



# NO NUCLEAR AUSTRALIA: TIME FOR ACTION!



**The sudden announcement of the AUKUS (Australia-UK-US) military agreement which will bring nuclear-powered submarines to Australia has provoked worldwide and growing opposition.**

New coalitions are forming in Australia and internationally to fight the agreement because of its serious cost, security, and environmental dangers.

The cancelled French conventional submarine deal has already cost \$2 billion. It was slated to cost about \$90 billion to build and \$145 billion to maintain over their life cycle. What compensation the French will demand is not clear.

Nuclear powered submarines will be even more expensive while the government has given no figure to their cost. However, what is clear is that the US and the UK firms will make considerable profits from this deal.

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 important health budget will suffer. Workers' wages, especially those in public service like nurses and teachers, will remain at an all-time low.

### CREATING JOBS

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 military spending is to take resources out of creating products that expand economic activity and to sink them instead into the creation of tools that destroy.

The transfer of highly enriched uranium and related technologies to Australia may well violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and encourages nuclear weapons proliferation. It provides Australia with resources needed to become a nuclear power.

### ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

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. There are already nine nuclear reactors on the seafloor from sunken nuclear submarines.

It is highly dangerous to build nuclear submarines in a city of 1.3 million people. Green Party leader Adam Bandt has called it putting "floating Chernobyls in the heart of Australia's cities."

### TROJAN HORSE

AUKUS may be a trojan horse for a nuclear power industry and even the adoption of nuclear weapons by Australia.

American war games suggest it cannot win a battle with China in the South or East China Sea. Yet, we have signed up for that possibility.

The US and UK are two Anglo countries that can retreat from Asia if their strategy fails. Australia can't.

### LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY

AUKUS places Australia on the front line of any future war with China. It drags us into a conflict that will not serve our interests. And it says very clearly, between now and then: we have chosen America.

How can Australia assert an independent and peaceful foreign policy with a military that is so integrated into the US? The AUKUS deal brings a further dramatic loss of Australian sovereignty and freedom of choice.

### REGIONAL TENSIONS

In 1985 Australia signed the Treaty of Rarotonga, the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty. This is trashed by the AUKUS agreement.

The creation of this new military pact threatens security in the region and makes us complicit in dangerous regional tensions and conflict.

Indonesia and Malaysia have expressed strong opposition while significant political and military figures in India, South Korea, and Japan are asking why they have been denied these capabilities.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There is a great deal that Party members

and supporters can do now and into the future – for this will be a tough and long campaign.

Here are some suggestions and you may well have more good ideas of your own:

- Sign the petition (it reached 14,000 signatures in a week) (see page 2 for details – get others to sign!)
- Write a letter to politicians and newspapers, using the information above and in other *Guardian* articles. Keep on writing them.
- Raise it in your union and get a resolution to go to the government and the ACTU.
- If you are not in lockdown organise and join protests!
- Work to develop specific actions to involve environmental groups in the campaign. It may help that Friends of the Earth (FoE) have issued a good statement and have a petition.
- Share your views on social media; use one of the hashtags #HealthcareNotWarfare #MilitarySpendingCostsTheEarth #WelfareNotWarfare #FundPeaceNotWar.
- Organise monthly pickets (1-2 hours) at a suitable location; send out media releases about the pickets; maybe feature quotes from different speakers you have invited. 📢

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# Guardian

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## FRYDENBERG OFFERS NET-ZERO BUT WE DEMAND MORE

Last month, cracks began to appear in the Coalition government’s policy on climate change. Speaking to leaders in the financial sector, federal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg stated that by failing to commit to a net-zero strategy, we run the risk of not being “in line with the rest of the world.” But, in what is perhaps the strongest language yet, Frydenberg stated that “[c]limate change and its impacts are not going away. To go the next step and achieve net-zero will require more investment across the economy.”

And yet, while Frydenberg’s words are encouraging, the Morrison government cannot seem to develop a coherent strategy as it attempts to navigate parliament. Nationals leader and deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce is at the forefront of the climate denial faction, and he has not been quiet about it. Joyce has made it known by openly throwing caution into the wind, stating that we need to focus on helping people “keep their job and their standard of living” – a vague liberal platitude about jobs.

However, Joyce isn’t the only one. When Senator Matt Canavan was asked about the targets he stated that was “ridiculous and I’m not going to take lectures from other countries that have not met their targets. [...] I don’t think they’ve got any moral high ground to make those arguments.” Furthermore, Canavan has been open about his fight with his colleagues stating that “I am dead-set against net zero emissions – just look at the disaster the United Kingdom is living through. I haven’t even begun to fight.”

Thus, with these tensions opened up like a sore wound, we must ask: can we rely on the Morrison government to get us to net-zero? It would seem with all the pandering and tip-toeing around that the government may get to it...eventually. And then what? Do we argue about for the next incremental change for months, if not years, on end?

The Morrison government doesn’t have a substantive path for a renewables future. All Frydenberg can talk about is the “the entrepreneurial spirit of Australian businesses” and the “new or expanded markets will present new opportunities for Australia” – as if saving our environment was about maximising profits, not saving the planet. This kind of thinking is not innovative and places our planet in the hands of those who are wholly unqualified.

The problem for Frydenberg and co. is that to fundamentally change the system means to fundamentally change who they represent – big business. This is not some secret either, Frydenberg talks openly about his relationship with the mining industry stating “it is wrong to assume that traditional sectors, like resources and agriculture, will face decline over the course of the transition. To the contrary, many businesses in these sectors are at the cutting edge of innovation and technological change.” This is, in fact, not true. In order to change the planet we must change the world. To do this, we must overhaul the means of production, redistribute global wealth, and organise our society in an efficient, planned economy. We can win this fight but we must do it together.

# PETITION: NO NUCLEAR SUBMARINES; END US DOMINANCE; HEALTHCARE, NOT WARFARE

The behind closed door commitment of Australia to a trilateral security agreement with the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) and a submarine fleet shows a complete disregard for the democratic process and undermines sovereignty.

It is shocking that the decision to build nuclear-powered submarines and expand US troops, planes, warships, bombers and armoury stationed on Australian territory was made in secret without any public consultation or parliamentary debate.

A nuclear-powered submarine fleet will represent a fundamental threat to the environment and global peace. These submarines will put nuclear reactors in the ports of Australia, encourage the proliferation of nuclear weapons and are potential sites for nuclear accidents.

The submarines will also impose an extraordinary economic burden on the Australian people. Funding for healthcare, welfare, education and the environment will be raided. These resources should be directed to the social and

economic needs of workers and the Australian people, and the rebuilding of local sustainable manufacturing industries.

The AUKUS defence pact tied to these submarines is a threat to global peace and will undermine Australia’s sovereignty. Australia cannot exercise an independent foreign policy if our military is reliant on the US for technology and support.

AUKUS is a step backwards for diplomacy and international relations. It represents a Cold War mentality that brings with it the same repression, conflict and potentially war.

The Australian government must withdraw from AUKUS, stop the development of nuclear submarines and end integration into the US military.

For these reasons, we, the undersigned, are calling on the Australian government to fully withdraw from AUKUS and the commitment to build nuclear submarines.

Online petition  
[tinyurl.com/subs-petition](https://tinyurl.com/subs-petition)



## 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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# UNITED ACTION TO DEFEND CONDITIONS

Anna Pha

Workers in the maritime and trucking industries are taking industrial action defending their jobs, safe working conditions, and wages. They face a wall of employers attempting to incorporate in enterprise agreements the temporary workplace flexibilities introduced by the Morrison government in 2020 during the pandemic.

## TOLL FIGHT BACK

After a long campaign around a new enterprise agreement Toll workers had no option but to take national strike action. They went out on Friday the 28th of August for twenty-four hours and the possibility of further action remains.

Ninety-four per cent of Transport Workers' Union (TWU) members who voted supported strike action in a ballot for "protected action" under the Fair Work Act. Toll refuses to guarantee that future work will be allocated to full-time employees ahead of lower paid, outside labour-hire. It is also trying to impose fixed term contracts of three months to two years for all new workers. These workers would be on lower wages and inferior working conditions, without the certainty of ongoing employment.

If Toll were successful, it would result in a two-tier workforce with all new employees on lower wages and in insecure employment. Over time Toll's permanent, higher paid employees would be squeezed out in a race to the bottom.

## STARTRACK WORKERS FIGHT

Several thousand StarTrack members of the TWU – drivers, freight handlers, and fork lifters – took a national 24-hour strike action for job security on the 23rd of September. The action is part of their enterprise bargaining campaign in defence of jobs, job security, and safe working conditions.

StarTrack, a subsidiary of Australia Post, is making record profits with lockdowns in Victoria and NSW creating a large increase in demand.

"For months now, the workers sweating it out in trucks and distribution centres to meet extreme demand have been battling behind the scenes to protect their jobs against an insurgence of outsourcing to lower-paid workers," said Michael Kaine, National Secretary of the Transport Workers' Union. The backlog is so great, that drivers are now delivering on Saturdays and Sundays.

Kaine pointed out that StarTrack workers want the same pay and conditions for labour-hire as employees, caps on the use of outside hire, and commitments to allocate work to employees before contracting out. The TWU said that outsourcing is as high as 70 per cent at some StarTrack yards.

## FEDEX WORKERS STRIKE

FedEx workers took twenty-four-hour strike action last Thursday, 30th September. Ninety-seven per cent of TWU members who voted supported the strike action.

FedEx refused to guarantee caps on outside hires or for existing employees to be guaranteed work before it is put out to contractors. It also rejected agreeing to "same job, same pay" provisions when outside labour was used.

"If FedEx had no plans to outsource work, they would have given a commitment on day one," Kaine said. Instead, FedEx workers have been battling with the company for the past six months without a satisfactory outcome.

"Workers shouldn't have been put in the position of choosing between strikes and signing a shoddy agreement which would see their jobs express shipped out to the lowest bidder."

## LINFOX & BEVCHAIN

Linfox and Bevchain are next in line for industrial action. It is a similar tail of two



large monopolies attempting to casualise and outsource jobs on lower wages and inferior conditions.

"It takes guts to stand up to your employer and strength to walk off the job, but they know they have no choice. If transport companies push ahead and flood truck yards with low paid, stressed, precarious workers, it will eradicate good, safe jobs in Australia's deadliest industry," Kaine said.

"Transport companies are under pressure from a constant squeeze on rates from the likes of Amazon and ALDI, but rather than facing off the cost cutting to ensure the work can be done safely and viably, they are passing the buck onto workers through attempts to replace decent jobs with an insecure workforce."

## "UBERISATION"

Amazon, the world's largest online retailer entered the Australian market in 2020 (see "Truckies in Fight of Their Lives" *Guardian: Workers' Weekly* #1977, 6 September 2021). It is one of the most ruthless, union-busting companies. Amazon, through its logistics company Amazon Flex, is exploiting the lack of regulation in the industry, undercutting other delivery companies using a highly exploitative methods that are aptly described as "Uberisation."

AmazonFlex employs drivers using a gig economy model, forcing them to race dangerously against the clock where employees are denied basic entitlements like permanency, sick and holiday pay, superannuation payments, etc.

California passed a bill with the aim of enabling Amazon warehouse workers to be able to take toilet and meal breaks! That speaks volumes about its methods and where the unregulated trucking industry is headed.

Uber claims its workforce are not employees but contractors – "contractors" with no job security and below award wages and conditions. This is what TWU members are facing in the future if they do not defeat the attempts by logistics companies to casualise their workforces.

The Federal government must take steps to reinstate an independent tribunal to regulate the industry and stop the deadly squeeze on transport workers. This tribunal should have the power to enforce minimum wages and conditions; ensure secure employment with the full entitlements other workers have; and police safe conditions. It is the only way to prevent a literally deadly race to the bottom.

## FLEXIBILITIES

Toll, StarTrack, etc, are pursuing work

conditions that in many respects are similar to the temporary provisions introduced in 2020 during the pandemic. These provided employers with a great deal of flexibility around hours of work, performance of duties, location of work, and gave the employer the ability to arbitrarily stand down workers.

They also provided for increased flexibility around annual leave arrangements and days and times of work. Employers are now pursuing similar provisions in enterprise agreements.

## HUTCHISON WIN

After three years of torrid negotiations, the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) reached an agreement with the world's largest stevedoring company, Hutchison, setting new industry standards at container terminals in Sydney and Brisbane. The four-year agreement includes five 2.5 per cent wage increases.

Importantly, it provides for a strengthening of job security at terminals with protection against job losses due to the implementation of automation, technology, and contractors. It also includes measures to address insecure work with the capping of the number of casual employees and by putting an emphasis on rostered permanents. The inclusion of twenty days paid domestic violence leave is a significant victory that will reduce financial hardship suffered by people dealing with the challenges of violence in the home.

"We could not have achieved this outcome without the sacrifices of MUA members who were united in exercising their lawful right to undertake industrial action in defence of a fair agreement," MUA Deputy National Secretary Warren Smith said.

"Nothing was given to us for free, and while negotiators spent countless hours working towards this outcome it was made possible by the efforts of every rank-and-file member at Hutchison," Smith said.

## PATRICK

MUA members at Patrick Stevedores in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Fremantle are set to take industrial action following more than eighteen months of negotiations over a new enterprise agreement (EA). Patrick is owned by Qube, a large transnational stevedoring monopoly.

Management is making exaggerated claims about the breakdown of talks, claiming that Christmas was at risk due to the MUA's actions.

"The truth is there is ample capacity for other stevedoring companies on the Australian waterfront to load and unload cargo and we don't accept that there is any

threat that imported goods will be in short supply due to the commencement of protected industrial action by our members," MUA Assistant National Secretary Jamie Newlyn said.

Patrick is insisting on unacceptable changes including increased casualisation that would limit future secure employment opportunities.

"Productivity is at a high and protected industrial action is a last resort to finalise an agreement that is almost 18 months past expiry," Newlyn said.

"Patrick employees are rightly frustrated at corporate tactics to deny a modest pay rise and remove previously agreed conditions on secure jobs."

Newlyn said instead of engaging in exaggerated PR "spin" Patrick should return to the bargaining table and conclude a fair and equitable agreement with its workforce.

## INDUSTRY BARGAINING

The examples of the struggles around new enterprise agreements in the trucking and maritime industries illustrate the difficulties workers and trade unions face under a decentralised system where bargaining is at the company or workplace level. It facilitates a race to the bottom for workers as their employers compete.

The likes of Toll, StarTrack, etc, with permanent employees on enterprise agreements are at a huge disadvantage when attempting to compete with Amazon Flex and its gig-economy practices. Amazon's workforce is paid below minimum award rates with no job security or other entitlements – an employer's dream and a worker's nightmare.

There is a common thread in all these struggles – the fight for jobs, job security, safe working conditions, wage rises, and retention of hard-won entitlements.

The Communist Party of Australia is calling for industry-wide agreements, where workers are not pitted against each other in a race to the bottom. Safety, job security, and caps on casuals are key rights.

The highly exploitative practice of substituting permanent workers with outside contractors must end.

Automation should not mean loss of jobs. The way forward is shorter hours on the same pay. After all, productivity has skyrocketed.

Employers are on the offensive, but workers are on the front foot fighting back. The fight for safe, secure jobs and decent wages and conditions never lets up under capitalism.

As Smith said, "nothing was given to us for free." ✪

# SA BANS SPIT HOODS

B Curphey

Content Warning: deaths in custody

**On 23rd September, the South Australian parliament voted unanimously to ban the use of spit hoods by police, corrections officers, and in mental health contexts, becoming the first jurisdiction in Australia to do so. Spit hoods are currently banned for use on children in every state, but SA is the first to ban their use on adults.**

The Bill is known as “Fella’s Bill”, following the high profile death in custody of Wiradjuri, Kokatha, and Wirangu man Wayne Fella Morrison in September 2016. Since then, Morrison’s family has led a sustained campaign to get spit hoods banned in SA and across the country. At a protest in May this year, Morrison’s mother, Caroline Andersen, said:

“I am angry at the lack of accountability from Corrections, I’m angry that they get to be paid thousands of dollars for more than 14 lawyers collectively to represent them and their interests and we only have two. I’m angry that from the beginning we have had a minimum of voice in our matter, every delay feels like a new splinter, I am tired and have waited so long. We demand answers.”

Spit hoods are designed to prevent people from spitting on or biting others and are primarily used in corrections, but are also used in mental health contexts for this purpose. They are an incredibly dangerous method of restraint, with limited effectiveness in preventing disease transmission. As such, spit hoods have been condemned as an “archaic,” “inhumane,” and “barbaric” form of punishment.

Morrison’s case is just one in a long string of deaths in custody involving spit hoods. Damning reports of their use on children as young as thirteen and the high profile case of Dylan Voller led to a nationwide ban on their use on children. This led the South Australian Ombudsman, in 2019, to release a report recommending they be banned in youth detention, stating that:

“I have no doubt that the application of a spit hood is an inherently traumatic event for the child or young person involved.”

But spit hoods are not only dangerous for young people and critics have called for them to be abolished entirely.

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a troubling rise in the use of spit hoods, ostensibly as a way to prevent corrections officers from contracting the virus. Yet, a report out of Northern Ireland suggests that they have very little effectiveness in preventing disease transmission. The report stated:

“The product will not prevent aerosols from coughing or sneezing and is therefore not an effective means to prevent COVID-19.”

Given their ineffectiveness in preventing disease transmission, the dangers of using spit hoods vastly outweigh their benefit. The CPA calls on all jurisdictions in Australia to follow South Australia in banning the use of spit hoods on adults as well as children. They are an inhumane and brutal form of punishment and are not effective against the COVID-19 pandemic.

A coronial inquest into Morrison’s death has been ongoing for the last three years. At the time of writing, final submissions were scheduled to be heard in the coming week. 🗳️



## FSU LAUNCHES HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

### Finance Sector Union Statement

**The Finance Sector Union (FSU) which represents workers in the banking, insurance, and superannuation sectors, has launched its Human Rights Network (HRN) to hold financial institutions to account on a range of important issues around the obligations corporations have to observe the rights of workers and communities they service.**

Launching the HRN last night FSU National Secretary Julia Angrisano said: “We will stand together for a finance sector that respects and promotes human rights in every interaction, at every opportunity.”

The FSU recognises the importance of working to secure and defend our rights: the right to equal pay, the right to reasonable wages, and the right to join a union and bargain collectively.

These rights are recognised and enshrined by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Financial institutions also have human-rights obligations, and we see these obligations being tested regularly with Myanmar being the latest example. Hundreds of bank workers have gone into hiding, four have been murdered by the Regime, and 600,000 workers have lost their jobs as a result of the coup.

Launching the HRN, Sharan

Burrow General Secretary of the International Trade Union Federation said human rights and labour rights are fundamental.

“It may shock you to know that 87 per cent of countries violated the right to strike, 79 per cent violated the right to bargain collectively,” Burrow said.

“This is going to be the struggle of the future, repairing the labour market, an end to corporate impunity and mandated due diligence.”

Human Rights academics Dr Kym Sheehan and Professor David Kinley have recently developed a human rights benchmark for businesses in the financial services sector to allow the FSU to evaluate

how corporations impact on human rights here in Australia or wherever they operate.

Dr Sheehan said financial services touch people’s lives and at times, create a human rights risk.

“An accountability framework but without governance won’t work. Outcomes are the litmus test. If you don’t recognise the risk, you’ll have policies that aren’t working,” she said.

Professor Kinley said financial services companies needed to understand that human rights and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) were core issue for their businesses.

“The finance sector often

focuses on environment, cutting fossil fuel investment, and governance, post Royal Commission rules and regulations, but ‘Social’ is important,” he said.

Angrisano said the FSU Human Rights Network will hold the finance sector to account for their human rights obligations and stands with all people to protect their human rights.

“We will stand together for a finance sector that respects and promotes human rights in every interaction, at every opportunity,” she said. 🗳️



### Fight for the Future

This attractive new booklet is a call to action to save our planet and humanity.

It argues that humanity is at a crossroads. The insatiable drive for profits by capitalism is leading to irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Capitalist governments – and the giant corporations they work for – are refusing to act on the warnings of the great majority of the world’s leading scientists.

A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs. The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system.

The booklet insists that we must confront the reality that what we do now will forever alter the course of humanity and all life on Earth. Now more than ever we must fight for a better system. Our lives are more important than their profits.

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### Party Badges



Port Jackson Branch has only 40 left of the original CPA badges, an elegant design adopted by the Central Committee some years ago after a Party-wide competition.

They are for sale at \$5 each plus \$2 pp.

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# A MELBOURNE PERSPECTIVE: LOCKDOWNS, “FREEDOM” RALLIES, AND MANDATORY VACCINATION



F Kermode and Z Doney

**The topics covered were discussed at a recent Melbourne CPA branch meeting. Members spoke up freely in response to the topic: *The Closure Of Melbourne CBD: A Threat or Right To Demonstrate?* Two days later the CFMEU offices were attacked.**

On vaccines, the branch spoke with one voice: we need more people to be vaccinated against COVID-19. This means we need a social response, driven by the people affected, *not imposed on them*. Members criticised the dominant liberal ideology that places responsibility for responding effectively to a whole of society crisis like the pandemic on individuals.

Additionally, Scott Morrison has been encouraging both vaccine hesitancy and, indirectly, the recent anti-vaccination protests by catering to the idea that public health has to take second place to a middle-class idea of choice, and by more or less campaigning against lockdown measures when it suited him politically. Morrison is very selective about when freedom of choice is important: we're not going to get a free choice about the US bases on our country or public funding of private schools any time soon.

Underscoring the need for real leadership in this area, it was reported that vaccinated workers are starting to get angry with unvaccinated workers, with Health and Safety reps needing to know if vaccinated workers can refuse to work with unvaccinated workers.

We should say “no” to the liberal framework of individual responsibility.

When asked if vaccination is important to the government, we should ask where the infrastructure is to support it? Where are the accessible vaccine centres and vaccination sites at work? Since the pandemic is a Workplace Health and Safety issue, a supposedly pro-worker state Labor government should be consulting with unions rather than dictating to them. Governments could be giving the community and workers some control over the vaccination process, for example, training Health and Safety reps to talk about vaccines.

In rejecting the narrative that the pandemic response is down to individuals, the pointed finger is firmly at the government – we are still wilfully relying on hotel quarantine which is not the same as having a proper quarantine system. At the Victorian government for over-policing and under-consulting with the community; for imposing mandates on groups of workers without consulting with the representatives of these workers, and; for draconian measures like closing public transport down to stifle protests without planning properly for the workers who rely on that transport to do their jobs.

None of our governments are really integrated with the people, so the only people governments can deploy are organs of the state – the police and the army. Rather than attempting to make lockdown bearable for people, the government tries to make it easier for the police to keep people in lockdown.

Members condemned both the recent protests, which are aided by and inspire far right groups, and over policing, including

excessive use of force which set a precedent for future police responses to demonstrations of all political stripes.

## THE VACCINATION DRIVE

We can see what happens to the public health response when the community is not involved: riots and attacks on workers. We stand with Health and Allied Community Services Union in their condemnation of the attacks on uniformed health workers as they commuted to work. For a protest movement allegedly comprised of unionists, this behaviour is totally unacceptable. Health workers deserve to be safe at work, as do all workers.

As for the continuing vaccination drive: mandatory COVID vaccination is beginning to be applied. The hasty and *ad hoc* way this is being done is leading to some bad analysis. Watching “the government,” unions, and the business lobby all push vaccination has some conspiratorially-minded people believing that the “one-world-government” is “behind all of this.” This position is wrong. A more correct position would be that lockdowns can't continue and commercial activity needs to increase. The bosses won't pay everyone to stay at home and the workers can't force it. The governments are pulling the purse strings closed on the welfare response. If the state opens up with low vaccination numbers, then our hospitals will collapse. Whether or not it is mandated, access to the economy will be on a vaccinated-or-not basis. This sucks, this isn't fair or just, but this is the case. It's valid and not surprising that some workers are reluctant about vaccination.

The sneering and condescending “pro-vax” sermonising coming from some sectors is not helping the current vaccine drive in our state. The tactic of shaming people into accepting vaccination is not going to work. There seems to be a desire to label anyone who is “anti-vax” as an opponent, even a fascist – leading to an environment where discussion of the vaccine drive is a no-go area of discourse. Opening up further possibilities for discussing this topic is important if we want people to abandon conspiracy theories.

With that said, we can look at the response to COVID-19 around the world to see that vaccination is effective. The delivery of a vaccine program is more important than the type of vaccine. Vietnam has just approved its seventh vaccine and has five vaccines in use, with another one on the way. A government which can mobilise huge sectors of society to aid in creating and maintaining the infrastructure discussed above to provide for reasonable lockdowns and a vaccine program to ensure the safety of a populace, is a government which can effectively respond to the COVID crisis.

The protest actions in Victoria have included genuine concerns with the vaccine process, amplified by rights-based individualists and opportunistic far-right actors. But, as the CPA discussion correctly identified, consultation with the unions would have helped. A federal government that didn't encourage vaccine hesitancy and that acted as decisively as Vietnam's did would have helped too. ✪

# THE THIRD WAVE OF SOCIALISM



Prof Dr Michael Brie

**The *Doi Moi* (Renewal) that Vietnam has carried out over the past thirty-five years is a creative approach to socialism that is of great significance and is part of the very early start of the third wave of socialism that we are still in the early stage of. It was a period of searching for a superior alternative to save human civilisation from destruction in the face of the fundamental crisis of capitalism and civilisation.**

The 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1986 initiated the *Doi Moi*, opening a new stage for socialism development not only in Vietnam. Unlike the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Vietnam has achieved far-reaching economic, political and social transformations and successfully combined rapid and effective innovation with political stability under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam. At the same time, Vietnam has also made efforts to improve social conditions and reduce poverty for the majority of people. The achievements that Vietnam has achieved have clearly become part of the world historical movement and can be called the third wave of socialism.

In the [article] entitled “Some theoretical and practical issues about socialism and the path to socialism in Vietnam,” Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong highlighted the overcoming of typical limitations during the second wave of socialism through the Soviet experience, saying:

“We have in stages addressed simplistic ideas we held previously, such as homogenising the end goal of socialism with the task currently at hand, one-sidedly stressing production relations and equal distribution without fully realising the need to develop the productive force in the transition period, not recognising the existence of other economic sectors, putting the market economy in the same basket as capitalism, and viewing the rule-of-law state in the same light as a bourgeois state.”

This is a time when the world needs to continue to conduct discussions about socialism in the context of a new and profound crisis of capitalism. Thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is time for a new perspective on socialism. To many Western observers, the end of the Soviet Union seemed to be the permanent eradication of any systemic challenge to capitalism. But if you focus only on the ruins of the Soviet Union, the view will be obscured.

The profound crisis of contemporary capitalist civilisation shows that socialism cannot completely disappear from the course of world history but is simply being renewed. And finding compelling answers to the challenges of modern capitalism is more urgent than ever. Modern capitalism has existed for more than 250 years, and the history of modern socialism is as long as modern capitalism.

The British Industrial Revolution demonstrated that the productivity of society could dramatically increase within a few decades. This has never happened in human

history. A comfortable life is not just for the rising middle class, it really can be for everyone. However, the reality is not so. Social reformer Robert Owen (1771-1858) wrote: “The present world is saturated with wealth – with an inexhaustible and constantly increasing source of wealth – but misery still abounds! That is the reality of human society today. There could be no worse settlement than what is happening now in all the nations in the earth.” So, the first socialists and communists were posed with the problem of reorganising society.

The first wave of socialism gave rise to the full range of basic forms of socialism, from revolutionary vanguardism, reformism to anarchism. Secret associations, political parties, widespread social and political movements of workers, or even revolutionary forces of slaves and peasants were all part of the wave. Marxism emerged with a scientific basis that formed outlines of the transition to a post-capitalist society in practice.

The first wave of socialism was the theoretical and political formation of socialism in the context that capitalism was developing on a global scale in the nineteenth century. Liberalism and conservatism still dominated the political arena. This situation had changed, firstly due to the Russia’s October Revolution in 1917 and then the coming to power of social democratic parties after the First and Second World Wars. The Bolsheviks not only succeeded in asserting their power from the backdrop of the civil war, but also put the Soviet Union on the path of industrial modernisation.

A force emerged that delivered a decisive victory over Hitler’s Germany, forming the socialist camp and maintaining a competitive position with the United States and the West for decades.

The 1949 victory of the People’s Liberation Army led by the Communist Party of China not only ended China’s period of imperial domination and civil war, but also paved the way for China to become a modern power with influence in a different way from the Soviet Union. Social-democratic reforms in Northwestern Europe after World War I and especially after World War II have created social welfare states with capitalist element. Meanwhile, America’s New Deal policy created a symbiotic relationship between capitalism and the well-being of the vast majority of people. Capitalism, democracy, and increasing standards of living seem compatible.

However, in the early 1970s, it became clear that the aforementioned successes could not be maintained. A deep crisis took place in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. The pace of economic, social, cultural and political innovation in socialist countries slowed down significantly compared to Western countries. Vietnam was unable to turn its great victory in the resistance against the US into a new outstanding dynamic development of modern production forces.

Western welfare states as well as developing countries faced a growing need for reform. Soviet-influenced European countries as well as Western social democracies could not find a satisfactory answer

**The profound crisis of contemporary capitalist civilisation shows that socialism cannot completely disappear from the course of world history but is simply being renewed.**

# SM AND RENEWAL IN VIETNAM



to these challenges and were swept up in the new wave of liberalism. Throughout the twentieth century, socialism proved its capability of being a serious contender against capitalism. But socialism in the twentieth century was unable to sustain its competition with capitalism and fell into a deep crisis.

However, contrary to many people's thought, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not mark the end of socialism; it could be seen as leading to the birth of socialism 3.0. Firstly, in its moment of victory, capitalism had entered a deep crisis for a long time that had reached its systemic limit. When the weaker Soviet system disappeared, capitalism was still not as dominant as it once was. Capitalism has the advantage of pricing capital with the core interest of capital accumulation. [...] Marx called this a "temporary necessity" to unleash productive potentials that would then allow the free development of each individual on the basis of increasing social wealth.

Today, in the highly developed societies of the West, these conditions have long since been perfected. Capitalism has largely accomplished its mission. Capitalist economies are destroying the natural foundations of human life; an ecological crisis is taking place. Material abundance cannot be exchanged for idle time, developed creativity and mutual affections as well cannot bring about a cultivated society. A crisis of ideals is taking place. Capitalist exploitation and its limitations are not incompatible with democracy, leading to a crisis of political legitimacy. Neo-liberal globalisation and

financial capitalism are dividing the world, leading to a crisis of international security. Modern capitalism has gone through many crises and is approaching a turning point of fundamental transformation or it will destroy itself.

The *Doi Moi* (Renewal) cause that Vietnam has carried out over the past thirty-five years is a creative approach to socialism, has a great significance and is a part of the early start of the third wave of socialism that is still in its early stage. This is the period of the search for a superior alternative solution to save human civilisation from destruction amidst the fundamental crisis of capitalist civilisation. I would like to highlight two features of this alternative solution:

Firstly, we have learned from the second wave of socialism that an alternative to capitalism can only exist if it is highly innovative. Such solutions must become learning societies, but not the bureaucratic centralisation such as with the Soviet Union nor primarily competitive systems. Like US Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom argued, multi-centred societies are best at boosting development based on solidarity.

According to Ostrom, multi-centred systems can be instrumental in boosting structures to self-organise and overcome the limitations of purely decentralised structures. External resources, which are considered means to combat tyranny, along with others, will remedy the inertia, provide objective knowledge, establish an open learning environment and mechanisms addressing conflicts that can help

realise the potential of self-organisation. The transition to the industry 4.0 and connected economy is a prerequisite for this. The cooperation and competition complement each other. Vietnam's *Doi Moi* cause has had many such elements.

Secondly, socialism 3.0 can only succeed if it facilitates the emergence of a new civilisation. This means the preservation of the achievements of capitalism and its ability to innovate regularly and lead to a new balance in the relationship between man and nature above all. One can also speak of a harmonious civilisation that connects contradictions in unity. The exploitation of nature must be replaced by concern for the balance of the natural environment.

Today, everywhere, we treat nature as a source for the extraction of raw materials and turn it into a dumping ground of the metabolism, warming the atmosphere and poisoning oceans. The earth needs to be treated like a garden. Accordingly, it must be nurtured, protected and nourished by the renewable energy of the sun. In a harmonious civilisation, a life that depends on a high-paying job should be replaced by a balance with mutual concern, social commitment and leisure time. A developed society will emerge, focusing on human creativity, human relationships, and the diversity of nature. Achieving consensus based on the democratic and open participation will take precedence over partisan competition and political representation.

The progress beyond real capitalism will be connected with pre-capitalist society and forms of democracy that encourage the

participation, connection among work and entertainment and sufficiency here and now. What capitalism has negated will continue to emerge again during the negation of capitalism – the negation of the negation. The rich national culture and traditions of Vietnam in particular have created many foundations for such a journey.

A society based on Socialism 3.0 requires several prerequisites including: (1) High labour productivity and the ability to achieve it going hand in hand with ecosystem protection (i.e., with high degree of reproducibility); (2) The diversity of forms of property consistent with the freedom of individuals contributing to the freedom of all people in solidarity; (3) Bodies consulting and making political decisions creating an environment for unity in diversity; (4) A culture of solidarity; (5) An international system that allows nations and peoples to develop together in peace.

Capitalism is not suitable for such a sustainable and solid development. The different approaches to socialist innovation – socialism 3.0 – must demonstrate the fulfilment of the above requirements. If successful, the 21st century could become the century of global realism. With the third wave, socialism will also fulfil its historical mission. I believe that Vietnam will continue to make great strides in this direction.

Nhân Dân ✪

**Capitalist economies are destroying the natural foundations of human life; an ecological crisis is taking place. Material abundance cannot be exchanged for idle time, developed creativity and mutual affections as well as cannot bring about a cultivated society. A crisis of ideals is taking place.**

# CPRF STATEMENT ON THE ELECTION RESULTS: UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS

**The 2021 Parliamentary Election ended on Sunday demonstrated a compelling success of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) having highlighted its overwhelming support by Russian society.**

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, being the major authentic opposition to the ruling party and widely supported by all strata of the population along with left-patriotic forces has successfully performed with the official result close to nineteen per cent of total votes.

We were supported by almost 10,661,000 people. This is the best result of the Communist Party in the present century. The faction of the Communist Party in the State Duma will increase by fifteen parliamentarians.

In four regions, the CPRF was ahead of "United Russia" ("UR"). They were: the Republic of Mari El (thirty-six per cent to the CPRF), Yakutia (thirty five per cent), Khabarovsk Territory and the Nenets Autonomous Region. More than thirty per cent of support for our comrades was gained in Ulyanovsk and Omsk regions, Altai Krai and the Republic of Altai and Hakassia.

In other thirty-seven regions the results were ranging from twenty to thirty per cent.

In regional legislative elections of 38 regional parliaments the CPRF gained 254 mandates (previously there were 158).

So, the abovementioned results explicitly demonstrate a trend of interception away from the "party in power."

But unfortunately, the political stance of a true political power with sufficient support of the population nowadays guarantees no fair result. Despite the statement made by the government spokesman Dmitry Peskov to the press about the transparency and honesty of the elections the CPRF faced substantial resistance from the ruling party and local authorities in getting fair results.

Seeking political domination in the Parliament, the "party in power" has modified the law related to electoral procedures.

It's quite obvious that the electoral campaign and the voting itself were artificially extended from September 17th to 19th creating new standards of what once was due process.

The extension of voting up to three days was officially explained as necessary to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, but in fact it was used to force public sector



employees to massively "increase" the polling figures of the "UR" party.

Against exit polls data and common sense the United Russia ensured its victory by "other" methods gaining about 50 per cent of the overall votes and so-called "constitutional majority" enabling it to control the Parliament. Access to country's resources and power made it extremely inventive in voting methods and counting.

After radical amendments to the Russian Constitution last July, the ruling regime has launched continuous attacks aimed at the elimination of strong competitors from the ranks of the opposition headed by the CPRF as number one.

Thus, five CPRF candidates for the regional Heads were excluded from the voting list under false pretext and one of them, ex-presidential candidate Pavel Grudinin who was running against V Putin with about 9 million supporters, was groundlessly brought to trial.

The mainstream media only followed the activities of the "United Russia" candidates deliberately ignoring the opposition.

Besides manipulation with electoral lists, the namesakes of the CPRF candidates were deliberately included in the "UR" lists aiming to confuse the voters.

Another trick invented by the ruling bourgeoisie was electronic voting in the mostly populated regions, crucially important for the "UR".

Electronic voting removes parties from the electoral process and makes it impossible to control or challenge the results, while adding significantly to the overall voting figures.

As of 19:00 on September 19th, the average results of the Communist Party in Moscow were comparable to "United Russia", but by the next morning the numbers had magically dropped by third or even a half. It is impossible to grow so much in an hour!

Numerous protests and complaints

about violation of the electoral legislation have followed the official announcement of the voting results.

The CPRF and thousands of Party supporters all over the country got together picketing against electoral lawlessness of the authorities.

The bourgeois regime, scared of people's outrage, attempted to intimidate CPRF members and supporters by blocking Party premises in some regions, arresting some Party activists and promising to block the website of the CPRF.

CPRF demands cancellation of the electronic voting results as fraud!

CPRF demands fair and open investigation on each violation case!

CPRF demands an immediate stop of persecution of Party members and supporters!

**CPRF CC International Department**

## STATEMENT OF THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY (DKP) ON THE ELECTIONS TO THE BUNDESTAG

Commenting on the results of the Bundestag elections, Patrik Köbele, Chairman of the DKP, states:

**The results of the Bundestag elections will lead to negotiations between the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Greens, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). In all likelihood, the grand coalition will not be continued; all other constellations from the camp of these four parties are conceivable.**

All of these constellations stand for a federal government

of growing domestic and foreign aggression. All of these parties have spoken out in varying nuances in favour of NATO's course of war and the militarisation of the EU, in favour of the course against Russia and China. All these parties stand for sharp attacks on the democratic and social rights of the people in this country. These attacks will intensify after the elections. The justifications will vary. Some will justify the attacks more, others less, with saving the environment. They all do not have a concept for the real improvement of the ecological situation, because they do not want to intervene in the capitalist

profiteering or even the property relations.

The perspective for the workers' and peace movement after these federal elections will still be: "Let's take the path of resistance".

The Left Party's (Die Linke) performance is bitter and no reason for gloating or even rejoicing. But this performance is the result of an election campaign in which Die Linke made it clear that it is prepared to throw everything overboard for the sake of governing. Experience with the Left Party where it participates in government shows that it is hardly any different from traditional social democracy. Despite an increase in voter

turnout, non-voters account for just under a quarter of eligible voters, thus remaining the strongest "party". The share of votes cast by the so-called "others" is at an all-time high of well over 8 percent; together with the non-voters, this means that well over 30 percent of eligible voters are not represented in Germany's federal parliament.

The DKP's performance is not satisfactory, with slight gains compared to the 2017 Bundestag election. The DKP is too weak to present itself as such to people looking for alternatives. Nevertheless, our election campaign was worthwhile. To a great extent, it has brought the party and its issues to the outside

world and strengthened it. The DKP was the only party in this election campaign, which was on the whole focused on warmongering, that consistently promoted peace positions. We were able to attract awareness, a wider audience, new members, and new activists.

We thank our voters, our candidates, and our comrades who participated in this electoral campaign. We continue to choose the path of resistance. This is now more necessary than ever: for peace with Russia and China. Against social cutbacks and the dismantling of democracy. The perspective for humans and nature is not capitalism. ✪



# WORLD ON THE EDGE OF AN ABYSS: UN SECRETARY-GENERAL



Matthew Hole

**“I am here to sound the alarm: the world must wake up. We are on the edge of an abyss – and moving in the wrong direction.” This was the warning offered by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly which opened on Tuesday 21st September. The event was attended by all UN member nations except Afghanistan and Myanmar, given the ongoing internal issues faced in those countries.**

The General Assembly is being held as major transformations in global affairs are taking place. The COVID-19 pandemic is now over eighteen months old, with shocking levels of disparity for vaccine rollouts between countries rich and poor. The climate crisis is now a code red for humanity according to the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And new military alliances are being formed by some old colonial powers as they seek to maintain world hegemony in the face of a rising independent China.

In his opening remarks to the conference, Guterres went on to describe the “Six Great Divides” that the UN must work towards overcoming: peace, climate, inequality, gender, digital, and generational.

## FOR MANY, PEACE AND STABILITY REMAIN A DISTANT DREAM

Guterres spoke of a range of regions undergoing conflict. In Afghanistan, humanitarian assistance is required in the wake of the US’s hasty withdrawal, as is the need to defend human rights, especially of women and girls. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, conflict rages between the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) vs the governments of the two neighbouring nations. Myanmar has experienced a military coup earlier this year, and the situation there remains unresolved. Several peacekeeping missions continue in the Sahel

region of Africa (between the Sahara and Sudanian savanna), whilst conflicts continue across Yemen, Libya, and Syria. Challenges within Israel-Palestine and Haiti were also mentioned.

Geopolitical divisions however are undermining international cooperation to solve these crises and are impossible to address whilst the worlds two largest economies are at odds with each other. Guterres continues, “To restore trust and inspire hope, we need cooperation. We need dialogue. We need understanding ... and we need a new comprehensive Agenda for Peace.”

## CLIMATE CRISIS A CODE RED

According to Guterres, meaningful action on climate change cannot happen without bridging trust between the Global North and the Global South. All countries need to commit to carbon neutrality by mid-century, and to have plans that will see emissions peak before 2030 – the conditions for this success need to be created in the leadup to the Glasgow meeting in November.

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s later remarks highlighted that China would no longer provide funding for coal projects abroad. Conversely, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison is still unsure if he will attend the summit. The coal industry in Australia continues to have significant political influence, to the detriment of the will of the majority, raising questions about what it really means to be labelled a “democracy.”

Guterres provided a range of measures governments should take that would see the best of possible outcomes with respect to climate: summoning the full force of their fiscal policymaking powers to make the shift to green economies, taxing carbon and pollution instead of people’s incomes, ending subsidies to fossil fuels, and committing to no new coal plants. Coalitions of solidarity are required, between countries still heavily dependent on coal, and those that have the

financial and technical resources to support their transition.

## A LOPSIDED RECOVERY IS DEEPENING INEQUALITIES

Differing levels in vaccine rollouts among nations rich and poor are deepening already existing inequalities worldwide. This was highlighted by Guterres in the proportion GDP nations are currently investing into their respective economic recoveries: 28 per cent for advanced economies, 6.5 per cent for middle-income economies, and down to 1.8 per cent for least developed countries.

It’s critical that vaccines are made available for peoples of all nations – seventy per cent of the global population could be fully vaccinated by the first half of 2022 should an effective plan be put in place. This plan would involve a coalition of partners, including present and potential vaccine producers, the World Health Organisation, ACT-Accelerator partners, and international financial institutions working with pharmaceutical companies.

The risk of an effective global vaccine plan not being carried out could see Sub-Saharan Africa achieve a culminative economic growth rate per capita over the next five years that would be seventy-five per cent less than the rest of the world. A shocking outcome, particularly given the already existing realities across the continent. China has produced approximately fifty per cent of all vaccines globally as at the end of August, of which over a quarter have been provided to developing nations; however Latin America and other Asia Pacific nations have received the vast majority of these to date.

## GENDER, DIGITAL AND GENERATIONAL DIVIDES

Guterres closed out his opening address highlighting the need to continually bridge the gender, digital and generational divides.

He highlighted that when the pandemic hit, “women were the majority of frontline workers, first to lose their jobs, and first to put their careers on hold to care for those close to them.” He went on to urge governments, corporations, and other institutions to take bold steps, including benchmarks and quotas, to create gender parity from the leadership down.

The digital divide is a topic often not given as great an emphasis as those already discussed. Yet half of humanity still has no access to the internet. There is the potential for everyone to be connected by 2030. The digital world is not without risk, however, as our behaviour patterns are being commodified and sold like future contracts, and our data is being used to influence our perceptions and opinions. Guterres remarks that, “to restore trust and inspire hope, we need to place human rights at the centre of our efforts to ensure a safe, equitable and open digital future for all.”

The last of the divides discussed was the generational divide. sixty per cent of young future voters feel betrayed by their governments. Many young people are suffering from high levels of anxiety and distress over the state of the planet, and they do not feel like they have a seat at the table to resolve the issues that they face. To help address this, it was announced that a Special Envoy for Future Generations will be appointed, as well as the establishment of a United Nations Youth Office.

Guterres closed with a message of hope: “The best way to advance the interests of one’s own citizens is by advancing the interests of our common future. Interdependence is the logic of the 21st century. And it is the lodestar of the United Nations. This is our time. A moment for transformation. An era to re-ignite multilateralism. An age of possibilities. Let us restore trust. Let us inspire hope. And let us start right now.” ✨

Letters to the Editor  
The Guardian  
74 Buckingham Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: editor@cpa.org.au

**Dear Editor,**  
**Thanks for covering the issues that the big business media definitely won't unless they have to and even then, when they do, they generally get them wrong.**  
I have not seen Morrison or previous

"leaders" challenged on their violation of international law. The "illegals" are in the government and Clayton's opposition.

When we signed the Refugee Convention in 1954, we undertook not to discriminate between refugees however they arrived, even "illegally" – you can come by boat, plane, submarine, or beamed down from the Starship Enterprise. To punish refugees for coming by boat (or via the Starship Enterprise) is illegal. This is what the ABC and many of the NGOs, even solidarity groups, do not mention. Perhaps because they think ordinary people cannot relate to international law.

We need to know and tell people where the Convention came from. It came from the persecution of minorities under Nazism and the terrible way they were often treated when they tried to escape as refugees. My

own father was very lucky, sponsored from outside Austria, eventually finding a safe haven in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Many, like those on the Voyage of the Damned, were not nearly so lucky, and died in Nazi camps. So it is essentially an anti-fascist Convention that we signed. To violate it puts us in the camp of those people who we saw in the recent *Sixty Minutes* episode, with their flags and salutes.

We have to be confident and militant in talking about this, as was the admirable Diana Sayed (of the Australian Muslim Women's Centre) on the ABC's recent Q&A episode.

As well, we have to banish propaganda terms such as "people smuggler." No one has been smuggled into Australia, no one has been concealed. They have been taken to Australia's border and claimed asylum,

which is their right. "Mandatory detention" is another doozie. There is no "mandate" to torture. And detention is short term – remember high school?

All this is being used to divide and rule, and Labor being a part of this tells us something.

The issue is not about "compassion and generosity" (although I am all for them), but simple justice and international law. The Convention is our weapon. Let's use it!

All of us refugee activists need to be more militant, less "cap in hand" and know our history, and truly be in solidarity with each other. I remember the friendship in the East Timor struggle. And as we said then: To Resist Is To Win.

Best wishes,

Stephen Langford OT

## REVIEW: DERRY GIRLS

Floyd Kermod

**Hey everyone! Who wants to binge-watch a TV series about young people trying to lead normal lives and realise their full potential amid late-stage imperialism? What, no hands up?**

That's not surprising because I've just done my best to make *Derry Girls* (streaming on Netflix) seem as dull as possible while basically being accurate about what happens in it. I'll try again: Who wants to see a funny TV series about a gang of foul-mouthed, insecure Irish high-school students with fun accents? I'd expect more hands up for that last question, but I wasn't kidding the first time.

*Derry Girls* is genuinely amusing and exciting – well worth a look regardless of the viewer's ideological bias or how much that viewer is interested in Irish politics. *Derry Girls* is set in the last years of "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland, just before the latest peace deal – "the Good Friday agreement" (aka the Belfast Agreement) – was signed in 1998. While not perfect, it is an engaging mix of the bog-standard sitcom, moving coming-of-age story, and a political slice of life.

The comedy is sometimes obvious, sometimes brilliant, but the way the humour and the political background interact is never handled the same way twice. This viewer grumbled at times but kept coming back for more.

The show revolves around a group of Derry schoolgirls at a Catholic girls school in the town of that name. Derry has a long history of being the subject of British mistreatment since 1689. When Ireland was partitioned in 1922, Derry was a Catholic majority town in a British statelet formed for the Irish protestant majority. Since then, there's been a history of discrimination, gerrymandering and what the polite newspapers call "sectarian violence," as though the two communities just randomly decided to not get on very well (I'm sure any Palestinian readers can relate to this). The infamous Bloody Sunday, when British troops shot twenty-six protesters, happened in Derry, and all of the hunger strikers who died in 1981 came from there. To put it mildly, there's history there.

The main character, one of the "Derry girls," Erin, is romantically ambitious and socially insecure. She lives with her parents and a grandfather who is constantly, unjustly, and amusingly furious with his son-in-law, her dad. The other Derry Girls are the rather flaky Orla who, like her equally flaky mother, is always vaguely weird; the perennially insecure Clare, who always worries about consequences; her polar opposite Michelle, who is always trying to keep up with the latest vulgar American vernacular and is obsessed with boys. Lastly, the other Derry Girl is, in fact, a boy, James – a nervous English boy whose mother left Derry years ago to get an abortion. The abortion didn't work out, as one of the girls explains, pointing scornfully at James, and now he's back in Derry at

the girls' school because everyone hates the English too much for him to be safe in the boy's school.

The girls do regular "girls-in-sitcoms" stuff: gossiping about boys, trying to get around the rules their parents and teachers set but with the reality of an occupied Ireland going on around them. For example, in the first episode, they're chatting while British soldiers go through their bus looking for weapons or bombs under the seats – I was as startled as James is at how casually the people of Derry react to troop presence. In the same episode, the entire cast treats a bomb on a bridge as just an annoyance: someone will have to miss a yoga class, and Erin won't be able to get to the gig of a band whose lead singer she fancies. Life goes on sort of thing. At other times, the reality of what's going on gets a direct comment. When James complains about how much history they have to learn, one of the girls tells him if the English hadn't invaded them so many times, there wouldn't be so many rebellions and uprisings for them to be tested on.

It's a show that keeps the audience off-balance, which is what I keep coming back for. I can easily comment on the more predictable sitcom stuff, but there are some more successful bits in it that are great. For example, Erin's always-angry grandfather insists on navigating on a family picnic rather than let his despised son-in-law get the credit for getting them safely past a Protestant extremist Loyal Orange Parade. The next scene shows the family car surrounded by Orangemen while the grandfather calls them "tangerine turds" from the passenger seat.

There are also genius touches like Kevin McAleer's character – Uncle Colm – who appears from time to time as a relative who can make absolutely anything tedious. This tedious tendency is demonstrated when he tells a tale – which ought to be gripping – of his being held up by Loyalist gunmen in a way that makes everyone almost die of boredom. I don't know if it's quality script-writing or just that Kevin McAleer is so expensive they can't use him all the time, but either way, he's not over-used, and he's great value when he appears.

The sitcom is leavened by social observations on racism towards non-whites and of course religious tolerance. Once in a while, the political situation impinges on the *Derry girls* so much that they forget to be funny – high death tolls and peace agreements which will change everything aren't amusing, and there are moments when even the grandfather forgets to be irate, with the Derry Girls noticing the very awful situation they're living through.

If you want to learn up on Irish politics, there are more direct routes than watching this enjoyable show. If you like some politics to spice up your comedy and don't mind thinking while you laugh, *Derry Girls* could be for you. ✪



# GERMANS CHOOSE CENTRE-LEFT OVER CENTRE-RIGHT BY BIG MARGIN

John Wojcik

The centre-left candidate fighting to succeed Angela Merkel as Germany's chancellor declared that his Social Democratic Party (SPD) intends to forge a "social-ecological-liberal coalition" after coming in first in Sunday's election. With 25.7 per cent, the SPD beat the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), currently in power, which garnered 24.1 per cent, its worst showing in the 70-year history of the party.

The Greens received their biggest vote ever, with 14.8 per cent of the vote and the Left Party (Die Linke) came in with 4.9 per cent, meaning that centre-left and left parties bested the CDU and its Bavarian Christian Social Union partners by almost a 2-1 margin.

In the new Bundestag, the breakdown for the parties will be 206 for the SPD, 196 for the CDU/CSU, 118 for the Greens, eighty-three for the ultra-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), and thirty-nine for Die Linke (the Left Party).

"The voters have made themselves very clear," Olaf Scholz, the SPD leader, said at a press conference Monday morning. He declared that his centre-left party, the Greens, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) had all picked up significant numbers of new votes, while the conservative CDU suffered a loss in support of almost nine percentage points.

"And that's why we have a visible mandate that the citizens of this country have formulated," said Scholz, who is vice-chancellor in the outgoing government where his party was the junior party to the CDU in a so-called "Grand Coalition." The FDP, which Scholz described as "liberal," is, in fact, however, a largely pro-business party.

The Greens can't automatically be counted on to hook up with the Social Democrats in a coalition, however. There are some sections of the party that can be characterised as solidly left-wing, but there are also sections on the right that have made alliances with big business in some parts of Germany.

The Greens have already agreed to hold preliminary talks with the FDP. Their vote percentage, 14.8 per cent, combined with the FDP's 11.5 per cent, puts them slightly ahead of both the SPD and the CDU. When those talks finish, however, they will, of course, have to begin discussions with the other parties to come up with a majority that can rule.

A so-called "traffic light" power-sharing deal, nicknamed such because of the parties' colours – SPD (red), FDP (yellow), Greens (green) – is just one possibility, however. The latter two parties could theoretically lend their support to a so-called "Jamaica coalition" with the CDU, led by its chancellor candidate, Armin Laschet. The CDU's



party colour is black so it would be a black-yellow-green coalition, the colors of the Jamaican flag.

Laschet, the CDU leader, seemed to take a page from Donald Trump's book when he did not concede on election night and instead announced that he was doing "everything possible" to form and lead a new government. At that time, the vote totals for the CDU and SPD were nearly identical.

But the SPD's lead increased overnight as more mail-in votes were counted, and it moved almost two points ahead of the CDU. That, plus the fact that the media blasted out the news that the CDU had garnered its lowest vote ever, forced Laschet, still refusing to cede, to be a bit more modest by Monday morning. He ignored, however, the fact that parties constituting the centre and the left far outpolled his centre-right coalition.

While the result of the vote "cannot, must not, and won't satisfy the [Christian Democratic] Union," the CDU leader said at a press conference, it did not yield a government mandate for either of the largest parties.

Huge numbers of German voters, contrary to his claim, turned out to demand change. They expressed anger about government inaction on climate change, for example. Some 200 Germans died in floods recently

in the western part of the country, floods widely attributed to climate change.

The Laschet analysis that Germans don't want change is also being taken up by much of the press here in the US – an analysis challenged, however, by many in Germany, including the mainstream media there.

On the mainstream *Bild* newspaper's television station, commentator Paul Ronheimer said Laschet was "living in a different reality." Even several conservative politicians who had backed Laschet were already, by Monday, distancing themselves from him.

"Second place cannot be construed to amount to a mandate to form the next government," tweeted Markus Söder, the Bavarian state premier whom many conservatives had wanted to see run for the top job in Laschet's stead. At a press conference, the leader of the CSU, the Bavarian sister party of the CDU, and part of its ruling coalition, called the vote a "disappointing result" and a "defeat that cannot be sugarcoated."

The extreme-right Alternative for Germany Party also lost votes, dropping to ten per cent from its previous fourteen per cent.

The Left Party (Die Linke) lost votes, too, eking out only 4.9 per cent. German election rules require a party to beat a five per cent nationwide threshold or win at

least three seats outright to secure a place in parliament. By doing the latter, the Left Party was able to take a total of thirty-nine seats in the Bundestag.

In some ways, it was Left Party's successes that helped reduce its totals. Its biggest losses came in Berlin, ironically, where it had successfully spearheaded a campaign to freeze rents for five years and reportedly won a referendum on Sunday that expropriated thousands of apartments from big German real estate conglomerates like Deutsche Wohnen and turn them into social housing.

In Berlin, the Left Party is part of a ruling red-red-green coalition of the SPD, itself, and the Greens. The SPD, which leads that coalition, campaigned by bragging how it was responsible for winning the freeze, even though it was the Left Party that did most of the work to build public support and win it.

The SPD reaped the reward with big gains in Berlin, while the Left Party lost votes. Early results suggest it was another case of left-wing parties and Communists not getting the credit for their policies and work when they enter coalitions with center forces. If things don't work out, however, they often get the blame.

People's World

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# BRITISH SPOOKS REMAIN TIGHT-LIPPED OVER ALLEGED CIA PLOT TO ASSASSINATE ASSANGE

Steve Sweeney

**British spooks remained tight-lipped today after questions posed by the *Morning Star* over an alleged CIA plot to kidnap and assassinate Wikileaks founder Julian Assange in London.**

MI5 did not respond when asked what it knew about the plans to kill Assange on British soil reportedly discussed by the US spy agency and former US president Donald Trump at the White House in 2017.

Though a plan was never approved, discussions centred on the possibility of kidnapping Assange and even executing him if he left the sanctuary of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he had sought asylum over fears that the US planned to extradite him.

The plot was revealed in an explosive investigative report by Yahoo news that included interviews with at least thirty former top US officials.

Then US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, a former CIA director, is believed to have been the driving force behind the plot against

Assange. He had been angered when WikiLeaks continued publishing classified government documents under the name Vault 7 – a vast tranche of material exposing CIA spying activities.

Scenarios presented for killing Assange included shootouts on the streets of London, crashing a car into his vehicle or even shooting the tyres off a plane taking him to Russia.

According to the Yahoo news report, US officials had asked their British counterparts to support their efforts. A former senior administration official claimed that the British agreed with the plan to eliminate Assange.

The Wikileaks founder had his asylum status revoked in 2019 and was arrested. He is currently being held in Britain's high-security Belmarsh prison, facing extradition to the US and a lengthy sentence under the draconian Espionage Act.

His supporters claim that he is targeted for exposing war crimes committed by the US and others in their wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

John Rees of the Don't Extradite Assange campaign said that the "incredible story strikes

at the heart of the prosecution's case" against Assange.

"They have repeatedly asserted that this is not a political case. This shows that it absolutely is, and that the legal attack on Assange came very close to becoming an actual physical assault and kidnapping and possibly an attempted murder.

"Julian Assange should be free and the people who conspired in this plan should be in the dock," he said.

International Federation of Journalists General Secretary Anthony Bellanger has demanded a full investigation into the allegations and the immediate release and protection of Assange.

"The US war against Julian Assange has been constant over the past few years, so it comes as no surprise the CIA could have contemplated kidnapping and even killing him.

"If these new accusations about the CIA are true, it would cast a long shadow over all independent journalism. It would mean there is no safe haven for journalists or their sources," he told the *Morning Star*.

The CIA was contacted for comment.

*Morning Star* ✪



## CHINA-EU DIALOGUE

Coinciding with the retirement of strong China-EU ties supporter Angela Merkel and the snub of France in the AUKUS security pact which targets China's influence in the Indo-Pacific, top diplomats of China and EU on Tuesday 28th September held a strategic dialogue by video link, serving as a stabiliser for geopolitical uncertainties.

**The dialogue between Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, came after Wang exchanged views with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg during a virtual meeting the day before, noting China has not been and will not be a rival to NATO.**

In his meeting with Borrell, Wang said China and the EU have increased talks recently, reached many consensus, which help enhance understanding, expand mutual trust and reduce misjudgement.

China and the EU should consolidate the momentum, adhere to mutual respect, seek common ground while shelving differences and reducing antagonism, Wang said.

Wang also pointed out the trilateral security pact AUKUS, recently formed by the US, UK, and Australia, have heightened geopolitical tensions and brought about risks of a return of the Cold War, potential arms race and nuclear proliferation.

Borrell said China is a key strategic partner with a mature, multi-faceted and non-confrontational relationship for the EU and it is important to maintain close and smooth communication between the two sides.

Wang also made clear China's principled position on the Taiwan question, stressing that the one-China principle is the general consensus of the international community and the political basis for China to develop relations with the EU and its member states.

Borrell said that the EU always adheres to the one-China principle, which is an important cornerstone of EU-China relations. The EU will not conduct official exchanges with the Taiwan region.

The two sides also exchanged views on human rights issues.

Wang said China is ready to conduct human rights dialogue and cooperation with other countries based on equality and mutual respect. However, China does not accept the "preachers" of human rights or foreign countries' interference in internal affairs under the pretext of human rights.

Borrell said that the EU will respect China's sovereignty and has no intention of preaching to China.

They also exchanged in-depth views on Afghanistan, Myanmar, non-proliferation and other issues of common concern.

Chinese experts believe that the dialogue, which was held amid the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical uproar, is a major achievement in itself. And issues like Afghanistan, climate change, China-EU economic and trade cooperation were discussed amid the dialogue, as the fields that China and the EU can deepen cooperation are larger.

The dialogue reflects China's desire to bring China-EU relations back to the track of sound development, as some conflicts have emerged recently, Cui Hongjian, director of the Department of European Studies, China Institute of International Studies, told *Global Times*.

Relations between China and the EU have been strained in the past few months as members of the European Parliament in August expressed support to Lithuania as the Baltic country allowed the secessionist Taiwan authority to open a "representative office" under the name of "Taiwan."

China also recently expressed opposition to a planned trip of some French senators to the island of Taiwan, which is a violation of the one-China principle.

The Council of the EU in March announced sanctions on four Chinese nationals and one entity, as a reaction to the alleged mistreatment by China of its minority Uygur population in Xinjiang.

The China-EU CAI [Comprehensive Agreement on Investments] is not expected to produce breakthrough progress, but green energy and digital dialogue will be the new growth for China-EU cooperation, Cui said.

As to the Taiwan question, the expert said China must further express its position and make sure that the Taiwan question will not become the sting in China-EU relations or leave any space for ambiguity.

Some analysts suggested China and the EU should find a more stable framework to reduce uncertainties in relations.

China-EU relations are in an important period of shaping, which should be observed in the context of a trilateral relationship between China, the US and Europe, Feng Zhongping, director of Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, told *Global Times*.

China emphasises mutual opportunities, seeks to enhance cooperation, and manage differences. And the dialogue is also part of managing differences, Feng said, noting what Europe needs from China is cooperating in

global governance and economics, while keeping ideological toughness and alliances with the US.

Some observers said Europe has moved from a predisposition to an alliance with the US, to a more pragmatic and rational attitude toward China and the US. From Biden winning the US presidential election, to various US-EU summits, NATO summits and G20 summits, to imposing sanctions on Xinjiang and the suspension of the China-EU CAI ratification, the EU has sounded out on the China-US-EU relationship.

Europe has dropped unrealistic expectations of the Biden administration and sees more clearly the US's self-interest tricks, whether in Afghanistan or in the AUKUS, or in the disclosure of a "China threat," said Wang Yiwei, Director of the Institute of International Affairs at the Renmin University of China.

"Europe knows it cannot rely solely on the US, and has lost the excitement when Donald Trump left office, despite EU acknowledging the challenge from China," Wang said.

As far as the big two in Europe, experts say that until the beginning of next year, there will be an opportunity to develop China-EU relations.

For Germany in the post-Merkel era, the formation of a new cabinet may last half a year. During the period of transition, Germany is very likely to maintain its prudent China policy. If nothing unexpected happens, French leader Emmanuel Macron will also be re-elected next year and will also lean toward stability, Wang said.

*Global Times* ✪



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