellow Vest movement has rendered working people throughout the EU a great and significant service, reminding them that passivity in the face of injustice only succeeds in inviting more injustice.

Macron’s initial “let them eat cake” refusal to countenance backing down (before, that is, he did back down), proclaiming with the bombast of the mouse to the cat that “People complaining about rising fuel prices are the same ones who complain about pollution and how their children suffer,” will follow him all the way to his resignation or the next French presidential election, whichever comes first.

Clearly and obviously the fact (remember those?) that just 100 of the world’s leading companies and corporations are responsible for 71 percent of emissions is not something that overly intrudes on the



consciousness of the current occupant of the Élysée Palace. It is those very companies whose interests and whims Macron with his recent raft of tax cuts for employers and the wealthy and cuts to pensions and welfare benefits for those at the bottom of the income scale, serves so avidly.

Moreover, said companies and corporations are the recipients of mammoth sums of institutional largesse, courtesy of the world’s leading banks and financial institutions; the very banks that brought us the 2008 global financial crash and worldwide recession. This, in turn, was met by the unleashing of an economic war against ordinary people, who were not responsible for the crash, in the form of austerity.

Only in joining the aforementioned dots are we able to cut through the fog of neoliberal propaganda relentlessly spewed out by an establishment media that long lost the right to be considered anything other than part of the problem; its primary role not to hold the rich and powerful to account but instead to throw dust in the workers’ faces.

Straddling the world stage like a colossus in his own mind, but a low rent Napoleon in everyone else’s, with his talk of a European army, Macron is the epitome of the confected politician to which neoliberalism has given birth over the years. Even before the current crisis his approval rating was so low it was drilling its way through the floor; yet as with other leaders who are cut from the same expensive cloth, being impervious to the real world is deemed compatible with strong leadership.

It really does beg the question of when, if ever, those who inhabit this cloistered Western neoliberal establishment will finally wake up to the consequences of their ruinous economic dictatorship?

In the UK we have the unedifying sight of Tony Blair being wheeled out as the de facto leader of the “reverse Brexit” movement. That there is anyone who actually believes that the man who took petrol and matches to the Middle East, and who carries about as much weight in the country’s Brexit heartlands as a fly’s wing, is capable of directing anything except his

chauffeur from one of his gilded mansions to a TV studio and back again, is remarkable.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, the lid of Hillary Clinton’s political coffin has been prised open by an out-of-touch Washington liberal establishment – one that left planet earth after Trump’s election in 2016 and has been floating around somewhere in outer space since.

The catastrophic refusal of liberal America to confront the truth that Trump is the political child of what Clinton and Obama served up to the American people over too many years, rather than an unpleasant interruption to business as usual, is one of the strongest arguments yet in opposition to the legalisation of cannabis across freedom’s land.

Returning to the sage of Trier, Karl Marx, the following from his classic 19th century work, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, delineates in Technicolor detail the reality of governments that genuflect at the altar of capital in the 21st century:

“Bonaparte [Macron] would like

to appear as the patriarchal benefactor of all classes. But he cannot give to one class without taking from another.”

The Yellow Vests have made it known that the days of the French working class being the class that is taken from are over.

Meanwhile, when it comes to the country in Europe where the austerity has wrought most carnage – i.e. the UK – the absence of anything approaching a Yellow Vest movement hitting the streets in response lends truth to the old saw that whereas in France the elites are frightened of the people, in Britain the people are frightened of the elites.

Up and down the UK, in communities gutted and garrotted by the country’s neoliberal establishment since the Tory’s came to power in 2010, the only sound emitted in response up to now has been the rumbling stomachs of hungry children – of which in 2018 there are over four million.

But, then, even the most slumberous lion has to awake sometime. And when it does?

RT –Russia Today ☺

Women hold general strike over increased violence in Israel

Tens of thousands of women held a general strike with protests across Israel and the Occupied Territories on Wednesday December 4 over Tel Aviv’s failure to deal with a rise in violence against women.

More than 30,000 attended a rally in Habima Square in central Tel Aviv where activists placed 200 pairs of women’s shoes painted red as organisers told the crowds: “Today we made history. Today the silence on the violence against women has turned to screams.”

The strike followed the murder of two girls last week – Silvana Tsegai, 12, in south Tel Aviv and Yara Ayoub, 16, in Jish. They were the 23rd and 24th women to be murdered in Israel in 2018.

Protesters have accused the Israeli government of silence over the murder of women with a 2017 Knesset report finding that 35 per cent of those killed had filed complaints with the police prior to their deaths.

Hundreds of institutions including the Knesset, trade unions and civil society organisations backed yesterday’s strikes which were organised by the Red Flag Coalition, itself made up of more than 50 feminist organisations.

They are demanding that money that was promised in 2016 as part of an emergency plan to prevent violence against women is released by the government and additional funding is given for educational programs.

On Sunday women held a protest outside

an Israeli cabinet meeting holding up signs reading: “Prime Minister Netanyahu, wake up! The blood of women is not cheap, don’t allow us to die. Violence starts in the corridors of power.”

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) parliamentarian Khalida Jarrar, who has been held in administrative detention in an Israeli prison since July 2017, highlighted the impact of the occupation on women.

“We Palestinian women in the occupation’s prisons, who see ourselves as an inseparable part of the national and global feminist movement, send our support for protesting women wherever they are.

“We hope the struggle for the end of all

forms of discrimination, violence, and exploitation continues. We believe that it is impossible to separate a national struggle against occupation from our social struggle.”

Organisers vowed to continue the struggle for women’s rights and bring an end to violence.

“We’re in the midst of a show of force by women, one which gives hope, and we won’t remain quiet until women’s lives are put at the top of the national agenda,” they said in a statement.

Morning Star, Britain’s daily socialist newspaper ☺

US Navy possibly preparing to enter Black Sea



US Navy destroyer sails through waters claimed by Russia in Sea of Japan.

An American destroyer sailed off the Russian coast, near the Pacific Fleet base in Vladivostok, in a first such stunt since the Cold War. Another US ship is expected in the Black Sea soon, amid tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

The *USS MCCampbell* (DDG-85) went into the vicinity of Peter the Great Bay to “challenge Russia’s excessive maritime claims and uphold the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea” enjoyed by the US and others, Lieutenant Rachel McMarr, a spokesperson for the US Pacific Fleet, said in a statement.

The US Navy calls such stunts “Freedom of Navigation Operations” (FONOP). The last time a FONOP was conducted in this area was 1987, at the peak of Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union.

“These operations demonstrate the United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows,” McMarr said. “That is true in the Sea of Japan, as in other places around the globe.”

Peter the Great Bay was named after the first emperor of Russia, and is dotted with bases of the Russian Pacific Fleet. The presence of a US destroyer in the area is comparable to a Russian sail-by of San Diego, California or Pearl Harbour, Hawaii.

Washington does not recognise Russia’s territorial claims in the Sea of Japan, with a Navy official telling CNN they far exceed the 12 nautical mile limit guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS). While Russia has ratified the Convention, the US has not.

That is not all, however. The US Navy could also be planning to send a warship into the Black Sea in the near future. CNN reported that the State Department has notified Turkey of the intent to send a warship through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, which requires a 15-day notice under the terms of the 1936 Montreux Convention.

The 1936 treaty also limits the presence of ships from nations that don’t border the Black Sea to a maximum of 21 days. The US last had a ship in the area back in October.

Anonymous US officials told CNN the move was a response to last month’s incident between Russian coast guard ships and three Ukrainian vessels in the Kerch Strait, which connects the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea.

“We routinely conduct operations to advance security and stability throughout the US 6th Fleet area of operations to include the international waters and airspace of the Black Sea,” fleet spokesman Commander Kyle Raines told CNN.

The US has also repeatedly sent ships to the parts of East China Sea claimed by Beijing, drawing repeated protests from China – most recently last week, when the guided missile cruiser *USS Chancellorsville* (CG-62) sailed through the area.

RT – Russia Today 🌐

Dow plunges 700 points after Huawei exec’s arrest

The Dow Jones fell more than 700 points on Thursday last week, as news broke of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou’s arrest and planned extradition to the US. The drop brings the Dow’s two-day losses to 1,500 points.

Meng was arrested in Vancouver, Canada, on Sunday December 2, and now faces extradition to the United States. The charges against Meng – the daughter of the telecoms company’s founder – remain unknown, but could relate to a possible violation of sanctions against Iran.

The Huawei executive’s arrest comes at a critical time for US-China relations. Both countries have been locked into a trade war for much of the year, and only agreed last weekend to restart discussions.

President Trump has agreed to postpone planned tariff hikes on Chinese goods, while China has pledged to purchase a “very substantial” amount of American produce and curb the export of deadly opioid Fentanyl to the US in exchange.

Representatives from both countries now have just short of 90 days to negotiate, unless the

time-frame is extended or a deal reached beforehand.

While stocks rallied on Monday, lingering uncertainty surrounding the precise details of the trade war truce have seen the Dow slump since.

Meng’s arrest could have a significant effect on markets and on US-China relations.

Huawei is one of the world’s largest telecom companies, and is the world’s second-largest smartphone manufacturer behind Samsung. The company has been accused of using its devices to pass on information to the Chinese government, prompting the US Department of Defense to ban their sale on military bases.

Earlier this year, six top US intelligence chiefs voiced their concerns about Huawei phones to the Senate Intelligence Committee, with FBI Director Christopher Wray saying he was “deeply concerned about the risks of allowing any company or entity that is beholden to foreign governments that don’t share our values to gain positions of power inside our telecommunications networks.”

Top British and New Zealand telecom providers have banned Huawei from their 5G networks, as

did the Australian government. All cited national security concerns in barring the Chinese firm from their next-generation networks.

Huawei, for its part, has consistently denied accusations of spying, and responded to the arrest of Meng by saying it complies with “all applicable laws and regulations” where it operates.

Beijing has called for Meng’s release, and the Chinese embassy in Canada said that her arrest “seriously harmed the human rights of the victim.” Meng, it said, was “not violating any American or Canadian law.”

Thursday’s stock drop also comes as fears of a global economic slowdown circulate. DoubleLine Capital CEO Jeffrey Gundlach told Reuters that the US economy is “poised to weaken.” Signals from the markets include the yield on three-year treasury bonds surpassing those on five-year bonds on Monday. This sign is usually interpreted by traders as an indicator of coming recession.

In Europe, Bloomberg reported that the European Central Bank is set to lower GDP forecasts, in light of arguments between Italy and Brussels and a slump in oil prices.

RT – Russia Today 🌐



Global Briefs

RUSSIA-VENEZUELA: Caracas and Moscow have signed US\$5 billion worth of contracts related to oil production during President Nicolas Maduro’s visit to Russia, Maduro tweeted a day after meeting with President Vladimir Putin. Maduro announced the deal on Twitter, thanking Putin and the people of Russia. “Contracts have been signed to guarantee investments for US\$5 billion to increase oil production with Russian partners of joint ventures,” Maduro said. In addition, an investment of more than US\$1 million was agreed for mining production in Venezuela, mainly of gold, according to Maduro, who was on an official state visit to Moscow last week. Russia and Venezuela run many joint projects in the energy, agricultural, geological, pharmaceutical, technology, and defence sectors. Russia’s investment in Venezuela exceeds US\$4 billion, according to the Russian news agency TASS.

BANGLADESH: The company behind the brands Chupa Chups or Alpenliebe, Perfetti Van Melle (PVM), is the third largest global confectionery company. It is a multi-national based in the Netherlands. PVM workers in Bangladesh recently attempted to form a union. The company’s response was brutal and swift: workers are being visited in their homes and threatened with the loss of their jobs if they don’t sign a statement saying they were forced to join (a common tactic used by South Asian employers). Elected union leaders have had their work rescheduled to make it impossible to meet with and represent their members. The workers are determined to defend their union and their rights. To indicate your support visit iuf.org

DR CONGO: According to the country’s Ministry of Health, a total of 291 Ebola cases have been confirmed in DR Congo (DRC) and 201 deaths have been reported in a new epidemic of the disease. About half of the victims of the recent outbreak of the virus are in Beni, in the North Kivu region. The World Federation of Trade Unions has expressed its serious concerns over this alarming situation and has called for all measures to be taken for adequate health care for the victims of the virus and for the immediate vaccination of the population. On behalf of our 95 million workers in 130 countries around the world, we call on the DRC authorities and the World Health Organization to step in and step up their actions to protect the people of the DRC from this deadly virus.

GREECE: PAME, the All Workers Militant Front, held a general strike on November 28, with thousands of workers taking part in massive rallies and demonstrations around Greece, overcoming employer pressure and intimidation. The actions were part of the struggle to strengthen the fight for increases in wages, pensions, social benefits, to abolish all the barbarous memorandum laws and in support of collective contracts. Under the slogan “Our Needs in the Frontline – Not the Profits of the Few”, a parallel message was sent to the forces of employer and government unionism who, after failing to prevent the strike, tried everything to undermine the actions on all fronts. The GSEE and ADEDY (the members of the European Trade Union confederation in Greece) were once again strike-breakers in their branches. There was increased participation in construction, transport, metal, food industries, and telecommunications. Also positive is the participation by young workers from big companies in sectors such as telecommunications, finance and catering.

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
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Surry Hills NSW 2010

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Sanctioning murder

Donald Trump's statements on Saudi Arabia and the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi make it clear that the US will let the Saudis regime off the hook. Letting states like Saudi Arabia get away with a brutal killing without any punishment is not an exception to US foreign policy.

The USA has in the past often been hypocritical on human rights violations depending on the country concerned.

The US is vocal in criticising human rights breaches in Iran, China, North Korea and various other nations, but then ignores, excuses and shields allies like Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, Turkey and others that commit flagrant human rights violations.

The US has a sordid history of backing, funding and supplying dictatorial military and other repressive regimes in Central and South America, Asia and Africa that were responsible for gross human rights abuses, countless deaths and disappearances.

The US is not the only big power to put national, military and economic interests before human rights.

But perhaps under Trump they are more blatant about the awful sad truth that for such powerful countries, politics and profits comes before respect for people's lives, dignity and welfare.

Steven Katsineris
Vic

A reminder

In 2007, the Howard government on its last legs opened a "pregnancy help line" that was to record conversations between counsellors and callers considering an abortion and store them for seven years. The \$5 million project was set up by the Department of Health then headed by the "right-to-life" zealot, Tony Abbott who described the rate of abortion in Australia as a "national tragedy".

It was clear from the outset that Abbott was intending this "help line" to act as an obstacle between women and the services they were seeking.

The help line was to be run by private outfit McKesson Asia Pacific and have advisers including two Catholic welfare agencies. Of course, no pro-choice organisations were represented.

At the time, in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and South

Australia abortion was still a matter considered under Criminal Code or Crimes Act. Medical practitioners had to vouch that taking a pregnancy to term would seriously endanger the woman's physical or mental health. Terminations were to be performed before the 23rd week of the pregnancy.

The fascistic right are contemptuous – and worse – of women.

Jo Dunleavy
Wodonga

On terrorism

Terrorist acts play into the hands of conservatives and are used by conservative political forces to advance their agendas. Assassinations and the killing of innocent civilians have always been rejected by progressive, revolutionary organisations. Much of the present (and proposed) legislation is anti-democratic in content.

It can be easily used against other sections of the community once enacted.

Terrorist ideas and actions can only be overcome when the causes that give rise to them have been removed.

These causes are the massive social and economic injustices that have become even more prevalent in the world in recent times.

Today, the first step that has to be taken towards a more secure, peaceful international community is the ending of our involvement in monstrous and illegal wars against other countries that bring huge suffering and death.

No matter how many times our governments attempt to deny this connection, it will remain until the wars of occupation are ended.

Mati English
Sydney

Voices from the student protests

CPA Youth NSW speak out

Jessica Ryan

Being a high school student, responding to the call and participating in such a large event felt like an obligation. As a student, someone young and deciding what I want my future to be, I feel as though the future of our planet is something we must strive to preserve.

ScoMo's jab at youth, suggesting that students should be in classrooms learning, and that those who protest are the ones who won't succeed in life is in fact a major encouragement to participate in the protest.

It's simply not just to tell the people who will have to live in the world after you've passed away with your pockets full of cash that we can't be active in protecting our future.

It's even more of a gross mockery that Morrison would tell us to hush on such a subject as opposition to the development of a new coal mine, which would serve no positive purpose, but undoubtedly ring dollar signs in a many politicians' eyes. We shouldn't allow reactionary politicians' rhetoric to stop us from speaking out for our future.

Being at the event with fellow comrades, we experienced a somewhat disorganised gathering. Although the mass presence itself was impressive, there was a significant presence of private school children and people passing who held obvious distaste or lack of knowledge of Communism or our Party.

Speakers out the front were drowned out by people's chants in the back. A theme was people protesting climate change debating those protesting the system which creates it.

Some progressive and interesting conversations were had, and we were approached by a couple of journalists who wanted our take on the situation. The hour and a half did feel as though it had an impact, and this was discussed as we headed back to CPA HQ.

Now is the time for action

Alex Laundess

Capitalism is killing our planet. The climate crisis has the potential to wipe out human civilisation on earth and will result in millions of deaths related to increased weather extremes (cyclones, floods, heatwaves, bushfires, droughts etc.).

Should the average global temperature increase surpass 2 degrees Centigrade the consequences will be devastating for human life. We are on track for 3 degrees of warming by the end of the century.

Climate change needs to be stopped. But what has it got to do with capitalism? Whatever credit or criticism one can attribute to capitalism it is an undeniable fact that so far the market has proven a failure in solving this crisis.

A brief look at the history of capitalism and climate change will show that markets have, if anything, worked against any solution to climate change. We knew about the potential impacts of climate change and how we could prevent them and yet with the increase of market dominance across the world and the "liberalisation" of world economies governments and capitalists have effectively done nothing.

Instead we are treated to the "profit-over-people" mentality of the capitalists of today. One hundred companies are directly responsible for 71 percent of global emissions. Fossil fuel companies fund deliberate misinformation campaigns and manipulate our media. The US Army which protects their interests in global conflicts is the single biggest polluter in the world. And all of this in the pursuit of profit.

It is now, more than ever, clear that the egotistical and heartless actions of these fossil-fuel capitalists are driving us to extinction.

Precious years have been wasted in stopping this crisis and it is we, the youth of the world, who will inherit this catastrophe. Our futures are being burned in the coal-fired power plants and oil-guzzling machines for dollars which we do not see.

And now is the time for action. We know our enemy. They are the profit-driven oligarchs, those who manipulate us, exploit us and attempt to control us. But the people are waking to this reality and demonstrations such as the student walkout are begging to showcase the people's disdain for the callous nature of our ruling class. ✪

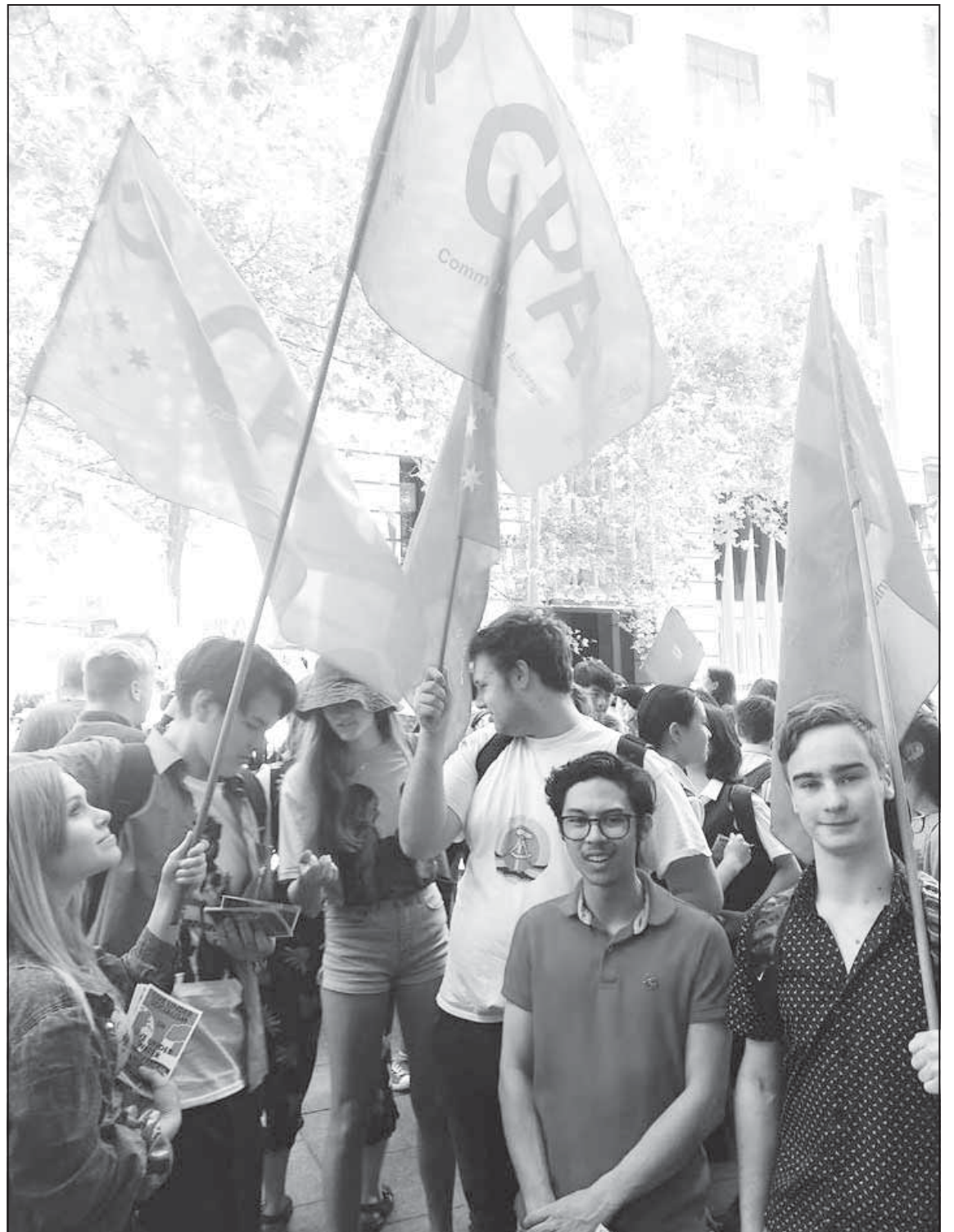


Photo: Communist Youth.

"Our futures are being burned in the coal-fired power plants and oil-guzzling machines for dollars ..."

The American Film Institute Festival

Reviews by Ed Rampell

LOS ANGELES: The American Film Institute's annual film festival, which took place on November 8-15, is arguably Los Angeles's premier annual fete of cinema. Here are some capsule reviews of some of this year's offerings. Some are now in theatres.

The Weekend

Woody Allen's films have sometimes been criticised for their dearth of Black characters, even if most of the Manhattanite's movies have been set and shot in New York City. This despite the fact that according to the 2006-2008 US Census 25.1 percent of NYC's 8.5 million residents are Black. Somehow the Woodman consistently managed to miss the estimated 2,086,566 Black people residing in there. Toronto-born writer/director Stella Meghie may not be American, but she is of African ancestry and her new rom-com, *The Weekend*, is a sort of all-Black Woody Allen type of comedy.

However, that being said, *The Weekend* takes place mostly in rural California, apparently near the town of Agua Dulce, which is located in northern LA County and where less than two percent of the population is Black, according to the 2010 US Census. Nevertheless, stand-up comic Zadie's (Sasheer Zamata) mother (sitcom veteran Kym Whitley) owns a bed and breakfast located in California's countryside, where Zadie goes to spend the eponymous weekend.

Rather strangely, and stretching credulity, the single and relationship-challenged zany Zadie does so with her ex, Bradford (Tone Bell), whom she still hasn't gotten over, and rather improbably along with his new girlfriend Margo (DeWanda Wise, who plays Nola Darling in the Netflix version of Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*). The plot becomes Woody-esque when Aubrey (Y'lan Noel of HBO's *Insecure*, which gratuitously uses the "N" word more promiscuously than a Klan rally) checks in at the B & B for the weekend. Like in Allen's movies, the comic implications of relationship fluidity and shifting sexual/romantic pairings becomes the basis of the plot. Who will – or won't – sleep with whom? Inquiring minds want to know.

The Weekend is mildly amusing. Although he's handsome,

personality-wise Bradford is a huge drip as a character, and it's hard to see what zippy Zadie, who is a firecracker, ever saw in this bore, and worse, why she wasted three years pining after him when Bradford broke up with the too-hot-to-handle comedienne?

Despite its implausible premise and some irrational behaviour, I found the 86-minute *The Weekend*'s denouement to be satisfying and real. Black audiences may be delighted to watch a rom-com featuring characters who look like them and are petit-bourgeois professionals, as opposed to being stereotypical lumpenised thugs, hoods and hos.

Roma

Mexican auteur Alfonso Cuarón (2001's *Y Tu Mamá También*) sets his new semi-autobiographical film *Roma* in the Mexico City district of that name. This two-hour 15 minute black and white feature shot in wide-screen is not so much about Cuarón, but about his petit-bourgeois family's live-in maid, Cleo (Yalitza Aparicio). She is a young Indigenous woman from the countryside (at one point we hear that the government is taking her mother's land away from her), devoted to caring for Cuarón's fair skinned family and their household.

The film slowly, deliberately unfolds with what seems to be mundane details. *Roma* is a bit Felliniesque: That Italian genius even co-wrote/directed a 1972 feature also named *Roma*. But the Fellini film that Cuarón's ode to his childhood memories most reminds me of is his charming 1973 *Amarcord*, which translates as "I Remember." Fermin's (superbly crafted by newcomer Jorge Antonio Guerrero) actions in the few scenes he appears in delineate and hone in on his character as a complete cad, whom Cleo, perhaps starving and yearning for romance, makes the mistake of getting involved with. The superhero-like Professor Zovek, appropriately played by a professional wrestler whose ring name (and the one used in the credits) is "Latin Lover," is another madcap Felliniesque character.

As Cleo, Aparicio plays the dark-skinned domestic in a Neo-Realist manner, as someone with both feet firmly on the ground. *Roma* gains mounting momentum and has a cumulative effect. Cleo is swept up in a student demonstration

with cataclysmic effects that your plot spoiler-averse reviewer won't divulge. But it is absolutely one of the most heart-wrenching sequences viewers are likely to see onscreen nowadays. Later, the diminutive Cleo, who doesn't know how to swim, is faced with a do or die situation at a beach with pounding waves.

The screening of *Roma* was completely sold out. Cuarón's beautiful homage to the servant who helped raise him won the Golden Lion for Best Film at the Venice Film Festival, while Cuarón himself won Venice's SIGNIS Award. I imagine the Spanish language *Roma* with English subtitles is a strong contender for the Best Foreign Film Oscar, while Aparicio deserves a Best Acting Academy Award. Since the heyday of Italian Neo-Realism, *Roma* is one of the best films ever made outside of the socialist world about a humble domestic, full of simple heroism, humanity and dignity, with an indigenous female in the lead role. Aparicio's beautifully drawn character may just be a salt of the earth, modest maid, but to me this Cleo is a Cleopatra.

The Favourite

The Favourite is set in the court of Queen Anne (Olivia Colman) during the early 18th century when England and Scotland joined together to become Great Britain – which is ironic as Britain's 2018 female head of government is now negotiating Brexit, in order to remove the UK from the European Union. In any case, other historical figures in this stylishly shot period piece helmed by Greek-born Yorgos Lanthimos (2015's surreal *The Lobster*), who introduced the AFI Fest screening at the Egyptian Theatre, include Lady Sarah (London-born Rachel Weisz, Best Actress Oscar winner for 2005's *The Constant Gardener*) and Abigail (Emma Stone, 2016's *La Land*).

Considering that *The Favourite* is about powerful women wielding state control it's interesting that this two-hour feature is being released just as a record number of women have been elected to the US House of Representatives and as the #MeToo movement empowers the sisterhood. There is also so much palace intrigue taking place onscreen, with various power players jockeying for position



Coogan and Reilly are Stan and Ollie.

that it seems to symbolise the Trump White House.

The Favourite of course deals with sexual politics and dynamics and there is a lesbian subtext. Class, too, plays a major role. My takeaway was that when it comes to the power elite, it is not mainly a question of gender but of the nature of domination, who holds sway in the pecking order to reign over and rule others.

I'd never heard of any of these parliamentarians, courtiers, royals, etc, and was surprised after the screening when I was researching my review to learn that this saga about the crown, privilege, entitlement, was actually inspired by real-life people. Watching this well-acted, well-lit, well-shot (with convex lenses by director of photography Robbie Ryan) movie will transport you 300 years into the past.

Stan & Ollie

First of all, this 97-minute period biopic about Laurel and Hardy is peerlessly acted by Steve Coogan and John C. Reilly, who is especially outstanding immersed in a fat suit, makeup and prosthetics by Mark Coulier and team, to make him look like Oliver Hardy. As a film historian, I relished the opportunity to see a biopic about one of the silver screen's most dynamic comedy duos. But alas, there is scant footage depicting their Hollywood heyday, as Laurel and Hardy act on a 1937 set and clash with Hal Roach (Danny Huston, a canny choice to depict a figure from Tinseltown's Golden Age, given his pedigree as the son and grandson of John and

Walter Huston), who is portrayed as an exploitative producer squeezing profits out of his players. At issue and at stake is the notion of creative control, which Stan is willing to fight for while Ollie is more conciliatory.

Most of this partial biopic takes place 16 years later, when Stan and Ollie are washed up in pictures and embark on a gruelling tour of playhouses and various venues in Britain, where Stan Laurel hailed from (Oliver Hardy was from Georgia). The film focuses on the team's personal dynamics and we see a number of their film and Vaudeville routines re-enacted, which of course is good fun.

Jon Baird's direction is right on and this is basically a very conventional narrative film. Jeff Pope (who wrote 2013's *Philomena*, also co-starring Coogan) misses the mark in this biopic that largely ignores Laurel and Hardy's screen work. Although I personally enjoyed *Stan & Ollie* as I'm a film historian and critic, this is mainly a movie for Laurel and Hardy buffs, comedy and film fans and the like. But if one's not interested in these subjects you're likely to agree with Ollie: "That's another fine mess you've gotten me into."

In any case, it was great seeing Reilly, Coogan, other members of the cast and crew and descendants of Stan at the AFI screening at the Egyptian theatre (an ideal venue for a film such as this). Movie buffs are, to paraphrase Mel Brooks, likely to want to extend a hardy handshake and laurels to the filmmakers and relatives.

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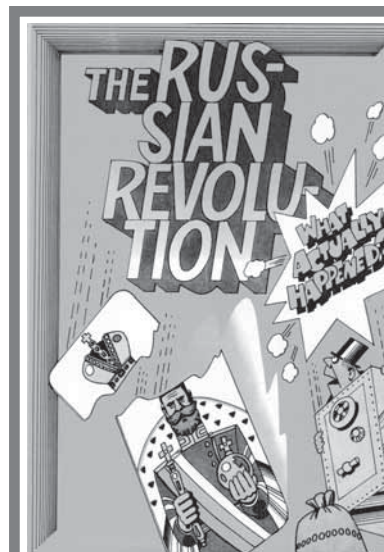
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Cyprus – a pregnant stalemate

End the occupation, end the division!

Dorothy Costa

The 1974 invasion and occupation by Turkey's military of almost 40 percent of Cyprus followed the failed military coup organised by far right Cypriot nationalists supported by the (1967-1974) military junta of Greece. The idea of the super patriotic nationalist group – Eoka B – was to force a union of Cyprus with Greece by overthrowing the popular, non-aligned, President Makarios.

The goal and interests of foreign powers throughout the ages has been to control the strategically located Mediterranean island and this was once again realised by the 1974 failed coup d'état. The coup quickly became the pretext Turkey had been waiting for to invade and occupy northern Cyprus and to realise its own plans for annexing northern Cyprus.

The short-lived independent and unified Republic of Cyprus, which had been created in 1960 following centuries of Ottoman and then British colonial rule, was thus undermined and Cyprus was occupied by Turkey and divided on a manufactured pretext.

This pretext of irreconcilable inter-ethnic conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots was continually fuelled in the 1960s and early 1970s by the Greek Cypriot ultra-right Eoka B and their military junta supporters in Greece. It also had the tacit support of British and US imperialism which continued to want to utilise Cyprus for their own interests in the region and saw new possibilities of reversing Cyprus's new found independence and its non-aligned status.

The Turkish occupation of Cyprus since the 1974 invasion, remains an unresolved tragedy for the Greek and Turkish Cypriot people who cannot return to their homes, who live in two artificial ethnic communities and cannot pursue their national and sovereign interests.

At the same time, it continues to enable Turkey, the US, NATO and the European Union to utilise Cyprus in pursuit of their economic and aggressive geo-political interests in the Middle East and the Mediterranean regions behind a smokescreen of the "insoluble intercommunal-ethnic differences" between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

The present status quo is that the northern third of Cyprus is occupied and ruled by Turkey in

internationally unrecognised limbo, and the southern Republic of Cyprus is a member of the European Union.

The recent discovery of gas and energy reserves in the seas around Cyprus has added another complication to the Cypriot people's struggles. With these discoveries there have emerged new inter-imperialist rivalries involving Cyprus and focussed on who will control this potential wealth. Behind these rivalries are the monopoly interests of multinationals like, DELEK, EXXON Mobil – QATAR Petroleum, ENI-TOTAL, STATOIL and CAIRN-DELEK-AVNER, etc.

Imperialism's grand designs

Individually and together the foreign imperialist states, alliances and their monopoly masters, objectively continue to have interests in contradiction with those of the Cypriot people, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Their agenda and their actions operate against the realisation of a single united and sovereign state, free from foreign interference.

Their interests have nothing in common with those of the Cypriot people who want their homeland re-united. They have no desire to attack other people in the region, or to allow the exploitation of their sovereign national wealth for the benefit of multinational monopolies.

It is becoming increasingly self-evident that in today's regional and international political and economic conditions, the Cyprus stalemate will not be easily resolved in the interests of the Cypriot people of all ethnicities and backgrounds. The co-Federal solution desired by Turkey, and the more likely, Federal bi-zonal, bi-communal solution on the UN negotiating table, both harbour enormous risks formalising and locking in a divided Cyprus.

Neither of these options is likely to realise the hopes of the Cypriot people to become once again one independent country or to directly benefit from the potential of the gas and oil deposits in their territorial waters. They both hold the potential to plant the seed for a "fake" resolution in the interests of Turkey, NATO, the US and the EU by giving the appearance of an end to the occupation while allowing it to continue in a de facto form.

From this basis it will be possible for Turkey and NATO to continue to manipulate events including, the accession of Cyprus to NATO, its use as a launching pad for imperialist

aggression in the region and to serve the interests of foreign monopolies' control of the newly discovered Mediterranean gas and oil resources.

For decades foreign bases on Cyprus soil have been used to spy for the US and to launch attacks from British bases in Cyprus on countries in the region, including Syria and Libya and others who are standing in the way of the geo-political strategy of US imperialism.

Today a complicated political scenario has developed in the Middle East, which is being expressed through the military, economic and political rivalry between imperialist states and alliances and which sees Cyprus playing a key role.

Imperialist blocs and states are attempting to redraw national boundaries, (Turkey's grab of part of Syria and of one third of Cyprus is only one example), and the installation of puppet regimes in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere that will help to resolve imperialist competition in favour of one side or the other.

The growing inter-imperialist rivalries in the region are also being played out by the efforts to encircle Russia, which is actively pursuing its own economic interests in the region. Players in this game include the US, Israel, Turkey, NATO, the EU and Russia. No solution of the Cyprus question can afford to ignore this reality and at the same time hope that it can bring harmony and progress to the Cypriot people in their interests.

Class interests reveal the motives

For the last 44 years the Cypriot people have worked within the framework of the United Nations to reach a negotiated solution acceptable to all. In recent years a "compromise" agreement based on a Federal, bi-zonal, bi-communal Cyprus, without Turkish occupation and without the interventionist rights of Turkey, Greece, and the United Kingdom over Cyprus, has been the preferred option of AKEL, the Progressive People's Party of Cyprus, and the Cypriot people. International pressure and solidarity have been a cornerstone in the struggle to force an intransigent Turkey to the negotiating table.

Today the conservative Nicos Anastasiadis government (Greek Cypriot) is muddying the waters and even hinting at accepting a co-federal or "two state solution" for Cyprus, as previously proposed by Turkey and rejected by the UN. These deliberate tactics are aimed at moving Cyprus



even further away from becoming one country without foreign interference by delaying and even defeating the UN sponsored reunification efforts.

The Anastasiadis governments' reluctance to contribute positively to the resumption of the UN negotiations, which stalled over a year ago, has led to fears the UN will withdraw from Cyprus creating instability and insecurity as 40,000 Turkish occupied troops are presently stationed in the north.

These are dangerous developments for the people of Cyprus and the region. They further play into the hands of NATO and US imperialism by simultaneously taking the focus away from Turkey's ongoing responsibility and by opening the way to further foreign interference and the permanent division of Cyprus.

Once again the Greek Cypriot right wing are opening the doors to imperialism's plans for Cyprus. Any solution that allows the continuation of a divided Cypriot community and state, holds within it the danger of enabling the absorption of 37 percent of Cyprus into Turkey and opening

the way to Cyprus's accession to NATO.

These outcomes will not benefit the Cypriot people and will benefit the foreign powers and monopolies who are seeking to redraw the political, economic and national borders of the region and exploit its wealth.

A lasting solution in the interests of the Cypriot people lies on a different road. First and foremost, it is based on the complete withdrawal of Turkey from northern Cyprus with an end to its military occupation. This has been allowed to continue with NATO's undeclared stamp of approval and because of the inaction of the big imperialist powers and alliances including the US and the EU.

Secondly, the closing of British and US bases on Cyprus is necessary to ensure Cyprus's sovereignty and independence is guaranteed.

Thirdly, self-government by the entire Cypriot people, Turkish Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, Armenian, Latin and Maronite of one country, independent of foreign interference and any foreign system of guarantees is essential. ✱



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