



SUBS, SUBSERVIENCE AND STUPIDITY



Casey Davidson

It's been less than a month since the US tore out of poverty-stricken Afghanistan after losing a twenty-year dirty war, with Australia dragging behind, and already they have announced a new absurd military scheme, AUKUS, a deal between the US, UK and Australia to develop and deploy nuclear-powered submarines along with other military capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region. The move comes with a multitude of complications, including potentially breaking the non-nuclear proliferation agreement, additional expense for taxpayers, ramping up of aggression towards China, further subservience toward the US and loss of sovereignty for Australia, and further challenges for cooperation for global threats such as climate change and the pandemic.

The AUKUS abomination makes Australia complicit in developing military artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, underwater capabilities, and long-range strike capabilities in cooperation with the US and the UK. While the Australian public have been up in arms about the threat of nuclear development, there are additional concerns of development of other advanced weaponry threatening the region. AUKUS creates additional fears as other Indo-Pacific nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia may respond by ramping up

their own military spending for their own defence. This could spark a new arms race in the region.

BREAKING THE NON-NUCLEAR TREATY

Australia as a medium-power has little need to participate in the nuclear arms race and has remained free of nuclear weapons. It is a signatory to the The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is an international treaty founded to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology. This treaty is at risk of being broken by Australia under the new agreement, however the powers that be claim to have found their way around the existing agreements by providing nuclear-powered subs that do not carry nuclear weapons. Curiously, nuclear subs are designed specifically for offence, and there are no existing nations with them that do not have nuclear weapons. It also provides a way to develop nuclear weapon technology in Australian waters with little ability for it to be regulated.

CHINA'S RESPONSE

Australia's geographical position in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as its fundamental roots as another white colonial power give the US strategic advantage in containing and threatening China. Unsurprisingly, China has expressed dissatisfaction with the formation

of AUKUS. Zhao Lijian, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry described the move as an "extremely irresponsible" threat to regional stability, expressing that "China is promoting economic cooperation and regional economic integration, while the US is pushing for war and destruction."

Not to mention, Australia relies heavily on China for trade and investment. In fact, China is Australia's largest trading partner, and an irresponsible act such as this is likely to further damage the already delicate relations. This will continue to affect Australian workers negatively as Australia's economy experiences additional strain.

WHITE COLONIALIST IDEALISM

Australia has already succumbed to co-founding the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) with the US, India and Japan, in response to increased Chinese economic and military power. But the formation of AUKUS is telling of an idealistic ambition to move back to what Carlos Martinez, author and co-founder of Friends of Socialist China describes as a "euphemism of white colonial unity" inextricably linked with British colonial slavery, genocide of indigenous peoples, the rape of Africa, brutal colonisation of India, and the horrendous Opium Wars in China.

Martinez also points to the link with the UK's favourite colonial offspring, the US, and

their deeply horrific occupation in the Pacific of Hawaii and Guam, as well as genocide in Korea, war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, while Australia has continually acted as a proxy for US interests, joining in Vietnam, the CIA-backed coup in Indonesia, and many more atrocities in the Asia-Pacific region. In Martinez's overview he stated that this is "the character of these countries, and everyone in the region and in the world understands perfectly well what they represent, but this is a fundamentally racist neo-colonial project and it is frankly, an embarrassment". AUKUS is not an attempt to protect the wellbeing of Australians, but an attempt to maintain US hegemony.

HOPE OVER HEGEMONY

Additionally, China's economic growth and prosperity is not a result of plunder and exploitation like in the West, but a result of an exceptional socialist political model. For more than forty years, the Global South has been forced to succumb to predatory neo-liberalism and endless war. With China's defeat of extreme poverty, rapid infrastructure development and cooperation with 140 countries under the Belt and Road Initiative, they are demonstrating a way forward, and a hopeful path for humanity. What has the West got left to offer the rest of humanity? It seems nothing but climate catastrophe, dirty wars, and poor pandemic management.

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Guardian

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TWO NEW COAL MINES GREEN-LIT, GOV'T IGNORES CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The federal government continues to fail Australia's future generations as it deepens its commitment to coal. On the 16th of this month, it was announced that the Whitehaven Coal's Vickery mine extension in northern New South Wales was green-lit. While referred to as an extension, there is no mine at the location, but the current project intends to extend the smaller, previously approved Whitehaven project that was not built.

This was the second such announcement in two weeks, following the Wollongong coal expansion the week prior.

Both approvals come after federal courts found that federal environment minister Sussan Ley had a duty of care to protect young people from the climate crisis – a finding Ley is attempting to appeal.

Environmental advocates across the country have expressed their frustration at the Morrison government's denial of our climate reality.

One of the eight students who brought the case against Ley, Ava Princi, an 18-year-old from Sydney stated that "[t]he decision to approve this mine comes only weeks after the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned of the urgent need to stop the extraction and burning of coal to contain global warming." "In approving the mine, Minister Ley has turned her back on the federal court, the international scientific consensus on climate change, and the children and young people of Australia," Princi said.

Echoing Princi's comments lawyer David Barnden, who represented the students in the case, said the legal team was considering further legal action saying that "[t]he approval is a surprise in light of the federal court's careful reasoning establishing the minister's duty of care not to harm children [...]. The Morrison government's decision signals to the world that Australia does not appear prepared to act responsibly to protect children from climate harms."

In a baffling statement defending the approval, Whitehaven – the company behind the mine – said that "the company sees a continuing role for high-quality coal of the type Vickery will produce in contributing to global CO2 emissions reduction and containment efforts while simultaneously supporting economic development in our near region."

Australian Greens environment spokesperson, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, said of Ley's decisions that she has once again proven "she's the minister against the environment, not for," adding, "[w]e are weeks away from the Glasgow climate summit where the rest of the world will commit to strong targets to reduce pollution and plans to move away from fossil fuels. [...] Expanding coal in the middle of the climate crisis is madness."

We cannot allow the expansion of mines, or the development of new ones, to continue. Instead, we must continue to fight for the expansion and development of renewable energies. Unlike the former, renewable energy technologies won't damage the planet and will create long-term, not short-term, jobs in a new emerging sector. If we do not act soon, we run the risk of creating a planet uninhabitable for future generations to come.

CPA STATEMENT ON THE AUKUS TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT AND NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBMARINES

The Communist Party of Australia urges all its members and supporters to actively oppose the Morrison government's decision to join the AUKUS Agreement; to buy nuclear-powered submarines; to purchase cruise missiles and other offensive weapons; and for Australia to host more US troops, warships, weapons, and planes.

The announcement was made at the 31st Australia-United States Ministerial Consultation in Washington. The Australian government agreed some time ago to be part of AUKUS, a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. AUKUS aims tie Australia even more tightly to US imperialism's war plans against the People's Republic of China (PRC), to have Australia take a larger share of the financial burden, and consolidate Australia as a US launching pad for war. In the process, Australia jettisons what vestiges of sovereignty remained.

The Australian government has dropped the mantra that we don't have to choose between Beijing and Washington. Now we are all in with the United States.

The AUSMIN statement lists agreements for the deployment of US aircraft of all types in Australia, US surface and subsurface vessels in Australia; more complex and more integrated exercises; and support for warfighting and combined military operations in the region. The agreement covers key areas such as artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, underwater systems, and long-range strike capabilities.

The moves are a step back to the Cold War days and will bring with them the same repression and restrictions on unions and our party as the Menzies era did. They bring a further dramatic loss of Australian sovereignty and freedom of choice and an imposition of an economic burden on the Australian people while making Australia complicit in a dangerous heightening of regional tensions and conflict

The AUSMIN statement makes much of what it calls the rules-based international order. Our Cuban friends have correctly called this the law of the jungle and it is certainly a euphemism for the US empire.

Paying for the nuclear submarines and other commitments will be extraordinarily expensive and will mean that other government departments will be raided to finance them. Welfare, education, the environment, and the now important health budget will suffer. Workers' wages, especially those in public services like nursing and education, will remain at an all-time low.

The working class will bear the burden of all this exorbitant expenditure and posturing by the Morrison government as it manoeuvres prior to the federal

election to try to claim it is protecting the Australian people when in fact it is doing the opposite.

Efforts made by the Liberals and the employers to persuade workers and unions that the new militarism will provide jobs must be resisted. Party members and supporters must campaign for work that creates benefits for the people of the world, not work that produces more efficient people-killing machines.

While military spending does create jobs, it does not create nearly as many jobs as a comparable investment in productive industry. The effect of increased defence spending is to take resources out of creating production and providing services that expand economic activity. Rather it sinks resources into the creation of tools that further destroy resources, both people and goods. Nuclear powered submarines present a risk to the environment and the people of Australia as they can suffer accidents to the reactors and in collisions. The presence of these ships in our capital cities and harbours is a clear and present danger. There are already nine nuclear reactors on the seafloor from sunken nuclear submarines.

The federal government is already close to the powerful nuclear lobby and the introduction of nuclear-powered submarines clearly opens the way for the development of an Australian nuclear power industry and for a nuclear weapons capacity.

A Chinese spokesman said the agreement "seriously undermines regional peace and stability and intensifies the arms race". The CPA stands in solidarity with the PRC as it faces this latest provocation and threat to its sovereignty and survival.

The CPA recalls the words of our Communist working-class poet, Vic Williams:

Can those who killed millions be ever repentant?

Take the guns from the hands of the killers,
the spoils from the robbers,

For the sacked, the evicted, the prisoned
to make the world of the future.

Hold to your course, my Party,
our world will prevail!

Communist Party of Australia
Central Committee Secretariat
19th September 2021

Special Appeal Reds go Green

The Guardian is running a special appeal with the aim of raising \$10,000 for solar panels. The panels will not only make substantial savings in electricity bills but also put into practice our commitment to a sustainable future. 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"!

We are looking to Guardian readers and CPA members and supporters to assist us with this important project.

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AUSTRALIA'S OWN GOAL

Anna Pha

US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Australia's PM Scott Morrison lined up like three stooges in a stage-managed virtual presentation to announce the formation of yet another military alliance – AUKUS. Morrison sold the deal as a win for Australia. He had a big smile on his face, but Biden's smile was bigger, knowing that he had secured such a lucrative deal for the US military-industrial complex.

Morrison unceremoniously ditched the \$90+ billion contract for twelve Attack-class conventional submarines from French military contractor Naval Group. In its place, Australia will purchase eight nuclear-powered submarines from either the UK or the US – all things considered, it will be the US.

The damage to Australia is far more serious than reputational. Apart from turning Australia into a military target, the economic fallout will be huge for the people of Australia.

BLANK CHEQUE

Morrison signed a blank cheque for the submarines. The cost, details of the submarines, the builder, and the time of delivery are unspecified. All that we have been told is that it will cost the Australian people more than the French ones would have. The original contract for them was for \$40 billion, which over time blew out to \$90 billion. The French ones were to be delivered by 2030. The nuclear-powered submarines will cost billions of dollars (more than \$100 billion) and will be ready around 2040 at the earliest.

"The Government's intention is to build the nuclear-powered submarines in South Australia, maximising the use of Australian workers," Morrison said. Jobs? Built in Australia? Already those promises are evaporating.

It only took a few days following the announcement for the proportion of components being built in Australia to shrink to a minority. As for jobs, the sector is capital intensive. The same amount spent on nurses, teachers, construction workers, and community services would create hundreds of thousands more jobs.

The bill will keep growing with billions more in cost overruns.

The Morrison government has agreed to the US having a base in Darwin, which will be paid for by Australian taxpayers. Who knows how much will be spent on upgrading the Collins class submarines that were to be taken out of service by 2030? There are suggestions that Australia should hire some nuclear-powered submarines in the meantime – another cost.

"ENORMOUS COST"

Defence Minister Peter Dutton refuses to give any figure for the additional costs of its latest shopping list. "It's not going to be a cheap project, but maintaining peace is not something that comes for free," he said. An understatement if ever there was one! It will be an "enormous cost" according to Dutton.

"If we have to pay an economic price for that, that's something that we're prepared to pay," Trade Minister Dan Tehan said. "In the end our values are so important to us and we think that they're something that we have to protect above all else."



Australia will purchase eight nuclear-powered submarines, extend the life of existing Collins class submarines, fund a US base on Australian soil, possibly rent some nuclear-powered submarines, and acquire additional long-range strike capabilities for the Australian Defence Force. This additional long-range strike capability aims at "enhancing the ADF's ability to deliver strike effects across our air, land, and maritime domains," Morrison said.

It includes Tomahawk Cruise Missiles, Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (Extended Range), Long-Range Anti-Ship Missiles (Extended Range), precision strike guided missiles, and the development of hypersonic missiles in collaboration with the US.

The military budget will increase from around two per cent of gross domestic product to between three and four per cent.

ECONOMIC HIT

When other economies went into recession as a result of the global financial crisis, Australia avoided recession because of China's growing economy and its purchase of Australian commodities and investments.

The Australian economy owes its first trade surplus in almost fifty years to China. China takes around eighty per cent of our iron ore exports – iron ore being our largest export. The price of iron ore recently sky-rocketed to over \$200 a ton, although it has since fallen.

The Australian government has restricted Chinese investments in Australia, demonised the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government, attempted to intervene in the internal affairs of China, and challenged Chinese exports at the World Trade Organisation.

Tourism and education were two of Australia's major exports until COVID hit. China was one of the biggest markets. Tehan has been at the forefront of removing Chinese "influence" from universities.

The Coalition government should not be surprised if the Chinese look elsewhere. Other Australian exporters are already feeling the pinch from China's quotas and

increased tariffs on exports of coal, barley, timber, lobster, and wine.

China is already reducing its imports of iron ore as it tackles climate change and attempts to take the heat out of the market. If China imposes restrictions on imports from Australia, or cuts back on imports of iron ore, the Australian government has only asked for such a response.

The Morrison government seems intent on pushing China to the point of no return with its brinkmanship. In doing so, it is playing with the lives and well-being of not only Australians, but the people of the whole region.

HEIGHT OF ARROGANCE

One of China's strategic and economic successes is its diplomacy, conduct of economic relations on an equal and mutually beneficial basis, and integration with other economies, large and small, around the world. China has applied to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) which has eleven members all bordering or in the Pacific, including Australia. To be accepted, unanimous agreement by CPTPP members is needed. The US pulled out under former President Trump.

The Morrison government has arrogantly said it would not agree unless the Chinese government resumed ministerial discussions between the two countries and removed "sanctions" it had applied to Australian exports.

In addition to holding China hostage to its demands, Morrison at the same time urged Biden to break an election promise and return to the CPTPP.

The Chinese newspaper, *Global Times*, issued a blunt warning to Australia: "There is no path to future prosperity for an Australia which chooses to isolate itself from the region's largest economy."

There could be other economic repercussions. France's anger is palpable and the European Union is stunned by the behaviour of the US and Australia. It is not clear yet whether Australia's negotiations with the EU for a free trade agreement are compromised.

ECONOMIC CRISIS LOOMING

Australia was already sliding into recession when the COVID pandemic hit. The \$90 billion spent on JobKeeper, the billions on the JobSeeker supplement, and handouts to business provided the necessary stimulus to stave off a serious recession.

The federal government's gross debt is over \$800 billion and was projected to peak at \$1 trillion. Debt itself is not bad, it depends on what it is used for and the ability to repay it. It was not so long ago that fear was being instilled in young people that they would be left to repay a huge debt. If the government had spent on job creation and not cut corporate taxes and income tax for the rich, debt would not be an issue. Full employment would bring in additional revenue through personal income tax and over time pay off the debt.

The Parliamentary Budget Office, in its latest medium-term outlook prior to the latest big-spend announcement, estimated that spending on defence would rise by almost seventy per cent in the coming ten years to more than \$75 billion per annum. At present it is \$44 billion. This additional debt will be run up on killing machines and create few, if any, jobs. That estimate is set to rise by billions with the forthcoming escalation of military purchases.

The neoliberal Coalition government will be determined to commence reducing that debt and budget deficits as quickly as possible. It will slash spending on social security recipients, age pensioners, and the most vulnerable. Services will be cut. Public servants sacked. Health and education will take a hit. The likelihood of war will become greater, bringing death and destruction.

And what for? For US imperialism's war preparations. This madness must be stopped. Act now!

Contact your MP and Senators. Write to media outlets, ring radio stations. Spread the word. ✪

"There is no path to future prosperity for an Australia which chooses to isolate itself from the region's largest economy."

VALE JACK HENRY

Peter Wills

Growing up and working on the railway in the sugar-growing town of Tully, I often heard mention by union delegates of Jack Henry. He was well known in the area, particularly amongst the descendants of the Italian migrant cane cutters who held him in high regard for his tireless work during the 1934-35 cane cutters' strikes. They said he was the most anti-racist man they had ever met, and they were grateful for his help and organising skills

Born on a farm near Grafton NSW in 1904, Jack moved to Queensland in 1922 at the age of eighteen, and he worked in southeast Queensland until 1925 when he moved north to the newly opened cane fields in Tully to work as a cane cutter. Having been part of the labour movement since he was thirteen, he had joined the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) – the largest union in Queensland at the time, dominating the state Labor government. It was, in essence, a right-wing bosses' union that supported the profit motives of the sugar farmers and millers.

After the cane cutting season was finished and the cane cutters were laid off, many of them would travel to Brisbane looking for work, and this is where Jack was first exposed to and embraced Marxism. During the 1927 cane cutting season, Jack read Marxist classics such as *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*.

Jack joined the CPA in 1931 and quickly gained the reputation of a highly effective advocate for workers (and migrant workers in particular). As a result of his efforts, the CPA grew quickly in North Queensland, gaining many new members, especially the Italian migrant cane cutters. This was in no small part due to Jack's tireless efforts to protect them from racist attacks from the AWU. Jack's organising skills helped the plight of the cane cutters and gained him wide respect amongst the sugar industry workers.

By 1933 the CPA had grown so much in Queensland that it was decided to create a ninth district. Jack was put in charge of the ninth district, which stretched from just north of Brisbane to the Torres Strait Islands. During this time, a branch office was opened in Innisfail, and despite the huge area the new district covered, Jack's reputation as an advocate for the working class grew. The Party's rapid expansion during this time included recruits from the mining, dairy, meat workers, sugar, railway and transport industries.

In 1934 Jack ran in the state election for the federal seat of Herbert (Townsville), and while only managing 8.3 per cent of the vote in the following year in the state election he managed to pull in 18 per cent of the vote. Although unsuccessful, his experience paved the way for the election of Fred Patterson to state parliament in 1944.

In 1935 a particularly bitter strike dragged on from August to October. The AWU tried to

stop the strikes, but they were side-tracked by Jack who had organised the cane cutters into a powerful force. During the strike, money was in short supply. Jack's organising skills were most valued and appreciated during this time, organising fundraisers for the striking cutters via raffles, dances, and other activities. Not only was he responsible for keeping the striking workers and their families fed but he contributed a great deal to the coffers of the CPA.

The state Labor government attempted to stop the strike by sending in the police, issuing £100 fines, evicting cutters from their barracks, and even shooting at them. However, the cutters remained staunch. With Jack Henry standing behind them every step of the way, they eventually prevailed. The burning of cane prior to cutting was mandated by the industrial court from that season on.

Jack was an early feminist and would not tolerate any interference by male members of the CPA into the various communist women's associations. He went on to a long and distinguished career with the CPA, eventually becoming a member of the Central Committee. Jack moved to Sydney, but it was his time in Tully defending migrant cane cutters that he is most fondly remembered for. His ability to motivate and have workers recognise and resist the forces of capitalism and recognise them as the oppressors of the working class was perhaps his greatest talent. ✪



GOVERNMENT CLOSURES LOOPHOLE ON E-CIGARETTES

B Curphey

Changes to the law on 1st October will make it illegal to possess or import an e-cigarette (or "vape") containing liquid nicotine without a prescription. It is currently unlawful to supply vapes containing liquid nicotine, but a loophole in the law means that it is not illegal to import or possess one. Currently, around 500,000 Australians vape, and more than double that number have tried it at least once.

From 1st October, it will also be illegal to supply any product containing liquid nicotine that is not in child-proof packaging. Under the new laws, proof of prescription must be included with all packages imported in Australia. Border Force will be authorised to destroy all products which are not accompanied by a prescription, and fines of up to \$220,000 will apply.

Once the ban comes into effect, chemists will also be authorised to supply nicotine liquid to anyone with a valid prescription. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is urging people who use liquid nicotine for therapeutic purposes to contact their doctor now to arrange a prescription before 1st October.

The science is not conclusive on whether e-cigarettes are effective at helping people to quit smoking, and some studies point to a higher risk of relapse in non-smokers who use e-cigarettes. Anecdotally, however, they are used by ex-smokers for this purpose. Furthermore, they are currently being regulated by the TGA as a smoking cessation product.

The problem is that the number of doctors who are authorised to prescribe nicotine in Australia is very low and access to healthcare is suffering due to the pandemic. Regional towns, in particular, have a chronic shortage of doctors. On top

of this, some vapers say it is "humiliating" to have to go to a doctor for nicotine products, especially when smokers can easily buy cigarettes at any convenience store, supermarket or petrol station. Similarly, alcohol is considered a dangerous drug but it is available readily without a prescription.

The rationale behind the ban is to prevent young people from vaping nicotine, which is a potential gateway to smoking cigarettes. Misleading statistics on this issue are rife, with some sources reporting epidemic proportions of vaping among young people. In reality, around 10.2 per cent of people aged 18-24 currently vape. This is only slightly higher than the percentage of people in this age group who smoke on a daily basis, around 9.2 per cent. The percentage of young people aged 14-17 who vape is much lower, at 1.8 per cent.

Once the ban comes into effect, ex-smokers will face a difficult choice: if they cannot make it to a GP who is authorised to prescribe them nicotine, they can break the law or go back to smoking. If the government is truly interested in helping people quit smoking, this is not the way to go about it. As one Sydney GP said to the ABC, "People are dying [from cigarettes] and that's a fact and right now, doctors know that vaping is safer than smoking."

The ban is based on alarmist misinformation and is not actually in the best interests of Australians. The statistics do not support the alarmist reporting of a spike in vaping among young people. Moreover, people who vape in order to give up tobacco will suffer under the ban while cigarettes remain readily available. As with all drugs, criminalisation will not stop the use of liquid nicotine and will only make recovery harder for those already addicted. ✪



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REPORT ON THE CFMEU ATTACKS

By CPA Melbourne Branch

The CPA Melbourne branch condemns in the strongest possible terms the right-wing attacks on the construction division of the CFMEU offices on Monday 20th September. The Communist Party stands in solidarity with the CFMEU and its members that have been the target of failed government industrial relations (IR) policies.

The CFMMEU is firmly against mandatory vaccination and will represent any individual worker who gets victimised or lose his/her job if they chose not to vaccinate.

Construction workers have been at risk during the pandemic and most recently have only been allowed to work at twenty-five per cent capacity. That is, until Monday 20th September when, after the attack on CFMEU offices, Premier Daniel Andrews announced that the construction industry would be closed for the next two weeks. This is particularly concerning as it will undoubtedly add fuel to the fire, causing even more construction workers to be rightfully disgruntled by the government's response to the pandemic. This valid distrust of the government may be further manipulated by right-wing rhetoric looking to tear down our unions.

The rallies and rhetoric of division must end.

The CPA Melbourne Branch is concerned about the punitive response of the Victorian State government to anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine protests.

We are also concerned about the wedging tactics which are being used to attempt to break up our most powerful union.

On the Monday, 20th September, a group of over 500 people gathered outside the offices of the CFMMEU in Melbourne to protest compulsory vaccination. The crowd was said to be both CFMEU members and construction workers. The reality is much less clear.

The flashpoint issue which these protesters had gathered about was the CFMMEU's



supposed support of mandatory vaccination. Nowhere has this been stated. The CFMMEU has been working hard to keep construction open over the course of the pandemic and has produced world-class COVID-safe site management. The protesters demanded that the industry be shut down, presumably over mandatory vaccination, which is very different to what the union has been working on since March 2020.

The narrative has been distorted by a prominent livestreamer who continually voiced a false story to the tens of thousands of viewers – that of the union and the government attacking their own members, unprovoked.

Misinformation about Secretary John Setka's remarks about the protest in an interview on 3AW spread. As this happened,

a one-hour deadline, which Setka had allegedly agreed to according to the protesters, lapsed. To chants of "Time's up! Time's up!", the union offices were pelted with bottles and cans. This was just before 4 PM. The front of the office was destroyed and barricaded from the inside. Five minutes later the riot police showed up.

The protesters are scared that the vaccines will harm them. They are using rights-based language to object to compulsory vaccination for work. They are worried about their children. They are also opportunistically pursuing the most sensational and counter-productive tactics – in fact, it is more understandable that this was an attack on the current union leadership than it was a targeted action to achieve "freedom of choice" for construction workers.

It is quite right that the membership of the CFMMEU should be represented by their leadership. This is not achieved by throwing bottles. We repeat part of the CFMMEU's media release on the issue: "These are not the actions of people who care about their workmates and the construction industry. They are the actions of extremists or people manipulated by extremists."

Protesters returned on Tuesday 21st September with numbers up to 2000 people. The protest managed to block off Melbourne's freeway traffic. Police responded with rubber bullets and tear gas. It is obvious that the events that unfolded on Monday widened the audience for Tuesday. At the time of writing, the situation is still unresolved and evolving. ✪

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MEDIOCRE MORRISON

Regardless, Prime Minister Scott Morrison is hellbent on carrying through this irresponsible deal, and has made remarks in response to criticisms that "our relationship with the United States is a forever relationship". This points to the fact that his coalition is tied to bowing down to all requests from the US, no matter how damaging for the Australian people. The reality is that the pact is a clear indication of how little sovereignty Australia has, and how tied it is with lining the pockets of US weapon manufacturers, and supporting US imperialist wars of aggression. This speaks volumes to the so-called democracy and freedom of the Australian people in interests of domestic and international concern.

LIBERAL & LABOR IN LOCKSTEP

So what do the Labor opposition leaders have to say in response to the announcement of AUKUS? Anthony Albanese has supported the ramp-up of nuclear military presence without question, with his only concern being how to manage bipartisan oversight. Even ex-Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's only concern was that the submarines would not be built fast enough, and in fact encouraged the Coalition to rapidly accelerate the

process. It is clear that leadership in the Labor Party is happier to risk working class Australians being involved in a potential war with a nuclear power rather than mildly inconveniencing their US counterparts. The Australian working class deserve a real party of the working class, and should not submit to this disappointing uniformity with the Liberal Party.

CRITICISM FROM KEATING AND ARDERN

The only previous Australian leader who made any sense in the discourse was ex-Prime Minister Paul Keating, who expressed great dissatisfaction in a letter to Morrison, "If the US military with all its might could not beat a bunch of Taliban rebels with AK47 rifles in pickup trucks, what chance would it have in a full blown war against China, not only the biggest state in the world, but the commander and occupant of the largest landmass in Asia?" In response, Morrison basically restated his position that the US-Australia relationship is "forever" and that he shares the views of ex-Prime Ministers John Curtin, Robert Menzies, and John Howard.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern warned that "New Zealand's position in relation to the prohibition of nuclear-powered vessels in our waters remains unchanged". New Zealand provides an example of how a more

responsible Western nation could behave in terms of maintaining fruitful relations with both the US and China.

GLOBAL COOPERATION A NECESSITY

Fundamentally, AUKUS is an outrageously obtuse and expensive project which is not based on any sense of rationality. At a time when the world continues to be faced with global threats, cooperation becomes ever more essential. While it seems the COVID-19 pandemic is on its way out, everyone in the world has been affected, and it has changed everyone's lives significantly. The threat of climate catastrophe continues to breed existential dread for people all over the world, and there are already a significant number of climate refugees seeking new homes. As Martinez highlighted, "climate catastrophe is a very, very serious threat and it's a global threat. If Shanghai goes down, if Guangzhou goes down, well, New York's going down as well, and Miami is going down as well." There should be no new military alliances, but cooperative alliances to tackle these very real challenges facing every person in the world. The world yearns for peace, development, cooperation and safety. All Australians who share these values must campaign to turn back the tide on what may otherwise be an inevitable path to war. ✪



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NO NUCLEAR SUBS!



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NAURU INVOKES THE LAW OF THE SEA TO BEGIN DEEP SEABED MINING BY 2022

B Curphey

At the 76th meeting of the UN General Assembly last week, a controversial move by the states of Micronesia was on the agenda. The Federated States of Micronesia, in particular Nauru, declared their intention in June this year to ‘jump start’ the process of seabed mining for cobalt, a move which could have drastic economic and ecological consequences.

The *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) governs the rights of various states to different areas of the sea. Notably, it provides that

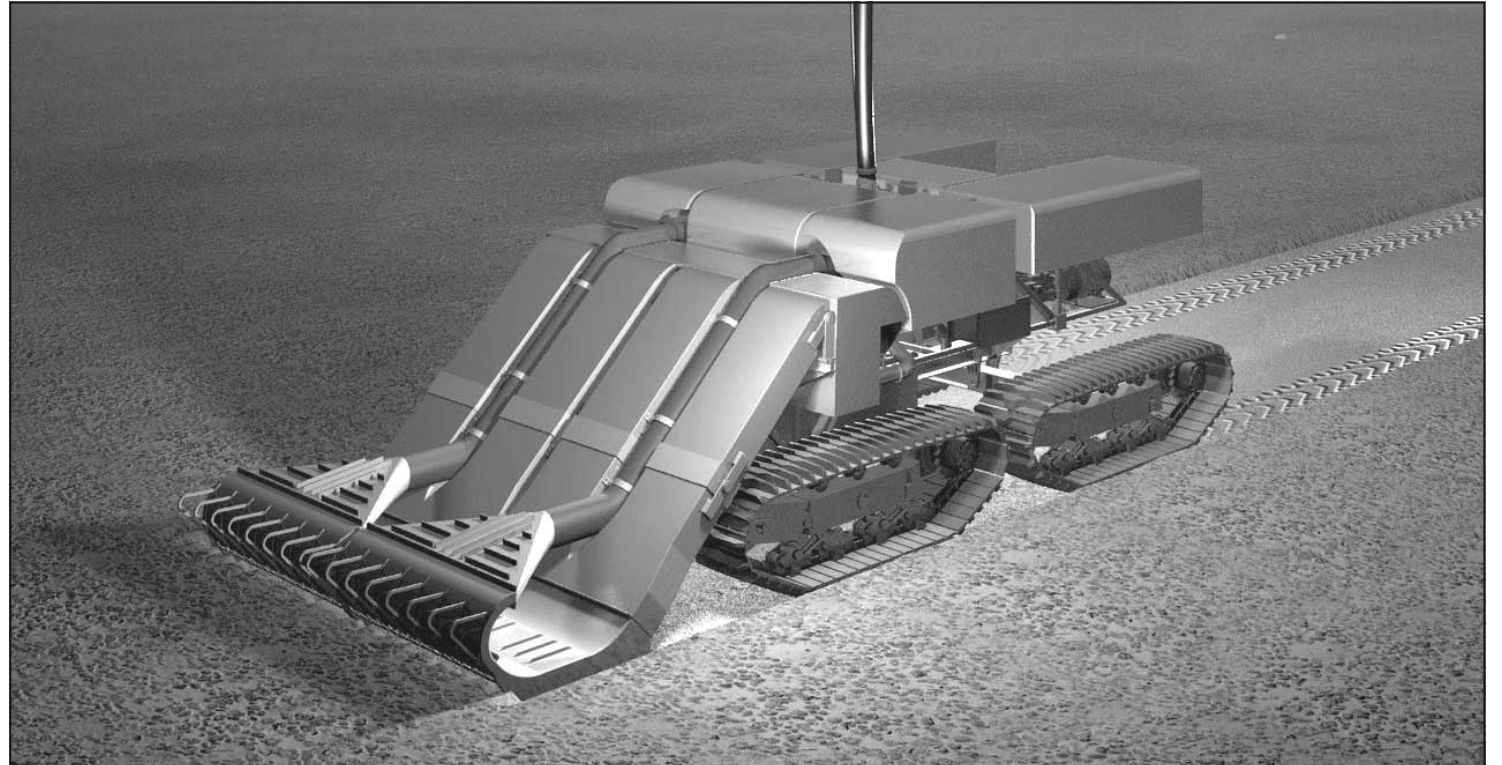
“[T]he sovereignty of a coastal State extends, beyond its land territory and internal waters and, in the case of an archipelagic State, its archipelagic waters, to an adjacent belt of sea, described as the territorial sea.”

A state’s “territorial sea” extends up to twelve nautical miles beyond its borders. This area is the sovereign territory of the relevant state, but it remains subject to the Law of the Sea.

UNCLOS also established an international body based in Jamaica called the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to “organise, regulate and control all mineral-related activities in the international seabed area beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.”

Commercial mining operations in the sea are currently prohibited under international law, pending the development of regulations by the ISA. In June 2020, a petition by leading marine scientists and policy experts urged the ISA to hold off on developing regulations around commercial seabed mining until science has a better understanding of the risks involved.

Later that month, the nation of Nauru submitted an application to the ISA indicating that it wanted to start mining the seabed for cobalt, through the mineral company DeepGreen. This triggered the “two year rule” under UNCLOS which allows states to notify the ISA of their intention to begin



deep mining in two years’ time, even if regulations around deep sea mining have not been finalised.

This is a many-sided issue with no obvious solutions forthcoming – it is a delicate balancing act between obtaining the resources for sustainable energy in an ethical way and potentially destroying the world’s ecosystem by rushing the technology.

Cobalt is essential for sustainable energy production and Micronesia is home to a lot of it; an estimated 1 billion tonnes. For context, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is currently the largest producer of cobalt, at seventy per cent of the global market share. In 2019, the DRC mined just 100,000 tonnes of cobalt. However, the cobalt trade in the Congo is plagued by abuses including child labour and government corruption, in

a country with one of the lowest HDI rankings in the world.

The cobalt rich minerals on the ocean floor in the area around Micronesia span an area roughly the size of the Amazon rainforest and offer a more ethical way to produce cobalt. But the current technology for seabed mining could stir up massive clouds of matter from the seabed floor and this could have massive flow on effects which accelerate the effects of climate change. It could kill local sea life but also interrupt the migration routes of large migratory animals like dolphins and whales. Due to the nature of sea currents, changes in one area could easily spread across the globe,

While the environmental impacts of deep seabed mining are potentially devastating and an area of legitimate concern, some have

argued that the West’s fervent opposition, disguised as environmentalism, is actually economically motivated. China and the West have invested heavily in cobalt mining in the Congo over the last decade. The seabed area surrounding Micronesia contains enough cobalt to sink this economy, shifting the economic balance of power away from the global north.

One thing is clear, the interests of global capital are deeply entrenched in the proposed deep sea mining operations. The seabed is part of the common heritage of humankind; we cannot let it be destroyed for the sake of mineral companies exploiting the economic vulnerability of the global south. If that means waiting until the science – and the technology – are in, then so be it. ✪

PARTY CHIEF’S ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS TRUE PERCEPTION ON SOCIALISM BUILDING IN VIETNAM

Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong’s article not only shows the theoretical thinking and practical summary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV)’s leaders on the path to socialism in Vietnam, but also shares a message about the true perception of the Vietnamese communists towards the theoretical and practical issues of socialism, said Professor, Dr Zhao Zi Sheng from the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China.

The Chinese scholar underscored that Party General Secretary Trong’s article comes from the reality of building socialism in Vietnam, from the perspective of the basic principles of socialism and the reality of building socialism.

The Party chief’s article “Several theoretical and practical issues on socialism and the pathway towards socialism in Vietnam” has systematically and comprehensively presented profound thoughts and experiences, combined with the practice of building socialism in Vietnam.

Vietnam’s path to socialism is a combination of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism with the revolutionary cause of Vietnam, an inevitable result of the revolutionary cause under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh.

Since its establishment, the CPV has identified socialism as the Party’s goal and revolutionary ideal, and that following the socialist path is the objective requirement and inevitable roadmap of the Vietnamese revolutionary cause.

When socialism in the world fell into decline, the CPV always persisted in following the socialist

path, and building a socialist state on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought.

In the process of leading the Doi Moi (Renewal) process and socialism construction, the CPV has led the people to build a truly society for the people; a society where economic development goes hand in hand with progress and social justice; a society of compassion, solidarity, and mutual assistance, towards progressive and humane values; with a living environment for sustainable development, in harmony with nature; and a political system where real power belongs to the people, by the people, serving the interests of the people.

Thirty-five years of implementation of Doi Moi has achieved unprecedented great achievements, bringing enormous and obvious changes to the development of Vietnam. From a poor and war-torn country, three-quarters of the

population lived below the poverty line before Doi Moi, after thirty-five years of high-speed development, Vietnam has escaped from the group of low-income countries to become one of the sixteen most successful emerging economies in the world.

In 2019, Vietnam’s human development index (HDI) reached 0.704, belonging to the group of highly qualified countries in the world, especially compared to other countries with the same development level.

In the context the COVID-19 epidemic has been raging in the world since 2020 and the global economic recession, Vietnam’s economy still maintains positive growth, becoming one of the countries with the best development momentum in the world, Professor, Dr. Zhao Zi Sheng said.

The achievements obtained in the renewal process under the

leadership of the CPV have been recognised and appreciated by the Vietnamese people and the international community, he noted.

Professor, Dr. Zhao Zi Sheng emphasised that the Communist Party of China and the Communist Party of Vietnam have persistently used the new developments in the construction of socialism in their respective countries to create new opportunities to promote the building of a community with a common destiny for mankind, and work together to contribute to maintaining peace and development in the region and the world at large, actively striving for the advancement of human society.

Nhân Dân ✪

SUDAN: REVOLUTION, IMPERIALISM AND SOLIDARITY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Part one was in *Guardian – The Workers' Weekly* #1978

People's Voice interviewed Elfadil Elhashmi, an activist in the Sudanese Communist Party, to discuss the ongoing struggle for democracy, secularism and progress in that country. The following is the second of that two-part interview, focusing on the role of imperialism and international solidarity.

People's Voice (PV): In the recent past, different parts of the African continent have been targeted by US and French imperialism especially. What role do imperialist forces play in the current situation in Sudan?

Elfadil Elhashmi (EE): Imperialism has been affecting the current Sudan crisis in regard to both resource utilisation and exploitation as well as its identity as a diverse and multicultural and multi-religious nation-state.

Historically speaking, the Turko-Egyptian colonial rule of Sudan heavily exploited its people (through the slave trade) and gold. It also heavily taxed the Sudanese people, leading to a merciless primitive accumulation as thousands of Sudanese left their farms and pastoral lives and became workers in the Turkish ammunitions and soap factories. Semi-feudalism and slavery coexisted with an emerging dependent capitalist mode of production. The mode of slavery included exporting slaves who were used as currency for exchange of products and working slaves in the gold mines, farms, as soldiers in the Sultanate's army or as domestic servants.

The British-Egyptian colonial rule until 1956 heavily exploited and exported cotton and ivory raw materials to England. A huge economic surplus was transferred to England through foreign banks and foreign companies. For example, in the period 1947-1952, nine million sterling pounds were exported to England.

These imperialist systems devastated, underdeveloped and deprived the Sudanese socioeconomic system and created unequal development between the local centre and the periphery.

Second, the pretexts used by the imperialists (US, European Union, etc.) include spreading democracy, fighting terrorism and advocating international free trade wrapped up with the commercial illusion of the American dream. The markets of the drug trade, human trafficking and body organs were hidden from the commercial package. Meanwhile, the industrial-military complex of imperialism flourishes from the spread of wars and sales of weapons – as do the American companies that accompany the armies. The resulting dependency on imperialism is unequal development in dependent countries and plundering of resources using the following tools of domination: the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization; the US Agency for International Development (USAID); the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) whose mission is to respond to crises in order to advance US national interests in Africa and to promote regional security, stability and prosperity; and the African Union.

US imperialism never attempted to help



in handing Omar al-Bashir over to the International Criminal Court. Instead, it uses this reality as a maneuvering and leverage tactic to get as much as it can from Sudan including its participation in the Saudi-Yemeni war by sending mercenary militia to fight Iran on behalf of US imperialism. In this context, the US economic sanctions and the promise for their removal are designed to slowly but surely force Sudan to accept the devastating economic, financial and debt service prescriptions of the IMF including the privatisation of health and education and austerity measures of removing subsidies from basic commodities and lifesaving medicine.

PV: Can you give us some examples of the history of the inequities and injustices in the US relationship with Sudan?

EE: In 1988, the US imposed its first sanctions on Sudan due to the accumulation of debt arrears and lack of debt service. As we speak, the IMF and other imperialist institutions are giving Sudan a hard time by not bestowing debt relief to keep it on [a] short leash. This way they will shorten the life of democracy and encourage generals to rule again.

Altogether, over the period 1956-1979, the US offered aid of only \$138 million dollars to Sudan, but it provided \$271 billion during 1980-1985 under the dictatorship of Jaafar Nimeiry. Most of this was humanitarian aid rather than economic development.

The imperialist economic sanctions imposed on the previous dictatorial regime of Bashir negatively affected the transportation sector (airlines and railways) which heavily depended on American spare parts. They also negatively affected health, education, agriculture, industry and the technology sectors as well as the banking and financial transfers. All of this heavily affected the living standards of the people.

US imperialism never supported the democracy fighters in Sudan. All the sanctions that were imposed like putting Sudan among states that deal with human trafficking (2003), issuing the Sudan Peace Law (2004) and the Darfur Peace Law (2006) never

directly benefited the peace and democracy movement in Sudan. When the US heavily joined the Sudan peace talks, it stood against the unity of Sudan and supported the separation of South Sudan in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

US imperialism has never pursued a mutually beneficial relationship with Sudan and has been persistently designing it to be a dependent and a follower. Even when Obama issued a decree to abolish sanctions on the military regime of Omar al-Bashir in January 2017, he stipulated that Sudan has to commit to stopping illegal outmigration and support the Saudi war against Yemen.

PV: How has the conflict in the Tigray region in Ethiopia affected the people's movement in Sudan?

EE: The conflict in the neighbouring Tigray region along with other conflicts along the Eastern border with Ethiopia and Eritrea do affect the revolution and democratic change because more than 60 thousand people fled to Sudan in this Tigray war and there are fights and disputes along the Ethiopian-Sudanese border.

The Tigray front has strong ties to Sudan's previous military regime of Sudan, and they hope to use them to destabilise political change in Sudan by involving the current ruling military generals in the transitional government. Egypt is also working closely with the Tigray front and maybe with Sudan to destabilise the Ethiopian regime so that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) does not get completed. Violence and ethnic tensions are flaring up on the Sudan-Ethiopia border where troops have clashed in the disputed territory of Elfashaga.

The United Arab Emirates has an economic agenda in the region – especially buying ports as part of the ongoing port wars along the Red Sea and the Pacific Ocean and has supported Ethiopia militarily in the fight against Tigray. There is news that the UAE is putting forward an initiative whereby the agricultural territory will be divided forty per cent for Sudan, forty per cent for the Emirates and twenty per cent for the Ethiopian

farmers. A military and security land grab is underway whereby a huge area will make up an agricultural colony to be contracted for ninety years and completely run by the UAE and Israel. Details are yet to be confirmed.

Anti-revolutionary forces in the east of Sudan have been trying for a while to disable the revolutionary political change. In this sense, the spillover from the Tigray war may negatively affect the revolutionary change in Sudan.

PV: What is the role of international solidarity in supporting the struggle of the Sudanese people?

EE: Given the status of the temporary unjust imperial global distribution of power and wealth, Sudan has been subjected to decades of mineral exploitation and smuggling of oil and gold that rarely show up in the government budget. Land grabbing of fertile agricultural plots and areas rich in minerals for ninety years has been contracted under the defunct military fascist regime. The current transitional government does not seem to bother renegotiating such contracts. Big multinationals from Russia, China, Canada and Europe are involved in gold mining.

At the local and regional levels, the Sudanese military, the militia and parasitic Sudanese merchant capitalists developed an alliance with the Arab monarchies in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. They have already sealed land contracted for years in huge agro-business projects in crops, oil seeds, animal stock and meat. The Janjaweed militia alone has forcefully occupied the big gold mine district of Jebel Aamir for years now and huge gold wealth up to fifty-three per cent of total exports has been subjected to smuggling.

The grassroots Sudanese struggle is counting on international solidarity to stop this kleptocracy and plundering of resources by all imperialists including the international institutions of impoverishment: the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and big business in the West as well as Russia and China.

People's Voice 🗳️

US imperialism has never pursued a mutually beneficial relationship with Sudan and has been persistently designing it to be a dependent and a follower.

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE US BLOCKADE ON CUBA – INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Eileen Whitehead

From its inception in 1962, the embargo against Cuba has remained the most comprehensive US economic sanctions regime against any country in the world.

The impact of US sanctions has varied, depending on the current US President's aims: at times inflicting serious harm on the Cuban economy and at other times merely making life on the island extremely difficult. However, the embargo has never been effective in achieving its principal purpose: forcing Cuba's revolutionary regime out of power and returning it to being America's playground!

Sanctions are a form of war. They are directed against the people from countries that will not follow the dictates of the US. The goal is to make the lives of the people in these countries intolerable so they will oppose their governments and support the US regime-change agendas in their countries. In their most severe form, as is being imposed on Cuba, Venezuela, and other countries, they deny these countries food, medicine, and trade and cause great suffering for the people of those sanctioned countries.

The US has been underpinning its sanctions by financing Cuban counter-revolutionary organisations and with subtle propaganda via social media, which led to the recent synchronised uprisings around the country. Despite the hardships they face, the supporters of the revolution quickly took to the streets in defence of their way of life.

It is obvious that the US hierarchy are petrified having on its doorstep what can be seen as a completely different and successful way of life that reveals the shortcomings of its own capitalist ideology. What's more important to the US is preventing socialism from spreading further to Latin America as a whole! However, it might have back-fired, with China now stepping up to help the ravaged country: the US's usual stringent trade sanctions being of no particular concern to China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has said he's willing "to walk together with Cuba in building socialism," which should send a chill down Biden's spine. The increasing aggression of US imperialism, with its blockade of Cuba and its new cold war against China have made these ties increasingly significant and even indispensable. The murderous US sanctions have made it very difficult for Cuba to cope with the spread of the pandemic: it has its own vaccine, but not enough syringes, ventilators, oxygen, etc. So China's help is invaluable. Without it, there would be a rampant spread of the virus, encouraging discontent and a regime change that could



ACFS Perth rallied against the blockade, Monday 20th September 2021.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has said he's willing "to walk together with Cuba in building socialism," which should send a chill down Biden's spine.

result in Cuba being enslaved once more under the heel of American imperialism.

Pan Deng, who is the executive director of the Latin America and Caribbean Region Law Centre of the China University of Political Science and Law told the *Global Times*, that although Cuba has strong research and development capabilities, its own vaccines faced challenges in manufacturing amid US sanctions and the pandemic. *The Havana Times* reported that Cuba has now started to administer China's Sinopharm vaccines along with its home-grown doses to accelerate the inoculation pace.

This is an example of socialist internationalism. Cuba and Venezuela are no longer alone in building socialism. Washington has every reason to fear the powerful economic development of the Chinese economy, especially when China's relationship with Cuba will encourage socialism over a prolonged period, in Latin America and beyond.

It also demonstrates the great divide between capitalist imperialism and communism, with the former denying access to vaccines and other equipment to poorer countries of the world in order to keep prices up and profits soaring, whereas China, with its own (very large) pharma companies, is donating equipment to Cuba and many others, and supplying it cheaply to many more. China has pledged to provide two billion doses to the rest of the world by the end of 2021. COVAX has received a US\$100 million donation from China, whereas combined imperialist countries have pledged just US\$224 million so far.

Having personally visited Cuba in 2015/16 a couple of months before we saw Donald Trump elected President of the United States, the people I met were happy with a political system that gave them a say in the running of the country. They were able to send chosen representatives from their regions, who in

turn could take their local problems to the National Congress. But, of course, most of the problems were being caused by the US sanctions. The unemployment rate was extremely low and anyone not employed was helped by the state: not regarded as bludgers.

This contentment with their situation was plain to see as thousands of Cubans turned out against the counter-revolutionaries. Cubans do not want to go back to being a mafia-led US playground, and are supported by countries all around the world. In Australia, we have the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society which is just one of many globally. And the CPA continues its support.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, Cuba is missing the revenue that tourism brings, which together with the US draconian blockade, makes the hardship of the Cuban people much worse than usual.

Viva Cuba! 🌟

CUBA THANKS MEXICO'S SOLIDARITY AMID US BLOCKADE STRENGTHENING

During the recent celebrations of the Mexican independence on Thursday, Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel thanked President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) for calling on the US to lift its economic blockade against Cuba.

"President AMLO, we will always remember your solidarity amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and the strengthening of the blockade. Among all the brother countries that our America gave

us, Mexico is one of the dearest ones to Cuba," Diaz-Canel stated.

The Donald Trump administration implemented over 240 economic sanctions against Cuba, including the suspension of non-family remittances, a ban on the import of products from any country containing over ten per cent of US components, and the criminalisation of ships and insurance companies linked to the transportation of fuels to this Caribbean nation.

These measures caused economic losses valued at US\$20 billion to Cuba, causing an impact on the welfare of the population, who has also suffered the consequences of the economic recession prompted by the pandemic.

To counteract the effects of the blockade, Mexico sent 100,000 barrels of diesel, oxygen tanks, buckets, syringes, and food to supply Cuban hospitals.

"The Cuban people only want

to live in peace, and we accompany them in this battle," Miguel Diaz Reynoso, the Mexican ambassador to Cuba, stated and recalled with gratitude the help given by hundreds of Cuban doctors in the most critical stage of the pandemic.

During his speech to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in July, AMLO proposed to declare Cuba a "world heritage" for resisting against the United

States, an issue on which he insisted on Thursday.

"One country may or may not agree with the Cuban Revolution or its government, but having resisted 62 years without submission is an undeniable historical feat," AMLO said and urged the US to separate politics from humanitarian issues.

teleSUR 🌟

VIOLENT RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS ATTACK COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICES IN INDIA

Vijay Prashad

On 8th September, members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India's right-wing ruling political party, attacked three buildings in the Melarmath area of Agartala (Tripura). These attacks targeted the offices of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the communist newspaper *Daily Deshar Katha*, and two private media houses *Pratibadi Kalam* and *PN-24*. The violence took place in broad daylight as the police stood by and watched. Across Tripura, fifty-four other offices of the communists were also attacked.

The Communist Party – CPI(M) – and the media houses had been critical of the BJP-led state government. The CPI(M) and other organisations recently took to the streets to protest a range of policies; these protests have drawn considerable support from the population. The CPI(M) was a key constituent of the Left Front, which governed the state from 1978 to 1988 and from 1993 to 2018.

Just a few days before the attacks, former Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, who is a leader of the CPI(M), was to speak to his constituency in Dhanpur (Sepahijala). BJP workers tried to prevent Sarkar's car from entering Dhanpur. Sarkar, with CPI(M) cadre alongside, walked six kilometers through two BJP barricades. Sarkar's public meeting was part of the wider communist campaign against the BJP.

Since 2018, attacks on the CPI(M) have become routine. The communists in Tripura report that, between March 2018 and September 2020, 139 party offices have been set ablaze, 346 party offices have been vandalised, 200 offices of mass organisations have been vandalised, 190 homes of CPI(M) cadre have been destroyed, 2,871 homes of party workers have been attacked, 2,656 party workers have been physically assaulted, and 18 CPI(M) leaders and cadre have been killed.

Sensitive people and organisations from around the world, including the International Peoples Assembly, condemned the attacks on India's Left.

RIGHT-WING POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAS BECOME ROUTINE WORLDWIDE

What occurred in Tripura, a state in India's northeast of nearly 3.6 million people, has become a normal facet of democracy in our times. Political violence by the right-wing against those who seek to amplify the voices of the people is now routine.

Just a few weeks before this attack in



Tripura, a terrible act of violence silenced a trade union leader in South Africa. As he stood at the doorstep of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration in Rustenburg, South Africa, on the 19th of August, Malibongwe Mdazo was shot to death. Mdazo, a leader of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), had led a 7,000-worker strike against Impala Platinum Holdings, the world's second-largest platinum producer, just a month before.

The political assassination of Mdazo came nine years after the terrible massacre in Marikana of 34 miners from the platinum mines operated by Lonmin, a British mining company. The platinum belt in South Africa has bristled with tension not only because of the killing of Mdazo and the Marikana massacre but also because of the normal way in which the mining firms' associates – including rival unions – settle industrial disputes through such grim violence.

These trade union activists, political leaders, and community organisers are people who have the urge to lift up the confidence of the people. When these leaders are assassinated or when buildings are burned, a light begins to flicker. Those who carry out the violence expect that the flame of resistance will die down and that the people will be cowed into submission, no longer confident in their ability to change the world. But this is only one outcome of such political violence. The other outcome is just as likely,

which is that these deaths and this violence inspire courage.

When the BJP workers attacked the CPI(M) office, they tried to break the statue of Dasher Deb (1916-1998), who led the liberation struggle in Tripura against its last king. Deb was born in a poor peasant family that had its roots deep in the indigenous culture of Tripura. He was a venerated communist leader who fought to democratise all aspects of life in Tripura as chief minister from 1993 to 1998.

It was thanks to the struggles led by Deb and then by the Left Front government led by Manik Sarkar that the state saw its human development advance remarkably. When the communists left office in 2018, the state's literacy rate stood at ninety-seven per cent, helped along by the provision of universal free education (including free school books) and by a massive electrification campaign (ninety-per cent of homes in the state have electricity).

When the BJP came to power in the state, its workers broke several statues of Deb, attacking the signposts of institutions that bore his name. That Deb was a tribal leader exhibits the animus of the BJP members who not only want to attack the Left but also want to send a strong message to tribal groups and oppressed castes that they must hunch their shoulders in the presence of the historically powerful communities.

This is not just political violence, but it is

rooted in social violence, a violence against those – such as the Garifuna leaders in Honduras and the Afro-descendant leaders in Colombia – who dare to lift their chins up and build the world in their image.

A new report from Global Witness, *Last Line of Defence*, shows that a large number of Indigenous activists were killed in 2020 (227, or more than four a week); half of them were in just three countries (Colombia, Mexico, and the Philippines), and all of them fought to defend the dignity of humans and the integrity of nature.

One of Tripura's great poets and communist leaders, Anil Sarkar, spent much of his literary and political career uplifting the voices and the destinies of the oppressed castes (Dalits) in the state. Sarkar's powerful poetry suggested that the old social forces would no longer be able to dominate society as they once had. Not only did they have the example of the great leader Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, but they had the legacy of Karl Marx and the Left.

"The sound of his approaching step wakes me," Sarkar wrote of his discovery of Marx in *Marxer Prati*, "and I see my land's deprivation." In another of his poems, Sarkar sang to Heera Singh Harijan, a Dalit, that power would not be given to him; "you, after growing up, should take it by force."

People's World

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HOUSING FOR WHOM, AND FOR WHAT?

Eugene McCartan & Aaron Nolan

Ireland: At the beginning of September the coalition government published its long-awaited final, final, final housing strategy, "Housing for All," to solve the deepening housing crisis.

Thousands are on local authority housing lists, and tens of thousands are trapped in rising rents which are completely unsustainable from the renter's point of view, though not from the position of landlords, both domestic and international corporate investors.

There is no commitment or strategy to enforce rent reductions or controls. Priority will continue to be given to the private provision of shelter for working people. It is the government's responsibility to provide the best conditions for making profits (accumulation of capital); it is the Government's responsibility to produce the best regulatory conditions for the process of harvesting the maximum by those who invest in order to accumulate more.

Speculation in property is now a major source of profits globally for finance capital. The push to accumulate more and more profits is driving the housing crisis not only in Ireland but throughout Europe and in the United States.

The "Housing for All" strategy paper clearly emphasises the protection of private and corporate investors, to make sure there is no disruption in that sector, to incentivise the private speculative investors to provide shelter for rent.

This policy is for sustaining private and corporate investment. This, in turn, can only be done by ensuring that rents grow, that investors are guaranteed a return (profit) year after year, to make sure it's attractive to invest in the Irish "housing market."

Over the last three years the number of tenancies in the twenty-six Counties has dropped, from 313,000 to 298,000,

resulting from the supply of new properties not matching rental properties withdrawn from the "market."

"Housing for All" has laid out a strategy for an annual increase of 6,500 "new private rental homes" up to 2030. Even the suggested 2,000 per year up to 2030 at cost-rental rents will not increase supply: they are only working to reduce the HAP (Housing Assistance Payment)-subsidised private tenancies and so appear to be "doing something."

Cost-rental will not reduce rents, nor is it designed to. Cost-rental will not be in competition with nor challenge the private rental market. It will not affect private rents, and will not be allowed to affect either private or institutional investors.

International research shows that profits for investors in the Irish housing "market" (rents as a percentage of the purchase price) are nearly twice as high by international comparison. Evidence shows Ireland to have the highest rental profits in the EU, based on apartment size (120 sq. metres). Ireland has the eighth-highest rental profits in the world, with an average rental return of 6.6 per cent.

Throughout the EU a similar trend is growing in relation to the private rental sector. The EU Commission has developed a strategy of opening up housing to greater speculation. Ideologically they are opposed to rent controls, as they see it as interference in the "market."

The institutional investors and larger private landlords are the benchmark and provide the "muscle" for small local landlords, who benefit from this strategy. It is they who set the rental benchmark. Current rent restriction do not apply to new lettings. The institutional investor – the vulture and cuckoo funds – are the rental benchmark as (a) they have the capital to invest and to secure properties to rent at any price and (b) this provides a shield for small parasitic local landlords to secure higher rents.



The vulture and cuckoo funds have the capacity to secure high rents and to sustain them against any possible downward pressure. This allows smaller landlords a shield to keep rents only going upwards. They allow the institutional investors to do the heavy lifting.

It's clear that this government will not do anything to upset the institutional investors, because they have based their whole housing strategy on encouraging even more private investors to build and provide people's shelter for rent. This means that rents can only go one way, and that is up. It is built in to the government strategy.

The solution lies in a full-scale public house building programme. Only public housing at affordable rents, based on people's ability to pay, can challenge the private and corporate landlord class.

Universally available public housing will bring about reduced rents all round, reduce property prices, and force private and corporate investors out, with a significant number of their properties becoming vacant.

Universal public housing at rents commensurate with people's ability to pay is the one way to break the landlords' grip, to end the power and control of speculators and private corporate builders.

In a society organised and structured around the creation of ever-increasing profits out of people's basic needs, housing is merely the latest vehicle for capital accumulation.

The last word to James Connolly: "Yes, friends, governments in capitalist society are but committees of the rich to manage the affairs of the capitalist class."

Socialist Voice ✪

US MILITARY ADMITS DRONE STRIKE IN KABUL KILLED 10 CIVILIANS

The US military admitted on Friday that a US drone strike in late August in Kabul of Afghanistan killed as many as ten civilians, including seven children.

"Having thoroughly reviewed the findings of the investigation and the supporting analysis by interagency partners, I am now convinced that as many as ten civilians, including up to seven children, were tragically killed in that strike," Kenneth McKenzie, commander of US Central Command, told reporters during a Pentagon press briefing.

"We now assess that it is unlikely that the vehicle and those who died were associated with ISIS-K, or were a direct threat to US forces," he added.

The general admitted the deadly strike was "a tragic mistake." "As the combatant commander, I am fully responsible for this strike and this tragic outcome."

The US Central Command said on the 29th of August that it launched a drone strike on a vehicle in Kabul, which it claimed had eliminated an "imminent" threat, posed by ISIS-K, an Afghanistan-based offshoot of the Islamic State, to the Hamid Karzai International Airport, where evacuations of US service members and personnel were underway.

Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, had called it a "righteous strike" with procedures correctly followed.

Media reports later emerged that the US military might have hit a wrong target in the strike with civilian casualties.

Separate investigations by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* identified the vehicle driver as Zemarai Ahmadi, a 43-year-old electrical engineer working for Nutrition and Education International, a US aid group based in Pasadena, California.

"We now know that there was no connection between Mr Ahmadi and ISIS-Khorasan," Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in a statement on Friday. "His activities on that day were completely harmless and not at all related to the imminent threat we believed we faced, and that Mr Ahmadi was

just as innocent a victim as were the others tragically killed."

"We apologise, and we will endeavour to learn from this horrible mistake," he added.

The Pentagon chief also noted he had asked a further review of the investigation just completed by US Central Command to determine whether "accountability measures" need to be taken and strike authorities and procedures to be changed in the future.

The Central Command announced on 30th August that it had completed the pullout of US troops from Afghanistan, ending 20 years of US military presence in the country, after botched evacuations that drew fierce criticism from both home and abroad.

The United States announced its "War on Terror" and invaded Afghanistan in 2001, soon after al-Qaida terrorists hijacked passenger planes and carried out suicide attacks against the United States, killing almost 3,000 people on its soil.

Over the years, Washington has expanded warfare into several other countries, relying heavily on drone strikes for targeted killings. US drone attacks and airstrikes have killed at least 22,000 civilians over the past two decades, according to watchdog Airwars.

Global Times ✪



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