



Guardian

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Cancel AUKUS! NO TO WAR!



The Labor government's decision to sign up to AUKUS is potentially the most costly and dangerous decision of any government since federation. It is not just costly in dollar terms. It is not just costly in the harm it will do the Australian people through austerity measures to foot the bill. It fuels an arms race that could result in nuclear war. To top it off, the \$368 billion plus bill offers up what remains of Australia's independence and sovereignty.

AUKUS must be cancelled. We are told there is not enough money to fund Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. That we cannot afford the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Public education is starved of funding. As for public housing, it has all but been dismantled. JobSeeker for the unemployed, the age pension and other social payments

are below the poverty line. We are told we cannot afford to increase them.

The planet is close to tipping point as climate change policies and action fall far short of what is required. But where is the funding for a transition to renewables? You need a magnifying glass to see it when compared with the \$368 billion plus being allocated towards escalating Australia's war-fighting capability.

The real threat to Australia's security is from the US war machine which is targeting the People's Republic of China. Neither Australia nor the US can win a war against China. The only winner is the military industrial complex.

The losers will be humankind and the planet.

The expanded US bases with additional US military; the purchase of hypersonic missiles; the offensive (not defensive)

nuclear-powered submarines; the enhancement of cyberwarfare capability; and other aspects of the AUKUS agreement are aimed at China and Russia.

Australian forces, already largely integrated into the US's war machine, will be under the command of the US. Parliament will not be informed in advance, let alone have a say in whether we go to war. So much for the claims of democratic values. Behind the talk of international order and rule of law lies the mailed fist of the US, NATO, and AUKUS.

"It is time for us to join together and call on governments around the world to cut military spending, and to instead invest in the true needs of the people and the planet to build a just and sustainable peace." Hannah Middleton (*Guardian* #2045, 13/03/2023)

The protests against AUKUS are rising here and overseas.

We must unite and mobilise to force the Australian government off this path to war. Join the anti-AUKUS protests in your state.

Write to PM Albanese, War Minister Marles, and Foreign Minister Penny Wong to tell them that you reject Australia becoming a proxy to US wars and bearing the terrible consequences.

Write letters to newspapers, take up your opposition to AUKUS on radio talkback, and post anti-AUKUS messages and memes on your social media. Spread the word, counter the pro-AUKUS propaganda and build the anti-war movement.

Make Tuesdays your No AUKUS day – email them every Tuesday. a.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au richard.marles.mp@aph.gov.au senator.wong@aph.gov.au

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Guardian

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The ALP's dying legacy

For the past 25 years self-styled liberal democratic governments in the developed Western nations have been entangled in growing turmoil. Back room deals and backstabbing; rapid changes of prime minister; the denial and rejection of election results; and in the nation of manifest destiny – the USA – an attempted fascist coup.

This political turmoil is a reflection of the upheavals in the wider world as the capitalist economic crisis deepens and the resultant chaos spreads in growing hardship for the people.

In Australia, the internal machinations within both the major parties have played themselves out in such a way that a newly elected Labor government entered parliament already fully briefed by its US masters in what is to be its overriding task: to put Australia in lockstep with the US in the march to war.

It has all the shades of a coup – the rehearsed narrative, the mass media beat-up, the hidden agenda, the arrogance, the \$368 billion price tag.

And it may be the dying legacy of the Australian Labor Party.

Social democratic parties such as the Australian Labor Party and the British Labour Party have always been parties of compromise between the interests of the working people and the interests of the capitalist class. When the chips are down it is the interests of the employers that predominate.

The objectives of the Labor Party have always been limited to the attainment of reforms within the capitalist system. Even the long-held aim of “public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange” which, in early times, did lead to Labor governments setting up Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank, Australian National Line, etc, have been overturned by both Labor and Liberal governments in the race to privatise everything, to outsource everything, to hand over to private for-profit everywhere.

Labor Party leaders have for a long time preached the idea that workers and employers have common interests. It was pushed hard by former Labour Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. This was the basic idea underpinning the Accord between the ACTU and ALP adopted in 1983.

But it is a false theory. Life proves it to be false every day.

The braying media chorus aimed at comments by former Labor prime minister Paul Keating, in his scathing assessment of the AUKUS deal, was the warmongers closing ranks. It also reveals the extent to which the right wing of the Labor party now dominates, as does Treasurer Jim Chalmers' dismissal of Keating's time as prime minister as a “peace time government.”

As Hannah Middleton stated in last week's *Guardian* on page one, “Prime Minister Albanese and Defence Minister Marles, like their predecessors Morrison and Dutton, are now exposed as traitors and agents of a foreign power.

“They are willing to sacrifice Australia's economy, to risk massive military and civilian casualties for the United States to retain dominance, economically and militarily, in the Indo-Pacific.

“They are prepared to risk WW3 and the possibility of it going nuclear with devastating worldwide consequences.”

The neoliberal agenda is anti-human and unsustainable. The Communist Party works for the strongest resistance possible to the coming attacks on workers' rights and living standards built up by working people through decades of struggle and hard work.

Labor has taken union and working class support for granted for too long. If trade unions are to win back lost members and improve the working conditions and living standards of their members, they must be independent in addition to opposing privatisation, defending Medicare, and defending public education.

The trade unions are critical to building mass resistance. The labour movement has the ability to fund, organise and sustain a struggle over the long term. But more importantly, labour is unique in that it is organised at the point of production; organised labour has an inherent capacity to bring protest to the economic and political level.

The ALP National Conference will take place in August, a stage where the class contradictions in the Labor Party will be played out. Workers will be watching and learning.

Illawarra renewable energy zone to deliver long-term work

Mick Cross, Southern NSW, Branch Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)

Maritime workers living and working in the Illawarra are excited by the opportunities and long-term industry development that will come from the declaration by the NSW government of the Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone.

With Port Kembla's maritime infrastructure, steelworks, and proximity to transmission networks, large scale renewable energy projects including offshore wind, green hydrogen, and onshore installation of wind, and solar infrastructure will ensure sustainable and rewarding employment for waterfront workers and seafarers in the Illawarra for generations to come.

“We have the skills and the resources locally to manufacture, build and install clean energy infrastructure in our own region for the betterment of the whole state,” said the MUA's Southern NSW Secretary, Mick Cross. “Maritime workers know that the future of our energy

needs will be delivered by an ever increasing mix of renewable energy, but that this needs to promote local employment opportunities and maximise local content,” he said.

While the Renewable Energy Zones have been legislated by the NSW Liberals and Nationals Government, the MUA notes that the inclusion of the Illawarra as a Renewable Energy Zone was only achieved through the lobbying of unions, local MPs and industry figures who saw the opportunities which the NSW Liberal Government had until then ignored.

“Left to their own devices, the Liberals would have overlooked the Illawarra and all its significant advantages for renewable energy projects. We thank the South Coast Labour Council and Labor MPs like Paul Scully and Yasmin Catley for negotiating on behalf of our community to ensure these reforms deliver long-term employment opportunities in Port Kembla,” Mr Cross said.

The Renewable Energy Zone will promote investment in the Illawarra and Port Kembla, with \$43 billion dollars of private investment already on offer through an Expression of Interest process undertaken by government last year, the bulk of which is in offshore wind.

“We have a massive opportunity here to eventually be using locally produced steel to produce wind turbine blades on the shores of Port Kembla which can be installed and maintained by locally flagged and crewed vessels. The opportunities and the work this investment will deliver will provide generations of well paid, skilled jobs right here in our harbour,” Mr Cross said. “That's on top of the utility-scale battery storage equipment, solar arrays and on-shore wind turbine equipment that will come through our port as more and more of these renewable energy projects come to life,” he added. ★

IWD Perth photo roundup



Australian-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society 2023 AGM

A CPA Member's Perspective

Che Janz

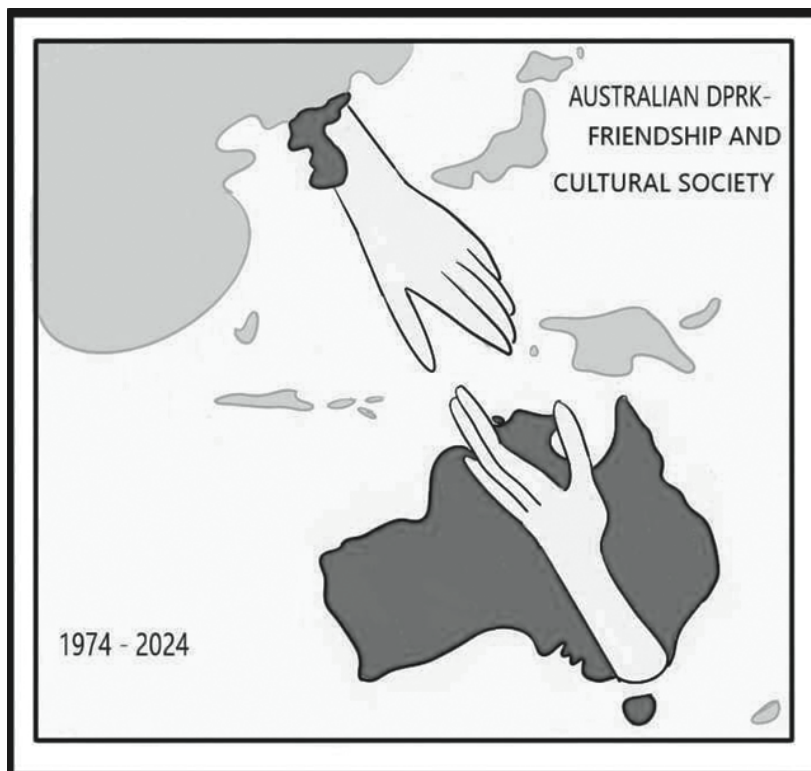
On the 24th February 2023, the Australian-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society Brisbane Branch met for their Annual General Meeting. Members from across Queensland, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, and Brisbane attended at the Trades and Labour Council in South Brisbane. Members of all ages came to discuss how the Society can end Western Imperialism and support the peaceful reunification of Korea. The society wishes to work with the CPA to help build socialism in Australia, and to aid socialist states abroad.

We shared how the DPRK society can continue its efforts to make the public aware of the real story behind the US government's global efforts to undermine this socialist country. The CPA Sunshine Coast Branch commissioned artists to create posters to show and campaign with. One design, by Eddie West, shows two hands reaching out from Australia to the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) signifying friendly relations between Australia and the DPRK. Other ideas were a movie night screening DPRK films, greeting cards designed by a member with the Gregorian and Juche calendars and a stall to sell these creations at events.

The Secretary, Ray Ferguson, spoke on how the society's bank account had been closed down by one of the "Big 4" banks, with the only given reason being that it was a "risk." This was an obvious result of the international sanctions placed by the USA. So far other societies, such as the Australia Cuba Friendship Society have not been forced to close their accounts. The DPRK is suffering from the global sanctions and the continuing attacks in the imperialist press of the US, UK, and Australia. This press gives no indications of the many achievements of the DPRK, spanning from a record number of new housing developments, land reclamation projects, and state of the art medical breakthroughs.

It's an anxious time for members of the society. From the fact that the bank closed our account we must take care in the society's meetings. The secretary's report mentioned how AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom and the United States Treaty) serves to destabilise to world peace and attempts to reignite the bloodshed of the Korean War (1950 to 1953).

The meeting concluded on a vigorous note. The society will continue to recruit nationally and with the help of the CPA, socialism will be built here and with fellow comrades will vanquish imperialism abroad. ✪



Celebrating 50 years of handshakes of Friendship and Cultural exchange between Australia and the DPRK!

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Queensland police to compile information on socialists, Marxists

Miles Fitzsimmons

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is enlarging and strengthening reporting on individuals with "extremist" views and beliefs as a result of the December 2022 killings of two police officers and a neighbour in Wieambilla.

According to an article released by ABC news on 17th February entitled "Queensland police beef up assessments of sovereign citizens, people with extremist beliefs following Wieambilla 'terrorist attack,'" the QPS is changing its procedures for recording interactions with "extremists." An internal memo sent to QPS officers via email describes new procedures for recording interactions with individuals who "allegedly hold a range of ideological beliefs." Under these new procedures officers are to record all interactions with "people holding ideological beliefs" in a state-wide central database known as

"QPrime" and officers are to do so at the earliest opportunity. Information will be then assessed by counter-terrorism investigation teams and can then be escalated or individuals flagged.

The article primarily focuses on the reporting of religiously-motivated extremists and conspiracy theorists of the kind that committed the Wieambilla attack, but one paragraph mentions a troubling aspect of the memo, namely the listing of groups defined as at risk who should be recorded in the QPrime database. The memo "describes the at-risk groups as conspiracy theorists, religious, social or political extremists and sovereign citizens, as well as people with ideologies relating to capitalism, communism, socialism, or Marxism."

While the full text of the memo is not reproduced, if the sections reported are accurate, the motivations and implications of this new QPS policy of documenting known

socialists and Marxists are troubling. Many Australians, Queenslanders in particular, will remember the government of Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the persecution of left-wing political forces and trade unions by the Queensland government and police at the time. Queensland was a notoriously corrupt and partisan police state, known for surveilling and persecuting political opponents. It is difficult not to see echoes of the Bjelke-Petersen regime in what effectively amounts to a register of political opponents and those not subscribing to the liberal status quo.

The justification for recording interactions with "extremists" is that the state needs to keep track of people likely to commit violence. This highlights that the QPS is drawing a false equivalence. It is placing groups like the sovereign citizen movement and religious fundamentalists on the same plane as anti-capitalists and Marxists.

This would seem to be a particularly aggressive application of so-called "horseshoe theory" whereby those on the far-right and far-left of the political spectrum are considered indistinguishable from each other by virtue of the fact they oppose the current organisation of society. This of course relies on ignoring the respective goals and methods of right-wingers and left-wingers as well as ignoring Australian history. Acts like the Wieambilla attacks are the exclusive domain of reactionaries in Australia. Based on the wording of the excerpts from the memo it would seem that the QPS believes that the mere act of holding political opinions or an "ideological belief" is abnormal and a threat.

We should reject this false equivalency between reactionary forces and ourselves, and oppose attempts to record and monitor socialists and Marxists fighting for change and justice in Queensland. ✪

Budget must tackle housing crisis

Everybody's home

Housing campaign Everybody's Home says renters on the lowest incomes will still struggle to make ends meet with the federal government's meagre rise in Centrelink payments and Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Launching its pre-budget submission, Everybody's Home has called on the government to:

- Build at least 25,000 social homes each year for 20 years;
- End tax handouts for

landlords, saving billions for social homes and renters in need;

- Boost funding for homelessness services;
- Raise the rate of Centrelink payments;
- helping renters on the lowest incomes.

Everybody's Home spokesperson Maiy Azize implored the government to address the national housing crisis in the budget.

"Australians are in a housing

emergency. They are paying the price for a broken system that is getting worse every year.

"Rents are sky high, vacancies are tight, and renters are foregoing the basics just to continue having a home. There's no respite in sight without government action.

"But instead of helping Australians in need, the government is spending billions each year on tax handouts to landlords – a fraction of what they spend helping renters in need.

"This week's updates to payments like JobSeeker and Commonwealth Rent Assistance are nowhere near keeping up with rent hikes. In real terms, those payments are going down.

"We're backing calls to raise the rate of JobSeeker and other income support payments over the poverty line, so everyone can keep a roof over their head and food on the table.

"We also call on the government to end the tax handouts for

landlords in its next Budget. That would free up billions to build more social homes.

"Australia has a shortfall of 500,000 social homes and no plan for how to fix it. The next Budget must commit to build 25,000 new social homes every year to end that shortfall.

"If the government is serious about housing affordability, it must put its money where its mouth is and take action." ✪

The fight against public service austerity

CPA Canberra Branch

No matter how much employers want workers to understand otherwise, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a boom period for capital. Finance capital, represented most obviously in Australia by the “big four” banks, is recording record profits. The same goes for fossil fuel, food, housing and other major industries. Inflation in commodity prices (initially negatively impacted by COVID-related supply chain pressures, but maintained even as these pressures have disappeared), as well as an interest rate environment that benefits banks and asset-owners are contributing enormously to this.

The capitalist myth of wage-price inflation is being used by capital – particularly its unelected and unaccountable representatives in our Reserve Bank – as an excuse for both the cause of inflation and need for contractionary monetary policy. Just as in the 1970s, the myth of wage-price spirals, rather than their actuality, was used to justify austerity measures.

So it is in the public service. Both the ACT Public Service and Australian Public Service (including associated corporations, like the ABC) are in the midst of, or about to commence, bargaining. Signs so far indicate that, unlike the December agreement for teachers in Queensland’s public education system, the ACT and Federal Labor governments are not willing to come to the table with guaranteed real wage parity, let alone growth, for their workers.

For the ACT government, this has meant 12 months of protracted negotiations on an Enterprise Agreement initially scheduled to end in 2021, with no pay increases for any of its workers since June 2022. As the impact of inflation hurts ACT government employees more and more – some were reporting to be sleeping in their cars as early as August last year – this depletion in real wages (7.8 per cent inflation against a 2.7 per cent wage rise from December 2021 to January 2022, representing a 5.1 per cent drop in purchasing power) is the number one issue needing remedy under the new Agreement.

The Labor government, however, has flatly refused to countenance anything approaching real wage rises in its core agreements, in spite of a commitment from the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, to at least match inflation less than 12 months ago. What has been tabled, both initially and this month is a mix of minimal percentage increases (1 per cent) and flat payments, neither of which come close to ensuring wage growth for the vast majority of its workforce (a similar percentage plus fixed figure arrangement has been tabled with ABC workers).

Tellingly, in its media releases, the government has pushed hard on the angle that the proposed arrangements will benefit low-paid workers the most – singling out those on the very bottom of the pay scale as examples. Those on \$53,868, they say, will see a 17.1 per cent increase in pay over the course of the three-year agreement. What they fail to note, however, is that these Class 1 salaries represent a tiny fraction of a workforce whose median salary is over \$90,000 a year. For the majority of workers, the proposed arrangements don’t even come close to matching current levels of inflation. The “cost-of-living” supplement of \$1,250 will barely pay the bond on any one bedroom apartment currently on the market. It is for these reasons that it appears more and more likely that the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) will vote for strike action in ACT government for the first time in at least two decades.

So what is behind this hard-nosed approach? From the perspective of the employer, it’s all about the bottom line; or at least the perceived one. In the ACT, for example, the pandemic saw increased temporary employment of public servants under the *Jobs for Canberra* campaign, an arrangement that is being used to justify the austerity narrative. These jobs, however, are not ongoing. The costs of the public health response as well, no doubt a burden on the public system, were shared significantly with the Commonwealth. These costs are also not ongoing, with, for example, the last public testing clinic closed last month.

What about revenue? As of 2022, rates represent 30 per cent of ACT government revenue, with land tax and stamp duty representing a further 27 per cent. Profits from land sales represent a further portion of property-related revenue to government. Property sale and rental prices in the ACT have inflated drastically since 2020 – greatly increasing the revenue paid by Canberrans across these income streams via bracket creep. Stamp duty payable on the median house price has inflated by almost \$16,000 in a decade, whilst land values (the indicator impacting rates) in some suburbs have increased by more than 35 per cent year-on-year. At the same time, government profit margins from land sales have surged to 72 per cent since 2018 (against 46 per cent in the preceding nine-year period).

This represents an enormous – and largely unexpected – boost to the Territory budget. The accounts from the upcoming ACT government budget will indicate the extent to which pandemic costs have been absorbed by this windfall, but the austerity narrative already being brought to the bargaining table clearly does not hold water. If anything, the ACT government, like big capital, has benefited from the pandemic.

Why then are negotiations dragging on, forcing one of Australia’s least militant unions into possible strike action? Uncertainty, despite the boom, is seeing the government aim for the most conservative of outcomes – lower wage costs over the course of the agreement guarantee a good fiscal position regardless of other factors. Labor, never a worker’s party, always a party mediating in favour of capital, also clearly have their ear to the ground regarding the wage price spiral fear-mongering. If the corporates on the Reserve Bank board are implementing anti-worker policy, so must the party of pokies and the Accord.

Most pertinently, however, Labor is perhaps most cognisant of upcoming bargaining across the Australian Public Service. At a time of uncertainty and increasing class antagonism, the self-proclaimed party of the union movement is certainly aware that heightened wage expectations may lead to greater labour agitation – a situation that does not benefit a government set on parading itself as one of fiscal moderation. If a conservative standard is established at the Territory level in Canberra, it can be replicated across the wider public service. After a decade of affiliated union campaigns explicitly supporting the return of a Federal Labor government to wind back Liberal cost-cutting and wage freezes across the Service, that very Labor government appears set to continue this trend.

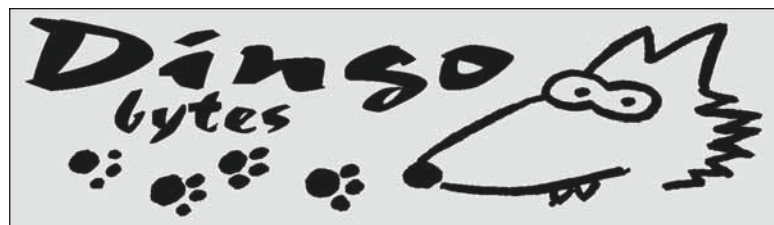
For Party delegates and workers in the public service, this moment represents a real opportunity to demonstrate the power of collective action and to push back against an austerity narrative “from the left.” As Jack McPhillips noted, “the correct stand for communists in the trade unions is to work to ensure forms of union organisation, union rules, and everyday practices which facilitate and encourage the maximum participation of the members.” Public service Party cadre should be using these months of negotiation (or pre-negotiation) to become delegates, encourage greater membership across their workplaces and supporting these comrades to push for a bargaining position that reflects their interests – regardless of executive positioning. For members in the ACT government, this is especially accessible given the existence of elected delegate representatives on both Section and Governing Council. In the Commonwealth service, increased union access under the new government should also be advantageous.

Just as Labor was the instigator of neoliberal reform in Australia, it is not afraid, as in the ACT government today, to throw the worker under the bus to conform to real, and unreal, pressures propounded by capital. It is the role of a worker’s party and its members to fight this.

Jack McPhillips, *Communists and the Trade Unions*, published by CPA NSW State Committee
nsw@cpa.org.au



Jack McPhillips.



The construction union, the CFMEU, has urged the Albanese government to ramp up its ambition on the Housing Australia Future Fund, which needs more investment to deliver strong outcomes for workers and public housing residents. The government’s \$10 billion future fund is slated to spend \$500 million a year with the aim of building 30,000 homes over five years. Unmet demand is estimated to be at 650,000 homes. “Australia is in the grips of one of the most serious housing crises in our history so what’s on the table simply doesn’t cut it,” the union’s National Secretary Zach Smith said.

“Labor must be more ambitious on social housing. The future fund proposal needs its funding to be dramatically increased if we’re going to go anywhere near meeting the skyrocketing need for housing. We need to ensure this fund has strict requirements to train Australian apprentices and use high-quality locally manufactured materials.” The union says a more ambitious investment is a massive long-term opportunity for Australian jobs and industry, but it needs to come with a commitment on local procurement and training with the houses being built by properly paid workers who are protected by the very best safety standards. “A housing future fund is a massive chance to build a stronger construction industry through top-notch jobs, skills, safety, and local procurement,” said Smith. “The government’s commitment simply isn’t enough.”

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Visions of a return to the colonial past fuel the insatiable greed of today’s transnational corporations, the great riches squeezed from slave labour. Joint stock companies, a depression, underground mining, and the colonial conquest of African chiefdoms all shaped the decision by the mining companies to introduce a closed compounds system in 1885. Compounds provided the framework for the total control of the African mineworkers. Once inside the military-style barracks, workers lost all access to the outside world for the length of a contract. In 1902 Gardner Williams, general manager of De Beers diamonds, described the largest compound: “Fully four acres are enclosed by the walls of De Beers’ Compound, giving ample space for the housing of its 3,000 inmates, with an open central ground for exercise and sports. The fences are of corrugated iron, rising ten feet above the ground, and there is an open space of ten feet between the fence and the buildings ... Iron cabins fringe the inner sides of the enclosure, divided into rooms 25 feet by 30 feet, which are lighted by electricity. In each room 20 to 25 natives are lodged. The beds supplied are ordinary wooden bunks, and the bed clothing is usually composed of blankets which the natives bring with them, or buy at the stores in the compound, where there is a supply of articles to meet the simple needs of the natives. In the centre of the enclosure there is a large concrete swimming bath.”

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Saving the Cuban Revolution

Review: *How the Workers' Parliaments Saved the Cuban Revolution – Reviving Socialism after the Collapse of the Soviet Union* by Pedro Ross.

Bob Treasure

DISASTER

When the Soviet Union and socialist bloc of Eastern Europe collapsed in 1990-91 the results were catastrophic for Cuba. Overnight GDP fell by 35 per cent. 70 per cent of Cuba's foreign markets evaporated. Oil supply fell from 13 million tonnes to 5.8 million tonnes. Public transport to and from work, as well as energy supplied to do that work, were thrown into crisis.

Whole sectors of industry had to curtail or close operations. Idle workers in factories were sent home. The government stuck by their payment of the 70 per cent guarantee, along with the universal ration, the "Libreta," which assured every Cuban a minimal amount of goods for survival. No-one would starve.

The Cuban government: the National Assembly of the Peoples Power, the Party Congress, Cuban Unions (CTC), and Fidel himself, all refused to sacrifice the vital pillars of socialist Cuba; free education and free health care. Not for them the capitalist mode of Thatcher/Regan neo-liberalism sweeping the globe at the time. Teachers and health workers would stay at their posts and receive their pay.

REVOLUTION UNDER THREAT

Meanwhile critics of the Revolution were boasting of "socialism as failure" and "the end of history" while touting capitalism as the best of all possible systems. Some predicted that Cuba would collapse within weeks.

To foster the predicted collapse, the US encouraged illegal immigration (the "Cuban Adjustment Act") by promising acceptance of people who fled Cuba secretly, while at the same time restricting legal visas. The "Toricelli Law" was enacted to reinforce the blockade. Later the "Helms-Burton Act" was introduced to punish third-party countries trading with Cuba.

Surging inflation, black marketeering and iniquities spread. In August 1994, riots broke out near the port and in central Havana. There were reports of stones being thrown and shots being fired and the police were mobilised, but Fidel arrived on the scene to insist that weapons not be used against the rioters, and stared the rioters down.

Asked why he risked injury to confront the crowd, Fidel replied, "If some stones were really being thrown and there was some shooting, I wanted to get my share of stones and shooting too!" He added that he wanted to, "... talk with our people, to exhort them to be calm, patient, cold-blooded, and not to let themselves be provoked."

Generally, throughout the "Special Period" of the 1990's the Cuban people remained co-operative, calm, and patient, and loyal to the revolution. Nevertheless something had to be done.

"ORGANOPONICS" AND "WORKERS' PARLIAMENTS"

In August 1994 Raul Castro Ruz identified the guarantee of food for the people as number one priority.

The call was answered: "Tens of thousands of workers, men and women, from enterprises that had shut down machinery or reduced their activity because of shortages of fuel, raw materials, and other inputs, made their way to the fields. Workers were trained as oxen handlers all over the country ... Numerous work centres, institutions, and organisations requested plots of land for agricultural production for their workers' cafeteria, to feed their families, and for their children's circles, schools, and health facilities."

They developed "organoponic gardens," furrows surrounded by a low rectangular wall of wood, stone, bricks, or concrete. After the first crop, the garden's earth is improved by crop residues, household wastes, animal manure, or any other organic material that could replenish the soil. Gradually the garden grows in height but improves its yield over time – "fields" could be created anywhere: building sites, vacant lots, roadsides, and in terraces on sloping land.

Yet basic agriculture did not address the desperate state of industrial lethargy. As General Secretary of CTC (the Workers Central Union of Cuba) Pedro Ross was called upon by Fidel and the government to mobilise the working class and improve productivity to drag Cuba's manufacturing industry out of its inertia, for without doing so inflation would continue to accumulate, corruption, and inequality grow, and class society recur.

"WORKERS' PARLIAMENTS"

"Parliaments" were called across the nation, in factories and workplaces to encourage Cuban workers to speak up, air their grievances, identify specific problems, and develop solutions.

Instead of "easy-fix" solutions to the inflationary crisis, like changing the currency or cutting state subsidies, the parliaments emphasised "looking inwards" – to the factories and work discipline inside each workplace. It was the *workers* who owned the factory space, the resources, the rules, structure and allocation of duties, and they needed to own the solutions.

From January 1994 three and a half million workers from 80,000 union sections, plus 158,000 small farmers, and 300,000 students came together to plan and set up the parliaments. The whole country became a school of Marxist political economy.

THE "LENIN CENTRAL WORKSHOP"

The Lenin Central Workshop repaired combine harvester engines for sugarcane production. When the parliament opened, workers there admitted to 11 per cent absenteeism, and that 12 per cent of engines supposedly repaired had been rejected because the repairs had not been thorough enough. This meant that the workshop was only productive for nine months of the year.

The Lenin Central workers adopted a "Basic Unit of Cooperative Production" (UBPC) of 250 fully repaired engines per month. This was not a dictated target but a reasonable guide to work goals and safety processes based on the know-how of the workers themselves. It was well within their capacity and they surpassed the target in future months.

The physician handing out false medical excuses was replaced. "Surplus workers" who might otherwise be "downsized" were redeployed growing food for the depleted canteen in an organoponic garden near the factory. Transport problems for some workers were overcome when they were allocated bicycles (a million of which were donated by China and assembled in Cuba for the "Special Period").

Furthermore the Lenin Central Workshop set up another UBPC for "Marabu" (sicklebush – a prickly invasive weed growing in the local vicinity) which could be harvested by idle off-season machines and processed into charcoal, thus becoming a valuable commodity at the domestic and export level. The whole concept of "recycling" became part and parcel of every workers' DNA, and was a huge factor in rebuilding productivity.

ASSESSMENT

By the end of 1994 Cuba was now able to reduce its debt by 24 per cent and stem inflation, while at the same time preserving the precious pillars of the Socialist Revolution. Numerous surveys confirmed worker satisfaction with the parliaments.

To quote Ross: "The parliaments promoted solutions ... for many obstacles. They provided a space for collective analysis of the crisis the country was confronting after the collapse of the European socialist model and the reinforcement of the US blockade. The parliaments also exposed our own insufficiencies – the instances of indiscipline, the lack of order and control, bureaucratic inertia, and obsolete practices that hindered innovation."

"The workers parliaments expressed the political culture of the great majority of Cuban workers in hard times. In them, they asserted their confidence in Fidel and the Revolution and their will to defend the Revolution's work."

Pedro Ross' account of the difficulties and responses of the "Special Period" is invaluable, and very relevant to Cuba's dire situation now, as it emerges from the privations of COVID, both natural and industrial disasters, intensified US blockade pressures, and inflated currency problems. The answers once more lie with the will of the Cuban working class. ☺

GREEN NOTES

Anna Pha

Humanity faces two major existential threats: climate change and nuclear war. The doomsday clock is ticking on both these threats. Ironically, the US war machine which is the largest single contributor to climate change faces threats from climate change – witness the extreme weather events. The Pentagon is the world's biggest single consumer of fossil fuels – and driver of climate change. US military greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions since the beginning of the so-called Global War on Terror in 2001 total an estimated 1.2 billion metric tonnes of greenhouse gases.

The military are estimated to produce 5.5 per cent of global GHG emissions. This estimate does not take into account GHG emissions arising from the impacts of warfighting, such as fires, other damage to infrastructure and ecosystems, post-conflict reconstruction, and health-care for survivors. The under current UN Framework for the Convention on Climate Change there is a loophole whereby nations are only required to report their military's fuel usage data. What data they do provide is often distorted by appearing under the aviation category. There is no obligation to report GHG emissions resulting from the manufacture of materiel, war exercises, weapons testing, and wars.

"War fighting, preparations for war, the manufacture of weapons and military facilities are highly polluting, highly damaging to the environment and a major contributor to climate change. The overall environmental cost of waging war is huge," notes Dr Hannah Middleton in *Fighting for the Future*.

"Military pollution is particularly poisonous. Fighter jets, destroyers, tanks and other weapons systems emit highly toxic, carbon-intensive emissions, not to mention the toxins released from the detonation of bombs including the forever-poison depleted uranium munitions."

"The damage the US military has inflicted is shocking, and they have shown complete negligence and disregard of human life," earth.org reports. There are numerous examples of this disregard from the US's use of agent orange in Vietnam to the firing of depleted uranium (DU) weapons at civilian areas as well as troops. The cost to the planet and humanity cannot be measured in dollars.

War not only contributes to climate change, but climate change can lead to conflicts as nations are faced with famine, loss of fertile land, contaminated water supplies, and other consequences of extreme weather events.

The AUKUS deal at \$368 billion plus cost blowouts is the largest and most lucrative single deal ever with almost all of it going offshore. The Albanese Labor government's allocation for climate change and energy transformation is a pathetic and shameful \$24.9 billion over the six years to 2029-30. Every dollar spent on these war preparations is a dollar less for health, education, housing, the NDIS, a dollar less for pensioners and the unemployed. It takes Australia another step closer to war, possibly a nuclear war. It is yet another nail in the coffin for humanity and the planet.

Time is running out. The government must cancel the submarines, slash military spending and redirect the savings to social spending in the interests of the Australian people and genuine foreign aid. The South Australian shipyards could be converted to build a merchant fleet for Australia – a step towards greater sovereignty. It is time Australia signed the United Nations treaty outlawing nuclear weapons and played a role of peacemaker in the Indo-Pacific.

A return

Report on the 38th Southern

Richard Titelius

Since January 1983, dedicated groups of Australian and New Zealand friends of Cuba have made their way to the Caribbean to show their support for the island's Socialist Revolution, spending three weeks learning about its society, culture, economy, and politics. In return they spend mornings volunteering to undertake agricultural work or other community work.

For the past couple of years, the COVID-19 pandemic put the Brigade to Cuba on hold as the world, including Australia, New Zealand, and Cuba, dealt with the challenges of quarantine, isolation and vaccination. By the end of 2022, however, the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP by its Spanish acronym), in concert with our Australian organisers, were ready to recommence their important internationalist work.

Fourteen Australians made their way from every Australian mainland state and the ACT to be a part of the 38th Southern Cross Brigade. A variety of genders and ages were represented by the cohort, with 50 per cent of participants under the age of 30. The program was a little different this time as the challenges facing Cuba had intensified during the pandemic and the need for international expressions of solidarity had therefore become more important. The two officials from ICAP who guided and organised the Brigade from the Cuban side were Iván and Margarita.

MAINTAINING & DEEPENING THE REVOLUTION

On the first full day of activities, the brigadistas engaged in a discussion with Professor and Editor of *La Tizza* magazine, Ernesto Teuma, on the topic of the modern challenges facing the Revolution. Professor Teuma began by stating that Cuba remains a beacon of hope for many people in the world as one of the few socialist projects from the 20th Century that has survived into the 21st Century.

Though the Revolution has brought enormous gains to the people of Cuba, the island's relative isolation (propelled by the US blockade, discussed further below) continues to incur economic and social costs. A key item of discussion was the ongoing

challenge of energising young people to carry on – and deepen – the Revolutionary process; the distance between them and 1959, let alone, the Special Period of the 1990s grows year-by-year.

Professor Teuma outlined how, both through necessity and, to a much lesser extent, policy choice, Cuba was forced to participate in the global economy following the defeat of the Soviet Union and the end of COMECON (socialist trading bloc). The US blockade, in place since 1962 and tightened progressively over time (especially since 1991), is the central hurdle to Cuba's ongoing participation in this economy; a reality that Cuba and all who wish to do business with it (including Australians) must contend with.

While revolutionary politics is still evident in the world, many have lost the incentive to continue with the revolutionary project as the harsh struggle for the emancipatory reality of actually existing socialism is necessarily heightened by the backlash of capitalist interests, especially the United States. From the perspective of the individual, the long struggle may not weigh positively against perceived short-term prosperity.

The Professor provided colour to the discussion by highlighting how this reality has played out in his own family, noting that his younger brother decided to leave for the US during the COVID period; Ernesto has stayed, his commitment to the Revolution steadfast. Increased access to information through the internet and social media has seen many Cubans, especially younger ones, view – through the distorted lens of the web – while the “realities” of capitalist life, comparing what they see to their material realities in Cuba. For Cubans the socialist project continues to resonate, the realities of life amongst their colonised brothers and sisters in the Caribbean and the rest of Latin America is a stark warning as to what capitalism really is.

Access to education and employment abound in Cuba, even if the incomes are relatively low. Some foodstuffs may be in short supply and/or expensive in the free marketplace, but the reality of the ration system means that no Cuban wants for key nutrients, let alone starves.

Beyond the distance from 1959, however, what else defines the deradicalisation of Cuban youth? Professor Teuma noted that, as the private market has begun to have more of a role in the lives of many, marginalisation

has begun to occur as lives are not perpetually integrated into the institutions of the Revolutionary state.

As late as the 1990s, a Cuban citizen could be born into a public health system, study until their mid-twenties in a public education system, be guaranteed employment in a state enterprise and live out their days in a state-allocated home, dying in a public hospital in the care of, perhaps, the same doctor who helped bring them into the world.

Today, many Cubans work in the formalised private sector (small shops, restaurants and limited factories) or the grey market – the state does not play as active a role in their lives as it once did. The social safety net is taken for granted; the low incomes scorned.

The discussion, though touching on the difficult realities of socialism, did not reflect ruptures in the Revolutionary process, but instead the contrary reality: Revolution is about awakening a change for the better, even under conditions of socialism. If the Revolution is to thrive into the 21st Century, it must continue to confront the challenges and contradictions of its reality, awakening a new consciousness amongst a youth that want fulfilling lives.

A VISIT TO MATANZAS

After the traditional New Year trip to the ballet at the State Theatre in Havana the Brigade climbed onto the bus to visit Matanzas province. Here, we would be accommodated at the Korimakao social project in Palpite and see some of the significant social and historical sites in the beautiful Ciénaga de Zapata nature preserve.

Korimakao, built during the early Special Period, is a live-in arts school where students hone visual, musical, and theatrical art skills, giving back to the localities in the province through performance and teaching. Schools throughout the region are especially engaged.

On the first morning at Korimakao, brigadistas headed for the coastal town of Guasasa where the artists from Korimakao performed a rendition of “Three Little Pigs” for primary school students. Afterwards, the Brigade gave back to the community by picking up rubbish and painting the office (and therefore home) of the local Family Doctor.

After the work we were given a meal and a swim in the brackish lake or the open sea. On the return to camp, we visited the Museum of Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs) which commemorates the successful defeat of the

US invaders in April 1961; 1,400 ex-Cuban mercenaries, supported by the US government led by President John Kennedy, crushed by the Revolutionary Army of newly-liberated Cuba. The Cuban defence was directed by Comandante Fidel Castro from an old sugar refinery headquarters in the Matanzas locality.

The iconic photo of Fidel jumping down from a Russian T-34 tank is from this time. The display at the museum included a 15-minute documentary film of the events at the time which pieced together the events of those 72 hours; capturing the violence and terrorism inflicted by the invaders.

To round out our stay in Matanzas, we visited the well-maintained pre-Revolutionary dwellings of the *carboneros*; those who made a living making charcoal. The huts are in Sopillar, famous amongst locals as the location of the “First Dinner of the Revolution.”

In 1959, months into the Revolutionary process, Fidel flew by helicopter into this community of hard-working peasants, wanting to see for himself what the Revolution had yet to do in the poorest parts of the country. Over a celebratory feast, Fidel promised that he would bring the benefits of the Revolution to this place: roads, power, running water, and a library following soon after.

Back at Korimakao, the performers who had been treating us to nightly song and dance taught us how to dance, sing, and act the Cuban way; giving us the confidence to perform on the last night, showing that we could perform as well with the right training.

CITY OF CHE & MARTA ABREU

No Brigade to Cuba is entirely complete without a visit to Santa Clara: the home of the Memorial to Che Guevara and location of the final and decisive battle of the 1959 Revolution. After the visit to the Mausoleum, we were given a presentation by Miguel Angel Gomez, local President of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, and by soldiers of the Cuban Revolutionary Forces.

The Association also promotes the independence, sovereignty and defence of the Revolution and it does this through presentations to groups such as us and to various schools and universities in the area. The Association believes it is important to work and celebrate with children and young adults to create a sense of unity and solidarity



to Cuba

ern Cross Brigade 2022/23

among the people; a link between those who fought for the Revolution and those who live in it today. Today, this also includes the digitisation of materials to be promulgated via the internet.

In the evening, the Brigade attended a presentation by the founder and organiser of the social project El Mejunje, Ramon Silverio. Founded in a formerly derelict set of buildings in Santa Clara, El Mejunje celebrated 30 years of work during January. The brainchild of Silverio during the Special Period, the space celebrates diversity and promotes a wide array of social movements, especially LGBTI activities.

Ironically, perhaps the most striking example of this open-door ethos was the patron with a penchant for everything US and rock and roll; a virulent anti-communist who had been a part of the 11th July 2021 protests and served three days' imprisonment for his behaviour.

During the Family Code campaign, El Mejunje became a major player in promoting the aims of the reform amongst the LGBTI community, especially provisions pertaining to same-sex marriage and adoption.

Reflecting the success of the nation-wide education program, the new Family Code was put to a referendum in late 2022 and approved by nearly 70 per cent of Cubans, despite a hard-fought campaign by churches and other conservative forces within and without Cuba – especially in the US. Silverio said that he feels he can rest now as most of what he wanted to achieve for the LGBTI community has been realised.

2022 was a difficult year for Cuba which was struck by three major calamities: the gas explosion in Havana, the major fire of a Matanzas oil supertanker and Hurricane Ian. The people of Santa Clara donated money, food and other supplies to the people affected by those disasters via a fund co-ordinated by El Mejunje.

This reflects the trust placed in the social project as a positive player in the community; even the Catholic Church urged parishioners to donate. When the supplies arrived in Pinar del Rio, the people distributing the supplies delivered them into the hands of the most needy.

The next two days in Santa Clara involved volunteer agricultural work in the morning – once at an agricultural cooperative which supplied fruit and vegetables to the tourist sector and another at the Pedagogical School

of Manuel Ascunce Domenech – named after a teacher who was killed by counter revolutionaries in the Cuban literacy campaign of 1961.

At the pedagogical school we were given a tour of the facilities and an explanation of the work of the school. One of the sessions took place in a meeting room in which was placed a large gravel mural of Fidel. This initiated a discussion on the concept of the cult of personality and Fidel's public opposition to it. The mural, conceived and produced by students at the school, was said to reflect respect for Fidel's revolutionary vision; a symbol, much like José Martí, of what Cuba must carry on.

In the afternoon we received a presentation on the society, economy, and environment of the province of Villa Clara which included a discussion on what measures are being taken to limit the effects of climate change. This included a basic recycling system (basic due to the excessive cost of extensive programs in a blockaded state), development restrictions on coastal land and developing renewables in the form of wind and solar.

Along a similar vein of technological development and constraints, we also visited the largest teaching hospital in the city (2,248 employees, including 977 doctors and 555 nurses). Unions and the Communist Party participate in the smooth running of the hospital and 100 per cent of the staff are union members (a significant increase on figures in previous decades).

The Brigade was given a presentation on the organisation of the hospital which included the acknowledgement that a unitary system of public healthcare is considerably more advantageous than the private-public systems found in countries such as Australia; coordination and pooling of resources is significantly more effective across a system that supports people from birth until death.

The Brigadistas from Australia knew what he meant and reflected on the waste and expense of having a private-public model. We also saw that in the hospital they had a section for alternative medicine which is considered a science and is used when appropriate and to remove the stigma from a holistic approach to healthcare.

While in Santa Clara we also visited the University of Marta Abreu which is one of the largest in the country with 12 faculties and 15 research centres including one which

has gained international attention for its development of a cement which is cheaper to produce, stronger than conventional cement, and produces a fraction of the emissions in production.

The cement is produced not with the conventional clinker, but waste from other mining processes, particularly bauxite. Australia was offered the opportunity to participate in trials but declined the invitation across the industry. Its application in China is growing rapidly, however.

THE MALLORY DECLARATION

Back in Havana we visited the Fidel Castro Centre, a new library/interactive museum centre dedicated to the life, works and ideas of Comandante Fidel Castro, which was opened on 25th November 2021, and includes an amphitheatre, nine exhibition rooms, a library and audio-visual presentations, including on significant events such as Playa Giron.

Back at camp, we were provided with a final lecture by the esteemed Dr Ernesto Dominguez-Lopez of the University of Havana. Discussing US-Cuba relations, Dominguez outlined a 400-year history of temporary collaboration but constant US antagonism described as "When you have a global power, they have an agenda of civilising those smaller players and help countries like Cuba to become 'free' according to the way the US would like to see the world."

This led the US to invade Cuba when it looked like Cuba would be able to defeat Spain and become an independent sovereign nation. This did not suit US interests and through a series of forced interventions the US maintained a presence on the island till 1959 when the Revolution led by Fidel, Che, Raul, Camilo, and thousands of revolutionaries succeeded in gaining freedom for the Cuban people and developing a socialist republic – much to the annoyance of the capitalist USA.

So concerned were US government officials of the popularity of the socialist government of Cuba they developed a policy that was enshrined in the Mallory Declaration of April 1960, named after a Lestor Mallory, a State Department official.

The declaration is only a page long and can be distilled down to two aims. 1.) To prevent the popularity of the Cuban socialist

model among other countries in the world and 2.) "Weaken the economic life of Cuba by denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation, and overthrow of government." Though US administrations have come and gone over the years since and a few have adopted different tactics, they have not relented on the end goal which is still to bring about the end of the socialist revolution of Cuba which they consider anathema to US capitalism and hegemony.

Most recently during the COVID pandemic, the administrations of both Donald Trump and Joe Biden saw an opportunity to topple the Cuban government by tightening the financial and economic blockade on Cuba when it was at its most vulnerable with a diminishing of trade and tourism during this period of enforced isolation.

There was also a reintroduction of the accusation of State Sponsoring of Terrorism label which even a group of 160 US lawyers petitioned the Biden government to repeal, saying that under the State Department's own criteria, Cuba does not meet the standards for sponsoring terrorism. (*Guardian* #2042, 27th February 2023 page 12).

This was the essential message that the organisers of the brigade wished to impress upon us for our return to Australia to spread the word of peace, friendship, unity and solidarity with the Cuban people. That contrary to Western mass media reports, Cuba is a free sovereign country and its people are also free to stay or leave if they so wish.

The US may wish to create pathways for people to enter the US from their southern border to "escape" difficult economic conditions of their own making (via the blockade). The US could solve this issue overnight, yet uses its power in the world to tighten its measures, year-by-year, to fulfil the Mallory aims: to obliterate a liberatory example in the US's backyard.

ICAP is currently promoting the next two Brigades to encourage people to see the Cuban socialist revolution/project and society for themselves. The next 39th Brigade in the summer of 2023/24 will celebrate 40 years of the Brigade and the following one in 2024/25 will be the 40th Brigade.

People wanting to go on a Brigade to Cuba "to be more than a tourist" are encouraged to contact southerncrossbrigade@gmail.com, the Australian Cuban Friendship Society in their respective region or ICAP. 🇺🇸



Israel's genocide unmasked

Ali Abunimah

Bezalel Smotrich, the ultra-far-right Israeli finance minister, declared in Paris that Palestinians do not exist. There is "no such thing as Palestinians because there's no such thing as the Palestinian people," Smotrich said.

His remarks were "met with applause and cheers from attendees," *The Times of Israel* noted and as videos of the event show. Smotrich went further, declaring that he – a West Bank settler – is a "real" Palestinian.

Speaking from Paris, Smotrich declared: "The Palestinian people are an invention from the past century. There is no such thing as Palestinians because there's no such thing as the Palestinian people".

Hanging from Smotrich's podium was a flag depicting the whole of historic Palestine, Jordan and parts of Lebanon and Syria as belonging to the Zionist state – revealing a desire for even greater territorial expansion that other Israeli officials have expressed as well lately.

The claim that Palestinians don't exist or are an "invented people" is widespread among Zionists. In 2014, Sheldon Adelson, the late billionaire mega-donor to anti-Palestinian causes and the US Republican Party, similarly declared that the "Palestinians are an invented people."

"The purpose of the existence of Palestinians is to destroy Israel," Adelson added. Two years later Brooke Goldstein, a prominent Israel lobby activist in the United States, asserted that "There's no such thing as a Palestinian person."

But perhaps most notorious is Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's 1969 declaration that "There is no such thing as Palestinians." Meir was a stalwart of Israel's ostensibly left-wing Labor Party establishment.

Smotrich's latest comment comes just weeks after he declared that the Palestinian town of Huwara should be "wiped out" by the State of Israel. There should be no doubt that Smotrich means what he says and if given an opportunity, he and the ascendant political movement he represents would carry it out.

There should also be no doubt that what Smotrich is talking about and inciting is the genocide of the Palestinian people.

Nor are Smotrich's remarks ill-considered outbursts; they reflect deep and careful thinking and a coherent ideology.

VALUES OF THE GERMAN SS

In 2017, Smotrich set out a plan to force the Palestinian people out of their homeland and take their entire land once and for all. At the time, Daniel Blatman, a professor of Holocaust studies at Hebrew University, wrote that Smotrich took inspiration for his plan from the biblical Book of Joshua, which describes the wholesale slaughter of a people by the "children of Israel."

Blatman called Smotrich, who was then deputy speaker of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, "the most senior government figure to date to say unabashedly that the option of genocide is on the table if the Palestinians don't agree to our terms."

Under Smotrich's plan, Palestinians would have to submit

to complete Jewish supremacy, or be forced out. Today, Smotrich not only controls the finance ministry, but he has been given special powers over the so-called civil administration, the Israeli military occupation bureaucracy that runs the lives of millions of Palestinians – people whom Smotrich does not believe exist.

"Smotrich's admiration for the biblical genocidaire Joshua bin Nun leads him to adopt values that resemble those of the German SS," Blatman, a former fellow of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, added.

It should be emphasised that even at the time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was willing to give a stamp of approval to Smotrich's ideas.

"I was happy to hear that you are devoting the discussions at the conference to the subject of the future of the Land of Israel," Netanyahu said in a recorded greeting played at the gathering where Smotrich set out his genocidal plan.

"Up until not so many years ago, this country was deserted and abandoned, but since we returned to Zion, after generations of exile, the Land of Israel is flourishing," Netanyahu asserted.

LIBERAL WHITEWASHING

Liberal Zionists have already made intense efforts to portray the likes of Smotrich and Israel's Kahanist national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir as aberrations who are somehow not true representatives of Israel and Zionism.

There should be no doubt that Smotrich is simply articulating Israel's foundational ideology and policy. In 2004, the liberal Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* interviewed Benny Morris, one of Israel's "new historians" who in the 1980s used Zionist sources to validate Palestinian accounts of the Nakba – the systematic ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948 during which Zionist militias perpetrated rapes, arbitrary murders, and dozens of massacres.

Morris explained that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founding prime minister – like Meir, a pillar of the nominally secular, left-wing Labor Party – personally directed the deliberate "transfer" of the Palestinian people from much of their homeland.

"Ben-Gurion was a transferist," Morris explained. "He understood that there could be no Jewish state with a large and hostile Arab minority in its midst. There would be no such state. It would not be able to exist."

"I don't hear you condemning him," the *Haaretz* interviewer told Morris.

"Ben-Gurion was right," Morris responded. "If he had not done what he did, a state would not have come into being. That has to be clear. It is impossible to evade it. Without the uprooting of the Palestinians, a Jewish state would not have arisen here."

But for Morris, Ben-Gurion's mistake is that he did not do enough ethnic cleansing. "If he [Ben-Gurion] was already engaged in expulsion, maybe he should have done a complete job," Morris asserted.

"I know that this stuns the Arabs and the liberals and the politically correct types," Morris said. "But my feeling is that this place would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had



Bezalel Smotrich, the ultra-far-right Israeli finance minister.

Photo: דלורף ותיא Atbannett at Hebrew Wikipedia (CC BY-SA 3.0)

been resolved once and for all. If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion and cleansed the whole country – the whole Land of Israel, as far as the Jordan River."

"It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake," Morris added. "If he had carried out a full expulsion – rather than a partial one – he would have stabilised the State of Israel for generations."

No one who calls themselves a Zionist, whether on the "left" or the far-right, can fundamentally disagree with Morris. That's why no one who calls themselves a Zionist supports the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

It is why Zionists, even of the "liberal" variety, constantly fret about the "demographic threat" from the births of Palestinian babies.

THIS IS GENOCIDE

And if no Zionist can fundamentally disagree with Morris, then they can't really disagree with Smotrich either. Indeed, Smotrich himself echoed Morris almost verbatim in 2021 when he yelled at Palestinian lawmakers in Israel's parliament in 2021 that "It's a mistake that Ben-Gurion didn't finish the job and didn't throw you out in 1948."

They may feign shock and disgust with Smotrich's language, but anyone who believes that Israel must remain a "Jewish state" with a Jewish majority has to endorse the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians that Israel has perpetrated to date, whether or not they actively advocate further large-scale expulsions in the future.

Indeed, the position of the

diminishing number of Israeli "liberals" and other supporters of the so-called two-state solution can be summed up as follows: We support all the ethnic cleansing and land theft that Israel has already carried out but think future expulsions and land theft should be limited – although by how much is open to debate.

Whereas the position of Smotrich and company is: We, like you, support all the ethnic cleansing and land theft to date, but think there needs to be much more.

Morally and practically there is no difference because both positions relegate millions of Palestinians to living under brutal Jewish supremacist rule and apartheid or exiled from their homeland solely and exclusively because they are not Jews.

Coupled with the frequent claims that the Palestinians do not and have never existed as a people, Israel's expulsions and massacres transcend the horrifying enough crime of ethnic cleansing and enter the realm of genocide: the complete erasure of the Palestinians as a people.

Here too, Smotrich's position that Palestinians have no existence let alone rights as a people is no aberration but a reflection of Israeli consensus.

Recall that in 2018, Israel adopted its so-called Nation-State Law, a constitutional instrument declaring that "the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people," thereby denying to Palestinians any national rights or existence.

And when Benjamin Netanyahu's new coalition government took office in December, it declared as its first guiding principles that "the Jewish people have an exclusive and unquestionable right over all areas of the land of Israel."

It is often said, understandably, that Israel's current government is its most openly racist and right-wing in history. That may be true in terms of its rhetoric, but there is no practical difference between Israel's founder David Ben-Gurion and a fanatically right-wing religious Zionist like Smotrich.

But after decades of mostly suppressing Smotrich's brand of openly genocidal language in favour of presenting a "liberal" and "democratic" face, why are Israelis now embracing it? It is because Israel's "demographic problem" – the existence of "too many" living, breathing Palestinians on their own soil – is becoming urgent.

With Jews once again a minority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, many Israelis clearly feel they have no option but to return fully to their country's genocidal roots.

That is why ostracising Smotrich – as French officials have done by declining to meet him during his time in their country – is insufficient and misleading because it falsely portrays one "extremist" as the problem.

The problem is Zionism itself and the ongoing genocidal settler-colonial nightmare it has unleashed on the Palestinian people and their land.

The Electronic Intifada ✪



US army soldiers run to Black Hawk helicopters, Iraq, 2008. Photo: Luke Thornberry/@USArmy – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

USA: What did the Iraq war cost?

Peter Certo

Most of us who were alive then remember where we were on the morning of the 9/11 attacks. As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War, I wonder how many also remember where we were that day.

On 9/11, I was a Catholic school eighth grader. I'll never forget my teacher, Mrs Anderson, wheeling the TV into the room and saying simply, "I have something to tell you." That afternoon, the school held a prayer service and sent us home early.

On 19th March 2003, when I was a freshman in a Catholic high school, the TVs came out again. In stark, night-vision footage, bombs exploded over Baghdad. We were barely teenagers, yet here we were again, watching explosions vaporise human beings on TV.

But this time, the bell rang, classes changed, and folks just carried on. I trudged to my next class, heart-sick and bewildered.

Looking back, it's easier to understand those reactions as a result of the trauma we all suffered after 9/11. People felt wounded, insecure – a feeling the Bush administration exploited with its bald-faced lies that Iraq was linked to the attacks and armed with weapons of mass destruction.

Neither the war nor those lies have aged well in history. Upwards of a million Iraqis were killed, and the violence unleashed a shock wave of instability across the Middle East.

But when I think about the cost of the war now, I also think about the other futures that were lost as that numb pall fell over my classroom.

The Iraq War super-charged the militarised spending that was already surging after 9/11, which totalled over US\$21 trillion as of 2021. The National Priorities Project calculates that just a fraction of that sum could have totally decarbonised the US power grid, created millions of good jobs, wiped out all student debt, and all but ended child poverty in this country – with plenty left over.

Imagine what our world would look like today if we'd made those choices. Instead, it was war, torture, mass surveillance, and other scandals that filled the space in our imagination where those dreams might have gone. Our gloomy present era of polarisation and alternative facts feels like a direct result of this malaise.

But fortunately, that's not the end of the story.

It may have taken the climate crisis and another traumatising, mass casualty event – the COVID-19 pandemic – but younger generations have burst open the negligent politics of the Iraq War era with demands for all that was due plus interest.

Why can't everyone have affordable health care, a liveable planet, and paths to pursue a better life? The movements for Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, and student debt cancellation are posing these questions in a new, serious way that politicians actually have to answer.

Yet military spending is still climbing, the planet is still warming, and our democracy, civil rights, and human rights feel shakier than ever.

People's World ✪

Banks collapse

Thousands of jobs are set to go as the Swiss government backed the deposits of troubled Credit Suisse by giant UBS amid fears of a global banking crisis.

Global stock markets plummeted after it was announced that UBS would be taking over Credit Suisse.

On the news of the takeover, Hong Kong's main index slid 2.7 per cent. London, Frankfurt, and Paris all opened down by more than 1 per cent. Shanghai, Tokyo, and Sydney all nosedived.

Oil prices also plunged by more than AU\$2.5 (£1.60) per barrel.

Credit Suisse's shares collapsed by 63 per cent while UBS saw its share value sink by 14 per cent.

UBS agreed to take over the ailing Credit Suisse for AU\$4.8 billion (£2.65bn) after a weekend of frantic talks amid fears of a collapsing Swiss banking system.

The shock follows the collapse of two major US banks Silicon Valley, and Signature.

The Swiss National Bank has agreed to back the deal to the tune of \$100 billion in financial guarantees while the government has also provided a default guarantee, to halt the collapse of UBS.

But, according to a leaked

internal memo, senior bankers are still set to receive their bonuses.

The bailout will not ease the fears of the vast majority of UBS's 74,000 workers worldwide. Even before news of the takeover, Credit Suisse was in the process of cutting 9000 jobs.

UBS chairman Colm Kelleher said that it was "too early" to make a judgement on whether there would be job cuts, but then said the deal "represents enormous opportunities" for his bank to "downsize" Credit Suisse to align it with what he described as the more "conservative culture" of UBS.

Morning Star ✪



Global Briefs

HONDURAS: The President of Honduras has announced that the country will seek to establish diplomatic relations with mainland China instead of Taiwan. The Foreign Minister was instructed "to manage the opening of official relations with the People's Republic of China" to join the rest of the world in "expanding the borders with freedom."

USA: About 1.5 million litres of radioactive water has leaked from a nuclear plant in Monticello, and the US state of Minnesota. The Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) said that the state agencies are monitoring Xcel Energy's efforts to clean up "a release of water contaminated with tritium" detected at the nuclear-generating plant. Xcel Energy reported the leak in November 2022, and the four-month delay in making the leak public has sparked concerns about public safety and transparency. Tritium is a by-product in the generation of electricity by nuclear power plants.

FRANCE: The Paris mayor's office reported that more than 10,000 tons of garbage have piled up in the streets of Paris due to a strike by street cleaners protesting against the government's pension cuts. The authorities have been warning about the health risks for residents and the spread of various diseases. However, the mayor of Paris, Anna Hidalgo, has rejected the government's request to resort to administrative measures to force garbage collectors and street cleaners to return to work. According to the Mayor, the workers have the right to protest and the only acceptable course of action would be to initiate a public dialogue.

PERU: The Boluarte government has a disapproval rate of 76 per cent, and 51 per cent of Peruvians consider that the Congress staged a coup against President Pedro Castillo. Since the President's dismissal, over 60 people have died and about 1300 people have been injured in anti-government demonstrations in Peru. The Peruvian National Police dismissed eight generals who ordered the repression of protests against President Dina Boluarte.

MEXICO, COLUMBIA, and CUBA are planning to form the Regional Medical Devices Agency. This proposal seeks to boost the Latin American production of medicines raw materials and equipment. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel strongly backed this initiative, stressing that the convergence of health regulations and standards in the region is indispensable to counteract the effects of the post-COVID crisis together. Currently, Latin America has seven out of the 15 countries in the world with the highest COVID-19 mortality rates per 100,000 inhabitants. As of 15th March, the region had registered 68,163,526 COVID-19 cases and 1,351,596 related deaths.

Communist Party of Australia

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Minnow Australia in the Anglosphere

Why does Australia want nuclear submarines at all? The 2016 Defence White Paper tell us that “the key capabilities of the future submarine will include:

- Anti-submarine warfare;
- Anti-surface warfare;
- Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and

• Support to special operations.

A diesel submarine can do all four and the 2020 Force Structure Plan admits this in its discussion of the future submarine’s capabilities to “regional anti-submarine warfare.” If any such actions are purely intended for regional purposes, then diesel submarines are all that we need.

Defence documents, however, talk about “interoperability with the United States,” which has 54 nuclear powered attack submarines compared with Russia’s 12 and China’s 6 ballistic missile submarines. So, presumably we need American nuclear-powered attack submarines in order to sink these “enemy” submarines before they could launch their missiles? I’m visualising scenes from *Dr Strangelove* already!

Of course, as anyone paying any attention to this knows, AUKUS isn’t about the subs, it’s about maintaining US superiority in the region and in order to do that we need nuclear-powered submarines with the ability to seek, track, trail, and (if necessary) destroy Chinese and Russian nuclear

ballistic submarines. The creation of AUKUS is all about consolidating the global, nuclear “Anglosphere”, in which “minnow” Australia is a geographical superpower.

Unfortunately, we in the West are currently seeing our Garden Island’s Fleet Base West, being upgraded to the tune of \$8 million to host these subs. We provide a politically stable and easily supplied home base for these AUKUS subs and plenty of space to expand for any support infrastructure considered necessary. In the event of the US dragging us into a war with China over Taiwan, this will make Perth a very vulnerable target. The vice-president of Beijing’s semi-official Centre for China and Globalisation, Victor Gao, has warned that “Australia itself will be a target for possible nuclear attacks in the future” because of AUKUS.

In the midst of all this talk of war any level-headed person has to question the use of submarines at all in today’s war scenario. But \$368 billion says otherwise. They may never actually deploy nuclear weapons – in fact we’re about to sign the Treaty

of Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) – but hosting nuclear-powered submarines could sound our death knell.

Why are we suddenly changing from being a solid, peaceful citizen in our region helping to provide global security into becoming used as an American base for its war games? Whatever we may think of China’s behaviour towards its smaller neighbours (if what we hear is not to be taken with a grain of salt) we need to mind our own business and show respect to other cultures.

Australia is well able to defend itself. We have a well-provisioned RAAF, a competent patrol-boat flotilla policing our shores, and an army which plays a role in promoting global security. This “forever partnership” with the US and UK puts us at real risk of WW3.

It’s time to stop spending billions buying US and UK submarines and start putting our own house in order: a house that is at present falling down around our ears.

Eileen Whitehead
Perth

Rediscovering Sara Gomez

Yahily HERNANDEZ PORTO

Sara Gómez, a native of Guanabaco, died suddenly from an asthma attack on 2nd June 1974, but she had already made an extraordinary contribution to the seething Cuban art scene of the first decades of the Revolution.

“She was,” says Olga García Yero, “one of the most dazzling figures in Cuban culture: the first fiction and documentary filmmaker who, when she died suddenly at only 32 years of age, was already recognised as one of Cuba’s most outstanding female creators.”

WHO WAS SHE?

“Sara Gómez had an exceptional culture,” says Yero, “which stemmed from her own life and the complexity of the ’50s and ’60s she lived through.

“Afro-descendant, she embodies a type of Cuban woman who, on one side of her family was connected to a mixed-race and Black petty bourgeoisie that, in Havana and other parts of the country, absorbed and created cultural values of the most varied kind.

“And on the other side, she belonged to the most humble, exploited, and discriminated strata of the country. All this allowed her to astonish people with her work.

“And her immense oeuvre emanates from this social bond, thanks to which she had, like very few other national artists, a direct experience of the complexity of social, class, educational, and labour relations in the country.

“Her petit bourgeois side allowed her to study piano at the Havana Conservatory; her strong family links led her to discover the heart of the most popular music on the island, as she masterfully demonstrates in her beautiful 1967

documentary *Y tenemos sabor (And We Have Flavour)*.

HOW ORIGINAL WAS SHE?

“She was one of the first Latin American documentary makers to dare to cultivate a completely new sub-genre: the autobiographical documentary: *Guanabacoa, crónica de mi familia (Guanabacoa: Chronicle of My Family, 1966)*.

“She was strongly linked by ties of friendship to the famous Seminar of Ethnology and Folklore that was taught at the National Theatre in the 1960s, and through them, she discovered anthropology and sociology, scientific bases that underpin many of her documentaries.

“So, it is surprising that Gómez’s work has been the subject of a wide range of critical studies, both in various Latin American countries and in the United States. She was a pioneer and founder of ideas, concepts, visions, and ways of making films.”

“Sara created documentaries,” says Luis Álvarez Álvarez, “that testified to the concrete facts of the vertiginous Cuban social life of those years. But she did so with a deep, thoroughly humanist perspective, which is not always present in Cuban cinema.”

IN WHAT WAY?

“Sara was not too interested in creating an aestheticist cinema,” he says, “she cared about being Cuban. Few of our artists, whatever genre they may have cultivated, were so interested in the simple human beings of the island and, above all, in what today is theoretically called ‘the marginal subject’: Those who are not the heroes, but the background of history.

“This vision of human beings from disadvantaged backgrounds

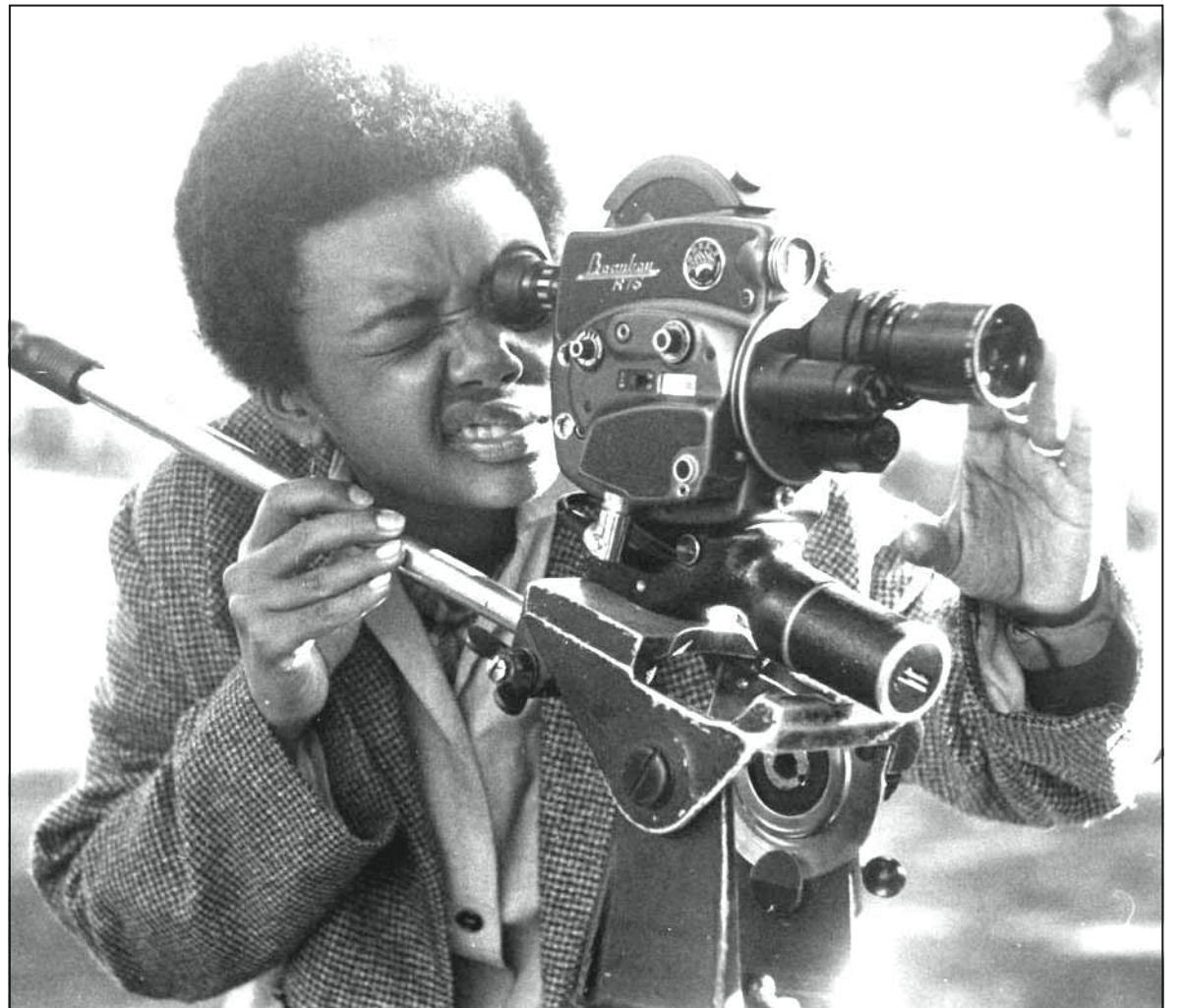


Photo: Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

runs through all her documentaries and, of course, her only fiction film, *De cierta manera (In a Certain Way)*.

“But it is particularly noticeable in the three documentaries she filmed between 1968 and 1969 about the then Isla de Pinos, today Isla de la Juventud, when educational projects began to be founded there for young people from dysfunctional families, young

people without work and with social problems.

“There are three works unsurpassed to this day: *En la otra isla, Una isla para Miguel* (completed in 1968), and *Isla del Tesoro* (1969). She opens up an extraordinary dialogue with young people who have lost their bearings.

“You find anthropology, music, social analysis and criticism, a study of poverty, a study of the risks of

juvenile delinquency, glimpses of social misunderstanding, and the needs of young people, sketches of the limits and diverse characters of social groups: All this makes this trilogy an invaluable document for getting to know the Cuba of those times and much of today’s Cuba.

“Sara remains a necessary point of reference for our present knowledge and our future hopes.”
Morning Star 🌟

Lula to China

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will pay a state visit to China from 26th until the 31st March. Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Wang Wenbin said that “China and Brazil are major developing countries, important emerging market countries and comprehensive strategic partners.”

He said that the visit should open “a new page in Sino-Brazilian relations.”

Since returning to the Brazilian presidency on 1st January this year, Lula has

moved Brazil away from subservience to the United States.

In recent weeks, Lula’s Brazil sent a delegation to Venezuela, refused to sign a United Nations resolution condemning Nicaragua, allowed Iranian warships to dock in Rio de Janeiro, and refused to send weapons to Ukraine.

While these moves may have raised eyebrows in the US and Europe, it is part of a trend towards greater independence by nations of the global South.

Experts also say that Lula is reactivating Brazil’s decades-old principle of non-alignment enshrined in its constitution to carve out a policy that best safeguards its interests in an increasingly multi-polar world.

Brazil’s approach involves “talking to all states at all times without making moral judgements, while respecting certain red lines,” said Feliciano Guimaraes, a political scientist at the think tank Brazilian Centre for International Relations.

Brazil has also refused to be drawn into

the increasing tensions over China.

China surpassed the US as Brazil’s main trading partner in 2009 and the relationship has continued to grow in strength.

Between 2007 and 2020 China invested US\$66.1 billion in Brazil, according to the Brazil-China Business Council.

“Brazil needs a strategy that allows it to manoeuvre. The principle of non-alignment allows it to have channels open with all states to protect itself,” Guimaraes said.
Morning Star 🌟

Queensland police under fire

Graham Holton

The Queensland Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, has begun to restructure the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in an attempt to eradicate the “significant problem” of sexism, racism, and misogyny in the force.

The ALP government has promised to enact the 78 recommendations of the *Domestic and Family Violence 2022* report. Judge Deborah Richards’ three-month Commission of Inquiry found that officers’ attitudes and biases to the public have impacted domestic violence policing and failed to support the victims.

In November 2022 Queensland’s Police Commissioner, Katarina Carroll, appointed Julie McKay, the Chief Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Officer at Price Waterhouse Coopers, to overhaul the QPS. The Commissioner said McKay has had years of leadership and cultural reform experience. She has “worked with the United Nations in that area, and also worked with defence in that area.”

McKay “will look at the reforms that we’ve already started and the reforms that happen into the future and assist the organisation in that leadership, that cultural reform in the organisation,” Carroll said.

In her report Richards said: “Victim-survivors are turned away from stations and misidentified as perpetrators. Police ... do not undertake investigations to the expected standard.”

Richards has recommended more training for police, more officers and more liaison

officers for Domestic Violence (DV), First Nations, and LGBTI+ communities, and a number of independent police watchdogs.

“These will be nation-leading reforms ... the commission of inquiry has put a spotlight on some dark places in the QPS, and ... identified cultural issues going back decades.”

Secret recordings from inside the Brisbane city watch house revealed staff used racist slurs and sexist language. It comes on top of evidence of racist and sexist behaviour amongst officers, including senior officials.

Bullying, harassment, and abuse in the force were under-reported due to a culture of fear and silence among victims and witnesses. The report also criticised the investigative system in which the police investigate their own workmates, knowing the culture embedded in the QPS.

Queensland Police Union president, Ian Leavers, agreed with most of the recommendations except establishing an independent integrity unit. Instead, this should be done by the “Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC), which is a standing royal commission ... and they have a role to play.” The discipline system is already “good” but only “maladministered.”

The CCC released a statement saying the success of this integrity unit would be “dependent on several factors,” which would “require all stakeholders to work effectively together.” Attorney-General Shannon Fentiman told ABC Radio Brisbane that she, the police commissioner, the premier, and the police minister, Mark Ryan, have taken responsibility for the report’s scathing

findings. As the DV report concluded, this is “Not just a few bad apples.”

As well as this scathing report, in February 2023, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) revealed the contents of a briefing sent by the top command of the QPS to all officers. It instructed how police should report on those with certain “ideological beliefs” – socialists, Marxists, and critics of capitalism – should be considered as potential terrorists.

The ABC states that: “The memo describes the at-risk groups as conspiracy theorists, religious, social or political extremists, and sovereign citizens, as well as people with ideologies relating to capitalism, communism, socialism, or Marxism.” It is interesting that the far-right, Q-Anon and Trump-supporters are not considered to be a threat.

If officers encounter people with these “ideological beliefs,” the incident is to be recorded on police body cameras and the individual “flagged.” The footage will then be uploaded to a centralised database, where it will be viewed and analysed by high-level counter-terrorism officers.

This memorandum follows from the shooting of two police officers in the regional Queensland area of Wieambilla on 12th December 2022. Four police officers went to the property and were allegedly attacked by Gareth, Nathaniel, and Stacey Train dressed in military-style fatigues and armed with high-powered guns. The Trains were killed that night by a tactical police squad.

QPS officials initially claimed that the officers had been sent to the property to

perform a “welfare check” on Nathaniel Train, after he was reported missing by relatives in NSW. The QPS concluded that it was a “religiously motivated terrorist attack” and that the culprits were influenced by an extremist Christian belief.

The QPS were working with the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) as part of their investigation. An FBI agent was allegedly present at the officers’ funeral. Criminal Justice and Criminologist, Terry Goldsworthy, questions the QPS calling the Wieambilla shooting a “terrorist attack,” as its intent was not to “try and influence a state.” Rather, it was “a deep hatred of the police.”

That Marxists and socialists are considered potential violent terrorists by the top police officers in Queensland is worrisome. What then of the state Labor government of Annastacia Palaszczuk, and the federal ALP government of Anthony Albanese?

On the back of its membership cards, the Australian Labor Party has: Communist Party members are forbidden to join the ALP. It raises the question of how deep does this fear of Marxists really go in the ALP and the QPS? Does it explain why in the past the Queensland police have allegedly failed to follow up on attacks on people, because of their Left-Wing beliefs?

The Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission website is at: www.ccc.qld.gov.au/corruption/report-corruption

Call to end Cuban embargo: 63 years of suffering

Graham Holton

On 10th February 2023, local councillors in Washington DC put up resolution PR25-0113 calling for the Biden administration to remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List and to lift the 63-year-old US political and economic blockade (el bloqueo) of the Caribbean Island.

Within the United States, at least 67 resolutions have been passed by state legislatures, county and city councils and school boards. Lobbying groups such as Engage Cuba have also called for the end of the embargo of the Republic of Cuba.

For decades there have been calls against the US economic embargo. The majority of the countries in the United Nations General Assembly have voted more than 30 times to end the embargo, passing a resolution every year since 1992.

The US and Israel are the only nations to consistently vote against these resolutions. Political pressure from the anti-Castro lobbying groups in Florida and the anti-Communist Right Wing in the USA ensure the embargo remains.

In 1959, with the collapse of the Batista regime, the rebel forces under Fidel Castro took over the island nation. The Castro government ended the Mafia control of night clubs and stopped the massive corruption of the previous regime. The Socialist government stopped the US corporations’ hold over the Cuban economy, nationalising large land holdings to be given to the peasant farmers. These achievements did not go down well with the US government.

In 1960 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lestor Mallory, called for a blockade, an “embargo” of Cuba, which the Eisenhower administration implemented. On 7th February 1962, under

the Kennedy administration, the embargo was extended to include almost all Cuban exports. During the Missile Crisis in October 1962, a blockade of the island almost led to World War III, when US warships dropped depth charges on Soviet submarines carrying nuclear warheads.

The Johnson administration adopted the policy of “economic denial,” using the member countries of the OAS (Organisation of American States) and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) to apply political pressure on Cuba for the Socialist government to step down. Only Spain and Mexico refused to cooperate with US imperialist demands.

Following the end of the USSR and the East European socialist bloc of countries in 1991, Cuba had few trading partners and no financial, military, or political aid. The US government reinforced its blockade with new restrictive

measures, when Cuba was at the peak of its worst economic crisis since 1959.

The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 (Helms-Burton Act) restricted US citizens from doing commerce in or with Cuba and mandated restrictions on giving public or private assistance to any successor government in Havana until US claims were met. In 1999, President Bill Clinton expanded the trade embargo by stopping foreign subsidiaries of US companies trading with Cuba. The following year Clinton authorised the sale of food and humanitarian products to Cuba, which was experiencing an economic crisis.

The relaxation of sanctions under Obama, was stopped by the Trump administration, which thrust new sanctions upon the Cuban people. On 17th May 2022, the Biden Administration reinstated “the Cuba Family Reunification

Parole program and increasing consular services, lifting a \$1,000 cap on family remittances, increasing support for Cuban entrepreneurs, and expanding authorised travel.” The “Cuban government- and military-aligned companies” were not removed from the Cuba Restricted List.

In January 2012, an Angus Reid Public Opinion poll showed that 57 percent of Americans called for an end to the travel ban that prevented US citizens from visiting Cuba. In 2015 *Al Jazeera* reported that since its inception in 1960, the embargo had cost the Cuban economy US\$1.1 trillion. On 1st June 2022, the US Transportation Department lifted restrictions on flights to Cuba. The embargo continues to stifle the national economy, creating further suffering for the poor on this Caribbean Island. ✪

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Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

Join us in Sydney to demand that the USA stops the blockade on Cuba with the right to self determination.

Also stop other blockades like Venezuela and Gaza.

4:15 pm Monday April 17
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IWD SA

“Community counts”

In her welcome at Fidel's, a venue belonging to the Workers' Club, Sally Mitchell, president of the Port Adelaide Workers' Club and the Port Adelaide Branch of the CPA, explained how International Women's Day (IWD) arose from the activism of struggling women workers in New York and the advocacy of Clara Zetkin in Germany in the early 1900s.

Sally reminded us that women still have a struggle on their hands for equal pay as a genuine reality and face exploitation at every turn. Sally acknowledged how much she had learnt from elders such as Ruby Hammond and Alice Rigney and the contribution of grandmothers and aunts to family life in what has become a cross-cultural celebration around the world.

The welcome to country by Wendy Warner, provided a thoughtful reminder that our gathering was not only being held on Kurna land, but more especially that the land has been looked after by the Kurna people for many thousands of years and is still truly their land.

Spokesperson for the Anti-Poverty Centre, Raquel Araya, provided an alarming statement on the shortcomings of the current welfare system, especially in the design of how the JobSeeker allowance payments operate. These

can easily be cut in consideration of a partner's earnings. Women may be forced to remain in violent relationships as a result.

For Raquel, Jobseeker stands out more as a “punishment” payment policy, rooted in sexism and racism, as women and especially Aboriginal women, remain as the most disadvantaged under the system.

As a special Aboriginal guest at the lunch, Cheryl Saunders, a Kokatha woman from Ceduna, recalled how childcare workers there, out of desperation, demonstrated for better pay in order to simply survive.

Cheryl reflected on her grandmother's generation along with the stolen generation, with her family having to flee to the remoteness of the Gawler Ranges to avoid the children being taken away, especially those with lighter skin colouring. In Cheryl's view, it is so concerning that babies are still being removed to this very day in increasing numbers.

As a grandmother, Cheryl not only saw the importance of taking her grandchildren back to country, but also the need for Aboriginal grandmothers to work together in the interests of their grandchildren. In commenting on being an elder, Cheryl remarked that age was less of a criterion than knowledge of language and culture.

On education, Cheryl, a strong

supporter of teaching about Aboriginal culture and history, referred to the Aboriginal College, Tauondi, where, regrettably, the government was now trying to gain control in the same way as governments still own the land under native title legislation.

Cheryl saw Aboriginal women still struggling but achieving just the same, despite being at the bottom of society. At the same time, Cheryl made clear her support for the “Voice” as it would assist communities to be heard. Also, Aborigines are still not mentioned in the constitution as yet. Cheryl recommended support for the Voice to achieve this end.

Two retired SA politicians gave their apologies for the IWD lunch. Sandra Kanck, leader of the Democrats and last Democrat sitting in any Australian parliament, who remains a strong advocate for human rights and supporter of First Nations justice. Frances Bedford, a state MP for 24 years and founder of the Muriel Matters Society, is noted for her “community counts” motto and her support for First Nations people.

A message for IWD from an Afghan women refugee to SAWA (SA Afghan Women's support group) at the end of the luncheon, as follows:

March 8 is coming once again
and women in all corners of



IWD, South Australia.

the world are still fighting with all kinds of violence and gender discrimination. But in our land, women experience the most deplorable situation. Once again coming to power, the wild Taliban has turned Afghanistan into a hell for the women and Afghanistan is the most terrible hell nowadays.

They have closed schools for the girls, started marriages

under age and widows forcefully taking young boys with them to prepare them for war and going to people's houses for having meals, while poverty is rampant in every house and people themselves have nothing to eat.

Once again, I congratulate all the women this day, especially the suffering women of Afghanistan. ✨

Overproduction

Crazy capitalism

Ethan Williams

In 1867, Karl Marx wrote of capitalism's inherent tendency towards overproduction and underconsumption (not enough goods reaching those that need them). No more vulgar example can be found in recent news than the company Funko's decision to send \$40 million worth of stock to the rubbish tip. Funko produces “Pop! Vinyls,” a popular line of licensed collectible figurines spanning a huge range of pop culture including Disney, NBA, and Whitney Houston.

The company claimed in its fourth quarter earnings report that the demand for these toys has fallen and the stock on hand is more expensive to store than it is to dispose of. Forced to rent storage space to cover the excess stock, the diseconomies of capitalism are laid bare; instead of a rational distribution of toys to those in need of them, the toys are thrown on the tip, with the company paying for the disposal instead of distribution. It goes without saying that the working people who produced these products did not have a say in the fate of these toys either.

Sadly though, this is not the worst of the most recent examples. An investigation

performed by the UK's ITV in 2021 found that Amazon UK fulfilment centres are throwing away millions of items every year. And unlike Funko, who consider their disposal of the products of working people to be a temporary, once-off action, Amazon have reportedly built this waste into their operating procedures.

“From a Friday to a Friday our target was to generally destroy 130,000 items a week,” says an anonymous ex-Amazon employee. The waste from a single fulfilment centre is staggering, but not to fear, says Amazon.

“The landfill site also has a recycling centre and none of [our] items go to landfill in the UK,” Amazon told ITV. A small comfort for those concerned about the environmental impacts but little for the workers whose labour never finds a use, and a slap in the face to a growing number of poverty-stricken UK citizens unable to afford three meals a day.

Food banks within the UK have recently revealed that a record number of households are now reliant on their services, with food inflation in the UK coming in at 16.7 per cent for the year. “We regularly have people who come in that may not have eaten for 2 [to] 3 days. We didn't use (sic) to see that before,” explained one UK food bank volunteer. As the economic crisis deepens, British

capitalism has repeatedly been shown to be just as inclined to throw its own people in the trash as the goods produced by the very same people

It must be mentioned that in response to the ITV investigation, Amazon have now rolled out a new program to “give unsold inventory a new life” – allowing third party sellers on the platform to on-sell some returned goods. This program is of course at the discretion of the third party seller.

Closer to home another example can be found when early last year, Queensland farmers dumped truckloads of avocados, leaving them to rot amidst massive rises in food prices. Later on in the year another report revealed that thousands of kilograms of oranges were being left to rot, unable to be sold on the market. “I don't understand, I guess, what people are eating if we can't sell our produce,” remarked one NSW orange grower to 7NEWS.

More recently it has been revealed that the collapse of a trucking company may eventually result in the disposal of \$500 million worth of frozen foods as the receiver attempts to move the frozen stock to other storage locations.

With the company going into administration, 1200 workers have lost their jobs

shipping frozen goods across the country whilst supermarkets struggle to deal with frozen food shortages.

Meanwhile, more than two million households or 21 per cent of Australians have run out of food in a period of 12 months, says the Foodbank Hunger Report 2022 from Foodbank Australia. This figure increases for households with children, with 37 per cent of single-parent families skipping meals or abstaining from eating all day at some point in the year.

“So that means now we have to cut down on groceries. Adults go without meals so the kids can eat. So, cutting down on groceries is our only option,” says a mother in Queensland. In the same year, Coles group posted over \$1 billion in profit, with the Woolworths group posting \$1.5 billion (both after taxes and costs).

It would be a mistake to assume farmers could produce such incredible volumes of fruit every single year, but a system that produces hunger while farmers and growers throw away food, and logistics are incapable of transporting food to the hungry is clearly indicative of a dysfunctional economy unable to fulfill the most basic needs of its people. ✨



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