



# COVID: "THE INEQUALITY VIRUS"

Anna Pha

"COVID-19 has been likened to an x-ray, revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built. It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere: the lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all; the fiction that unpaid care work is not work; the delusion that we live in a post-racist world; the myth that we are all in the same boat. While we are all floating on the same sea, it's clear that some are in super yachts, while others are clinging to the drifting debris."

Antonio Guterres,  
UN Secretary General

**The description could not be more apt in describing the global impact of the pandemic.**

OXFAM released a report, *The Inequality Virus*, in January this year. It pointed out that the ten richest billionaires had increased their wealth by US\$540 billion (AU\$700 billion). Worldwide, billionaires' wealth increased by a staggering US\$3 trillion dollars between the 18th of March and the 31st of December 2020.

"History will remember the COVID-19 pandemic for taking close to two million lives worldwide. It will remember hundreds of millions being pushed into destitution and poverty," the report said. Existing gender, racial and other inequalities have been widened.

Australia, despite not being as severely hit as many other parts of the world, experienced a widening of inequality. It has been and still is difficult for millions of Australians facing lockdowns, reduced hours of work, precarious employment, unemployment, declining or stagnant wages, and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. At the same time, the global experience has been repeated here, with a relatively small number of billionaires making a matza during the pandemic.

The *Financial Review's* Rich 200 list, published at the end of May, reveals just how much richer the rich got. And they did get richer! The wealthiest 200 Australian individuals and families increased their combined net wealth by a whopping \$55.6 billion to a total of \$479.6 billion. Their combined wealth is now equivalent in magnitude to one quarter of Australia's Gross Domestic Product!

These valuations are minimal and based on publicly available information and in some instances, from private interviews. Moreover, they make no allowance for cash stowed away in secret offshore tax havens.

The Rich did not make their billions or millions from Morrison's "have a go to get a go," or hard yakka. Neither did they have

to endure the struggles that ordinary people have faced during the pandemic. Instead, they swanned the globe in their private jets and were permitted to self-isolate wherever they landed. No nasty hotel quarantine with cockroaches for company and slops for meals.

They have their teams of accountants, lawyers, managers, and advisers who minimise their taxes and enhance their profits and the ear of prime ministers, premiers, resources, environmental, and other key government ministers.

## TOP OF THE LEAGUE

With the exception of Andrew Pratt and family (manufacturing), the top ten accumulated their billions from resources, property or technology. The Pratt family's (No 4 with \$20.09 billion) Visy packaging and recycling companies benefited from the upsurge in online shopping.

The three largest Australian mining magnates Gina Rinehart (No 1, \$31.06 billion), Andrew (Twiggy) Forrest (No 2, \$27.25b), and Clive Palmer (No 7, \$13.01b) are the beneficiaries of sales to China during a period of booming iron ore prices. Their interests lie in good relations with China, putting them at odds with the government's current aggressive policy stance towards China.

This division in the ruling class has been developing for some time. At present China's steel manufacturers rely heavily on Australia for 60 per cent of their iron ore imports, but this will not last forever. China is developing alternative sources of iron ore.

## WAGE THEFT

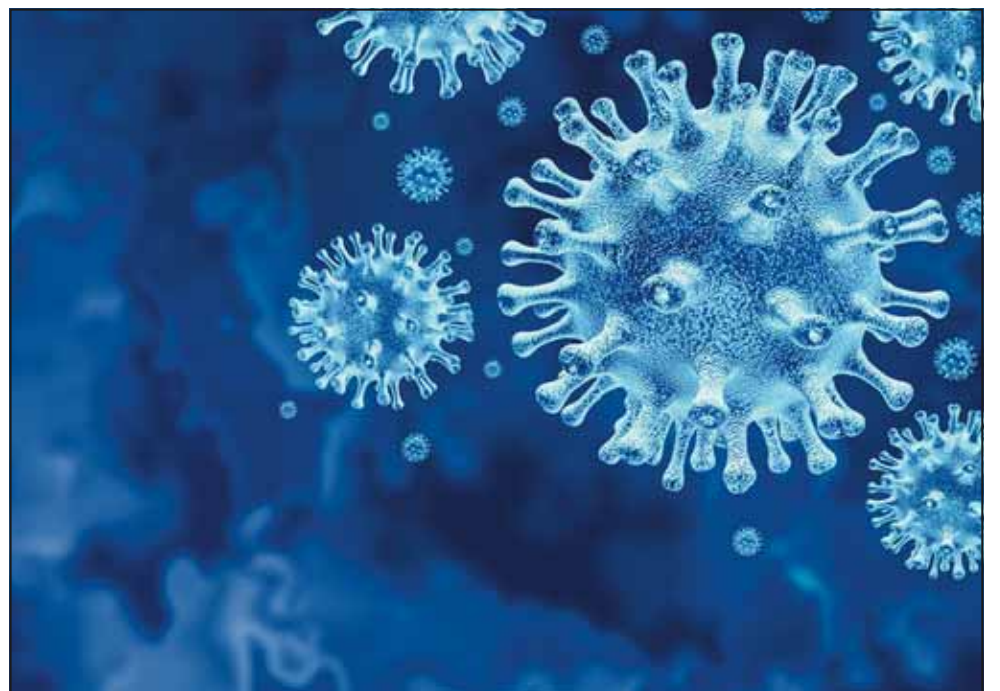
The mining sector is notorious for its fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) workforce who are subjected to poor living conditions and wage theft. The amount they are paid does not adequately compensate for the long hours they work and the time they are away from their families.

The sector is also now notorious for casualising its workforce and attempting to shut out trade unions, making it extremely difficult for them to protect workers with union-negotiated agreements.

These companies have an extremely high concentration of wealth, are not labour intensive (largely automated), pay pepper-corn royalties, and make super-profits off the backs of the workers they exploit. As a result, they have the highest rate of exploitation of any industry.

## LAND THEFT

Their profits are based on the theft of the land that was never ceded by the First Nations people. The traditional owners fight endless court battles for Native Title, and even when they win a case, they have another battle on their hands over exploration and mining rights.



The Morrison government gave more than \$102 million to thirteen large corporations under the Indigenous Advantage Strategy (IAS) in one year including Forrest's Fortescue Metals Group (FMG).

Forrest designed the IAS for the Coalition government. FMG received \$3.48 million in 2019-20 under the scheme he designed! In the same year, FMG's post-tax profit increased by forty-nine per cent to US\$4.7 billion (AU\$6.07 billion). The underlying return on equity (net value of assets) was a whopping forty per cent! One has to wonder how much of it was funnelled back in political donations. It is worth noting that in February FMG reported a profit of \$5.29 billion for the December half-year!

## RACISM

Victorian Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe, a proud Gunaikurnai and Djab Wurrung woman, told the *Koori Mail* that it was outrageous the government was granting millions of dollars to corporate Australia in the name of Indigenous employment programs. "I call it systemic racism," she said. "It's looking after your mates. It's a rort. They are rorting money meant to empower and enable our communities to self-determine their own destiny."

"It's not designed to look after the people, and it perpetuates inequality," Thorpe said. ROY "When the IAS came in, so many grass roots organisations lost their funding, including small groups and women's groups [...]. It was devastating because funding went up for tender to anybody who said that they'd do the right

thing for Blackfellas, including mining companies and big corporations."

"Our communities need this money ..." Forrest's FMG and the other big mining corporations paid scant respect for the wishes of the First Nations' people whose land and its resources they stole and profit from.

## PROFITS FROM COVID

With the shift to online-work practices, the pandemic generated huge profits from the tech companies of Mike Cannon-Brookes (No 3, \$20.1 billion) who co-founded Atlassian in 2002 with university friend Scott Farquhar (No 5, \$20 billion).

Melanie Perkins & Cliff Obrecht (No 10, \$7.98 billion) have more than doubled their wealth in the past year from graphic design technology for businesses.


After a slight dip early in 2020, the three property developers experienced large increases in their wealth as record-low interest rates saw property prices surge.

Capitalists are fuelled by rapacious greed. They can never rip enough profits out of the pockets of workers and the planet's natural resources. Some such as Forrest are now moving into renewable energy as a new source of lucrative profit-making.


They can't stop themselves. That is capitalism. It would take thousands of years for some of them to spend their riches. Some, such as Forrest, attempt to put a human face on capitalism through philanthropy. Capitalism has no human face. It is a moribund, decaying system over-due for replacement by one based on the needs of the people, on equality, and one that protects the planet. ✖

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## Guardian

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### MUA STANDS WITH TRADITIONAL LAND OWNERS

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has once again shown how, with militant leadership, the trade union movement can be a vehicle for taking the workers' movement to social issues. Late last month, all three NSW Branches of the MUA announced that they are ready to support Gamilaraay Traditional Owners, farmers, and the community in opposing Coal Seam Gas extraction in Narrabri.

The project has received local and national opposition. However, Santos the multinational energy company is moving forward, proposing to construct up to 850 Coal Seam Gas wells in the Liverpool Plains, the Pilliga Forest, and surrounding areas near Narrabri.

While Santos may have a lot of opposition it has powerful backers. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, through his "gas-fired recovery" plan, is attempting to assist Santos by proposing to spend millions of dollars on subsidising fracking and coal seam gas projects. This would be in addition to the already-spent \$200mil+ on fracking in the Northern Territory. The Traditional Owners have opposed all of these projects.

Speaking on these projects, MUA National Indigenous Officer Thomas Mayor said, "The Morrison government's plans are unviable according to economists, and destructive and dangerous according to Traditional Owners. It's disgraceful that they are not listening to the experts."

MUA Sydney Branch Secretary of the Paul Keating echoed much of Mayor's statement, saying, "Working-class people know when we're being sold a lemon, and I can say with complete certainty that there is a lifetime of lemonade in this cooked idea. As ordinary people, as unionists, as community members, we will not stand by and let Santos destroy a millennia of cultural knowledge in pursuit of a superfluous, wasteful proposal. Our Unions in NSW will support Traditional Owners in their fight with everything we've got."

The Narrabri Gas Project is one of the projects with the largest opposition – ranging "from farmers to football players". According to the MUA:

"Leading water scientists have raised grave concerns about the potentially disastrous impact on Australia's vast inland aquifer, the Great Artesian Basin. The [Narrabri Gas] project would create significant new methane and carbon dioxide emissions, worsening the climate crisis, and causing more heat, drought, bushfires and storms."

The MUA also spoke out about the government's blocking of renewable projects and even presented their own, green alternative:

"Seven huge offshore wind projects are blocked and waiting for the government to put forward legislation – three just in NSW. Government funding could support new port terminals and upgrades of steelworks and cable manufacturers to supply offshore wind projects. Commonwealth-owned Snowy Hydro could be building offshore wind projects to ensure this happens quickly and provides good jobs."

It is great to see this resistance and solidarity in the trade unions. The vision and determination these comrades have shown highlights how working-class perspectives can inform social issues and how we must all stand, side-by-side, to fight the injustices unleashed onto the majority of the working masses by the minority capitalist ruling class. By building strength in the trade unions, the workers will have the power to fight back against reactionary governments.

#### SPECIAL APPEAL – REDS GO GREEN

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising \$10,000 for solar panels on the roof. They involve a substantial cash outlay, but we believe that every measure we can take to reduce carbon emissions is important. It is not enough to preach "green." We must act "green"! Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how small or large. Send your contribution today. Our warm thanks to the following for their generous contributions:

Daniel G \$50, K Manski \$50

This week's total: \$100 Cumulative total: \$895.

## CONTRIBUTION BY CPA GENERAL SECRETARY ANDREW IRVING AT THE WORLD SYMPOSIUM FOR MARXIST POLITICAL PARTIES

The topic under discussion, on which Comrade Irving spoke was "People-centred Philosophy and Poverty Eradication" this contribution contains extracts from the 100th anniversary greeting to the Communist Party of China (CPC) by Assistant General Secretary David Matters

**Comrades, This is an appropriate subject on which to speak as it links Marxist Philosophy and theories to the essence of its application in society and the success of the Comrades of the CPC in the practice of Marxism in defeating poverty.**

The Communist Party of Australia thanks the CPC for inviting a number of our comrades to participate in this important World Symposium, and we are proud to be given this opportunity to participate by making a contribution in this Panel discussing People-centered Philosophy and Poverty Eradication.

To start, on behalf of our party, we wish to recognise, welcome and rejoice the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the CPC. This anniversary provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the events over these 100 years.

In China, the CPC has made many outstanding political, social, economic and defence achievements for its people; a vanguard party that has gathered the most developed, committed, and heroic elements of Chinese society.

History has shown that the CPC has successfully applied theory and practice. Its achievements are measured by its experience and political development, creating the expertise to further develop Marxist theory

for practical application to the needs and reality of the Chinese nation.

Our party comes to hear about a revolution from a revolutionary party which has based its theory and practice on a strong base of scientific socialism. To learn from the experiences of victory and defeat in the difficult path to success.

China opposed great power chauvinism and set up its international relations to encourage the independence of developing nations.

Particular attention was paid to International and internal contradictions under the leadership of the Communist Party of China by reaching out to the world with increased engagement through trade, tourism, education exchanges, and economic development, creating a powerful environment for the building of a peaceful world.

It presently has a GDP of over US\$17 trillion. Just one example of this economic success was built upon investing 2.5 per cent of its GDP on Research and Development. The 13th Five-year Plan aims to make China a leading power in science and technology, including the areas of theoretical mathematics to Artificial Intelligence.

President Hu Jintao saw the need to revitalise Marxism within the Chinese nation and the party by establishing the Chinese Academy of Marxism, strengthening party schools and taking the struggle to the educational institutions, winning a new generation of Communists by actively engaging and combating Bourgeois Liberal views that potentially could undermine the understanding and development of scientific socialism within China.

Under Comrade Xi Jinping, the Chinese Nation has reached a New Era. The task of eliminating absolute poverty has been achieved

and now the goal is to build a mature socialist society through the high-level participation of the people in national development and economic production. China's Belt and Road Initiative is contributing to the development of a sustainable world based on promoting peace, independence, and socialism.

The living science of Marxism, freed from dogma and its continuing process of seeking truth from facts, is alive and well in our world. The predatory capitalist class has identified the Communist Party of China's stand with humanity as a barrier to their voracious need for increasing exploitation, power and market expansion.

In Australia, we are committed to stand calmly and firmly against the lies being told about our good friends and comrades in the Communist Party of China, and we will resist the pressure, propaganda and xenophobia of the bourgeoisie.

We are committed to develop fraternal friendship between all communist and worker's parties and that this comradeship with Parties and peoples will strengthen the struggle and campaign for the liberation of all.

To finish, I would like to quote comments made by comrade Xi Jinping on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth.

"We must win the advantages, win the initiative, and win the future. We must continuously improve the ability to use Marxism to analyse and solve practical problems."

Marx is the "teacher of revolution" for the proletariat and working people all over the world.

Long Live the CPC, at one with the Chinese people, and the guarantor of the Chinese people's prosperity and independence.

Thank you ☆



# GIG WORKERS FIGHT BACK: FAIR WORK COMMISSION RULES DELIVERY RIDERS ARE EMPLOYEES

Bree Booth

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has ruled that a delivery rider for Deliveroo, a food delivery company, is an employee, not a contractor, for the purposes of employment law. The ruling has been lauded by the Transport Workers Union of Australia (TWU) as a big win for gig workers across the country. The Commission found that Diego Franco, a delivery rider in Sydney, had his employment unlawfully terminated during the COVID-19 pandemic for “delivering meals too slowly.” Franco was given only seven days notice of his termination and given no right of reply.

The FWC found that the nature of the relationship between Franco and the company had the elements of a relationship between employee and employer including a uniform, a system of organised shifts and performance reviewing. Crucially, “multi-apping” – working for multiple companies at a time – did not necessarily mean that it wasn’t an employment relationship. This means that Deliveroo riders are entitled to the basic protections afforded to all employees under Australian Law, including the right not to be unfairly dismissed.

Michael Kaine, National Secretary of the TWU said that Franco’s case would be a “major test for the gig economy in Australia.” He made the following statement:

Deliveroo should not be fighting this case but apologising to Diego and his family and ensuring its riders are working within safe parameters.

The reprehensible behaviour of gig economy companies that pay below minimum wage and refuse workers’ rights is being challenged by brave workers like Diego and unions in Australia and around the world. Following international rulings that gig economy workers are entitled to rights that are not being met, the Australian Government must catch up and regulate with a tribunal to set minimum rights and protections for all workers.

The Federal Government has proved this week it is willing to take on major tech firms like Google and Facebook in an effort to regulate them. It should apply the same determination towards Uber, Deliveroo and others and protect workers in Australia.

The FWC’s ruling comes after a series of gig workers have been killed on the job. Five delivery riders were killed in the two



months between September and November 2020 alone. Aside from being a particularly dangerous job, gig workers are some of the worst treated employees in the country, precisely because they have not been considered employees and have not been extended the protections afforded to other workers. A survey conducted in 2020 showed that delivery riders for companies like Deliveroo, DoorDash, Menulog and UberEats are paid just over \$10 per hour and rideshare drivers for companies like Uber and Lyft just over \$12 per hour. The fast food industry award is \$19.06 for casual workers over the age of 18. The award for passenger vehicle transportation workers is between \$15.98 and \$19.98.

The Delivery Riders Alliance and the TWU report that seventy-one per cent of delivery riders and fifty-six per cent of rideshare drivers have struggled to pay bills and buy food, with gig workers across the board noticing a decrease in their pay over time. Thirty-six per cent of delivery riders and rideshare drivers have been injured at work, with the majority receiving no support from their company. A majority have not been provided with basic PPE or safety training during the pandemic while seventy-eight per cent say they were not compensated for lost wages when forced to self-isolate.

The majority of rideshare drivers report experiencing threatening behaviour from a passenger (eighty-one per cent), and having been verbally harassed or assaulted in some way (sixty-two per cent). Forty-one per cent say they have experienced racism on the job. Horrifically, seventeen per cent have reported being sexually harassed or assaulted at work. When the Australian Human Rights Commission discovered in 2019 that twenty-six per cent of students at elite universities had been sexually harassed or assaulted there was a massive outcry and universities acted quickly to at least give the appearance that something was being done. Our gig economy workers deserve the same concern and the same protections.

The ACTU has spoken out about the mistreatment of gig workers, calling on the Morrison government to protect those in insecure work by tightening workplace laws. ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said:

At the moment, so-called-gig economy workers have less rights than workers

100 years ago. They deserve the same rights as all other Australian workers.

By allowing these workers to be exploited by their employers and by the so-called gig economy system, our Government is not only turning their back on the workers and their families, but is also creating an unfair system for employers who have to compete against these companies.

These companies are racing to the bottom by deliberately eroding workplace rights and protections for workers.

What the ACTU statement leaves out is any mention of the application of corporate manslaughter to companies employing gig workers. In July 2020, amendments to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic) commenced, introducing the offence of corporate manslaughter in Victoria. The introduction of this law followed the deaths of 183 workers who were fatally injured at work across 2019.

A corporation commits corporate manslaughter where they are negligent, in breach of their duty to an employee and where that breach causes the employee’s death. It is punishable by up to twenty-five years in prison for individuals and fines of \$16.5mil for companies. Similar laws exist in all states and territories except NSW, SA, and Tasmania. As of 13 May, thirty-four workers have been killed at work this year.

Following the deaths of five delivery riders in 2020, a NSW government taskforce found that riders are “under unrealistic time pressures to deliver food, causing a risk to their safety.” The treatment of gig workers by their companies has the potential to meet the corporate manslaughter threshold.

The ACTU ought also to call on the government to ensure that companies employing gig workers are captured within the scope of corporate manslaughter laws, to ensure they are held responsible for the treatment of their workers.

In this context, the finding of the FWC that a gig economy worker was an employee has been lauded as a precedent-setting ruling with “huge implications” for gig workers. Politically, this is true. Such a ruling puts

pressure on companies to respect the rights of their employees and sends the message that a tribunal may intervene to enforce those rights. It may also put pressure on the government to tighten workplace laws. It is certainly a win for gig workers.

Legally speaking, the finding of the FWC itself is not binding on Courts and other tribunals. However, Deliveroo has stated that it will appeal the decision in a court of law, disputing the claim that its workers are employees for legal purposes. The outcome of any proceedings emanating from the appeal will be legally binding on lower courts. The Full Court of the Federal Court of Australia has previously held that owner-drivers of delivery trucks are employees but a worker employed by a labour-hire company is a contractor. This decision may inform the outcome of the appeal, but a court will ultimately have to decide where the chips fall for gig workers.

Deliveroo states that the freedom of self-employment is the “key reason” why people choose to work for them, and that giving their employees rights would take away those freedoms. Don’t let this rhetoric fool you – delivery riders and rideshare drivers are not “self-employed.” In Australia, an employee is “a person that’s hired to provide a service to a company either on a full-time, part-time or casual basis in exchange for payment.” Gig workers fit this definition. They are subject to terms of employment set by the companies they work for, and they should be afforded the hard-won rights that every worker in Australia is entitled to.

In a time of pandemic, gig workers are some of the most essential workers we have – and some of the most vulnerable. While Victoria and other parts of the country were in sustained lockdown for most of 2020, the demand for delivery services skyrocketed. The rich locked themselves away while the poor risked their lives to bring them food and other essential goods. Gig workers like Diego Franco were out on the streets every day at a great risk to their own health while the rest of us stayed at home. What they need is not a patronising pat on the back for their “heroism” but real legislative action to protect their rights – to fair wages, safe conditions, sick leave and sick pay. No one should have to risk their life for poverty wages. 🙏

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# NATIONAL ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION WEEK – REMEMBERING THE LOCK HOSPITALS OF BERNIER AND DORRE ISLANDS

Richard Titelius

**The Bernier and Dorre Islands are two narrow islands located fifty-two km from the Western Australian port city of Carnarvon and was the location of a barbaric and bizarre social experiment by the Western Australian government at the time under the auspices of the Aborigines Act 1905. The aim of the WA Aborigines Act 1905 was to administrate on behalf of Indigenous people because they were viewed as a dying race and therefore, with the “proper treatment,” they could be assimilated into the society and culture of the colonising non-Aboriginal people.**

Two lock hospitals were established on the two adjacent islands to remove Aboriginal people from the Gascoyne and Pilbara regions as they had non-specific diagnosis of venereal diseases. Police officers were empowered under the act to facilitate the removal of the Aboriginal people and move them to Carnarvon, where they were shipped on a boat from the One Mile Jetty to the two islands. The slow all-day journey by boat would have been an unfamiliar and tiring experience for many Indigenous people. Some did not survive the arduous land and sea journey from their native country. The lock hospitals were established on the Islands in 1908 and continued until 9th January 1919, when they were closed. The remaining patients shifted to a similar facility further north at Port Hedland – another coastal town established to serve pastoral interests. Of the more than 800 Aboriginal people who were transported to the two islands, it is conservatively estimated that about 200 people died on the islands and were buried in unmarked graves.

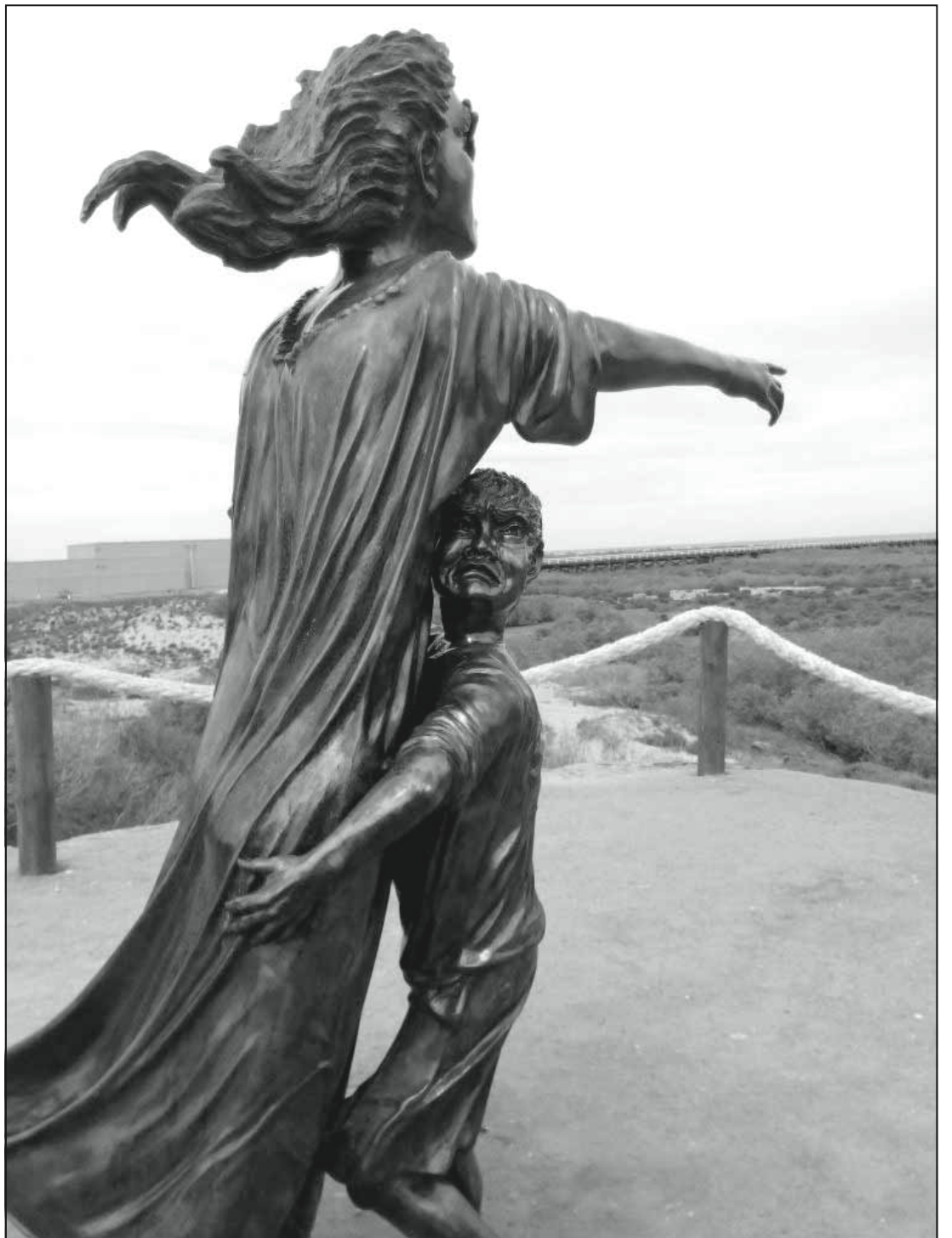
It is known that many people who were transported there did not have venereal diseases and that also children were transported to the islands. In some cases, children were separated from their parents, who were then transported to the islands. The Lock Hospital experiment contributed to the Stolen Generations. With the removal of Aboriginal people under the guise of a benevolent act of welfare, the Aborigines Act 1905 allowed pastoralists to take up leases on once-occupied land.

However, the Department of Justice National Reconciliation Week Symposium held on the 27th of May 2021 sought to show there were far more traumatic and long term affects suffered by the Aboriginal people as a consequence of this “misguided” and poorly administered attempt at “welfare for their own good.” The first of two speakers was archaeologist Dr Jade Pervan who said that the operation of the Lock Hospitals led to the dispossession of their land and the dislocation and breakdown of Aboriginal society, and following that, to intergenerational trauma. Pervan said the Lock Hospitals at Bernier and Dorre Islands were not unique, and medical incarcerations took place in several locations across

northern Western Australia, Northern Territory, and Queensland.

As an archaeologist, Pervan’s excavations of the islands revealed a stark difference in the artefacts of everyday life between the building where the doctors and nurses lived, such as expensive ceramic ware, personal items like combs and shoes, and even a piano. The medical staff received better food while the Aboriginal people were given rations of tea, damper and salted meat. Notwithstanding their isolation from their traditional lands, the Aboriginal people continued to speak their language, practice their cultural beliefs, and pass them on. Not all the medical staff were in agreement with the exercise. In 1908 one doctor arranged for a petition to be circulated among the residents to say they had finished the time on the island that had been prescribed to them initially and should be allowed to return to their homes. There were medical experiments carried out on the Aboriginal people including one which involved comparing the Aboriginal people to monkeys brought to the island for that purpose. It is also known that noted anthropologist Daisy Bates visited the island, and though she was encouraged by their treatment at the time, she spoke disparagingly of the hospitals in her later years.

The second speaker was Kathleen Musulin, a Yawaru and Malgana woman with family connections to the Bernier and Dorre Islands Lock Hospitals history and who works for the Department of Justice at the Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison as a mental health worker. A video was also played of the work carried out on the island and narrated by Carnarvon Aboriginal elder Bob Dorey. The video also discussed how community workshops took place among Aboriginal people in Carnarvon to try to involve people who had family who had been on the island. As part of the outcome of that project, there is a need for education and awareness of what happened on the islands. The islands should be a place of healing, and there should be a memorial to acknowledge the truth of what happened. It should examine why people were taken to the island, what was done to the people in some cases while they were on the island and why they died there. A memorial built in 2019 now stands at the heritage precinct adjacent to the One Mile Jetty (or what is left of it after Cyclone Seroja almost completely destroyed it in April 2021) called “Don’t look at the islands” of an Aboriginal woman with her arm outstretched pointing towards the island with a grim-faced young boy holding her tightly. Kathleen Musulin concluded her talk by noting, “My Aboriginal people are still on the journey of healing from the consequences of the effects of what happened on the islands.” The truth belongs to all of us and knowing what happened at the Lock Hospitals on Bernier and Dorre Islands will help achieve a just future for all of us. ☺



**“My Aboriginal people are still on the journey of healing from the consequences of the effects of what happened on the islands.”**

# AUSTRALIAN WAR PROFITEERS FACE BACKLASH FROM PEACE ACTIVISTS

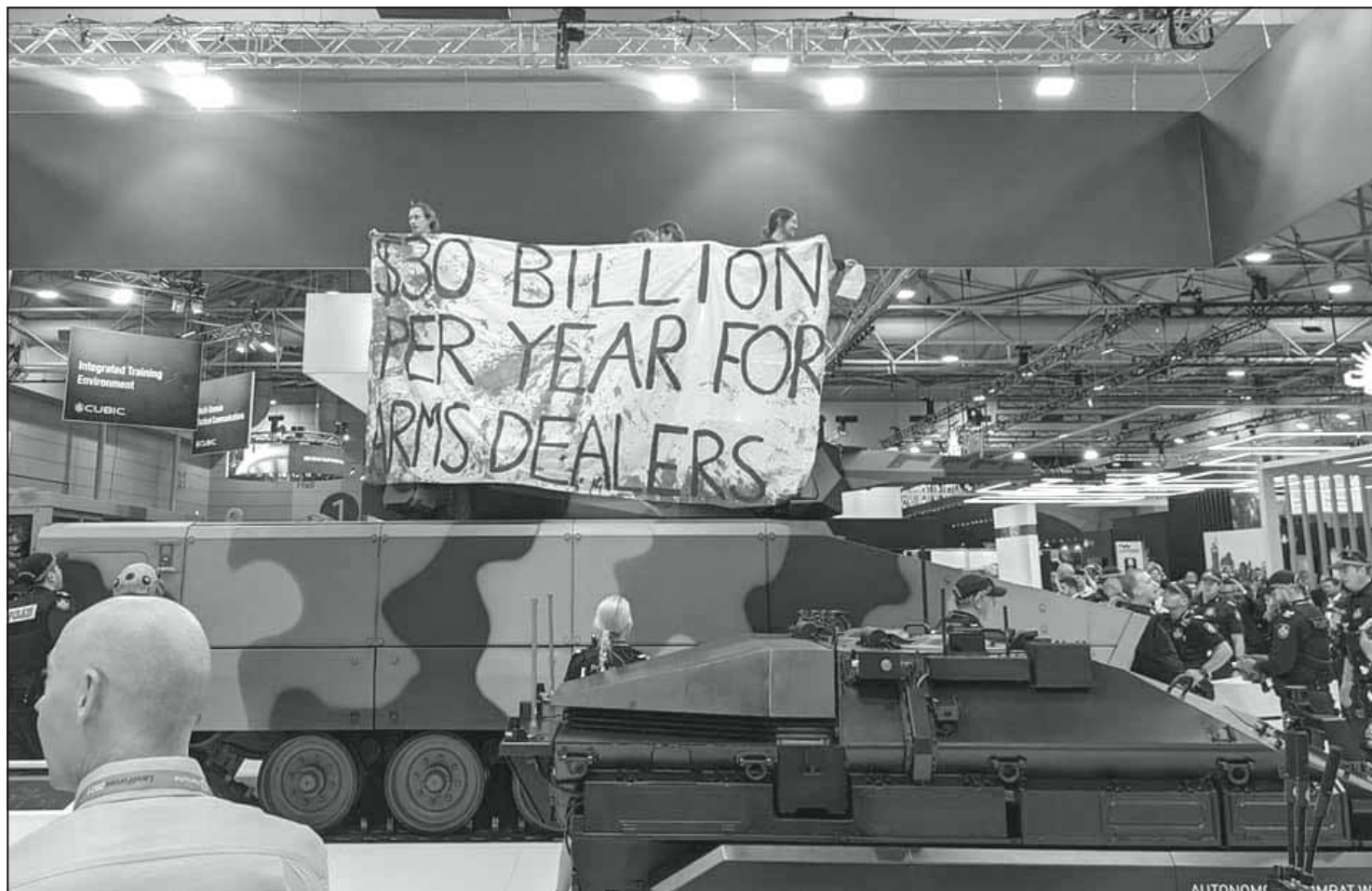
Casey Davidson

Anti-war activists in and around the Brisbane region flocked together this week to protest Land Forces, a taxpayer-funded biennial exposition promoting military equipment, technology and services for Australian and Indo-Asia-Pacific armies. The blatant military violence recently and historically committed towards West Papuan and Palestinian civilians was a major focus by the protesters, who directly linked these weapons sales and the continued subjugation of these people's lands. Workshops, concerts, tours and parades were held over the weekend in the lead-up to the midweek Land Forces conference for activists to share, create and educate each other and the general public about the arms trade.

The Disrupt Land Forces festival attracted a diverse range of protesters, including First Nations, Palestinians, West Papuans, Quakers, Greens, and a range of other peace and climate campaigners and organisations who rallied in strong solidarity against the military expo. Several activists were arrested, some on grounds of inappropriate language towards those entering the expo, and others for refusing to move from the entrance of the convention centre. Seventeen were arrested on the grounds of trespassing after entering the exhibition through a side door and occupying a military tank.

Outside the expo, the activists played loud music, banged on pots and pans, blew horns and yelled phrases such as "Baby killers" and "Murderer", as weapons dealers entered, creating an intentionally uncomfortable experience for them behind the line of police. In addition, two Quakers, Margid Bryn Burns and Frances Long, who have both been directly affected by war, partook in a 24-hour hunger strike to protest the manufacturing and selling of weapons.

"Australia spends \$98.9 million a day on so-called defence and related agendas and



the governments want to see the industry grow. War-making and weapons manufacturing and trading are taking precedence over funding crucial social areas such as public housing, health, employment and education initiatives", explained Bryn Burns.

Additionally, a weapons expo such as Land Forces only exists to serve Australian and US imperialist projects. West Papua is a prime example of this, as weapons continue to be pointed at these First Nations people

as they watch their lands and waters being destroyed in the name of oil, gas, gold and palm oil. The US-Israeli colonialist project continues in Palestine, as a grossly disproportionately high number of Palestinians are murdered and continue to have their homelands stolen from them. First Nations people in Australia have a direct connection to these struggles as colonised people with a long history of resistance.

While the disruptions to the Land Forces

conference have proven to demonstrate a clear rejection of Australia's participation in war crimes, the question of how to make lasting change to Australia's foreign policy still lingers. Once the conference is over and the deals have been made, the ability to change outcomes for those being subjugated by the US and Australia remains questionable. Weapons continue to be sold to Saudi Arabia, one of Australia's biggest customers, in order to subjugate the people of Yemen, who are living in abject poverty and fear. Australian Whistleblowers still remain threatened or imprisoned for exposing SAS war crimes in the Middle East.

While disruption to conferences like these remains important, it is essential that the working class become engaged in peace action through trade unions, to make crucial and lasting change. A range of strategies must continue to be discussed to put pressure on Australia's subservience to the US, to work towards behaving as a peaceful nation in world affairs. ✪

**"War-making and weapons manufacturing and trading are taking precedence over funding crucial social areas such as public housing, health, employment and education initiatives."**

## REPORT: "FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA", MEANJIN RISES FOR PALESTINE – BRISBANE

Matthew Hole

Members of the Communist Party of Australia Queensland Branch attended a rally on Saturday 22nd May, just twenty hours after a ceasefire was announced, demanding an end to the occupation of Palestine by Israel. The rally was organised by Justice for Palestine Meanjin (Brisbane), which musician Phil Monsour led as MC, and around 1,500 people were in attendance.

Greens MP for South Brisbane, Amy MacMahon, was very critical

of Israeli actions and the Australian government's support for the settler state and went further, promoting the BDS (Boycott Divest Sanction) movement. She was followed by Labor's federal MP for Morton, Graham Perrett, who was willing to label the conflict as apartheid, and made overtures that an Albanese government would put far more pressure on Israel – this followed from an announcement by the ALP a month prior that it would finally recognise Palestine as a state, something they have evaded until this point.

Following on from the two

politicians, a range of other speakers then took the stand to speak out for Palestine. Sam Watson Jnr spoke of the links between the struggles of indigenous Australians being part of the same struggle as the one the Palestinians are fighting – namely settler colonialism. A Palestinian woman who had grown up as a refugee in neighbouring Jordan referenced a famous Palestinian poet when she said that Palestine is the "only nation who knows each day will be worse than the one before it".

Wendy Turner from Labor for Palestine spoke of the Israeli's

"burning Palestinian lands and crops and olive groves". In introducing Michael Clifford, General Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU), Phil Monsour spoke of the general strike that had recently swept across Palestine in the wake of the bombing of Gaza. Michael went on to speak at length about the difficulties involved for Palestinians who work in Israeli areas to attain a permit and the lengthy and demoralising daily delays in just being able to go to work.

The next two speakers were the most powerful of the day. A

representative from the Islamic Council gave a stirring speech on behalf of the Muslim community, linking their struggle with the wider anti-imperialist struggle globally. He was followed up by a young Palestinian girl named Danya, who spoke of the story her grandmother experienced during the Nakba – or "The Catastrophe" as it translates, referring to the mass exodus of at least 750,000 Arabs from Palestine in 1948.

Justice for Palestine Meanjin (Brisbane) is holding a public forum at the QCU building on Tuesday 8th of June at 6pm. ✪

# CPC CENTENARY: THE “END OF HISTORY” AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST LIQUIDATION

**History was proclaimed “ended” when, between 1989 and 1991, socialism was overthrown in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It was a historic setback for the working class around the world, dismembering the socialist community and tilting the world balance of forces sharply in favour of imperialism.**

Almost immediately, the most powerful capitalist states began the process of redividing the world’s territories amongst themselves, starting with the former socialist states. This global imperialist reconfiguration also included the tightening and internationalisation of the US blockade against Cuba, the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent decade of sanctions against Iraq and the massive NATO bombardment of the former Yugoslavia in 1999.

Furthermore, unencumbered by real, existing socialism, capitalist governments around the world adopted neoliberal policies to roll back all of the economic, social and political gains achieved by the working class and its democratic allies over the previous half century. Mass privatisations, deep cuts to social programs and sweeping rollbacks to labour and democratic rights were the order of the day in virtually every capitalist country.

The overthrow of socialism and the capitalist counter-attack had a staggering ideological impact on the working class globally. Many socialist-minded people began to question the possibility of winning working-class power and constructing socialism in these new conditions.

In Canada, these international developments sparked a profound crisis inside the ranks of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). In the period between 1988 and 1992, a small group within the highest leadership abandoned Marxism-Leninism as the basis of the Party’s revolutionary perspective and eventually moved to liquidate the CPC itself, seeking to replace it with a left social-democratic formation. In the process, they shut down the Party press (*The Tribune*) and publishing operations, laid off Party organisers across the country, dissolved the Young Communist League, dismissed elected committees and expelled dozens of members including two founding members of the CPC.

Most of the membership, however, actively resisted this rightward, revisionist and liquidationist policy and ultimately prevailed in saving the Communist Party of Canada. But the costs of this protracted ideological and political crisis were high – the Party’s independent and mass work was paralysed for over two years, its membership was reduced and many of its organisational structures were lost.

What emerged within the CPC in this period was not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a pattern that developed worldwide – inside and outside of the system of socialist states. This pattern represented not just opportunism but an attack on working-class politics – it was a counter-revolutionary development. In the European socialist states, that meant a defeat of the socialist state itself. While the socialist state was overthrown in

some cases, officials announced its demise and proceeded to dismantle social ownership and working-class hegemony of the state in others.

In the non-socialist world, these developments meant various forms of what is referred to as liquidationism – activities within a communist party that would bring about its destruction as a revolutionary party. This includes turning it into a social-democratic or broad-left party or a collection of like-minded people in some amorphous grouping without real structure or direction. In Canada, it became clear that if those who wished to transform the Communist Party were successful, there would be nothing left. Certainly, if there had been some remnant of a party or other formation, it would not have carried the banner of revolutionary working-class politics, a banner that had been carried by the CPC.

In both the socialist and non-socialist world, this growth of counter-revolutionary ideas reflected the success of bourgeois ideology combined as it was with enormous economic power, cultural domination and military might. The use of these weapons was both overt and covert and the international capitalist class was able to turn back the forces of working-class political power in the European states where it had achieved considerable success, surviving a civil war in the USSR, defeating fascism, addressing the social needs of their societies and building a modern industrial state. While that reversal is temporary, in its historical context, it was monumental at the time that it was happening, and it continues to shape the character of international politics.

The consequences of this defeat were most destructive for the working classes of those socialist states who saw their living standards collapse and the social services which they had created, the social capital which they had produced, destroyed in a matter of years. Social inequality on a scale and magnitude inconceivable within socialism emerged as if already fully formed.

In the non-socialist world, capitalist ideology was able to strengthen and extend its hold, including among those who saw themselves as anti-capitalist. The demise of the European system of socialist states had a devastating impact on the strength and development of progressive forces and this impact was magnified within some communist parties where the defeat spurred the growth of anti-Leninist attitudes and ideas. It raised questions about how best to achieve change. In a number of those parties, the answer was to move towards a reformist approach and to embrace the flawed idea that fundamental change could be accomplished with incremental improvements over time without ever having to break the foundation of the rule of the capitalist class.

That is in essence the character of the struggle that developed within the Communist Party of Canada. A number of those who had declared themselves anti-capitalist either were or became advocates of bourgeois values and ideas. They accepted the bourgeois definitions of democracy which defined socialist societies as anti-democratic. They agreed with bourgeois ideologues that rather



than a higher form of democracy, democratic centralism was anti-democratic, serving to stifle debate and individual integrity. They revised their previously professed opinions of Marxism-Leninism and capitulated to the notion that these were dogmatic concepts and expressions of elitism and ideological rigidity.

In the particular case of the CPC, they claimed that a new, more vital, broad, dynamic and more democratic formation was in the offing. They argued that masses of people were eager and willing to participate in such a venture if only the existing Party could rid itself of all those qualities which they now disavowed and disparaged. Those within the Party who sought to bring about this “revitalisation” planned to turn the CPC into a loose association of some existing Party members along with a collection of left intellectuals and academics who were committed to social justice, but hostile to the basic concepts of not only Leninism but often to Marxism as well.

No one would suggest that individuals who join the Communist Party must never change their opinions, political beliefs or adherence to a particular set of principles. The problem was that the particular small group in the leadership who had changed their minds did not just leave the Party as many had done in the past but decided to take the Party with them. They sought to utilise the considerable assets garnered through years of commitment and sacrifice on the part of thousands of Party members, dead and alive, by transferring those funds to this new “creation.” They believed this new formation was achievable, but it proved in reality to be a mirage – a miasma of false hopes and faulty analysis.

That it was a false hope and a faulty analysis there can be no doubt. No such formation appeared. No new grouping of non-Leninist leftists emerged. The landscape of the left in Canada was not enhanced or expanded by their efforts. In fact, it was diminished. This utter failure was despite the financial resources which they took with them.

As one combatant in this struggle put it, “those whose goal is liquidation do not announce that they are trying to liquidate the Party, they do it by challenging its precepts and principles – Marxism and Leninism.” This challenge was done by calling into question the value of those ideas by suggesting that they are outdated, irrelevant, inapplicable or elitist. The proponents of liquidation argued that the destruction of the socialist states was proof that the ideas were fatally flawed.

It doesn’t matter whether or not they consciously sought to liquidate the Party, although the documents indicate that some if not all of them were seeking precisely that outcome. It doesn’t matter if they thought that they were going to transform it into something more “modern” or “relevant.” The best of motivations, justifications and intentions – everyone knows what is paved with those. What matters is what would have been the consequences of their actions and the results of their proposals for change. The result would have been the destruction of the Communist Party, the destruction of a party based on historical materialism and Leninist principles of organisation.

But the success of the liquidationist “project” was doomed from the outset. There can be no other explanation for their failure to create what was said to be not just possible, but so certain as to be worth their efforts to destroy what existed. They presented the case that such a new formation would emerge if only they could rid themselves of the strictures of a Marxist-Leninist party.

And it did not.

Instead, the Party survived, recovered and grew. Working-class revolutionaries met the challenge of liquidation just as they have met every other challenge over the past 100 years – from a consistent and principled Marxist-Leninist perspective – and defeated it.

Striding into its second century, the CPC continues to hold its red banner high and proclaim that Canada’s future is socialism.

People’s Voice 🇺🇸

**“Those whose goal is liquidation do not announce that they are trying to liquidate the Party, they do it by challenging its precepts and principles – Marxism and Leninism.”**

# WESTERN NARRATIVES ATTEMPT TO TWIST BELARUS FLIGHT STORY



Seamus Carey

**Ryanair Flight 4978, flying on the 23rd of May from Athens, Greece to Vilnius, Lithuania, was forced to make an unexpected detour to land in Minsk, Belarus. Belarusian authorities reported receiving a threat of a bomb onboard. Upon landing in Minsk, police searched the plane, and no bomb was found. However, one of the passengers onboard, Roman Protasevich, was arrested and taken into custody, as he was considered a wanted fugitive in Belarus. Four other passengers also remained in Minsk while the plane continued on to land in Vilnius safely with the other 121 passengers.**

These are the basic details of the incident that seem to be agreed upon by most sources. But regarding other details, there are a great deal of contradictory reports. However, what is universal in Western media reports is assigning blame to the Belarusian government for the whole incident and claiming it was merely a set-up to arrest the “opposition activist” and “journalist” Protasevich.

Protasevich, who is now being lauded as a brave fighter against dictatorship, is in fact, a far-right extremist who joined the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion in the Ukrainian civil war.

Within fifteen minutes of the plane’s emergency landing, EU politicians were already making public statements accusing Belarus of violating international law by diverting the flight. A phrase used by several figures was that the Belarusian authorities “endangered the lives of passengers onboard the plane” – here a quote from US-backed opposition leader in exile, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya. Estonia’s UN representative

called it an “attack on international civilian aviation safety.” Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne used a similar phrase in her statement on the incident, saying:

“This unprecedented action put innocent lives of airline passengers at risk and was a clear breach of the international standards that underpin civil aviation.”

Keen-eyed readers might ask themselves, what exactly does this focus on the safety of the passengers have to do with the case. If Belarus committed a breach of international law by diverting a plane to arrest someone, that would seem to be the wrongdoing. However, it is not so unusual an event for a plane to make an unexpected stop. While it is a major inconvenience, it is hard to see exactly how it “endangers the passengers” to do so, especially if a bomb threat was genuinely received. We also know that the plane made it to Vilnius without further incident.

The problem is that the same international law that Belarus is accused of violating, the 1944 Chicago Convention, states that every signatory country has “complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory” and that “in case of interception, the lives of persons on board and the safety of aircraft must not be endangered.” This quote implies that such an interception is entirely legal, so long as this condition is met. This is precisely why politicians hostile to the Belarusian government are clamouring to claim that the passengers’ safety was endangered by the diversion, despite this appearing to be a weaker point – it is in fact a critical point for any legal action against Belarus.

This subtlety has been glossed over. So

too, has the most important question of all: did Belarusian authorities receive the bomb threat?

The truthfulness of the bomb threat claim has been summarily dismissed with several arguments, all of which are deceptive. A common criticism of the claim was that at the point the plane was diverted, it was closer to Vilnius than to Minsk, so supposedly, the diversion did not make sense as the longer transit time made it more likely that the bomb would detonate. This has been used as one explanation for how the diversion “threatened the safety of passengers,” despite this allegation being completely inconsistent with the claim that the authorities invented the threat.

It also completely ignores what Belarus has stated was contained in the threat: the threat claimed to be from Palestinian group Hamas, stating that the bomb would go off in Vilnius as retaliation against the EU for its support of Israel. If this is taken at face value, then allowing the plane to continue to Vilnius could not sensibly be said to decrease the risk.

According to Belarus, the fake threat was sent to Minsk International Airport via email. One could reasonably wonder why Belarusian authorities would take it seriously, as Belarus is not an EU member and has nothing to do with their backing of Israel. But even if Belarusian authorities immediately surmised the message was not from Hamas, it would be quite reasonable for them to suspect a plot along the following lines: that a Belarusian anti-government group had actually sent it with the intention that it be ignored, then a real bomb would detonate in Vilnius, and consequently, it would be publicised that the Belarusian government

had ignored the threat from “Hamas” and allowed an attack against Lithuania. While this convoluted imaginary plot did not turn out to be true, had it occurred as a possibility to Belarusian authorities, it would pose an unacceptable risk.

Whether a threat was actually received is the key question. If it was, then the Belarusian authorities’ actions were entirely logical and lawful. But Western media and politicians have summarily decided that it was not, for no reason other than the arrest of Protasevich seeming too convenient. But if it were all indeed a plot to capture Protasevich out of the self-interest of the Belarusian government, it’s a strange sort of self-interest: the EU has initiated new sanctions against Belarus in response to the incident, which would have been an outcome obvious to the hypothetical Belarusian government conspirators. Not so convenient, after all.

The capture of one wanted man doesn’t seem a worthwhile payoff for this outcome. Doesn’t it make much more sense that the grounding was a quick decision made in response to a genuinely unexpected threat? More facts should be established before passing judgement, and certainly more time taken than fifteen minutes.

The whole affair exposes Western hypocrisy. In 2010, a flight from France to Mexico was forced by US authorities to land in Canada in order to arrest a passenger. No other explanation was given. In 2013, at the US’ behest, several European countries denied airspace access to the presidential aircraft of Bolivian President Evo Morales. This forced the plane to land in Austria, upon which it was raided by Austrian police looking (mistakenly) for Edward Snowden, again on US orders. Some of the European countries apologised for their role in this unjustified grounding, but the US did not. In 2016, the Ukrainian government forced a plane to land in Kiev in order to arrest a passenger, to no outcry by the West – the plane was a Belarusian airliner en route to Minsk!

The US and its allies make endless noise about a “rules-based international order,” but the only rule they care about is getting their own way. When a rule ensures that, it must be enforced; when it contradicts that, it is happily ignored. ✖

**Protasevich, who is now being lauded as a brave fighter against dictatorship, is in fact, a far-right extremist who joined the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion in the Ukrainian civil war.**

# ISRAEL ATTACKS GAZA AFTER JERUSALEM'S ASSAULT

The following is a talk given by Shamikh Bavda, a Palestinian from Gaza, at a function commemorating al Nakba at the CPA headquarters in Sydney on Sunday, 16th May. Please note: the function was held prior to the cease-fire being announced.

First, I would like to convey the greetings of Palestinian people in besieged Gaza to you, on the occasion of "Nakba Day."

Nakba day: "Day of the Catastrophe" is an annual day of commemoration of the displacement that preceded and followed the Israeli declaration of independence in 1948.

There is a long history of Israeli violations of human rights. It is as though the Israel Zionist project to force Palestinians to leave their lands cannot be stopped. In 1948, Israeli occupation forced nearly 750,000 Palestinians to leave their homes after committing massacres against Palestinian civilians and destroying hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages.

As of today, more than 140 Palestinians, forty-five of them children and at least fifteen women have been killed in Israeli bombing attacks in Gaza Strip since Monday night [the 10th of May] – further straining hospitals already under heavy pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Israeli offensive has targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, killed tens of people and caused enormous destruction throughout Gaza. The Israeli forces destroyed houses, killing people while in their homes, and demolished apartments and high-rise buildings throughout Gaza.

## ISRAELI ASSAULT ON JERUSALEM

This aggression in Gaza came after the Israeli forces assaulted worshippers in the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, injuring hundreds. Since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, Israeli occupation forces have banned gatherings and restricted Palestinian access to al-Aqsa compound for observance of the holy month.

The violent incursions against al-Aqsa compound by settlers continued under the protection of Israeli occupation forces, who themselves continued attacking worshippers and detaining hundreds of Palestinians, including women, children, and the elderly.

Over 700 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli suppression in recent days. Three Palestinians have lost their eyes.

The Palestine Red Crescent society said Israeli forces prevented their medics from entering the al-Aqsa compound where dozens of wounded Palestinians needed medical attention.

Thousands of Palestinians are being forcibly evicted and replaced with Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem. Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah are experiencing the largest forced mass displacement since 1967.

The forced evictions and displacement of Palestinians in East Jerusalem the violent attacks against worshippers and raids of Al Haram al-Sharif and Al Aqsa Mosque are deliberate actions by Israeli forces to consolidate control of the city and to change the demographic composition, character, and legal status of East Jerusalem. It can be described as ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem.

## THE COLONIAL PROJECT, GREAT JERUSALEM

The latest Israeli escalation in Jerusalem comes in the context of the policy of violating human rights in the West Bank, arresting thousands of Palestinians, including some members of parliament, targeting and killing the civilians and innocent children, refusing to comply with UN decisions regarding respect for citizens' human rights, expanding the settlements, demolishing homes, and



# It can be described as ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem.

expelling Palestinians in East Jerusalem, in order to establish the colonial project which is called Great Jerusalem (Jerusalem Metropolitan).

This is a project which is called the boundaries of the Great Jerusalem (Metropolitan).

The goals of the racists of Israel are as follows:

1. Isolating Jerusalem from other Palestinian regions which are under occupation
2. Expanding Israeli settlement activities and keeping the population of Israel higher than Palestinians in Jerusalem
3. Preparing the ground to prevent the establishment of a state of Palestine whose capital will be Jerusalem.

## THE PALESTINIAN RESPONSE

During the violation of human rights in Jerusalem, the Palestinian resistance issued an ultimatum giving Israeli occupation an hour – until 6:00 pm local time – to withdraw its forces from Al-Aqsa and the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, and free detainees.

When the deadline passed, resistance groups in Gaza fired volleys of rockets towards Israeli settlements for the first time since the 2014 summer war. The resistance in Gaza said that resistance fighters "fired rockets in response to the enemies' crimes and aggression against the holy city, and their abuse of the people in Sheikh Jarrah and Al Aqsa mosque."

The Palestinian public have responded

to Israeli violations by holding vigils, peaceful protests, and demonstrations in Palestine which have been suppressed by Israeli occupation forces who have arrested and assaulted protesters.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "Whoever attacks us will pay a heavy price."

Such warnings should be understood as threats of collective punishment against civilians in Gaza. Israeli ministers approved an aerial offensive against the territory.

## US BLOCKS UN STATEMENT

Egypt, Qatar, and the United Nations were reportedly mediating between Palestinians and Israeli occupation to slow the escalation.

The US government expressed its deep concern over "violent confrontations" in Jerusalem but reserved explicit condemnation for rockets fired from Gaza. Washington's mission to the UN Security Council reportedly prevented the release of a joint statement condemning violence in Jerusalem.

The European Union's envoy to Israel said he was "extremely concerned over the violence in Jerusalem" but only said that firing of rockets was "totally unacceptable and needs to stop."

The UN Human Rights office warned that Israeli violations could amount to "war crimes", and the Secretary-General urged Israel to cease in line with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

At this point, expressing concern is not a sufficient response. The international community and media continue to approach the situation in Jerusalem with false equivalence, despite there being no parity between Israel the occupier and oppressor, and Palestinians the occupied and oppressed.

The international community must re-evaluate and reconsider its approach to Israel with this in mind and focus on international law and human rights tools such as the International Criminal Court. Additionally, full recognition of the state of Palestine is vital to adequately empower Palestine.

Finally, the international community must act immediately to protect the Palestinian people against Israeli violations in the interests of upholding international law and saving human lives.

## CONCLUSION

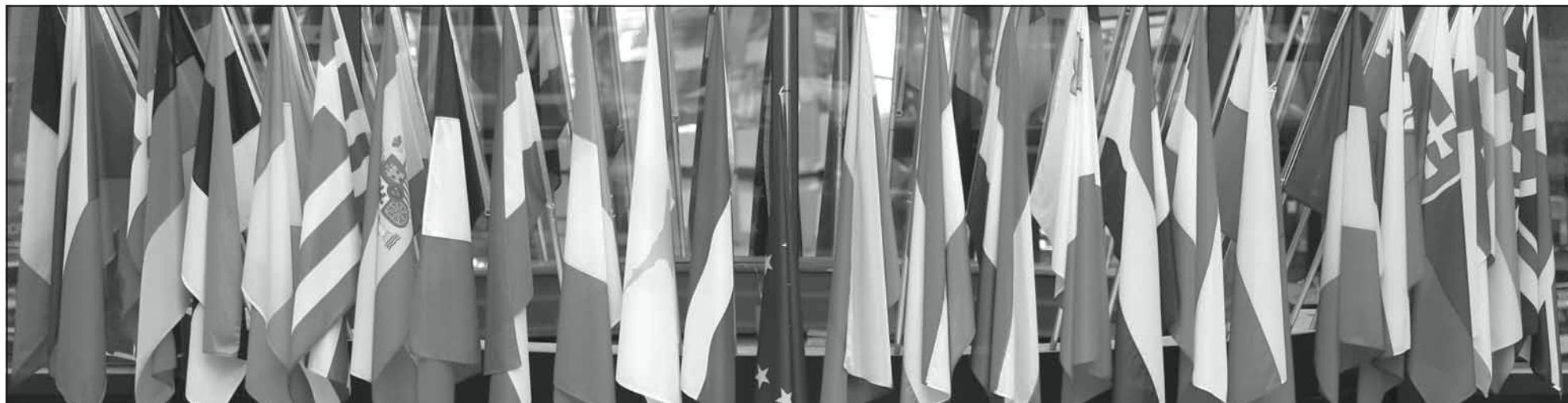
I would like to seize the opportunity and this event to confirm our deep deepest gratitude to our international friends and partners, and the states that support Palestine, and to encourage you all to take a leading role in the struggle for justice and real peace in the Middle East, and the entire world.

In spite of all the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians, they continued to find creative methods for resistance to the violence and occupation.

This raises our morale and gives us the hope that we will achieve our national aims of freedom, liberation, and independence. I am so proud of my people and our supporters who refuse and resist colonialism. ✪



# VENEZUELA, RUSSIA AND CHINA: THE ROUTE TO A MULTIPOLAR WORLD



Jesus Rojas

**The current global order is experiencing tension caused in the main by US-backed imperial power. They are hell-bent on maintaining the current neoliberal capitalist system, which has proven to spell economic disaster, not to mention war and systematic genocide. The developing world – led by China, Russia, Venezuela, and Iran (among others) – is working tirelessly to establish a multipolar world. Our goal is to ensure that there is world peace and economic and political stability.**

International organisations, created after the Second World War, were designed to serve Western hegemony by establishing mechanisms of domination that are currently out of date in the face of the emergence of new poles of power.

## THE UN: A DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION?

The United Nations Organisation was established in 1945, at the end of the Second

World War. Its bodies are organised to guarantee the effective use of power for the victors of that war who became part of the Security Council.

The rest of the world is organised in the General Assembly, whose mechanisms and decisions are not binding on the member countries.

The Charter of the United Nations establishes the principles that should govern the international order, and therefore, the member countries of the organisation must respect them. The fundamental principle is the defence of world peace and balance.

Failure to comply with this mechanism is systematically demonstrated by the facts. The US maintains unilateral sanctions that affect the human rights of the population in: North Korea, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Burma, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Syria, Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Ukraine, Yemen, South Sudan, Russia and Venezuela.

As stipulated in the UN Charter, such sanctions should not be imposed unilaterally. However, none of these measures has been a joint decision of member countries.

Among other violations, it is known that

in US prisons, more than 100,000 immigrant children are detained; and 3,000 boys and girls have been sentenced in this country to life imprisonment, violating the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Not counting the wars imposed against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria in the name of the fight against terrorism from George Bush's statement in 2001, when he affirmed: "they are with me or they are against me".

## THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD: A HISTORICAL NECESSITY

In Latin America, the Bolivarian Revolution, with the arrival of Hugo Chávez to power in Venezuela, gave the impetus to initiate a period of political changes that would impact not only within each country. Rather, on an international scale, the region began to position itself as a power bloc within world geopolitics, which later allowed the creation of regional integration and unity mechanisms that confronted the traditional vision of international relations.

The Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP), Petrocaribe, Unasur

and CELAC; they are an example of this possibility.

On the other hand, China and Russia began to demonstrate their prominence in the international arena and are emerging as powers, putting the hegemonic role of the United States in world geopolitics on notice. China, in addition to the great advance in the economic, scientific and military fields, has demonstrated the ability to establish international relations of cooperation and complementarity.

The need to establish institutions based on the vision of a multipolar world, as the only way to defeat the imperialist practice of the United States, supports the formation of the Group of Friends in defense of the United Nations Charter, which is currently made up of sixteen countries.

"The Group of Friends in Defense of the United Nations Charter emerges with force. Venezuela, as one of its founding countries, shares the call for all States that respect the principles and purposes of the UN to join. Strengthening multilateralism is essential," said Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza. ✪

## REPORT: BRIDGES OF LOVE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN – PERTH

CPA Perth Branch

**On Sunday the 30th of May, activists in Perth joined the global campaign Bridges of Love. The campaign has mobilised many people around the world demanding the end of the criminal US blockade on Cuba.**

For more than sixty years, Cuba has been under the longest and inhumane blockade; a blockade no other country has ever been subjected to. This is considered an act of war under international law.

Despite the long blockade, the Cuban revolution has survived and continues to build a socialist society in the best interest of its people.

The Cuban revolution and the dignity of its people have survived more than ten US Presidents and all the acts of state terrorism.

President Obama made some attempt to re-establish more diplomatic relations with Cuba. The process was welcomed by many around the world but the reactionary forces found in President Trump the best vehicle to feed their

hatred. Trump introduced 242 new coercive measures and enforced the extraterritoriality of the blockade on Cuba. It penalises third countries from trading with Cuba.

The pandemic presents even more challenges that hurt the entire world but in particular the poorest and less developed. For Cuba the blockade makes the pandemic even more painful. The pandemic demands solidarity among the peoples of the world. Calls to remove coercive measures to confront the pandemic have fallen on the deaf ears of the US administration.

Cuba has been able to produce five vaccine candidates, two in final stages of development. However, the blockade makes it difficult for Cuba to purchase raw materials for the mass production of the vaccines needed and Cuba faces shortages of medical supplies that include syringes and other basic materials. The Communist Party of Australia stands with the Cuban revolution. Join the global campaign against the US blockade on Cuba and demand its end.

Viva Cuba! ✪



# AUSTRALIA'S AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY IS "ARCHAIC"

Emily Muagututia

**Australia is being urged by 31 countries of the United Nations to reconsider our archaic laws regarding the age of criminal responsibility. Currently, this age is set at just ten years old - four years below the international standard.**

One of the most concerning things about Australia's legal age of criminal responsibility is how it is weaponised against Indigenous children. Eighty per cent of 10-year-olds incarcerated in Australia are Indigenous children. Indigenous children are seventeen times more likely to be incarcerated – in Western Australia, twenty-one times more likely – and their likelihood of reappearing in adult court is ninety per cent compared with fifty-two per cent for non-Indigenous children. As it stands today, Indigenous children are more likely to be incarcerated than to complete year 12.

By holding 10-year-old children criminally responsible, we are guaranteeing the cycles of incarceration will continue for years and generations to come. Ninety-four per cent of children incarcerated between 10-12 will return to jail before the age of eighteen. Just as suspending students does little to solve the root of behavioural issues, uprooting a child from their school and home life to be locked away and labelled a criminal only serves to perpetuate the "school to prison pipeline." This system provides no solution to the root causes of incarceration in Australia as the residual effects of a brutal colonisation, with little to

no reparations, still weigh heavily on Indigenous communities.

Recently the City of Fremantle local council in Western Australia announced that they were changing the name of Kings Court to Walyalup Koort, meaning "Fremantle's heart" in the Noongar language. While it is positive to see an embrace of Indigenous culture and language in recent years, this does nothing to bring attention to our society's true, systemic problems. The causes that will truly advance the living standards of Indigenous people should include allowing them the right to self-determination and implementing extensive criminal justice reforms. While Australia's justice system and laws may no longer be as explicitly racist as they once were, applying these laws has proven time and time again to be racist. Our outdated juvenile laws are providing a foundation for racist sentencing and imprisonment of young children.

If the Australian government could commit to the bare minimum of changing the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14, we could decrease the incarcerated Indigenous juvenile population by about fifteen per cent by raising the age, we are allowing a child to have a childhood. We would also be allowing them to continue with education. Education is a proven tool to free people from cycles of poverty and ensuing incarceration. In WA, around seventeen per cent of children are living below the poverty line, with this rate shooting up to sixty-nine per cent in areas such as East Pilbara. Many children



growing up in these circumstances are already at risk of dropping out of school; by disrupting schooling with imprisonment, they may never have the chance to break the cycle of poverty. If we do not even attempt to give children the resources and programs to succeed in life, how can we expect anything but symptoms of poverty such as crime to arise from those situations?

Punitive justice is not an effective tool in ending crime. It is little more than a bandaid solution. Once an individual is released back into the same – or often, worse – situation post-incarceration, the rate of recidivism is considerably high, especially where poverty and lack of education are factors. Furthermore, when incarceration first

occurs in the formative years, can we expect anything other than the development of low self-worth, low self-efficacy, or a "criminal" mentality? More often than not, a child's personal experiences and circumstances are overlooked in this system, and likewise at school prior to imprisonment. With these current frameworks in place in the justice system, we are allowing the unchilding of Indigenous children rather than supporting and encouraging personal growth and healing in order to achieve the best outcomes for the community, the affected and the offender.

Australia must give Indigenous people the right to self-determination. Indigenous people deserve the right to provide solutions that

garner the best outcomes for their own communities. Restorative justice practices led by the affected communities could result in a substantial shift in how we view crime and how we treat offenders. The solutions being handed down by the Australian government haven't worked thus far, and it is time we redirect funding to resources and programs that support Indigenous communities in healing from generations of trauma, colonisation, and imprisonment. Our government should be doing everything that it can to protect, support and help our children. Ten-year-old children belong at school and in playgrounds, not prisons. ✪

## "LIBERATION IS WITHIN OUR REACH": PALESTINE GOES ON STRIKE

Valentin Cartillier

Under Israeli bombardment, Palestinians went on one of the biggest strikes in Palestinian history on 18th May. Throughout the occupied West Bank, Gaza, and inside Israel, Palestinians refused to go to work in protest against the recent attacks. General strikes are quite uncommon for Palestinian citizens, and the recent strike could foreshadow a greater political unity between geographically separated Palestinians.

The strike was called by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, who issued the following statement:

"From across colonised Palestine, we call on you to join our general strike and our action [...]. Launched from Jerusalem and extending across the world, we call on your support in maintaining this moment of unprecedented resistance [...]. Liberation is within our reach."

The strike was supported by both Hamas, which has a political majority in Gaza, and Fatah, which control the Palestinian National Authority. The Palestinian National Authority is a self-governing body which ostensibly governs Palestine but only has effective control over parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Shops, business centres, civil institutions, banks and universities all closed their doors; workers refused to show up, revealing Israel's dependency on Palestinian labour. *Al Jazeera* reporter Nida Ibrahim stated: "It's the first time in decades that we see

Palestinians across the political divide take part in such a general strike."

While it is difficult to determine the exact number of people who went on strike, *Ha'aretz*, an Israeli newspaper, reported that "only 150 of the 65,000 Palestinian construction workers [came] to work in Israel. This paralysed building sites, causing losses estimated at 130 million shekels [nearly AU40 million]." This latest action shows that general strikes remain an incredibly powerful tool in fighting all forms of oppression, their power can be taken far beyond the bounds of just the workplace and used to further political demands of any nature.

The strike was accompanied by protests that were largely peaceful, however, there were the inevitable outbursts of violence. In Ramallah in the West Bank, protestors burned tires and threw stones at Israeli military checkpoints. Soldiers responded by firing tear gas canisters, which some protestors were able to throw back. The clashes left three protestors dead and over a hundred wounded, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The Israeli Defence force claimed that two of its soldiers were wounded by gunshots to the leg.

While this strike was only intended to last a single day, it signals a new era of Palestinian political action. It has demonstrated a unity of Palestinian demands that has not been seen in decades. Given the success of this strike, we can expect to see more sustained strikes in the future. The CPA stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to be free. ✪



# LESSONS FROM VIETNAM: ELECTIONS THAT CAN'T BE BOUGHT

Amiad Horowitz

Americans are used to the never-ending and increasingly costly cycle of US electoral campaigns. Theoretically, elections are supposed to happen once every two to six years depending on the office and, one would think, campaigns for those elections would coincide with the election schedule. The reality is quite different. The 2020 election is barely past, and already the media and political commentators are hyping 2022 and 2024.

Campaigns in the US begin months or even years ahead of the election as candidates start raising money. While maintaining the name, the Republican and Democratic Parties no longer bear much resemblance to traditional political parties as most of the world understands them. Rather they've mutated into vast fundraising and fund-distribution machines. When combined with super-PACs, millionaire and billionaire donors, lobbyists, corporations, and a corporate media monster with an unquenching hunger for ratings and profits, the citizens of the US are left with the longest and most expensive campaigns on the planet.

Of course, one might think that these billions of dollars and long campaigns were an investment in (and would lead to) an active electorate. Anyone thinking that will be very disappointed. From the late 1970s to today, most presidential elections saw a fifty-five per cent voter turnout or less. In midterm elections (those elections that don't coincide with a presidential election), turnout is even lower. In 2018, it was less than fifty per cent and in 2014 less than forty per cent.

As an American living in Vietnam, I recently witnessed another electoral system. On the 23rd May, the Vietnamese people voted for both their National Assembly and

local representatives. These elections saw an estimated ninety-five per cent voter turnout. While the Vietnamese system of government and the US system of government are extremely different, I believe there are some lessons Americans might learn from the Vietnamese election campaigns.

Most significantly, in Vietnam, money is removed from the system. There are no super-PACs, no big donors, and no flashy ad campaigns. Second, the length of the election campaign is limited to the weeks just before the election date. After all, since there is no need to raise money, there is no need for a lengthy campaign. In Vietnam, there are no ads on television or social media and no campaign rallies. Furthermore, candidates don't meet with CEOs and billionaire donors to solicit donations or sell influence.

Without the media blitz, how do Vietnamese voters get their information? Historically, in the weeks before the election, there are signs hung up in every constituency with the names, resumés, and past accomplishments of the candidates running locally. The documents further include what that candidate would like to do for their constituency if elected. All a voter has to do is go to the sign in their neighbourhood. All the relevant information is at their disposal. Thanks to modern technology, the most recent election was even easier. The government created an official website for the election where voters could look up information about the candidates in their area using only their address. It's important to highlight that both the community signs and website are publicly funded, and all candidates get equal treatment.

The Vietnamese system ensures that all candidates have equal contact with the voters. This also means that anyone, no matter how rich or poor, has the same opportunity to run for office, and big companies and the



mega-wealthy don't receive extra influence over candidates via donations. In Vietnam, there are no campaigns to donate to.

As previously mentioned, the US and Vietnamese governmental systems are very different. Of course, a one-to-one copy of the Vietnamese arrangement can't be used in the US. However, I believe that we can adapt some of the positive attributes of the Vietnamese system for use in the US.

The most important, but perhaps the most difficult to implement, is the removal of money from elections. This has been one of the biggest problems in American elections for decades. It has only gotten worse since the Supreme Court's horrendous ruling in *Citizens United*. The wealthiest one per cent have significantly more influence over elections, which is inherently undemocratic.

Another aspect is public funding for publicity costs, equally distributed among all candidates. Why should candidates from the two big parties automatically get more access to voters than candidates from other parties or independent candidates?

Easy access to information about candidates is important as well. Why should it be

up to the voter to hunt down the information on every person running for office – from school board to city council to state legislature to Congress and everything in between? There should be one place where every voter can go to find out all relevant information about all candidates.

Finally, shorter election campaigns would certainly be beneficial. No candidate needs months or years to explain their past accomplishments to voters or paint their vision for the future. We don't need months of smear and fear-mongering. A shorter election campaign would also cut down on the costs, thereby helping remove some of the financial influence on candidates. Plus, the media empires wouldn't stand to collect billions of dollars from endless campaign ads.

The democratic process shouldn't be unnecessarily complicated and definitely shouldn't be for sale. The current system in the United States is broken and owned by the top one per cent. American voters deserve better. Luckily, if we look around the world, there are lessons to be learned if we are willing to learn them.

People's World

## SYRIA'S PRESIDENT RECEIVES CONGRATULATIONS FOR HIS RE-ELECTION

On Friday, leaders from several countries around the world congratulated Syria's President Bashar Al Assad on being re-elected with ninety-five per cent of the vote for a new seven-year presidential term.

Among them was Russia's President Vladimir Putin who congratulated Al Assad on his victory in the election held on the 26th May.

"The results of the vote have fully confirmed his immense political prestige and the confidence his fellow citizens have in the policy pursued under his leadership to stabilise the situation in Syria as quickly as possible and strengthen its state institutions," he said.

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro also sent a message of congratulations to Al Assad

for revalidating his mandate in Syria.

Through social networks, the Bolivarian Foreign Affairs Jorge Arreaza shared the presidential message congratulating the Syrian people "for the exemplary democratic day of May 26. The unobjectionable triumph of brother President Bashar Al Assad is the victory of peace and national sovereignty".

President Miguel Diaz-Canel said, "Cuba congratulates Syrian President Bashar al Assad on his re-election. We ratify the deep friendship and solidarity between our peoples and governments."

Iran expressed its congratulations on an election where the massive participation of the people "is an important step towards the establishment of peace, stability, calm,

reconstruction and prosperity in Syria."

Iranian officials also stressed their support for the right of the Syrian people to decide on the future of their country "without any foreign interference."

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# ANALYSIS: MYANMAR, A BATTLEGROUND OF THE NEW COLD WAR AGAINST CHINA

**During World War II, the British colony of Burma (now Myanmar), sitting between British-ruled India and war-torn China, became a key military theatre, pitting Allied Forces against Japan.**

Today, Myanmar is embroiled in conflict once again. While this time the principal factors are internal, there are wider geopolitical dimensions. In particular, Myanmar has become a battleground within the wider New Cold War against China.

A Communist Party of Burma (CPB) spokesman told the *Morning Star*: “We used to say that Burma’s importance to the world’s great powers lies in the geographical position it occupies.

“Being situated between India and China, Burma became an important springboard for the Allied forces during World War II both on land and sea.”

Modern Myanmar borders India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, Thailand and Malaysia. The Myanmar-India-China tripoint, the intersection of the three states’ borders, lies next to the so-called McMahon Line, the location of a long-running dispute between China and India, which recently led to bloody, but thankfully short-lived, border clashes between the two Asian giants.

Myanmar’s maritime borders in the north are adjacent to Bangladesh in the oil and gas-rich Bay of Bengal and stretch southward to a point just north of the Strait of Malacca.

The strait, which flows between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean through the South China Sea.

It is the shortest sea route between Persian Gulf oil and gas suppliers and key Asian markets.

Around twenty per cent of global petroleum shipped by sea goes via the Strait of Malacca, including eighty per cent of China’s sea-borne oil.

According to the CPB spokesman: “Southern Myanmar covers a strategic position for monitoring shipping heading to the Malacca Strait. That’s one reason, we believe, Western powers are very concerned about Burma.”

“At this time, when tension between the US and China has reached a peak, when naval forces with various flags are sailing to and fro in the South China Sea, it benefits Western powers if they can distract China on its western borders. Furthermore, Burma borders

the Chinese region of Tibet, another super-sensitive area in China.”

More recently, Myanmar has become a focus of interest as part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to build infrastructure networks in a whole series of countries over the coming decades.

If even partially successful, this will transform international trade routes and effectively disrupt US economic hegemony by shifting the centre of the world economy to the Asia-Pacific and Eurasian regions. The United States is determined to block as many of these BRI projects as possible.

Over the past decade, China has worked with Myanmar on several BRI projects, some of which are in operation with others still undergoing feasibility studies.

The biggest potential project is the China-Myanmar-Bangladesh-India (CMBI) corridor that would connect Kunming in China’s Yunnan province with Kolkata in India’s West Bengal by crossing into Mandalay in northern Myanmar and going through Dhaka in Bangladesh. It would provide obvious benefits for tourism and trade to a region of around 300 million people long starved of modern road and rail connections.

For example, Indian-Bangladeshi freight train services only resumed last year, after a gap of 55 years. There is still no passenger train service connecting what was once a single undivided Bengal. However, given the strongly anti-China stance of the Hindu-chauvinist BJP government in India, the CMBI project may be indefinitely delayed.

The other key project is the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) which is designed to develop networks linking the Kyaukphyu port and economic zone on Myanmar’s coast with China’s western regions.

During his visit to Myanmar in early 2020, Xi Jinping met with Aung San Suu Kyi to accelerate many of these projects.

The advantages to China are obvious. CMEC would substantially cut transfer times for China’s import/export trade in its developing western provinces, which lie furthest from China’s southern and eastern coastal ports, and would end China’s vulnerability to a potential Malacca Strait “chokehold.”

The potential advantages for Myanmar could also be vast if the commanding heights of the country’s economy can be wrested from the military-run monopolies and

made to benefit working people. The country could become a major trading centre linking the Indian subcontinent with south-east Asia and western China.

China’s complex relationship with Myanmar has confused many on the left, who too often base their binary analyses through the prism of Western media coverage, which portrays China either as an active backer of the military or at least indifferent to its seizure of power.

For those already predisposed to view China as no different from or even worse than Western capitalism, the idea that Beijing must be backing the military was simply taken for granted.

However, others took a diametrically opposite view, seeing yet another “colour revolution,” a US-backed attempt at regime change, by pointing to the activities of the foreign-funded “democracy promotion” agencies.

It’s certainly true that the usual suspect, the US State Department-funded National Endowment for Democracy, has for years openly channelled substantial funds into Myanmar’s trade unions, satellite broadcasters, social and print media and the like, to influence both internal politics and also to shape external media presentations of Myanmar. (See for example [www.ned.org/region/asia/burma-2020/](http://www.ned.org/region/asia/burma-2020/))

However, the CPB rejects both of these simplistic interpretations of China-Myanmar relations.

“Presenting China as a supporter of the Burmese military is to fall into the trap of the military junta as well as the White House,” the party spokesman says. “We shouldn’t forget that the military generals in Burma, ever since they became a clique in the 1950s, are very chauvinistic and have prejudices against any race or religion besides theirs. China needs Burma to be a strong buffer for it against Western forces and the West needs Burma as a bridgehead to enter China.”

China was blindsided by the coup. In an interview given to Myanmar media two weeks after the military seizure of power, China’s ambassador to Myanmar Chen Hai said: “Both the National League for Democracy and the Tatmadaw [military] maintain friendly relations with China. The current development in Myanmar is absolutely not what China wants to see.”

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called China’s policy in the current crisis the “Three Supports and Three Avoids.”



Support is for an internal political settlement, the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, a return to the constitutional compromise that existed pre-coup and to “advance the hard-won democratic transformation process.” The other side is avoidance of “further bloodshed and civilian casualties,” avoidance of the UN security council being used to intervene in Myanmar (a bitter lesson China learnt from the Libyan crisis in 2011) and to “avoid external forces from fuelling the unrest in Myanmar and seeking private gains by messing up the country.”

Chinese statements have pointedly made clear that it is in continual contact with the NLD and other anti-military forces.

Nonetheless some pro-Western elements in the anti-coup protests called for US intervention and demonstrated outside the Chinese embassy. In addition, unknown

groups attacked Chinese-owned businesses, hotels and, recently, oil pipelines to China.

This is seen by the CPB as a futile and potentially dangerous diversion which misdirects and divides the anti-junta movement.

The CPB representative emphasises: “The Burmese military generals will make use of any available means to divert the attention of the opposition elements inside our country or to create disunity among them. The West is always seeking an opportunity to make use of the Burmese anti-military elements to wage anti-Chinese protests and sow anti-Chinese seeds among the Burmese population. They have made some achievements before, but this time the people’s hatred against the junta is so strong nothing will divert their attention from their main enemy – the military bureaucrats.”

*Morning Star* ✪



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