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WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!



A section of the Arirang Games, held annually in Pyongyang. www.pinterest.com.au

HANDS OFF THE DPRK! NO TO NUCLEAR ARMAGEDDON

(This article first appeared at the website www.redfireonline.com on 26-09-2017. As we go to press US President Donald Trump is touring Asia, in what is viewed in some quarters as a trip to garner support from US allies for a full scale strike on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, risking a nuclear war.)

22-09-2017 – The irony may not have been apparent to immediate observers, but in the body

allegedly set up to prevent war between nations, days ago US President Donald Trump issued perhaps the greatest ever threat of war against the world. While Trump thundered against Iran and Venezuela, he openly threatened to “totally destroy” North Korea (its real name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – DPRK).¹

¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/21/politics/kim-jong-un-on-trump-comments/index.html> (22-09-17)

While the US Empire has previously used the platform of the United Nations (UN) as a basis for announcing war plans, e.g. Colin Powell's 2003 speech about "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq, this is arguably the first time in UN history that one nation has directly threatened another with elimination. The DPRK has only perhaps a handful of nuclear weapons ready to be deployed, which can only act as a deterrent. On the other side, the US has literally thousands of nuclear missiles, "locked and loaded" to use a Trumpism. Nuclear Armageddon, despite all the advances of modern technology, culture and science, is unfortunately closer than ever. Where do the interests of working people stand?

RED FIRE is the publication of the Workers League.

The Workers League is an organisation which seeks to build a vanguard party for working people, which can lead the struggle for socialism and a world without war.

We welcome all enquires and feedback, as well as applications to join. Contact us by:

Mail: PO Box 66 NUNDAH QLD 4012

Email: workersleague@redfireonline.com

Phone: 0421 408 692

www.redfireonline.com

Socialism vs Capitalism

The current state of war between the US and the DPRK is due to a number of historical factors, tied in with the current geopolitical situation globally. The DPRK was founded in 1948, after a 40 year struggle against Japanese militarist occupation. In 1950 to 1953, the Korean people suffered immeasurably under a barbaric war against them led by the US, but also including the military forces of other countries including Australia. Four million lives were brutally extinguished. One could say this was the first time that the US "totally destroyed North Korea". However, despite the staggering losses, the Koreans in the

north of the peninsula, aided by Chinese volunteers, fought the US to a standstill, leading to an armistice being signed on July 27th, 1953. Despite the DPRK's efforts, the US never signed a peace agreement, which was supposed to follow according to the armistice agreement.

Since that time, the US and the DPRK have remained technically at war. However, what the Western corporate media never tells is that the DPRK since then has built arguably the most advanced socialist system in the world. Not only does the DPRK's socialist state provide universal and free health care, education, housing and a lifetime guarantee of employment – it does this while charging its citizens no tax at all.² The retirement age for men in the DPRK is 60, and for women it is 55. Eight months of fully paid maternity leave is automatically given to pregnant women. Despite fears of a "rape culture" in the capitalist West, in the DPRK women can walk the streets, or anywhere in the country, at any time of the day or night, in complete safety. Visitors to the DPRK may notice children walking around outside late at night, with some friends, also in complete safety. Crime is almost non-existent, as the state meets virtually every need, free of charge or at heavily subsidised nominal rates.

The comparison with living and working conditions for working people in the US, Europe and Australia could not be more different. The clear advantages for workers of collectively owned industry and commerce, administered through a planned economy, stand out in stark relief. Despite these gains, the political system in the DPRK is distorted, given that the immense threat of being wiped out by the US has remained for more than 60 years. Arguably, this enormous pressure has produced a system where it appears workers are not able to influence or exercise political decisions, and has contributed to a

² <http://exploredprk.com/news/dprk-country-free-of-taxes/> (22-09-2017)

somewhat mythologised acclaim for its historical and current leaders. What drives Western capital into a frenzy, however, is the fact that due to the DPRK's socialist system, which has produced a warm and friendly society based on solidarity, the DPRK is off limits to exploitation and plunder. In the same way, the giant next door neighbour, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is also barred to Western capital – despite the pro-market measures the PRC uses to develop its economy. Thus the bitter vitriol which the US and Australian rulers spew towards the DPRK and the PRC is ultimately the hatred of capitalism for socialism.

This is why it is in the vital interests of working people to stand with the DPRK and the PRC against the threats of nuclear war. It is not enough just to call for “peace” and “negotiations”, for this lets the system which creates and foments the crisis in the first place, directly off the hook. As Lenin analysed 100 years ago, imperialism is monopoly capitalism which has outgrown the system of national boundaries. Capital expands or it dies, and despite there being endless opportunities for infrastructure development and provision of services to “their own” people, Western capital will only do so if there is what they regard as an adequate return in the form of the rate of profit. For example, there is a dire need for a modern, up to date internet system to all rural and regional areas right across Australia. But due to a lack of customers being able to pay, capital could not be bothered. Hence, we have the decidedly second rate National Broadband Network (NBN), which covers some areas with slow speeds and other areas not at all.

PRC's rise and rise

The PRC's vast economic expansion over the last 30 years has pushed the US ruling class to the brink. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the PRC, from 1978 until now, grew faster than

the world's total economic growth for 30 years.³ Yet this is only possible because of the PRC's overwhelmingly state owned and run socialist economy, which is protected by the workers state which emerged out of the 1949 revolution. While the PRC leadership has allowed a large degree of capitalist free enterprise which causes some political dangers, these capitalists have little or no chance of competing with China's vast State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) which, by law, totally dominate the commanding heights of the economy. Banking, Finance, steel making, infrastructure construction, rail, roads, ports, telecommunications and more are either state owned or majority state owned. This strong collective state underpins planned economic expansion which, according to their Five Year Plans, must meet social goals such as employment and overall development – and not just a rate of return.

Similar to the DPRK, however, working people struggle to exercise political decision making, and the Communist Party of China (CPC) leadership is almost solely concerned with internal matters – rather than the extension of world socialism. Of course, these aspects do not concern the US and European ruling classes. What concerns, and even spells danger, for them are plans such as the PRC's vast new infrastructure development plan, the “New Silk Road” as well as initiatives such as the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). These massive economic offerings to underdeveloped, and even some developed countries with ailing capitalist economies, mean that China is assuming world economic and political leadership, regardless of whether or not this is its aim. This is occurring while the profit based economies of the US, Europe and Australia are crumbling into ruin.

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[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/%28httpAuxPages%29/2893F14F41998392C1257BC600385B21/\\$file/China%27s%20growth%20miracle%200808.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/%28httpAuxPages%29/2893F14F41998392C1257BC600385B21/$file/China%27s%20growth%20miracle%200808.pdf) (22-09-17)



Above: The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) after liberating the towns of Buqrus Fouqani and Buqrus Tahtani from ISIS control near Mayadeen in the region of Deir EzZor. ISIS, a proxy force established, armed and funded by the governments of the US, UK, France, Saudi Arabia and others, has now been completely eradicated from eastern Syria, and is in the process of being eliminated from the rest of Syria. The US ruling class cannot tolerate being defeated in a war, even if they outsourced the fighting of it to genocidal mercenaries. Encountering an obstacle to their war with Russia, the US Empire has now turned to the war on China, via the DPRK. Image from www.almasdarnews.com

Defeat in Syria

While the US Empire's frenzied threats against the DPRK and the PRC are to a large extent driven by the challenge of socialism, there is the additional factor of the comprehensive defeat suffered by the US with their attempt at regime change in Syria. As we go to press, the Syrian Arab Army has advanced to within 6 kilometres of the last ISIS base in Raqqa,⁴ despite the US backed Kurdish "Syrian Democratic Forces" (SDF) abstaining or working with ISIS in an attempt to seize Syrian territory for themselves.⁵ Overall, however, the unspeakable US strategy of arming and funding death squads in order to bring down the Syrian government – arguably the dirtiest war in history – has collapsed. Syria, with the assistance of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, has inflicted perhaps the first defeat of the US since

⁴ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-syrian-army-advances-within-6km-isis-last-stronghold-raqqa/> (23-09-17)

⁵ <https://www.veteranstoday.com/2017/09/17/russian-military-observed-no-fighting-between-isis-and-sdf-north-of-deir-ezzor-in-the-last-days/> (23-09-17)

the war on Vietnam. The Australian government is also culpable, having dispatched troops and warplanes to back the US marauding throughout Iraq and Syria. This defeat has halted – for now – US plans for the inevitable next stepping stone – regime change in Iran.

Enraged that anyone would have the temerity to not only question, but take action to repel, the US war machine in its tracks, the US Empire is lashing out in any other direction it can. The DPRK is the next obvious target, as the US preparations for invasion and war are well practiced, and garrisons of US troops are already stationed and primed for war. 30 000 US troops are permanently based in South Korea (officially the "Republic of Korea" – ROK), and 50 000 US troops are permanently based in Japan. The annual war games on the border of the DPRK, including US, ROK and Japanese troops, have been expanded this year. This military "exercises" are nothing less than a dry run for the invasion and overthrow of the DPRK. Yet again, Canberra sends Australian troops to participate alongside the US in this reckless provocation,⁶ one that potentially pushes the world closer to the cliff of nuclear destruction.

War abroad linked to war at home

The sheer insanity of nuclear Armageddon provoked by Washington, with the backing of Canberra, has reduced many to stunned disbelief. This may be understandable, but if working people can draw the links from the war abroad to the war at home, we can begin to comprehend why degenerate politicians are prepared to flick the switch to cause the deaths of tens of millions, and take action to prevent it. The wars being prepared against China (via the DPRK) and Russia (via the Ukraine and Syria) are directly linked to the intractable crisis of the Western economic system of production for profit, which went into

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<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/08/21/australia-joins-south-korea-us-war-games> (23-09-17)

severe recession in 2008, and has barely recovered. This depression, known as the “Third Slump” (the first two being the Great Depression of the 1930s and the second being the onset of the recession beginning around the mid-1970s), has accelerated the ongoing assault on working people, many of whom have been barely surviving for the last thirty odd years. Australian workers, similar to workers in the US and Europe, face mass unemployment, unaffordable housing, skyrocketing bills for basic utilities, crumbling infrastructure, the privatisation of public assets and virtually non-existent wage growth. Public transport is unreliable and expensive, and only covers some areas. The privatised banks charge outrageous fees, securing billions of dollars in profit, much of which goes into paying million dollar CEO salaries. Schools and universities are turned into profit gouging racketeers, as academic standards fall further and further. Government funding for vital public services is stripped from service after service.

To top it off, basic bourgeois democratic rights and civil liberties are being shredded day by day. Para-military like fare inspectors threaten public transport users. Email, phone, internet access and other forms of communication are monitored, and, as whistle-blowers such as Edward Snowden revealed, details are routinely handed over to US intelligence agencies. Western governments are aware that masses of people will inevitably rise up against the limitless inequality which capitalism generates, and the unacceptable burdens it places upon working people. One of the key methods they use to head this off is to present us with an “external threat” which is supposedly so “evil” that war – even nuclear war - must be declared. It is a classic case of projection – the system they represent is the only real evil.

Stand with the DPRK and the PRC against war

This is why it is imperative that working people internationally stand with the working people of

the DPRK and the PRC against the threatened US led nuclear holocaust. While Koreans currently face annihilation, this horror is but the extension of the same attacks that working people here face at home – the job losses, the abolition of elementary rights, and the daily struggle to survive under capitalist exploitation. To a large extent, the workers of the DPRK do not endure these hardships by virtue of their socialist system. To a lesser extent, the socialist system in the PRC also shields workers there from untrammelled plunder.

Capital’s assault on humanity cannot be upheld by calls for “peace” or “negotiations”. It neither knows nor understands such concepts. It is a monster which will not stop until private capital becomes the property of all working people, for the common good. The workers of the DPRK and the PRC have already achieved this, despite the at times wayward direction of their political leaders. Working people here need the leadership of a workers vanguard party, which can lead the struggle against imperialist war through combining working people’s efforts for a decent life with the working class victories achieved in Asia. Such a revolution necessarily leads to the foundation of a workers republic. *HANDS OFF THE DPRK!*

WORKERS LEAGUE

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Above: Flag of the Korean People’s Army Ground Force.
Image from Wikipedia



Australia - DPRK

Friendship and Cultural Society

Brisbane Branch

USA: HANDS OFF NORTH KOREA!

LIFT THE SANCTIONS!

NO TO NUCLEAR WAR!

(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the Brisbane Branch of the Australia-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society at a rally against war on the DPRK called the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN). While leftists welcome the initiative, IPAN tends to take a non-class position, equally blaming both the DPRK and the US for the threat of war. In reality, the DPRK is as besieged as it always has been, after fighting the US to a stalemate during the war of 1950-53.)

07-10-2017 – At the recent United Nations (UN) General Assembly, US President Donald Trump threatened to “totally destroy North Korea”. This is the first time in UN history that one nation has openly threatened to eliminate another. North Korea – whose real name is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) – has never waged war against any other country, has never invaded another country, has never applied sanctions to any other country and does not have any of its armed forces stationed outside of their borders.

To say the least, the same could not be said for the government of the United States of America (USA). The US has troops stationed in over 140 countries around the world, and operates around 800 military bases through 70 countries. Just in the last 16 years, the US has led invasions and wars against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. As of last year, the US was also actively bombing Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. Now, the US threatens the world with nuclear war.

Following the US government, the Australian government is only too eager to tag along. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has stated that Australia is “joined at the hip” to the US in the case of war. And currently, the crazed US rulers seemingly have nothing to offer the world but more war. In the case of the DPRK, US war plans are also aimed against the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the DPRK’s giant neighbour. The US has never forgiven the DPRK and the PRC for fighting it to a stalemate during the Korean war of 1950-53, where the US and their allies

slaughtered 4 million people, and razed the northern side of the Korean peninsula to rubble. Since that time, the DPRK has rebuilt itself into an independent, socialist state, while the enormous resources available to the PRC's socialist system has ensured that it arguably now leads the world economically, if not politically.

The US rulers cannot tolerate countries developing independently, let alone developing on socialist lines, to say nothing of exposing the economic frailties of the capitalist profit system. Unable to restart their own economy, the US rulers are driven to military recklessness, an immediate threat to the lives of tens of millions in Korea and China. Their actions also potentially launch the horror of world nuclear war.

To be clear, the DPRK would prefer NOT to have to build a nuclear weapons program. It demonstrated this by being one of the 122 countries to recently vote for a UN resolution banning the production and use of all nuclear weapons. However, given the unending sanctions and threats of war against it, the DPRK has little option but to develop a nuclear deterrent. In fact, given what the world has witnessed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, it would seem that nuclear weapons are the only guarantee of NOT being invaded by the forces of US imperialism.

Still, the DPRK has made repeated offers to suspend the testing of its nuclear weapons if the US and the South Korean ("Republic of Korea" – ROK) militaries suspend the annual war manoeuvres they conduct on the doorstep of the DPRK. They have offered to abandon their nuclear weapons program if the US withdraws its troops (around 30 000) and its nuclear weapons

permanently stationed in the ROK, and its 50 000 troops based in neighbouring Japan. The DPRK scrupulously maintains its "No first strike" policy, as has the PRC since 1962. The US government, on the other hand, has no such policy, and is currently the only country to have actually used nuclear weapons against another – the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WWII.

The Brisbane Branch of the Australia-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society joins with all anti-war and peace organisations in urging all working and progressive people to take whatever actions they are able in an effort to avoid the catastrophe of nuclear war in the Asia-Pacific. Specifically, we urge the anti-war movement to demand:

- The immediate lifting of all sanctions and trade embargoes on the DPRK.
- All US and ROK military exercises (including AUST and NZ participation) to cease immediately.
- US to remove all military hardware, nuclear weapons and personnel from the ROK.
- US to sign a formal peace treaty with the DPRK.
- Australia to close all US military bases, including the Pine Gap and Nurrungar spy facilities.

For more information, visit: www.australia-dprk.org or email: ray.ferguson@tisgroup.com.au

CHANGE THE RULES OR CHANGE THE SYSTEM?



Above: The logo of the “Change the Rules” campaign. Image from www.australianunions.org.au

(The following article first appeared at www.redfireonline.com on 07-10-2017)

Australian workers are enduring wave after wave of an ongoing onslaught against their wages and conditions. It is not just penalty rates either. The Union movement has arguably never faced such governmental restriction on what was previously regarded as lawful activity. The right to organise a Union, the right of Union officials to meet with members on the job, the right to speak to workers about a Union – all of these and more are in danger of being legislated out of existence. Then we have the assault from employers themselves. Some of them have already tried – successfully – to cancel previously agreed enterprise bargaining agreements, and throw workers back on award conditions – potentially meaning the loss of thousands of dollars per year in employee income.

Currently before federal parliament is the outlandishly misnamed Ensuring Integrity Bill, put as an amendment to the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009. The measures contained in this bill would not be out of place in Nazi Germany. It was the Nazis who, on coming to power, outlawed Trade Unions in toto. This “Ensuring Integrity” bill does not outlaw Unions as such, but outlaws major parts of their activity. The Bill, if passed, will allow the Federal Government to directly interfere with the internal operations of Unions. The Bill would allow the government to: disqualify certain Union members from holding a Union position, prevent basic Union activity – such as stopping work over a health and safety issue or incident, to deregister Unions, to place Unions into administration and to prevent Union mergers from going ahead.⁷ On top of a restriction where it is

“Ensuring Integrity” Bill

⁷ <http://www.cpa.org.au/guardian/2017/1797/01-affront.html> (07-10-2017)

basically illegal to take industrial action at any time apart from “bargaining periods” - and then only through secret ballots – this Bill is arguably an attempt by the ruling class to see just how far they can go.

Below: The minimum wage in Australia currently stands at \$18.29 per hour, or a measly \$36,000 annually. Enterprise Bargaining greatly reduced the collective strength of the working class, which previously organised on an industry wide basis. This expanded base allowed solidarity actions between different branches of the same industry. Enterprise Bargaining reduced this to one company, one government department, or one workplace. This led to great disparities in wages and conditions, with many workers losing out. The attention of Unions switches from basic social justice and political issues to one of continually monitoring internal working conditions, to the exclusion of an overall view. Inevitably, wages overall suffer. Image from www.thenewdaily.com.au



It is not enough for capital to keep wages of workers down. It is generally agreed that the rate of wage growth in Australia this year is the lowest in recorded history.⁸ The dire crisis of profitability

⁸ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck/2016-06-17/fact-check-is-wage-growth-lowest-on-record/7505512> (07-10-2017)

means that capital also wants to control even more about what potential struggles Unions can lead. The “Ensuring Integrity Bill” seems to be an attempt to head off a Union campaign before it even starts, by using the ability to dismiss certain Union officials if they actually start to organise workers to fight back. Failing this, the Bill could be used to simply deregister the Union, and dismantle it altogether. There is little that is different between a fascist government outlawing trade unions as per the Nazis, and a “liberal democratic” government deregistering and disbanding a union. The effect is the same – a massive blow to virtually the only organisations that stand in the way of workers being subjected to unfettered capitalist exploitation. There is an economic, political and psychological aspect to this insidious attack on all working people.

The fruits of Enterprise Bargaining

The industrial relations situation for Australian workers today is almost totally weighted in favour of the employers, especially big industry groups and the government, and almost totally against workers and their Unions. Arguably, this is the end result of the Enterprise Bargaining system brought in by the Keating Labour government from 1991. Prior to the introduction of Enterprise Bargaining, workers and their Unions were not restricted as to when, and over which issues, they could take industrial action – up to and including strike action. While going on strike was never enshrined in law, prior to the introduction of Enterprise Bargaining, Unions could go on strike and push for their demands to be met. The government and employers would have to go to court themselves in order to claim damages, for example. However, Enterprise Bargaining brought with it the notion of “protected industrial action”. This meant that workers and their Unions could legally take industrial and/or strike action – but only during a “bargaining period”, i.e. the negotiation of a new Enterprise Bargaining agreement, usually once every three years. For the rest of the three years,

workers were legally prevented from withdrawing their labour – over any issue at all.

Enterprise bargaining changed the landscape of industrial relations, almost wholly to the benefit of employers over workers. While some workplaces were able to gain pay rises and conditions that were above award conditions, many others did not. The horizon of workers was especially narrowed, as they were encouraged to see themselves not as part of an entire industry, but as an individual company or area battling away, competing against all others. Employers were often encouraged to use Enterprise Bargaining to introduce all kinds of practices which assisted them, to the detriment of workers, such as “multiskilling” – the virtual elimination of specialised roles.⁹ For workers, it led to a situation of profound disempowerment. Instead of working with thousands of other workers across an entire industry pushing for the best pay and conditions for all within the sector, workers only had the small confines of their enterprise. This dramatically shifted power to the employers. What is more, workers were encouraged to see themselves as bound to protect the profitability of their own enterprise – often at their own expense. Hard won conditions could be traded away with the excuse that the enterprise could no longer afford them, in order to be “competitive”.

“Change the Rules” campaign

Many workers mistakenly believe that corporations and the governments which serve them are now too powerful, and that Unions are not able to fight back because they are legislatively prevented from doing so. This sentiment reflects not the power of capital per se, but the dire lack of leadership on the side of labour, which boils down to the Trade Union leaderships around the country. Enterprise Bargaining may have begun the breakup of workers

across an industry, but this has been facilitated at each step by conservative officials, who are ideologically tied to the capitalist system – and therefore the employer class itself. There are a few exceptions, but there are scarcely any Union officials willing to organise a class struggle fightback not only against anti-worker laws, but against the profit system as a whole.

What we have instead from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is the “Change the Rules” campaign. While it is welcome that there is any national campaign at all, the ACTU’s “Change the Rules” has little chance of repealing the misnamed Fair Work Act, and replacing it with pro-worker and pro-Union legislation. This is because it is ultimately an electoral campaign, rather than an industrial campaign. In its purest form, it is yet another re-elect the Australian Labor Party effort – in two years’ time! Correctly, the ACTU note that 40% of the workforce is in casual or contract employment, and thus many workers do not experience a paid holiday or a paid sick day. They note that inequality is at a 70 year high, and that wage growth is the lowest it has ever been.¹⁰ All well and good. However, for this disastrous state of affairs, the ACTU point the finger at...the Liberal Party and Employment Minister Michaelia Cash.¹¹

However, it is evident that the all sided assault on workers is coming from the entire political establishment – Labor, Liberal, One Nation, the lot. The Greens offer some cautious words of support, but are tied into the parliamentary gravy train just as much as the major parties. This is because the real source of the attacks on workers is private capital itself (the basis of the parliamentary system), which is facing an ongoing crisis of profitability, and can only react by making workers pay. The increasing application of automation to

⁹ <http://www.peopleculture.com.au/innovation-in-the-workplace-under-the-fair-work-act/> (10-10-17)

¹⁰ https://www.australianunions.org.au/change_the_rules (11-10-17)

¹¹ <https://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/media-releases/2017/actu-launches-change-the-rules-campaign-in-western-australia> (11-10-17)

workplaces – including “robotisation” is eliminating jobs, rather than reducing working hours and increasing the standard of living. The means of production remain in the hands of private profit-seeking business. State and Federal governments are privatising more and more functions previously performed by the public service – and handing them directly to the private sector. Yet even with this massive assistance, the private sector is not able to re-engage in the serious production of goods and services. Capitalism has reached an impasse – and it is not going back to the “mixed economy”, or the “welfare state”.

Class struggle leadership of the Unions desperately needed

When Sally McManus became head of the ACTU, some left parties welcomed the apparent change of outlook. “Bad laws have to be broken”, Ms McManus stated. But it soon became obvious that it was not going to be followed by any action – other than token online petitions, the occasional rally and a press release. Socialist Alternative correctly note that Union activism has to be rebuilt on the workplace floor, after three decades of attacks on Unions which have largely led to demobilisation, and thus demoralisation. They also note this is a political task as much as an industrial one.¹² Solidarity urge workers to heed the words of Sally McManus, and launch themselves into the struggle.¹³ The Socialist Alliance laud the work of Sally McManus for heading the campaign, albeit with the plea for more to be done.¹⁴ The Communist Party of Australia (CPA), are the most enthusiastic in signing up to the “Change the Rules” campaign, with not even one iota of a critique of the ACTU leadership. They even endorse the ACTU leadership’s diversionary calls for a

“community” campaign.¹⁵ What all of these left parties lack is a perspective of seriously challenging, and ultimately replacing, the class collaborationist ACTU and local Union officials with leaderships dedicated to hard class struggle. We will be waiting an eternity for the ACTU and local Union officials to even contemplate such a struggle. It’s not on their agenda.



Above: Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Secretary Sally McManus. Many on the left welcomed McManus to the position of heading the ACTU, who in words stands for improving the lot of working people. However, there is very little action which follows from the ACTU. While some sections of the “community” will support Union action, the Union leaderships themselves have to engage in action, particularly industrial action. It has to be backed by open organising amongst Union members and their supporters. Image from www.twitter.com

Many Unions can go for two to three years, without the officials organising even one general meeting of members. There are intense political reasons why the conservative officials avoid organising basic meetings. For one thing, they are aware that the resentment of workers over the loss of pay, worsening conditions, harassment by management at work and a host of other issues, are at a peak. But at a gathering of Union members, the officials’ control over the Union is potentially threatened. Ideas for action can be

¹² <https://redflag.org.au/node/6025> (11-10-17)

¹³ <https://www.solidarity.net.au/highlights/enterprise-bargaining-un-fair-work-act/> (11-10-17)

¹⁴ <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/time-change-broken-industrial-relations-system> (11-10-17)

¹⁵ <http://www.cpa.org.au/guardian/2017/1796/07-change.html> (11-10-17)

raised, proposals put forward, workers can draw strength from one another, and more. All of this confronts the no-action approach of conservative officials head-on. So the officials simply refuse to organise even the most basic method of giving Union members some form of say over the direction of the Union they pay their fees to. Whether the Union organises 24 meetings per year, or zero meetings per year, the considerable pay of the officials does not change one iota. Meanwhile, workers suffer.

Workers need to start organising as soon as they are able. Perhaps with some exceptions, rank and file groups will need to be organised within virtually all Unions. Within these rank and file groups, leftist and anti-capitalists should, wherever possible, work together to encourage workers to demand urgent action from the Union officials. Unilateral actions called by these rank and file groups will also be needed – with or without the endorsement of the Union officials. These rank and file groups should also be prepared to picket the offices of their own Unions, demanding action. Organising meetings of members without the sanction of the Union officials will be an unavoidable necessity.

At the very least, the Unions should be leading a national industrial struggle **for a shorter working week with no loss in pay**. A 30 hour week would be a good start. Serious, nation-wide struggles over this basic demand, which, if won, would substantially undermine unemployment and increase the amount of disposable income of workers, returning a stimulus of the economy even on the terms of the business class itself. This could then set the stage for winning permanent jobs for all workers, and would embolden workers to demand adequate health and safety, the retention of penalty rates, and more.

The reign of capital will resist furiously, which would only point to the need not for a changing of the rules, but a changing of the entire system.



Above: A demand which seems to have vanished from the Union movement is for a 30 hour week. Put forward now, it could galvanise a desperately needed Union fightback. www.oldpoliticals.com

Working people need not only a new industrial relations act. Workers ultimately need a state and a government which they own and which defends their interests. No capitalist government, no matter how liberal, can ever fully meet the needs of all workers of all generations to come. What is needed is a workers republic – a government which rests on the organised power of workers themselves. Leading them will be the most class-conscious workers, composed in a vanguard party of activists committed to the struggle for the sweeping away of the power of private capital and the initiation of a socialist order. This system change is the only one which can “change the rules”.

WORKERS LEAGUE

PO Box 66 NUNDAH QLD 4012

E: workersleague@redfireonline.com

www.redfireonline.com

HANDS OFF THE PHILIPPINES!

AUSTRALIAN TROOPS: OUT NOW!



Above: ISIS “mysteriously” appeared in Marawi, the Philippines while President Duterte was visiting Russia. www.nbcnews.com

(This article is taken from www.redfireonline.com)

09-09-2017 – The US led war on Syria is in the throes of defeat, and ISIS is on the verge of being eliminated from the Levant. Australian military forces have played an ignominious role, fighting with and alongside the US Empire, who in turn fight with and alongside ISIS and other proxy forces. The final embers of this dirty war are still smouldering, but that has not prevented the Australian government from once again committing Australian troops to US wars, this time in the Philippines. Once again, we see ISIS being used by the US Empire as a staging post, popping up conveniently when needed, which will once again be used as justification for an invasion force to fight “against”. Working people should not be fooled.

After “offering” to send Australian military forces to the Philippines for some weeks, the Philippines

Defence Minister Delfin Lorenzana finally relented yesterday. With US troops already in the Philippines,¹⁶ allegedly “helping” the Philippine Armed Forces battle against Abu Sayyaf and ISIS militants, the “offer” from the Australian government, backed by the US war machine, is one that the Philippines government would be under enormous pressure to “accept”. Australian Defence Minister Senator Marise Payne, after meeting with Mr Lorenzana, referred to “militants” returning from the Middle East, who are “battle-hardened....well-trained [and] very determined”.¹⁷ She should know. In effect, Australian troops in Iraq and Syria were aiding the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia and others fund and arm them!

Duterte pivots away from the US

¹⁶ <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/905605/armed-us-troops-support-afp-operations-in-marawi> (09-09-17)

¹⁷ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-08/australia-sending-troops-to-marawi-in-support-roles/8887384> (09-09-17)

Almost from the moment Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte was elected, it seems he attempted to break the Philippines from its decades old alliance with the US Empire, tilting towards China and Russia in the process. Last October, Duterte visited President Xi Jinping in Beijing. While a guest in the Great Hall of the People, Duterte asserted: “America has lost now...I’ve realigned myself in your ideological flow and maybe I will also go to Russia to talk to [President Vladimir] Putin and tell him that there are three of us against the world – China, Philippines and Russia. It’s the only way.”¹⁸ Duterte was arguably alarmed at the previous Philippines government being strong-armed by the US into provoking Red China over a series of islands in the South China Sea, along with Taiwan.

The idea of a former US colony openly switching allegiance to China and Russia was too much for Wall Street. Duterte reportedly sought increased trade, commerce and an arms deal with Russia during the meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. But the meeting had not even finished when ISIS, from out of nowhere, appeared in Mindanao, in the south of the Philippines. Duterte had to cut short his visit after martial law was declared around the area of Marawi, which was “suddenly” being besieged by armed ISIS terrorists. To say this was a convenience does not even begin to describe the manipulation.

Until that time Duterte had fired off a number of declarations which were exceedingly brave, despite his questionable domestic politics. Duterte had labelled Russian President Putin as his “favourite hero”, and had referred to Barack Obama as a “son of a bitch”. Duterte stated that America since the 1960s had interfered in other states, offering ‘help’ but in return demanding changes such as the

legalisation of gay marriage.¹⁹ Despite the nationalist and populist presentation, Duterte’s rhetoric was a distorted attempt to push back against US domination of the Philippines, and US imperialism worldwide. Despite Duterte’s conservative views on issues such as same-sex marriage and drug addiction, working people should not in the process condemn moves to contribute to the isolation the world’s most dangerous juggernaut – US imperialism.

The war on drugs

It can be recognised that drug addiction, especially in a society such as the Philippines with extensive poverty levels, is a problem which ties in health, employment, alienation, despair and other issues. In normal circumstances, leftists favour treating drug addiction as a health issue, not one of crime and punishment. It does appear that since being elected on June 30, 2016, President Duterte has embarked on one of the most unforgiving “drug wars” in recent history. It is claimed that up to 7000 addicts and dealers have lost their lives, often being blown away by police or masked assassins. However, the killing of 17 year old Kian Delos Santos appears to have moved some in the Philippines who may have otherwise supported the “tough on crime” approach.²⁰

While those internationally with generally progressive views may recoil in horror at Duterte’s war on drugs, the fact is he was elected with a huge mandate to do just that. Moreover, those internationally now opposing Duterte for the drug war are often a who’s who of the “human rights” and “civil society” industry – which inevitably form the “liberal” wing of the US Empire. For example,

¹⁸ <http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/article/2098544/what-now-dutertes-china-pivot-marawi-cements-us-importance-philippines> (09-09-17)

¹⁹

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/23/philippine-president-rodrigo-duterte-moscow-meet-favourite-hero-vladimir-putin> (09-09-17)

²⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/22/duterte-faces-nationwide-revolt-drugs-war-killing-schoolboy/> (09-09-17)

both Human Rights Watch²¹ and Amnesty International²² have condemned Duterte's first year in power. Yet these are the same organisations which for years alibied Al Qaeda and ISIS in Syria as "rebels" for attempting to bring down the Syrian Arab Republic using extreme violence – with the full backing of the governments of the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia. "Human Rights" indeed. While a "war on drugs" is usually a war against predominantly poor people, the left needs to be aware of the larger geopolitical motives that have brought "ISIS" to the Philippines.

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Marawi

The leprechaun like appearance of ISIS in the Mindanaoan area of Marawi bears all the hallmarks of a ham-fisted late US attempt at regime change in the Philippines. Despite how most of the Western left views Duterte, he maintains an overwhelming approval rating within the Philippines, which some say is as high as 75%. Duterte appears to be attempting to overcome the dependence his pro-US predecessor locked the Philippines into. Along with moves to conciliate China, and foster more trade with Russia, Duterte

also was reportedly forging closer ties to Cuba in order to improve health in the country.²³ Though opposed by anti-Duterte NGOs and Western governments, Duterte appears to retain popular support even in Mindanao, where the military now appear to be winning against the ISIS proxies. The martial law which has been imposed has apparently not alarmed the local population, who appear to approve of the government's military campaign against the appalling violence of the ISIS mercenaries. The local Maute and Abu Sayyaf have now morphed into the ISIS incubus, further alienating the locals.

From a distance, it does appear as though Duterte represents one wing of the Philippine ruling class which genuinely desires to be free from US domination, while the other wing is more than content with a role as a US patron. These wings are perhaps replicated within the Philippine Armed Forces. This may explain why the Philippine Army has allowed US troops to intervene in the Marawi situation – or perhaps they had little choice. The Philippine defence minister in turn, may have felt that he had no option but to accept Australian military involvement – knowing that the real pressure for this was emanating from the US war machine.

Another complication when attempting to analyse the overall situation is Duterte's relations with the New People's Army (NPA) – the armed wing of the Maoist inspired Communist Party of the Philippines. If the NPA can ally itself with Duterte against the encroaches of the US military, perhaps it is not wise to oppose Duterte from the left. However, this alliance between the NPA and Duterte appears to be not only not ongoing, but on-again, off-again.²⁴ In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that Duterte, under immense

²¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/28/philippines-dutertes-first-year-human-rights-calamity> (09-09-17)

²² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/philippines-dutertes-bloody-and-lawless-year-in-power/> (09-09-17)

²³ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/philippines-western-media-is-distorting-reality-people-and-army-unite-to-battle-isis/5600985> (09-09-17)

²⁴ <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/21/17/with-duterte-cold-on-peace-talks-mpa-braces-for-hostilities> (10-09-17)

pressure, has felt forced to abandon a consistent anti-US stance. In early August, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Manila, seemingly in order to persuade Duterte to allow the US armed forces to fight “against” ISIS. Duterte reportedly acquiesced, following on from a seemingly amicable statement to Tillerson at the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) forum, saying “I am your humble friend in South East Asia.”²⁵

Below: A street in Marawi during the operations to clear the town of ISIS. The ISIS flag can be seen protruding from a barrel in the middle of the street. Despite the efforts of Western funded liberal NGOs in the Philippines, it appears the majority of Filipinos approve of President Duterte’s efforts to eliminate the scourge of ISIS, even if it means temporary displacement within the country. Image from www.bbc.com



US encirclement of China

Regardless of the vacillations of Duterte, and despite the hypocritical and plaintive pleas of Western backed anti-Duterte NGOs, the US/AUST military presence in the Philippines is another disastrous chapter in attempted regime change abominations, flowing on from Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. The Pentagon, not being able to accept the reality of military defeat of their ISIS Frankenstein in Syria by the air power of Russia, have again lashed out against another sovereign country attempting to assert its independence. The

political decline of the US Empire has led to “humanitarian wars” now being outsourced to proxy terrorist forces, which receive weapons and funding by the millions. The Pentagon trains up unhinged fundamentalist “Islamic” extremists, and sends them into Libya, Syria, Chechnya in Russia or Xinjiang in China.²⁶ One of the aims is to not only continue the military encirclement of Red China, but to disrupt the mammoth New Silk Road Eurasian infrastructure projects that only a gargantuan socialist economy such as China’s could offer. Wars, conflict and chaos in all the areas targeted for infrastructure and trade development by the New Silk Road clearly benefits the US state at the expense of China, the world’s most powerful workers state. The US cannot tolerate any rival, let alone one based on the Marxist precepts of collective ownership and a planned economy. Canberra itches, as usual, to prove it is even more loyal to the project of hybrid war against China than the US itself.

For an anti-war movement

At the very least, what working people need is a serious anti-war movement, which can contribute to a recalibration of class struggle in this country. Unfortunately, the previous six years have seen a vanishing of anti-war activity, despite many urging its reanimation. Large responsibility lies with the conservative Trade Union bureaucracy, from the national peak bodies down to local Union secretaries. To our knowledge, not one of them have spoken out against the criminal wars for regime change in Libya and Syria, let alone condemn the Australian military’s participation in them. Along with their virtual silence in the face of the decimation of jobs and wages in times of economic recession, their silence in the face of impending world war testifies to the high salaries their careers ensure. Tailing after this pro-capitalist bureaucracy we find some left parties, who also

²⁵ <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-08-07/us-preparing-airstrikes-against-isis-philippines> (10-09-17)

²⁶ <https://journal-neo.org/2017/05/30/the-cia-s-cloddish-isis-attack-on-duterte/> (10-09-17)

struggle to break from the foreign policy of Australian capital, and thus come behind US imperialist adventures, muttering pleas against “dictators”.

Workers here, and internationally, on the other hand, are irrevocably opposed to imperialist wars, especially ones that could lead to world war. Despite the abject murder of the peace movement by corporate funded NGOs, conservative Union officials and some left parties, there is a mass base of millions of workers and their supporters ready and willing to take action to arrest the drift to war. Politically savvy working people are already aware that the series of never-ending wars is linked to the problem of mass unemployment, unaffordable housing, skyrocketing electricity, gas and water prices, the shredding of pay and working conditions for those still in employment and the ever-worsening danger of climate collapse. While this is occurring, not one cent of taxpayer’s money should be used for Australian military hardware and soldiers marauding their way around the Philippines, under the flimsy pretext of “fighting ISIS”. The bitter experience of the war on Syria demonstrated that ISIS is the horrific creation of the US led imperialist powers themselves, and that unity of the **anti-imperialist** governments and workers of the world can put them to the sword.

The horror of modern day war is not the result of mad leaders such as US President Trump, or servile Australian politicians. Today, imperialist war is the ultimate result of the impasse of the falling rate of profit for the “captains of industry”, whose capitalist economy continues to spiral downwards with recessionary rates of growth. It follows that imperialist war itself cannot be abolished without the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, and the collectivisation of industry in the hands of the workers. Leading this struggle will require an anti-imperialist vanguard party, which can spark the nearly dormant anti-war

and Union movements into action. **AUSTRALIAN TROOPS: OUT OF THE PHILIPPINES!**

WORKERS LEAGUE

PO Box 66 NUNDAH QLD 4012

E:workersleague@redfireonline.com

www.redfireonline.com



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HANDS OFF MYANMAR!

WESTERN POWERS CREATE AND FUEL CHAOS IN ASIA



Above: Map showing the operation of the China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline, which only began operations in the early part of 2017. The pipeline is jointly owned by Chinese and Myanmar state owned corporations. www.deepresource.wordpress.com

(This article first appeared at www.redfireonline.com on 15-09-2017)

15-09-17 – We were told there were “rebels” in Libya - but they turned out to be Al Qaeda. We were then told there were “rebels” in Syria – but they turned out to be ISIS. If we were now to believe that there are “rebels” in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, we would have very short memories indeed. And, as if on cue, Al Qaeda has now chipped in, declaring that any deaths of Rohingya Muslims will be avenged, and that the government

of Myanmar will be punished.²⁷ The horrific imperialist game of regime change appears to be on again.

If you are thinking that all this is just a little too convenient, you are not alone. No sooner is the US Empire facing a serious defeat in Syria, it turns its attention to other countries and regions, where it has been working away behind the scenes for decades, undermining and white-anting any

²⁷ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-14/al-qaeda-urges-muslims-globally-to-aid-rohingya-in-myanmar/8946390> (15-09-17)

country perceived to be independent of them, or, worse still, engaging Red China to assist them with their trade and development. Any of the Asian nations that have the temerity to consider China a partner rather than the US, sooner or later will find chaos erupting within their borders, if not an open hybrid “humanitarian” war. The current situation in Myanmar, despite all of its unique history, is yet another case.

Aung San Suu Kyi/NLD a product of Western funding

Unlike in Syria, where the Syrian government was regarded by the US as an opponent going back to the 1950s, the National League for Democracy (NLD) government led by Aung Sung Suu Kyi was a product of US and UK backed NGOs over some decades. The “Land Destroyer” blog site reveals that the US and UK have spent tens of millions of dollars creating the NLD/Suu Kyi led government in Myanmar, filtered through liberal para-state “civil society” organisations. The notoriously misnamed “National Endowment for Democracy” (NED) is in on the act, as is the infamous Open Society Institute (OSI) of colour revolution specialist and billionaire financier George Soros. The US funded broadcaster Voice of America (VOA) beams in disguised pro-Western propaganda three times a day, while the Orwellian named Radio Free Asia (RFA) pumps Myanmar with pro-capitalist missives through a two hour “news service” every day.²⁸ The “Burma (the previous name of Myanmar) Campaign UK” group openly chastise the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) for a lack of funding and backing for “democracy promotion”.²⁹ It would be funny if it wasn’t so serious. By “democracy” these apologists for US/British imperialism mean a government which will do the bidding of Washington and London,

²⁸ <http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com.au/2017/09/myanmar-gasoline-and-fire-not-good-vs.html> (16-09-17)

²⁹ <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/images/uploads/DFIDReview.pdf> (16-09-17)

rather than exerting any shred of independence from them.

As recently as 2012, Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honour the US Congress can award.³⁰ To give you an idea of just how comfortable Aung San Suu Kyi was with the inner sanctum of the US Empire, she welcomed a visit from Hilary “Destroyer of Worlds” Clinton in 2015, at the peak of her powers before later being defeated by Trump in 2016.³¹ So if Suu Kyi was the apple of the eye of Uncle Sam as little as a year ago, why is she now targeted by the Empire’s vassal NGOs, and is being asked to hand back her Nobel Peace Prize?

Attempts to disrupt the New Silk Road

In a word, the New Silk Road. The New Silk Road, or One Belt One Road initiative led by the People’s Republic of China, is an infrastructure and economic growth building plan, reported to be seven times larger than the US sponsored Marshall Plan for Europe after the destruction of the Second World War. 1.3 trillion dollars of projects have been announced so far, with more to come. Amongst other things, it seeks to link China’s western provinces to South East Asia, Africa, Central Asia and Europe, reviving the Silk Road trade routes of ancient times³², but using China’s well renowned modern state owned railway and port projects. Aung San Suu Kyi was one of the 29 world leaders who attended the launch of the mega- project in Beijing in May of this year,³³ signing up Myanmar as a founding member. This appears to have been the final straw for the Wall Street. Already reeling from the rise of China,

³⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/20/aung-san-suu-kyi-medal> (16-09-17)

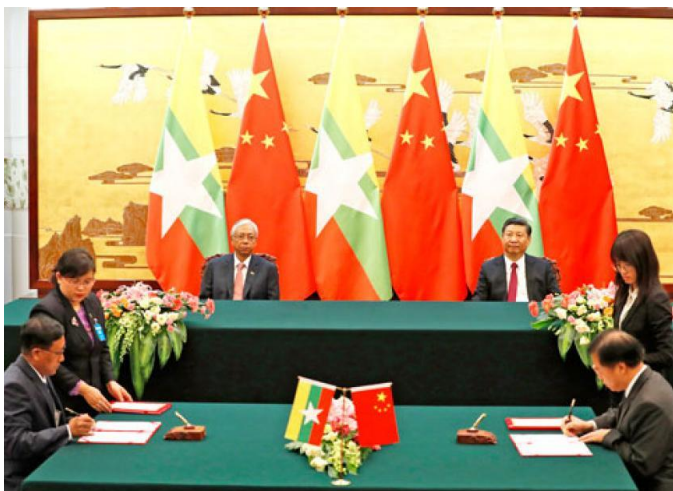
³¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/icons-bid-for-power-aung-suu-kyi-and-hillary-clinton-are-facing-a-huge-task-10185813.html> (16-09-17)

³² <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/05/16/chinas-one-belt-one-road-plan-explained> (16-09-17)

³³ <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-arrives-in-beijing-to-attend-belt-and-road-forum-for-international-cooperation/> (16-09-17)

losing influence amongst South East Asia to socialist China was too much to take. As little as a few months later, a crisis emerges for the Rohingya people of the Rakhine state in Myanmar.

Below: Chinese President Xi Jinping and Myanmar President Htin Kyaw sign off on the China-Myanmar oil pipeline on April 10, 2017. The deal benefits the people of China and Myanmar via the state ownership of the Chinese and Myanmar corporations which will operate it. Part of China's One Belt, One Road (New Silk Road) initiative, the deal will mean that Myanmar receives US \$13.81 million dollars initially, plus a \$1 a ton transit fee for oil which passes through the pipeline for the next 30 years. The US can barely tolerate losing influence in Asia, let alone being replaced by socialist China offering favourable trade and investment to its neighbouring and developing countries. www.mmtimes.com



To be sure, the history of tensions between the Muslim people of the coastal Rakhine state in Myanmar and the majority Buddhist population goes back some years before the launch of the New Silk Road. But now outside forces, who bear no relation to the Rohingyas themselves, have an opportunity to sow chaos and disorder, which at the least, can disrupt the greater economic ties between Myanmar and China. At most, it could provide a beachhead for the entry of US troops, or their proxy forces, in yet another “humanitarian war”. This beachhead could then be a part of the real aim of the US “pivot to Asia” – the military encirclement of Red China; which is the 21st

century version of “containing and rolling back communism”.

Working people need to be clear. China overturned capitalism via its victorious socialist revolution in 1949. Therefore, the Chinese economy today does not operate primarily on the basis of production for private profit. Its expanding foreign investments do not take place in order to maximise profit, but in order to secure resources for its own economic development. As a quid-pro-quo, China's non-exploitative development projects in other countries also offer the opportunity for much need economic growth, especially in the Third World. This is because roads, ports, railways etc. – inevitably lead to increased commerce. In fact, some of the First World economies can also benefit from these projects, given that they are in a dire capitalist fuelled recession of their own. Thus, despite ties to the US, the Australian government felt compelled to send a delegation to Beijing for the launch of the New Silk Road. The comparison is stark – socialist China offers Asian, African and European countries opportunities for mutually beneficial development; while the US Empire offers nothing but plunder and war. And if it looks like you are a friendly neighbour to China – as Myanmar is – be prepared for chaos to be unleashed.

Rohingya “Army” appears

The history of the tensions of the Rohingyas and the Buddhists in Myanmar requires a separate study, and certainly does predate China's New Silk Road mega-projects. Yet it is extremely suspicious when the so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) makes a spectre-like appearance, armed to the hilt, and then begins armed attacks on the Tatmadaw – the armed forces of Myanmar. Suspicions are confirmed when it becomes known that ARSA – formerly known as Harakat al Yaqin (HaY) – is being funnelled cash and weapons from Malaysia, Pakistan and..wait for it...Saudi Arabia. The Rohingya diaspora has led to large Rohingya

populations being established in Malaysia and Pakistan, and the ARSA even has a leadership council based in Saudi Arabia.³⁴ With US state support, Saudi Arabia was one of the strongest backers of the genocidal Wahabist “rebels” in Syria, which at great cost were defeated by the Syrian government with the assistance of Russia. Now in Myanmar, we see the same playbook being rolled out again. Yet, as in Syria, the Saudi armed Rohingya “rebels” no more represent the Rohingya people, or Muslims, any more than Al Qaeda and ISIS “represented” Muslims in Syria.

Nor does the “Buddhist Bin Laden”, monk Ashin Wirathu, leader of the ultra-nationalist 969 group in Myanmar represent all Buddhists. The 969 group are said to have been behind a wave of sectarian anti-Muslim riots which have killed scores since 2012.³⁵ More than this, these “monks” were the most active in organising vigorous protests *against* the Myanmar government’s move to give hundreds of thousands of stateless Rohingyas citizenship. These protagonists of the “Saffron Revolution” are in fact ultra-violent, bigoted and racist in a way which would rival the Ku Klux Klan in the US.³⁶ Yet this is part of the support base for Aung San Suu Kyi, and are thus presented to unsuspecting Westerners as liberal pro-democracy activists! Once again, the Western media and Western funded NGOs have covered for the real aims of the US Empire – the installation of a subservient pro-Western government, regardless of who their domestic allies may be. Whether the allies be ultra-violent Buddhist nationalists in Myanmar, Nazis and fascists in Ukraine, ISIS in Syria and the Philippines, or Al Qaeda arming the Rohingyas – the corporate media will portray them as “rebels” or their actions as a “democratic uprising” !

Left parties take the bait

³⁴ <http://www.atimes.com/article/foreign-support-gives-rohingya-militants-lethal-edge/> (17-09-17)

³⁵ <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-ff-myanmar-monk-20150524-story.html> (17-09-17)

³⁶ <https://journal-neo.org/2015/03/05/myanmar-meet-aung-san-suu-kyi-s-saffron-mobs/> (17-09-17)

Unfortunately, some Australian left parties appear to have repeated their error-ridden actions from the wars on Libya and Syria, where they backed “rebels” even when it became clear that the “rebels” were in fact genocidal Al Qaeda linked mercenaries. Already the Al Qaeda link to the Rohingya “rebels” has emerged in Myanmar, but this seems to have been overlooked by the Socialist Alliance³⁷, Socialist Alternative³⁸, and Solidarity³⁹. There are some indications that the Communist Party of Australia, which at best offered only lukewarm opposition to the US led wars on Libya and Syria, have followed suit.⁴⁰ Despite their anti-war credos, these organisations are lining up with the decidedly pro-war NGOs in Myanmar, as they did in Libya and Syria. The lessons haven’t been learnt. The whole raison d’être for these para-state NGOs (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International) is not to advocate “human rights” and “democracy”, but the very aims of the US Empire itself. In the case of Myanmar, it is currently about creating chaos in the Rakhine state, fostering armed extremism (yet again), disrupting China’s New Silk Road, bringing Aung San Suu Kyi and the Myanmar government to heel, and extending and consolidating the military encirclement of Red China. Chaos and war on China’s southern flank can only benefit Wall Street, and, combined with the provocations in the South China Sea, the threat of nuclear war against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the

³⁷ <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/myanmar-all-out-war-rohingya> (17-09-17)

³⁸ <https://redflag.org.au/node/6014> (17-09-17)

³⁹

<https://www.solidarity.net.au/mag/back/2017/99/new-evidence-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-burma/> (17-09-17)

⁴⁰ <http://www.cpa.org.au/guardian/2017/1793/18-region-briefs.html> (17-09-17)

backing of anti-socialist jihadists in Xinjiang, the Lamas in Tibet and the never-ending war on Afghanistan, the picture comes into sharp relief.

For an anti-imperialist anti-war movement

Workers desperately need an anti-imperialist anti-war movement, to lead a struggle against the endless machinations and regime change wars being prepared against China and Russia, and any country that even has thoughts of independence from the US Empire. In the case of Myanmar today, while not offering political support to the NLD government or its supporters, working people should defend the right of Myanmar to determine its own affairs without interference from US state and para-state actors, up to and including the right to complete trade and investment opportunities with China. After all, China is a next door neighbour. Without Western meddling, it is likely that the 135 ethnic minorities which make up Myanmar would co-exist, as they did for decades previously. Despite the grim scenarios, we should be confident that the overwhelming majority of working people here and internationally are opposed to a world war, and would be prepared to take action to prevent it. What is currently absent is the leadership of a workers vanguard party. Such a party could lead working people in a struggle to eliminate the source of imperialist war – the decaying capitalist system – by fighting for a workers' republic, linking with the vast proletariat in Asia to aim for an internationally planned economy. **HANDS OFF MYANMAR!**

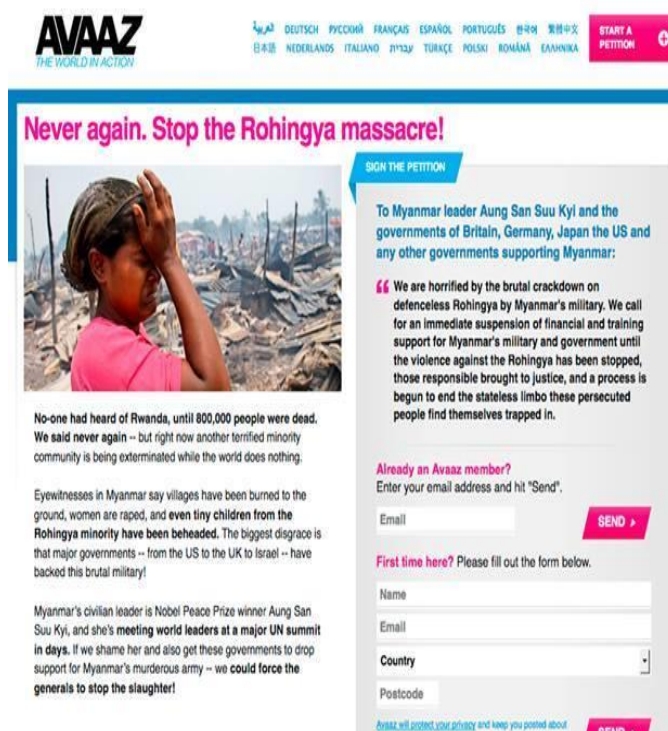
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www.redfireonline.com

AVAAZ, supporter of death squads, regime change operations, violent military interventions has something to say about Myanmar:



The screenshot shows the AVAAZ petition interface. At the top, the AVAAZ logo is on the left, and a row of language options (Arabic, Deutsch, PycKOB, Francais, Español, Português, 中文, 日本語, Nederlands, Italiano, Türkçe, Polski, Română, Edoanika) is on the right, followed by a 'START A PETITION' button. The main heading is 'Never again. Stop the Rohingya massacre!'. Below this is a photo of a Rohingya woman covering her face in distress. To the right of the photo is a 'SIGN THE PETITION' button. Below the photo, there is a quote: 'No-one had heard of Rwanda, until 800,000 people were dead. We said never again -- but right now another terrified minority community is being exterminated while the world does nothing.' Below this is another quote: 'Eyewitnesses in Myanmar say villages have been burned to the ground, women are raped, and even tiny children from the Rohingya minority have been beheaded. The biggest disgrace is that major governments -- from the US to the UK to Israel -- have backed this brutal military!'. Below this is a quote: 'Myanmar's civilian leader is Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, and she's meeting world leaders at a major UN summit in days. If we shame her and also get these governments to drop support for Myanmar's murderous army -- we could force the generals to stop the slaughter!'. To the right of these quotes is a text box with the following text: 'To Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the governments of Britain, Germany, Japan the US and any other governments supporting Myanmar: "We are horrified by the brutal crackdown on defenceless Rohingya by Myanmar's military. We call for an immediate suspension of financial and training support for Myanmar's military and government until the violence against the Rohingya has been stopped, those responsible brought to justice, and a process is begun to end the stateless limbo these persecuted people find themselves trapped in."'. Below this text box is a 'SEND' button. Below the 'SEND' button is a form with fields for 'Name', 'Email', 'Country', and 'Postcode'. Below the form is a 'SEND' button. At the bottom of the form is a small text: 'Avaaaz will protect your privacy and keep you posted about this and other campaigns.'.

Above: The dead giveaway that something in the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar doesn't add up is the sudden appearance of Avaaz, with its calls to "save the Rohingya". There certainly have been serious issues with Muslim and majority Buddhist Myanmar, which have their own history. However, these tensions are being expertly manipulated by Western NGOs, working for Western imperialism. In this context, the current call to "save the Rohingyas" is in effect a call for imperialist war on Myanmar. Some left parties have once again fallen for the trap. www.wrongkindofgreen.org

YES TO EQUAL MARRIAGE RIGHTS.....AND A WORKERS' REPUBLIC!



www.sfgate.com

(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed at a rally for Marriage Equality on 21-10-2017.)

As partisans of the forward march of humanity, the Workers League fully supports the aims of the “Yes” campaign relating to the right of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) people to be entitled to all benefits relating to the concept of marriage. Even though the postal survey does not actually bind the current legislators to act, the survey is seen by most as a referendum on equality and acceptance of all variants of human sexuality. While the winning of the right for all those identifying somewhere on the LGBTI spectrum to marry whomsoever they choose will not end the manifestations of oppression and discrimination, any concession wrested from the elite rulers of this

unequal society represents a victory worth celebrating.

LGBTI discrimination under capitalism stunts the development of human and societal relationships, while relegating those on the LGBTI spectrum to second class status. While the winning of equal marriage rights will go some way towards alleviating the deprivations endured, in itself it cannot end LGBTI oppression. This oppression is bound up with the “sacred” right to private property, without which the rule of capital would fall. In 1884, Frederick Engels, one of the founders of scientific socialism, identified the three main pillars of class society – the family, private property and the state. LGBTI oppression flows from the institution of the family, particularly the

monogamous and heterosexual template, which represents class society's smallest repressive unit. It is reinforced by the strongest arms of capitalist rule – its state, via its parliaments, police, civil service bureaucracy and the law courts. Same-sex relationships challenge the form of the family, but legal recognition of them under capitalism does not do away with the material basis which sustains and maintains homophobia. This requires a workers movement strong enough to wage a struggle for its complete liberation – the prerequisite of which is the overturn of finance capital and the founding of a workers republic.

Shady Allies

We note that the revolutionary overthrow of the rule of the banks and the stock exchange is far from the agenda of those leading the Equal Marriage Rights campaign. On the contrary, while the equal marriage rights campaign has been largely led by activists outside of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Australian Greens, it nonetheless welcomes the formation of an open front with them, which immediately shuts off the politics from developing in a radical direction. It was the ALP itself which strongly voted with the Liberals in 2004 for the discrimination against the LGBTI community, and the ALP ignored the equal marriage rights campaign for over ten years. It was only after the momentum for marriage equality, backed by years of activism, and had reached the stage where the overwhelming majority of young people, and the clear majority of the Australian people, were in favour – did the ALP finally put its hand up. While it is true the Australian Greens have always held the position of supporting equal marriage rights, the Greens tend to view victory as winning an argument, or as a result of more education. This outlook conforms to their unattainable “humane capitalism” ethos.

One glance at the list of corporate endorsees of the Yes campaign is enough to trigger alarms bells in workers with even an elementary sense of class

consciousness. All manner of exploitative and profit gouging corporations have willingly handed over their colourful logos to the Yes campaign. For example, after slashing thousands of jobs and raking in vast profits, QANTAS, the Commonwealth Bank and Telstra appear as sponsors. The owner of Coles, Bunnings, Officeworks and numerous other retail chains, Wesfarmers, one of the largest corporations in Australia, is also an endorsee. Australia's workforce is 40% casual, contract or temporary, causing immense insecurity for millions of workers. Yet the Skilled company, one of the largest casual staff employers, is also an endorsee.



Above: Many businesses and corporations have jumped on board the marriage equality campaign. This demonstrates the cross-class nature of the politics, meaning express limits for working people. Image from www.news.com.au

It doesn't stop there. If the genocidal Salafist and Wahabist mercenaries of Al Qaeda and ISIS had, in their role as US and Saudi armed proxies, succeeded in overthrowing the Syrian government, it is likely that many LGBTI Syrians would have been summarily executed, in the same manner as they did to anyone perceived to be supporting the Syrian Arab Republic. Yet some of the most outspoken, if indirect, backers of the US/UK/AUST war on Syria – pro-war NGOs such as Amnesty International, GetUp! and the grossly misnamed Save the Children – turn out to be corporate backers of the Yes campaign.

Organised Labour must lead

It should be obvious what the limitations of such an extreme cross-class alliance leads to – an alibi for corporate power, which in practice means an alibi for the very system responsible for LGBTI repression in the first place. On the other hand, it is noted that some Unions have backed the Yes campaign, or at least put their name to it, much in the manner of the corporations they are supposed to protect workers from. Unions WA, the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) have all added their logos to the Yes campaign.

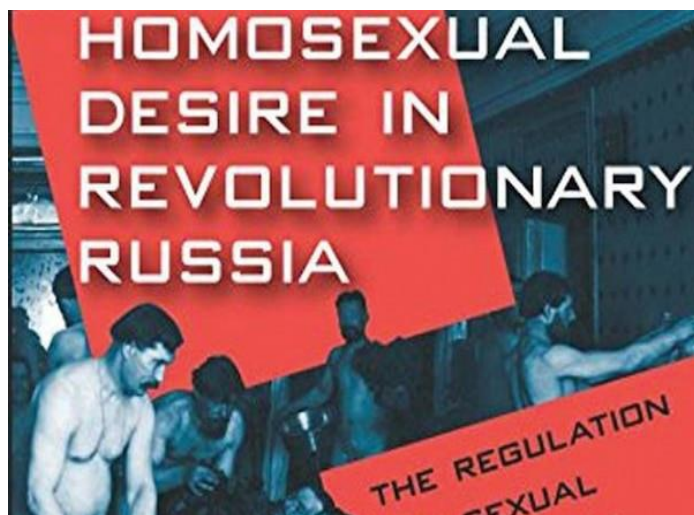
Yet logos in themselves are not enough – especially when placed alongside corporate logos. What is needed is for the Union leaderships to champion LGBTI liberation through the efforts of working people to break from the chains of capital. This will require the formation of a Marxist vanguard party, which can position the conservative leadership of the peak Union bodies in the struggle against that which restrains LGBTI and non-LGBTI workers alike – the profit system. 2017 marks 100 years of the October Revolution in Russia, where working people, led by VI Lenin's Bolsheviks, seized power and created the world's first socialist state. Soon after, one of the first acts of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was the abolition of all Tsarist laws which criminalised homosexual activity and relationships – the first state defence of LGBTI people in history. *For new October Revolutions!*

WORKERS LEAGUE

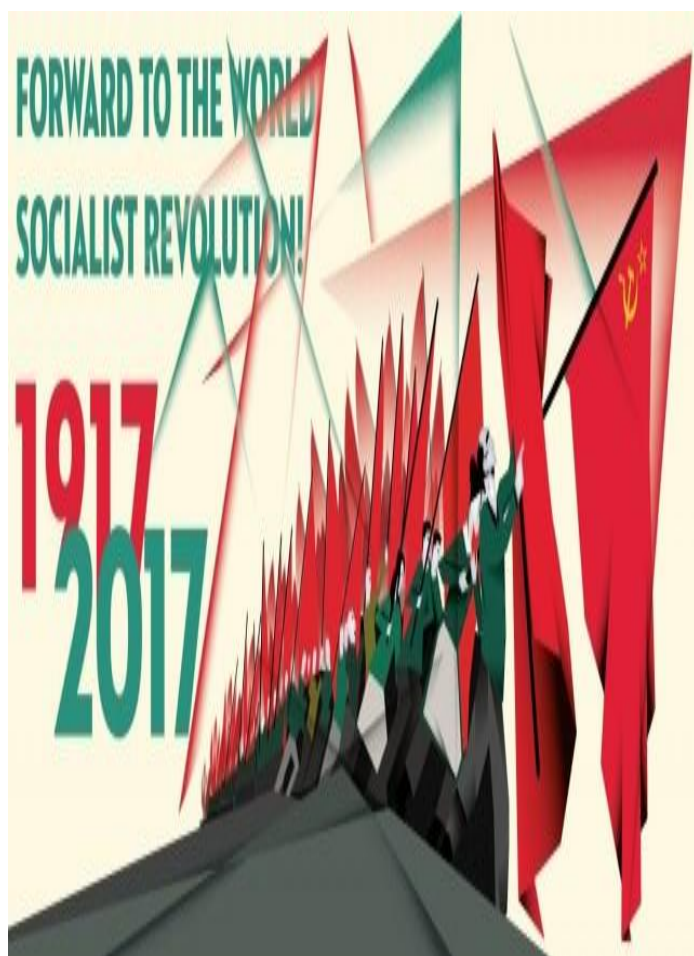
PO Box 66 NUNDAH QLD 4012

E: workersleague@redfireonline.com

www.redfireonline.com



Above: Part of the front cover of Dan Healy's book "Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia". Although not sympathetic to socialism, Healy's book highlights the fact that homosexuality was decriminalised, and homosexual marriage allowed, under the new Soviet government headed by the Bolsheviks. Even though this was later reversed in the 1930s, the advances of the early USSR for what is now known as LGBTI rights still stand as very advanced today. Image from www.mronline.org



www.marxist.com

CATALONIA: THE AFFLUENT "REVOLUTION"



Above: Map highlighting the Catalonian region of Spain. www.ontheworldmap.com

By Adam Baker

15-10-2017 – When is a revolution not a revolution? Amongst other things, it is when it is led by wealthy industrialists and conservative politicians, and when it is not supported by a majority of its people. Witness Catalonia today. All manner of misguided left parties and those who take a progressive political stand generally have been taken in by this movement for separatist independence of the wealthiest region of modern day Spain. It is true that there is right wing opposition to this movement, from Spanish nationalists to the conservative Spanish government, to the imperialist dominated European Union (EU). But the fact is, this movement is not supported by a majority of

Catalans, even if the majority of Catalans and Spaniards support the right to vote on the question.

Catalonian wealth

Catalonia is the wealthiest region of Spain, bar none. Andalusia in the south of Spain, for example, has less than two thirds the per capita income of Catalonia.⁴¹ It was never really industrialised, unlike the industry which was developed in Catalonia. Many suspect that the current push for Catalan independence has much to do with the fact that the wealthy business owners and industrialists resent having to pay taxes to the

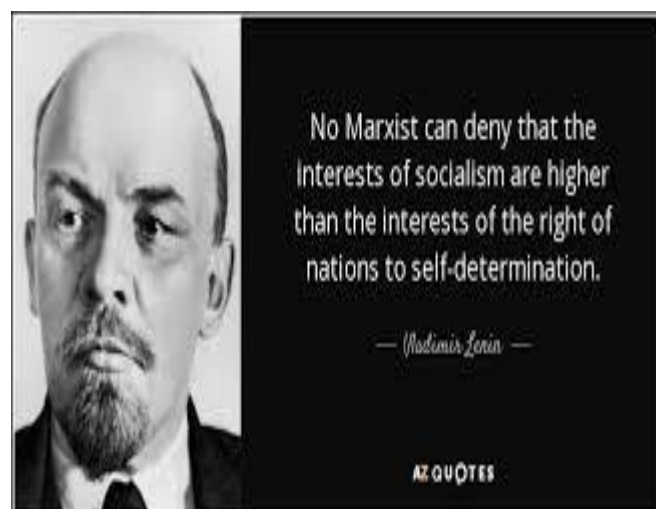
⁴¹ <https://benjaminstudebaker.com/2017/09/22/the-left-wing-case-against-catalan-independence/> (14-10-2017)

Spanish state, which then redistributes much of them to the poorer regions of Spain, such as Andalusia and Galicia. Of course, this is relative, as a capitalist state's prime function is far from ensuring the welfare of the masses. Catalonia has 7.3 million people, and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of over \$300 billion, similar to that of Scotland and Singapore.⁴² It goes without saying that the Catalan working class does not automatically share in this wealth, but the region itself is not short of a quid.

Under normal circumstances, the left usually comes behind a small prospective nation against a larger one, or a nation seeking national liberation against stronger imperialist powers. There is a sense of siding with the underdog, of siding with the less powerful against the mighty. However, the situation of Catalonia today is not what any self-respecting leftist would refer to as "normal". By definition, it can't be a "revolution" if it is led by the wealthiest sections of a society, and/or their political representatives. The affluent have **never** been oppressed by the poor, and never can be.

One can agree that Catalonia meets the criteria for the Marxist conception of a nation, that is, it contains: a common language (Catalan), a common territory, a common economy and a common culture. And leftists usually point to Lenin's work affirming that Marxists can support the right of a nation to self-determination – the right to self-administration up to and including the right to secede, to form their own nation.⁴³ However, what some left parties misunderstand is that while Marxists support the **right** of nations to self-determination, it does not follow automatically that Marxists will advocate the **exercise** of that right. Whether or not Marxists advocate the exercise of the right of nations to self-

determination depends almost entirely on whether this will advance, or set back, the class struggle, both in the oppressed nation and the oppressor nations. If self-determination will clear the way for better conditions for the working class struggle to advance, for example, where national oppression is so great that it clouds over other political issues, then Marxists may decide to support it. If, on the other hand, the exercise of self-determination may lead to the setting back of the working class struggle, for example by unnecessarily boosting harmful nationalism, and cutting workers of small and large nations off from one another, then Marxists may actually campaign **against** the exercise of the right to self-determination. That leftists should automatically support the exercise of the right to self-determination, regardless of the concrete analysis of concrete conditions, is in flagrant contradiction to Leninism.



Above: Some left parties, who have jumped on the bandwagon of Catalanian independence, often cite the fact that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had a position of supporting the right of all nations to self-determination. Yet the overall goal of socialism, in the practice of Lenin, was always a far higher priority. In fact, if it came about that the exercise of the right of nations to self-determination conflicted with, or impeded, the class struggle of workers of all nations, Marxists will not necessarily advocate it. At all times, leftists must analyse the concrete situation, the alignment of class forces, the politics of the region and internationally, and so on. There is no gain to be made by blindly supporting all independence movements. www.azquotes.com

⁴² <http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com.au/2017/10/catalan-independence-5-things-to-think.html> (14-10-2017)

⁴³ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jan/x01.htm> (14-10-2017)

In 2017, and for the last five years or so, the Catalanian independence movement has been politically led by conservative nationalists, with links to the Catalan bourgeois class. How conservative? For one thing, these leaders have been, and remain, staunchly in favour of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – the military arm of anti-Russian US led imperialism). Former Catalanian Prime Minister Artur Mas made it explicit – Catalonia actively seeks membership of NATO.⁴⁴ NATO is arguably the most dangerous organisation in the world today, and the one most likely to be at the heart of itself igniting World War III. One could sustain a case that NATO is thus the most politically reactionary body existing. Yet NATO membership is dearly held by Catalanian independence leaders. One doesn't have to be a Marxist to recognise something is amiss here.

Below: The politicians of Spain, as well as those of Catalonia, have repeatedly pledged allegiance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – arguably the most politically reactionary body on the face of the planet. Originally established as a counter to the USSR, it remains a US dominated anti-Russian military bloc of war, which constantly threatens war. To our knowledge, the Catalanian independence movement has not distanced itself from the conservative pro-NATO politicians. Image from www.twitter.com



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<https://www.vilaweb.cat/noticia/4165393/20140105/catalan-pm-confirms-nato-membership-commitment-to-collective-security.html> (14-10-2017)

This alone is enough to recoil, but there is more. The Catalanian independence movement is also pro-EU (European Union). Catalan leaders recently re-stated that a breakaway Catalonia would seek to remain a part of the EU – even despite the EU saying that it won't recognise an independent Catalonia if not completed via the Spanish constitution.⁴⁵ The EU is an imperialist trading bloc, where the stronger imperialist powers, such as Germany and France, lord it over the poorer southern countries such as Portugal, Greece, and Spain itself. It functions to suppress the wages and working conditions of all workers across Europe to advantage European capital against its US and Japanese rivals – even if the US and Japan are mired in capitalist recession, and have been for some years. The pro-EU politics of Catalan leaders is another indication of how right-wing they are.

Democratic?

Undoubtedly there are some left-wing minded Catalans who have been drawn into the campaign for independence. A possible reason for this is that they mistakenly believe that Catalanian independence will lead to an end to the crushing unemployment and austerity measures being implemented across Spain in the wake of the capitalist financial crisis in 2008. However, a majority of Catalans have never favoured independence outright, and certainly not separatist independence. Many polls show that support amongst Catalans for independence has never reached more than around 41%. Support amongst Catalans to a unilateral declaration of independence is even smaller, at 35%. Opposition to a unilateral declaration of independence amongst Catalans stands at 60%, with a near overwhelming 67% opposition to this taking place

⁴⁵ <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/10/08/could-independent-catalonia-stay-eu> (14-10-2017)

without a debate in the Catalan regional parliament.⁴⁶

The left could even consider backing an independence movement if it had a majority of working class people backing it. But this is extremely doubtful in the case of Catalonia. The October 1 referendum, despite a rough-handed attempt to prevent it being carried out by the Spanish police, only had a turn-out of around 2 million votes. Of these, 90.9% supported independence, while 7.87% opposed independence.⁴⁷ So, approximately 5.3 million Catalans did not vote at all – and it is fairly safe to say that the overwhelming majority of these folk did not turn out to vote due to the fact that they were NOT in favour of independence. Of course, this is a separate matter from having the *right* to vote for independence. But the left should know better than to back an independence movement which does NOT have majority support.

It is the case that the attempted repression meted out by the Spanish authorities against the holding of the referendum may push some more Catalans into supporting the push for independence. But this is by no means guaranteed. In fact, there was a response by those supporting unity with Spain, in a rally on October 8. Some reports put attendance at up to a million people, many waving Spanish flags.⁴⁸ To be sure, there was a component, perhaps even the leading elements, which were mobilising on the basis of Spanish nationalism. There was also support for the EU – which the bourgeois led Catalan independence movement also supports. Yet there was also a clear element of a unity with Spain sentiment, which, from all reports, constitutes the majority within Catalonia.

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https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/05/24/inenglish/1495609585_875590.html (15-10-2017)

⁴⁷ <https://www.sott.net/article/363392-Catalonia-heads-to-the-polls-for-independence-referendum-amid-violent-police-measures-UPDATES> (15-10-2017)

⁴⁸ <https://www.rt.com/news/406049-protest-against-catalan-independence/> (15-10-2017)

This is the case even if there are major concerns about unemployment, austerity, and so on.

In fact, the majority of Catalans who support unity with Spain are also more than aware that it was in fact the conservative politicians who have led the independence movement themselves who have carried out austerity measures. This has included eliminating public service jobs and slashing wages at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 2013, Catalonia's ambulance workers were forced to take industrial action against a 9.2% wage cut.⁴⁹ These savage austerity measures have been carried out by the Catalan government itself, which is now leading the independence movement!

Amongst the reasons why the Catalan independence movement does not have overwhelming, or even majority support – is the question of language. It is true that Catalan was forbidden in Catalonia during the 40 odd years of Francoist rule, from the 1930s to the 1970s. Since then Catalan has been bilingual – Catalan and Spanish – while the majority of government, academic and institutional language is usually carried out in Catalan. Yet Catalonia also includes a large proportion of working people from the other regions of Spain, as well as migrants. Neither of these groups have Catalan as their first language. In fact, the Catalan government's own statistics show that less than a third – 31% - of Catalan residents speak Catalan as a first language.⁵⁰ Despite this, the Catalan independence parties want Catalan to be the only language for public affairs.

Nationalism is not the answer

⁴⁹ <http://www.catalannews.com/society-science/item/ambulance-workers-go-on-strike-in-catalonia-for-four-days-but-essential-services-are-guaranteed> (15-10-2017)

⁵⁰

http://llengua.gencat.cat/web/.content/documents/publicacions/altres/arxiu/EULP2013_angles.pdf (15-10-2017)

What is more, even the moderate left, let alone Marxists, have to be concerned when a police chief is regarded as a hero by the nationalists. The chief of police of the Catalan autonomous region, Josep Lluís Trapero, once gave a press conference, as head of the Mossos d'Esquadra (regional police). One reporter walked out when they discovered it was being held in the Catalan language. Trapero reportedly said in response "Okay, very well. So, goodbye". This farewell in Spanish is now often used by Catalan independence supporters – a measure of the lack of class awareness.⁵¹ It hardly needs to be said that the police are the bitter class enemies of working people, whether in a small regional capitalist autonomous region, OR in a larger national capitalist state. The logic of small time nationalism – in this case upholding the police as "heroes" very easily lends itself to big power nationalism.

Some left parties say that there are both left wing and right wing Catalan independence parties, and so the task is to assist the "left". Yet the "left" they refer to is not socialist in the Marxist sense, even if they refer to themselves as "socialists". The Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP), reserve the use of "socialist" and "feminist" rhetoric, but overall they are similar to the Greek SYRIZA party of Alexis Tsipras – which led Greek workers into the catastrophe of imposed austerity which was far worse than the former "social-democratic" politicians they replaced. The CUP currently holds 10 seats in the Catalan regional parliament, and is a part of the JxSi (Together for Yes) Coalition, alongside the Catalan Republican Left (ERC) and the Catalan Democratic Party of Europe (PDeCAT).⁵² The PDeCAT party is the right-wing party of Catalan premier Carles Puigdemont. So the CUP attempts to be the "left" force – while in direct coalition with the right-wing nationalists. The experience of

SYRIZA in Greece in 2015 gives a clear indication of where that strategy hits the rocks.

Nationalism is never the answer to pressing political problems facing the working people. As Boris Kagarlitsky writes, whenever the nationalists hold the upper hand, the left is weak. Conversely, whenever the left is the strongest and most influential, nationalists and nationalism often fade away into irrelevance.⁵³ The task for the left in Catalonia and Spain and Europe today is to unite working people against the profit system. In this case, dividing workers up into smaller and smaller nations can only fuel further isolation from one another, at a time when the greatest pro-working class unity against European capitalism is needed. Austerity can only be defeated by a widespread workers' struggle for revolutionary power, opening the gates of true socialism. Marxist vanguard parties which prioritise the struggle to win over the majority of Catalan, Spanish, European and international workers to this perspective are the key to solving this and other crucial problems of our time.

Below: In the centre is the police chief of the Mossos d'Esquadra, the police of the Catalan region. Josep Lluís Trapero has reportedly become a hero figure for Catalan independence supporters, for "standing up" to Spain. Workers should be extremely wary of movements with police chiefs as leaders. www.gettyimages.com



⁵¹

<http://www.internationalist.org/cataloniaselfdetermination1709.html> (15-10-2017)

⁵² <https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2017/09/29/the-cup> (15-10-2017)

⁵³ <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/11/catalonia-the-revolt-of-the-rich/> (15-10-2017)

MANUS ISLAND: EVACUATE NOW!

ORGANISED LABOUR MUST LEAD THE FIGHT TO FREE THE REFUGEES



Above: Refugees on Manus Island protest the dire situation, including cut offs of water and electricity. Image from abc.net.au/news 01-11-2017

(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed at an emergency rally over the dire situation on Manus Island.)

01-11-2017 – As we go to press, the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Defence Force is preparing to enter the Manus Island refugee detention centre, where around 600 men remain, fearful for their safety if they are forced out.⁵⁴ Earlier this year, the PNG army fired live ammunition into the detention centre, and there have also been machete and knife attacks against the asylum seekers by some aggrieved locals. The Manus Island detention centre is being closed after a ruling from the PNG courts which found that its establishment was unconstitutional. Full responsibility for it lies with

the Australian government, which has funded these hell-hole death camps on Nauru and PNG to the tune of billions of dollars.

As of today, reports indicate that electricity generators have been removed from the detention centre, which could mean that toilets and running water would cease to function. There are photos of refugees diverting rain water from building guttering into wheelie bins, so as to ensure they have some water when the cut off takes effect. This truly farcical but all too real medieval like siege is overseen by the current Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who repeatedly claim that these refugees remain the responsibility of the PNG government. Far from it. All of these refugees, who attempted to flee to Australia in fear for their lives, were unceremoniously dumped by the Australian

⁵⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-01/manus-island-army-to-remove-600-men-from-closed-centre/9106700> (01-11-2017)

government in what are in reality death camps, funded by private sector contracts authorised by the Australian government. To avoid mass casualties of those who have not committed any crime, the federal government must evacuate Manus Island detainees to Australia immediately.

Refugee rights at an impasse

The diabolical situation facing refugees and asylum seekers in this country is in the main the result of several interlocking factors. One is the almost criminal inaction of most Union officials. Perhaps the core reason for the unimaginable cruelty meted out to refugees and asylum seekers by the Australian government is their political need to divide the working class into an “us” and “them”. In the absence of a strong left-wing political force, this division leads to working people diverting their entirely justifiable dismay at unemployment, poverty, and the high cost of living onto refugees, almost all of whom are from countries much less wealthy than Australia, and almost all of whom are not white. This fuels and fosters extreme racism, despite the official declarations of multicultural Australia.

This racism is poison for the labour movement. The workplace is the only place in capitalist society which is truly integrated. All production depends on cooperation between workers regardless of their nationality, culture, language or religion. The Union movement simply cannot even begin to organise workers to defend themselves from the effects of the dire capitalist recession afflicting Australia, the US and Europe, unless they take action to decisively extinguish all traces of racism. While many groups and institutions in society oppose racism towards refugees from a moral, philosophical, religious or even political standpoint – such as the Greens, liberal NGOs, small businesses, church groups, social-welfare bodies – **only the working class has a material interest in overcoming and defeating racist ideology and practice.** This is why it is a vital necessity for the

Union movement to be the leading force against the appalling abuse of refugees and asylum seekers who have made it to these shores.

Yet the question of the Union movement is the question of the *leadership* of the Union movement. With a few exceptions, Unions in Australia are led by conservative, well-paid officials who have little interest in risking anything to assist working people. After all, their careers can only continue if they act to restrict the workers movement to the confines of the existing system, which is based on the exploitation of wage labour. Hence, these Union officials actively inculcate working people with ideology almost identical to that of the business class. Specifically, they politically steer workers towards the very institution of the profit system – parliament – which is used to deceive working people that they have some form of “democracy”.

This is by no means done directly. Some Union officials openly back the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and urge workers in that direction. However, the ALP is itself so exposed on the question of refugee rights – it established the mandatory detention of refugees, as well as off-shore detention – that that option is often a no go. So in steps an organisation such as GetUp! – an ALP front if ever there was one. GetUp! was created in 2005, as a result of funding from some Unions. As it poses as simply an independent activist group, and initiates campaigns on popular issues – for refugee rights, against coal mining and so on – many are unaware as to its core political role. However, Liberal Party politicians are certainly aware of the overall role of GetUp! driving campaigns which easily fit into the agenda of the ALP and the Greens. They have pushed for an Australian Electoral Commission inquiry into its funding.⁵⁵ The Australian Workers Union (AWU) recently had its offices raided as a politicised action

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http://www.aec.gov.au/Parties_and_Representatives/compliance/AEC_Advice/2010-nov-get-up.htm (01-11-2017)

to discredit the ALP, and Opposition leader Bill Shorten specifically. While workers should resolutely condemn and oppose any raids on any Union offices, they should also seriously question why the officials of some Unions hand members money to bodies such as GetUp!

Refugee rights in the service of war

GetUp!, the labour bureaucracy and the ALP have a three way symbiotic relationship – one cannot exist without the other. GetUp! is the acceptable public face of the ALP, a Clayton's ALP. The labour bureaucracy funds both GetUp! and the ALP, often against the express wishes of the Union members themselves. If GetUp! did not exist, the political crisis for the ALP and the labour bureaucracy would see the ALP slide further and further backwards. Some of this manoeuvring also assists the Greens, and they work together on similar campaigns. With regard to refugee rights, the rare involvement of GetUp! helps to play the role that the labour bureaucracy would themselves play if they were involved – shepherding and steering the refugee rights movement into a lobby group, begging and pleading for changes from the very politicians themselves responsible for the maltreatment of refugees.

As we have mentioned on several occasions previously, the refugee rights movement, such as it is, has a fatal flaw. *It does not seek to highlight the reasons why refugees are created in the first place.* Impoverished people fleeing the harsh economic conditions in the third world are one aspect. In recent years, however, a much larger proportion are fleeing the US led imperialist wars which have been waged around the world – inevitably with the backing of Canberra. Yet the activist refugee rights movement in this country is largely led by some misguided left parties which have not opposed these wars which have the potential to unleash World War III. These left parties have been some of the most vocal proponents calling for regime change in Libya and Syria – and the US/NATO

juggernaut obliged. Refugees fleeing from the Middle East and North Africa were then welcomed by these refugee rights groups, the effect of which was to justify further war against sovereign countries.



Above: In 2015, GetUp! made a rare appearance in the refugee rights movement – in order to “welcome” Syrian refugees. In practice, this was a call for the emptying of Syria of its populace, thus leading to victory for the US armed mercenaries. This later fell flat after the intervention of Russia, at the invitation of Syria, which turned the tide in the war. www.getup.org.au

It is true that these left parties were joined by others not inclined at all to socialism, but were welcomed as part of a “broad” movement. Unbeknownst to them, the labour bureaucracy via organisations such as GetUp! were ensuring that the refugee rights movement as a whole stayed well within the bounds of acceptable public discourse – nominally “anti-war”, but in practice calling for the downfall of the latest “dictator” the US had decided was the next target. In this respect, the labour bureaucracy ensured that the refugee rights movement perfectly aligned itself within the political spectrum of Australian imperialism. Despite notable exceptions from groups such as Hands Off Syria, there was little opposition to the Australian military’s role in helping the US bomb Syria under the false pretence of “fighting ISIS”.

Needless to say, with the world hurtling towards a World War III scenario, the refugee rights movement needs a clinical break from its previous practice of being manipulated by the politically savvy interests of private capital. For it was not only for the wars on Libya and Syria that the refugee rights movement was mobilised to flag

wave. The US Empire is also in the throes of encircling Russia. NATO has installed 31 000 troops in Poland, has spent \$3 billion on building up presence in the former Eastern bloc countries, in a “Cold War 2.0”.⁵⁶ NATO’s backing of fascists in Ukraine, sponsoring a coup, was also aimed squarely at Russia, along with the war to destroy Syria. When the former PM Tony Abbott openly blamed Russia for the shooting down of flight MH17, without a shred of evidence, the refugee rights movement – as with the liberal intelligentsia – were virtually silent. Can anyone imagine the refugees produced by a war against Russia?

Just as dangerous are the US led provocations against Red China. Furious at China’s socialist economy driving prosperity inside and outside the world’s largest country, the US ruling class knows it must act to contain China soon, or be eclipsed economically, diplomatically and politically. Too large to destroy in a one-on-one, the US deep state targets areas to break off from the People’s Republic, such as Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet and island in the South China Sea. It also actively funds “NGOs” in the countries bordering China, including Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. It is Myanmar where the latest “humanitarian war” is being prepared, over hypocritical concern for the Rohingyas in the Rakhine state. Again, refugees will be created by the millions if a military conflict with China breaks out.

The other assault on Red China are the continual threats to its socialist neighbour, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or “North Korea”). All that the DPRK has ever stated is that if it is attacked, it will respond. Yet the US Empire, and not only President Trump, whips up such irrational demonisation of the DPRK that millions of working people regrettably do not question the wild allegations. In the last six months there has been the very real threat of nuclear war with the

DPRK – a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. Yet, again, we have virtual silence from the refugee rights movement, and those who in the past prided themselves on their anti-war credentials. This is unfortunately not a coincidence. The refugee rights movement, to the mistaken left parties, to the labour bureaucracy, to the ALP, to the Greens, to GetUp! – all of them fall into line, some consciously, some not - behind the aims of Australian imperialism.

For labour action to free the refugees

This is why it is impossible to free the refugees on Manus Island (and Nauru) without a complete break with Australian foreign policy. This has to also mean a political break with those forces who consciously seek to impose its hegemony – parliamentarist parties, the labour bureaucracy, GetUp! etc – as well as with the waylaid left parties pulling up the rear. What is required is a direct challenge by Union members to the ideologically pro-capitalist Union officials, in the course of a struggle for a leadership which recognises no common interest between the employers and workers. This will inevitably require the forming of rank and file Union committees, which may need to be underground. Supporting these efforts must be the most keenly class aware workers, forming the basis of a Marxist vanguard party. Such a party would seek to both drive the urgently needed political action for the refugee rights movement, as part of a struggle to revive Union and class struggle for jobs, decent healthcare and education, public transport and other measures currently being eliminated by the capitalist crisis. It would also seek to mobilise workers in strident opposition to imperialist war, if need be by forming a workers government. EVACUATE MANUS ISLAND! BRING THE REFUGEES TO THE MAINLAND!

WORKERS LEAGUE

PO Box 66 NUNDAH QLD 4012

E: workersleague@redfireonline.com

⁵⁶ <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/346825-nato-russia-cold-war-stoltenberg/> (01-11-17)

TASK FARCE 'INTEGRITY'



Above: Incredibly, the federal government is using the federal police to investigate welfare "fraud". www.whitepages.com.au

(The following is an article contributed by a supporter of RED FIRE.)

In 2014, 14,459,785 Australians received some sort of government payment (including Newstart Allowance, Austudy, Carer's Allowance).⁵⁷

In the years 2015 and 2016, the Australian government spends an estimated 150 billion dollars on social security and welfare.⁵⁸ \$150,000,000,000 divided by 14.5 million people equals \$10,344 dollars on average per person in welfare payments in a single year.

Founder of Rams, John Kinghorn, has been found to have avoided paying \$30 million dollars in tax from the years 2004-2007.⁵⁹ That is 7.5 million dollars in one year stolen from the government by one person.

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<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2014-03-dss.pdf> (07-11-17)

⁵⁸

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook45p/WelfareCost (08-11-17)

⁵⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-31/afp-john-kinghorn-rams-home-loans-tax-fraud-charges/9102876> (08-11-17)

Let's now assume that in one year, 100% of welfare recipients were fraudulently claiming 100% of the money being received by the government. They would each, on average, only be stealing the equivalent of 0.0013792% of the money Rams founder John Kinghorn had stolen in a single year.

Despite the amount of government money that can potentially be stolen by members of the community by way of welfare fraud being tiny in comparison to the potential amount of money that can be stolen from the government by way of tax evasion by the heads of corporations, the Australian Government has decided to establish a taskforce to focus specifically on the matter of welfare fraud.⁶⁰

A government that works in the interests of the Australian people would absolutely prioritize ending the potential for corporate crime before targeting the members of our community who are most in need of support, the poor, young, old and injured.

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<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/about-us/taskforce-integrity> (08-11-17)

'RUSSIA DID IT' – THE NEW AGE OF McCARTHYISM



www.21stcenturywire.com

*(The following article first appeared at
www.21stcenturywire.com on 30.09.17)*

By Robert Parry (Consortium News)

Make no mistake about it: the United States has entered an era of a New McCarthyism that blames nearly every political problem on Russia and has begun targeting American citizens who don't go along with this New Cold War propaganda.

A difference, however, from the McCarthyism of the 1950s is that this New McCarthyism has enlisted Democrats, liberals and even progressives in the cause because of their disgust with President Trump; the 1950s version was driven by Republicans and the Right with much of the Left on the receiving end, maligned by the likes of Sen. Joe McCarthy as "un-American" and as Communism's "fellow travellers."

The real winners in this New McCarthyism appear to be the neoconservatives who have leveraged the Democratic/liberal hatred of Trump to draw much of the Left into the political hysteria that sees the controversy over alleged Russian political "meddling" as an opportunity to "get Trump."

Already, the neocons and their allies have exploited the anti-Russian frenzy to extract tens of millions of dollars more from the taxpayers for programs to "combat Russian propaganda," i.e., funding of non-governmental organizations and "scholars" who target dissident Americans for challenging the justifications for this New Cold War.

The Washington Post, which for years has served as the flagship for neocon propaganda, is again charting the new course for America, much as it did in rallying U.S. public backing for the 2003 invasion of Iraq and in building sympathy for abortive

“regime change” projects aimed at Syria and Iran. The Post has begun blaming almost every unpleasant development in the world on Russia! Russia! Russia!

For instance, a Post editorial⁶¹ on Tuesday shifted the blame for the anemic victory of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the surprising strength of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) from Merkel’s austerity policies, which have caused hardship for much of the working class, or from her open door for Mideast refugees, which has destabilized some working-class neighbourhoods, to – you guessed it – Russia!

The evidence, as usual, is vague and self-interested, but sure to be swallowed by many Democrats and liberals, who hate Russia because they blame it for Trump, and by lots of Republicans and conservatives, who have a residual hatred for Russia left over from the Old Cold War.

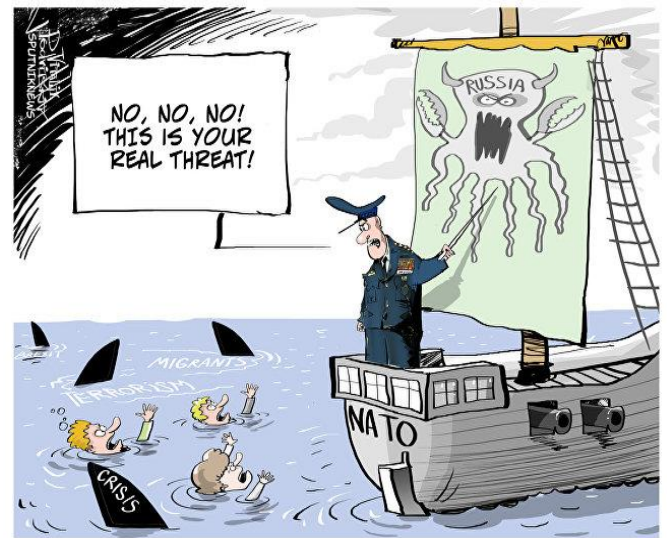
The Post cited the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab, which has been pushing much of the hysteria about alleged Russian activities on the Internet. The Atlantic Council essentially is NATO’s think tank and is financed⁶² with money from the U.S. government, Gulf oil states, military contractors, global financial institutions and many other sources which stand to gain directly or indirectly from the expanding U.S. military budget and NATO interventions.

Blaming Russia

In this New Cold War, the Russians get blamed for not only disrupting some neocon “regime change” projects, such as the proxy war in Syria, but also political developments in the West, such as Donald Trump’s election and AfD’s rise in Germany.

The Atlantic Council’s digital lab claimed, according to the Post editorial, that “In the final hours of the [German] campaign, online supporters of the AfD began warning their base of possible election

fraud, and the online alarms were ‘driven by anonymous troll accounts and boosted by a Russian-language bot-net.’”



Sputnik International

Of course, the Post evinces no evidence tying any of this to the Russian government or to President Vladimir Putin. It is the nature of McCarthyism that actual evidence is not required, just heavy breathing and dark suspicions. For those of us who operate Web sites, “trolls” – some volunteers and some professionals – have become a common annoyance and they represent many political outlooks, not just Russian.

Plus, it is standard procedure these days for campaigns to issue last-minute alarms to their supporters about possible election fraud to raise doubts about the results should the outcome be disappointing.

The U.S. government has engaged in precisely this strategy around the world, having pro-U.S. parties not only complain about election fraud but to take to the streets in violent protests to impugn the legitimacy of election outcomes. That U.S. strategy has been applied to places such as Ukraine (the Orange Revolution in 2004); Iran (the Green Revolution in 2009); Russia (the Snow Revolution in 2011); and many other locations.

Pre-election alerts also have become a feature in U.S. elections, even in 2016 when both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton raised questions about

⁶¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-kremlin-creeps-into-germany/2017/09/25/3d06277e-a227-11e7-b14f-f41773cd5a14_story.html?utm_term=.f0875ec75641 (15-1-17)

⁶² <http://www.thinktankwatch.com/2015/11/the-donors-of-atlantic-council.html> (15-11-17)

the legitimacy of the balloting, albeit for different reasons.

Yet, instead of seeing the AfD manoeuvre as a typical ploy by a relatively minor party – and the German election outcome as an understandable reflection of voter discontent and weariness over Merkel’s three terms as Chancellor – the Atlantic Council and the Post see Russians under every bed and particularly Putin.

Loving to Hate Putin

In the world of neocon propaganda, Putin has become the great *bête noire*, since he has frustrated a variety of neocon schemes. He helped head off a major U.S. military strike against Syria in 2013; he aided President Obama in achieving the Iran nuclear agreement in 2014-15; Putin opposed and – to a degree – frustrated the neocon-supported coup in Ukraine in 2014; and he ultimately supplied the air power that defeated neocon-backed “rebel” forces in Syria in 2015-17.

So, the Post and the neocons want Putin gone – and they have used gauzy allegations about “Russian meddling” in the U.S. and other elections as the new propaganda theme to justify destabilizing Russia with economic sanctions and, if possible, engineering another “regime change” project in Moscow.

None of this is even secret. Carl Gershman, the neocon president of the U.S.-government-funded National Endowment for Democracy, publicly proclaimed the goal⁶³ of ousting Putin in an op-ed in The Washington Post, writing: “The United States has the power to contain and defeat this danger. The issue is whether we can summon the will to do so.”

But the way neocon propaganda works is that the U.S. and its allies are always the victims of some nefarious enemy who must be thwarted to protect all that is good in the world. In other words, even as NED and other U.S.-funded operations take aim at Putin and Russia, Russia and Putin must be transformed into the aggressors.

⁶³ <https://consortiumnews.com/2016/10/07/key-neocon-calls-on-us-to-oust-putin/> (15-11-17)

“Mr. Putin would like nothing better than to generate doubts, fog, cracks and uncertainty around the German pillar of Europe,” the Post editorial said. “He relishes infiltrating chaos and mischief into open societies. In this case, supporting the far-right AfD is extraordinarily cynical, given how many millions of Russians died to defeat the fascists seven decades ago.”



www.04varvara.wordpress.com

Not to belabor the point but there is no credible evidence that Putin did any of this. There is a claim by the virulently anti-Russian Atlantic Council that some “anonymous troll accounts” promoted some AfD complaint about possible voter fraud and that it was picked up by “a Russian-language bot-net.” Even if that is true – and the Atlantic Council is far from an objective source – where is the link to Putin?

Not everything that happens in Russia, a nation of 144 million people, is ordered by Putin. But the Post would have you believe that it is. It is the centerpiece of this neocon conspiracy theory.

Silencing Dissent

Similarly, any American who questions this propaganda immediately is dismissed as a “Kremlin stooge” or a “Russian propagandist,” another ugly campaign spearheaded by the Post⁶⁴ and the

⁶⁴ <https://consortiumnews.com/2016/11/27/washington-posts-fake-news-guilt/> (15-11-17)

neocons. Again, no evidence is required, just some analysis that what you're saying somehow parallels something Putin has said.

On Tuesday, in what amounted to a companion piece for the editorial, a Post article⁶⁵ again pushed the unproven suspicions⁶⁶ about "Russian operatives" buying \$100,000 in Facebook ads from 2015 into 2017 to supposedly influence U.S. politics. Once again, no evidence required.

In the article, the Post also reminds its readers that Moscow has a history of focusing on social inequities in the U.S., which gets us back to the comparisons between the Old McCarthyism and the new.

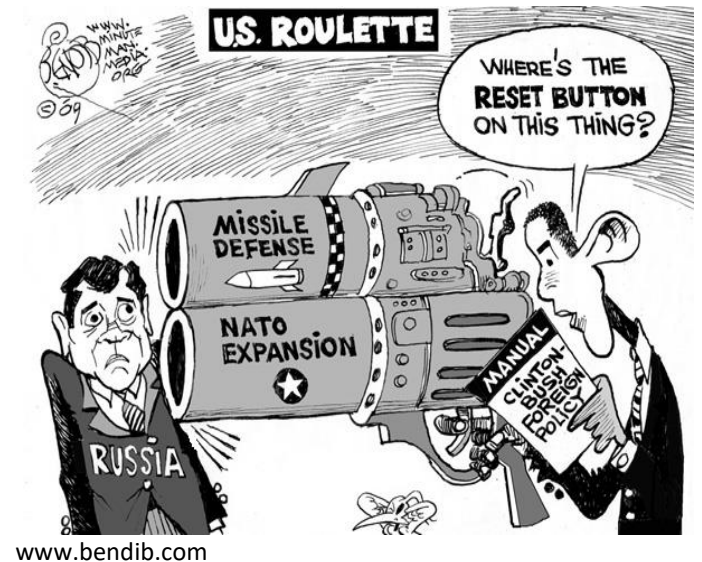
Yes, it's true that the Soviet Union denounced America's racial segregation and cited that ugly feature of U.S. society in expressing solidarity with the American civil rights movement and national liberation struggles in Africa. It's also true that American Communists collaborated with the domestic civil rights movement to promote racial integration.

That was a key reason why J. Edgar Hoover's FBI targeted Martin Luther King Jr. and other African-American leaders – because of their association with known or suspected Communists. (Similarly, the Reagan administration resisted support for Nelson Mandela because his African National Congress accepted Communist support in its battle against South Africa's Apartheid white-supremacist regime.)

Interestingly, one of the arguments from liberal national Democrats in opposing segregation in the 1960s was that the repression of American blacks undercut U.S. diplomatic efforts to develop allies in Africa. In other words, Soviet and Communist

criticism of America's segregation actually helped bring about the demise of that offensive system.

Yet, King's association with alleged Communists remained a talking point of die-hard segregationists even after his assassination when they opposed creating a national holiday in his honour in the 1980s.



These parallels between the Old McCarthyism and the New McCarthyism are implicitly acknowledged in the Post's news article on Tuesday, which cites Putin's criticism of police killings of unarmed American blacks as evidence that he is meddling in U.S. politics.

"Since taking office, Putin has on occasion sought to spotlight racial tensions in the United States as a means of shaping perceptions of American society," the article states. "Putin injected himself in 2014 into the race debate after protests broke out in Ferguson, Mo., over the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, an African American, by a white police officer."

"Do you believe that everything is perfect now from the point of view of democracy in the United States?" Putin told CBS's '60 Minutes' program. 'If everything was perfect, there wouldn't be the problem of Ferguson. There would be no abuse by the police. But our task is to see all these problems and respond properly.'"

The Post's speculative point seems to be that Putin's response included having "Russian

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/technology/russian-operatives-used-facebook-ads-to-exploit-divisions-over-black-political-activism-and-muslims/2017/09/25/4a011242-a21b-11e7-ade1-76d061d56efa_story.html?utm_term=.67017af564b6 (15-11-17)

⁶⁶ <https://consortiumnews.com/2017/09/25/wpost-pushes-more-dubious-russia-bashing/> (15-11-17)

operatives” buy some ads on Facebook to exploit these racial tensions, but there is no evidence to support that conspiracy theory.

However, as this anti-Russia hysteria spreads, we may soon see Americans who also protest the police killing of unarmed black men denounced as “Putin’s fellow-travellers,” much as King and other civil rights leaders were smeared as “Communist dupes.”



www.zerohedge.com

Ignoring Reality

So, instead of Democrats and Chancellor Merkel looking in the mirror and seeing the real reasons why many white working-class voters are turning toward “populist” and “extremist” alternatives, they can simply blame Putin and continue a crackdown on Internet-based dissent as the work of “Russian operatives.”

Already, under the guise of combating “Russian propaganda” and “fake news,” Google, Facebook and other tech giants have begun introducing algorithms⁶⁷ to hunt down and marginalize news that challenges official U.S. government narratives on hot-button issues such as Ukraine and Syria. Again, no evidence is required, just the fact that Putin may have said something similar.

As Democrats, liberals and even some progressives join in this Russia-gate hysteria – driven by their

⁶⁷ <https://consortiumnews.com/2017/07/28/the-dawn-of-an-orwellian-future/> (15-11-17)

hatred of Donald Trump and his supposedly “fascistic” tendencies – they might want to consider whom they’ve climbed into bed with and what these neocons have in mind for the future.

Arguably, if fascism or totalitarianism comes to the United States, it is more likely to arrive in the guise of “protecting democracy” from Russia or another foreign adversary than from a reality-TV clown like Donald Trump.

The New McCarthyism with its Orwellian-style algorithms might seem like a clever way to neutralize (or maybe even help oust) Trump, but – long after Trump is gone – a structure for letting the neocons and the mainstream media monopolize American political debate might be a far greater threat to both democracy and peace.

Below: It is imperative that working people the world over reject the New McCarthyism – relentless and racist baiting of all things Russian. www.imdb.com

