

# RED



# FIRE

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!



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## NATO: TROOPS OUT OF EASTERN EUROPE! LIFT THE SANCTIONS! HANDS OFF RUSSIA!

By Paul Nave

In a rational world, a fleet of warships belonging to country A patrolling 50 miles from the shore of country B would be seen as a considerable threat to the security of country B. Not so if you happen to be a part of the Western corporate media, and country A is Russia, and country B is the United States of America. In that case, Russia is seen as a hostile provocateur, and the US is seen as waging a heroic struggle to contain an aggressive rogue state. The massive and ongoing mobilisation of US and NATO

(North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) troops on the borders of Russia, far from being seen as unwarranted, is seen as a necessary amassment to prevent the evil Kremlin plotting against Europe.

Needless to say, the world labouring under the hegemony of US imperialism, is not rational, and won't be until the dragon is slayed. Thankfully, some of the actions of the Russian state are staying the hand of the US imperialist dragon, but this is something which the arrogant hegemon cannot forgive. An example is the Russian intervention on

the side of the Syrian Arab Republic against the atrocious proxy war being waged against it by the US and its allies Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and backed by Israel. At the invitation of the Syrian government, from September 30 last year, the Russian military began taking out the US proxy ISIS forces, and other armed mercenary groups committing barbaric acts against civilians across Syria. The actions of the Russian government, supported by Iran and Hezbollah, tipped the balance decisively in favour of elementary justice – the right of a sovereign state to exercise its own policies independently of imperialism. At the same time, the Russian moves thoroughly exposed the US role in funding and arming jihadist barbarians and trucking them into Syria. The US could not openly defend its own monsters, for even the most blind would clearly see what is an open secret.

**RED FIRE** is the publication of the ML Group (MLG).

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Even if Russia had not come to the material aid of Syria, however, Russia would still be relentlessly targeted, and indeed, surrounded on many sides. In an important sense, the US war for regime change is

not just directed at Syria, but Russia. It's not difficult to see that the US/NATO backing of a fascist coup in Ukraine in 2014 was and is another front aimed at Russia. On top of this, Pentagon officials have recently announced plans to deploy 4000 troops, 250 tanks and 1700 pieces of wheeled military hardware to Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup> It is thought that the Britain and Germany will contribute to these four new battalions. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander General Philip Breedlove is being replaced by US Army General Curtis Scarpotti. Scarpotti reportedly told a US Senate hearing that Russia was displaying "increasingly aggressive behaviour that challenges international norms, often in violation of international law".<sup>2</sup>

Such rhetoric is scarcely credible. And what should be the response of Russia when NATO essentially occupies Europe? One would think a natural response would be one in which Russia makes every move to defend itself against what could potentially be a dire threat. And this is apparently what has occurred – Russian military troop movements and exercises in the vicinity of the borders with the European countries. Yet the US responds by claiming that the Russian troop movements are "extraordinarily provocative". The US has sent its troops and advanced military hardware thousands of miles to be stationed on Russia's borders. In response, Russian troop movements – on Russian territory – are regarded as "extraordinarily provocative".<sup>3</sup> Welcome to the upside down world of the New Cold War.

### Why a New Cold War?

The reasons for the reigniting of the West's New Cold War against Russia are relatively easy to identify. The capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the Soviet Union was only the first step for the US. At first, during the 1990s, the US rulers could quite easily work with a pro-US drunkard, Boris

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pravdareport.com/world/europe/12-04-2016/134143-usa-troops-europe-0/> (08-05-2016)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nato-russia-idUSKCN0XT1ZR> (08-05-2016)

<sup>3</sup> <http://russia-insider.com/en/nato-wants-put-german-troops-russian-border/ri14170> (08-05-2016)

Yeltsin. The catastrophic decline in industry, manufacturing, and life expectancy in Russia at that time was largely facilitated by Yeltsin and other oligarchs, who handed US capital, in a financial and political sense, more or less open access. None of this shock treatment had any effect other than to make the dire economic conditions dramatically worse for the majority of Russians. Consequently, Yeltsin and his accompanying “democracy” was almost universally detested in Russia.

Beginning around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the rise of Vladimir Putin and his cohorts saw a vast change in direction for Russia. Putin sought to nationalise some resources, arrested and tried some of the more corrupt oligarchs, and slowly the economy began to pull itself out of the doldrums. Conditions are still not rosy, but by most measures an improvement on the devastation of the 1990s. This is one reason for the popularity of Putin domestically. Another is the fact that under Putin, Russia has sought a path independent of, and not subordinate to, the US behemoth. This alone is enough to enrage the US elite, and they have responded by demonising Putin and Russia itself in endless media propaganda. A string of newspapers and magazines depict Putin as a new version of Stalin.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the more Putin stands up to the US, the more admiration he receives both from Russians within and others internationally, including those who do not at all have left-wing sympathies. The view is prevalent that Putin is a leader who at least, “knows what he is doing”, as opposed to Western politicians who are unable to do anything about their collapsing economies or declining living standards for the majority. Therefore the propaganda of the media scribes in the West becomes ever more shrill, and ever more extreme. In response to some Russian Navy ships sailing in the vicinity of Australia during the G20 Summit in 2014, the Murdoch tabloid the Herald Sun hysterically headlined “The Reds are Coming” complete with Putin in a Navy uniform and

a hammer and sickle!<sup>5</sup> Tabloid newspapers in the West are not refined publications admittedly. However the tone of the propaganda was alarming. In fact, one could say that the relentless Western corporate propaganda against Putin and Russia, despite Russia being capitalist for the last 25 years, *is a distorted form of anti-communism*. It is therefore in the interests of working people to reject it entirely, and seek to combat it.



Above: Murdoch empire newspapers slander Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin, even inferring that they are still “communists” and that the Soviet Union still exists. The crudest elements of the ruling class therefore use anti-communism to whip up hostility towards Russia, at the same time as the US through NATO is militarily encircling Russia. Such propaganda is ultimately used to garner support for war. Some left parties fall for the corporate spin, and directly oppose Russia or what they falsely imagine to be “Russian Imperialism”. Pictured are front covers from 2014 for The Courier Mail and the Herald Sun.

Of course, working people should not seek to politically endorse Putin, as he is no socialist, and does not seek to lead an anti-imperialist revolution domestically or internationally. The Russian government cannot be extended political support either, as it does contain some particularly objectionable positions, not the least of which is a seeming defence of Zionist Israel. Nonetheless, to

<sup>4</sup> <http://inf.com/alt-news/featured/propaganda-success-u-s-govt-reveled-success-lying-propaganda/> (09-05-2016)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.crikey.com.au/2014/11/13/media-briefs-tabloids-battle-the-reds-abc-line-up-audiences-desert-tv/> (09-05-2016)



the extent that Russia resists the world dominance of the US, and resists the infractions of NATO on its own doorsteps and elsewhere, the world's workers find themselves in a temporary bloc with the Russian state. Like all political blocs, it not permanent and it is conditional, but for the interim it needs to be real. For example, Russia's actions in the defence of Syria have arguably prevented a wider regional war. In Ukraine, despite the non-intervention of Russia to back the anti-fascist resistance in Donetsk and Lugansk, the threat of it probably stayed the hand of the US from pushing its proxy ultra-nationalists to wage all-out war on the east against Russian borders. And this is before we even begin to discuss the increasingly independent economic agenda of Russia, in joining forces with rising non-Western nations such as the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

While Yeltsin was pro-US, Putin is not. Putin and his backers seek to protect Russia's interest not in terms of socialism, but in terms of capitalism. For the US Empire, however, the rejection of socialism in Russia in practice means very little. As Eric Zuesse writes, for the US led West:

“...jihadists are just a side show. The main event is Russia. The end of communism, and of the USSR, and of the Warsaw Pact, doesn't really make any difference to them. *They want the land, and its resources.* They don't care about the people on it – anywhere.”<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Putin and his cohorts are not willing to subordinate themselves to the US, and are not willing to be controlled by them. Perhaps naively, they may have imagined that the US would welcome them into the family of capitalist nations if they abandoned socialism. Yet this is not the way imperialism works. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, demands **total** subservience, which means zero independence. For the Putin led wing of the Russian rulers, this is unacceptable. They believe they have a right to form independent relations with other nations, to engage in trade, cultural and

diplomatic relations with any other country, from the first or third world. Yet to even think this, let alone begin to carry it out, is to enrage that entity which arrogates to itself the title of world leader. The fury of the US Empire vents itself in a veritable storm of anti-Russian and anti-Putin propaganda, almost all of which is based on barely concealed lies.



Above: Cartoon depicting the NATO gladiator standing over Russian President Vladimir Putin with the caption (In Dutch) “Who woke me up?” Image from [www.voxeurop.eu](http://www.voxeurop.eu)

## The left and “imperialism”

Many fall for this base level Western propaganda. This is to some extent to be expected, for without significant and strong workers parties in the West, many working people never hear a view opposing the US line. Yet this excuse cannot be claimed by the left parties which exist – for they should know a lot better. Unfortunately, for some of them Russia today is the Soviet Union of yesterday, which even at that time they opposed. Some others hesitate to back Russia out of supposed concern over classic middle class issues such as the lack of “democracy” and limitations on homosexual relationships – as important as these are. Some others subscribe to the absurd theory which claims that Russia is “imperialist”, and is therefore simply competing with the US to divide up the world. All of these positions in the end amount to a capitulation to capitalist

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2016/05/06/america-biggest-of-all-big-lies-ii.html> (10-05-2016)

propaganda – even if on other issues such groups can see through corporate spin.

The left party Socialist Alternative, publishers of *Red Flag*, are perhaps the most strident in putting forward the “Russia is imperialist” fantasy. They hold to a type of moral equivalency between the US and Russia, which dates back to their forbears during the 1980s, who proclaimed “Neither Washington nor Moscow but international socialism”. In the same way in which “Neither Washington nor Moscow” in previous decades meant in practice support for Washington, today the “Russia is imperialist” furphy in practice means embracing the US empire, albeit with little conviction. In the case of the proxy war on Syria, Socialist Alternative thus sees the Russian assistance to the Syrian government as “imperialist” intervention.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, if it was it would be the first imperialist intervention in history where the invaded country issued a formal invitation to its subjugator!

Solidarity, the estranged sister organisation to Socialist Alternative, likewise see Russia as simply a rival imperialist vis-à-vis the US. For them, NATO’s installation of a fascist backed government in Kiev in February 2014 was some kind of justifiable uprising. The real culprit, according to them, is Russian intervention. The “Russia is imperialist” theory immediately paints Russia as world enemy number one, while US imperialism is seen as something minor, or even benign. At times, it even lends itself to covert calls for US intervention. Referring to Crimea’s vote to re-join Russia, which was passed by over 90% of Crimeans, as an annexation (!), Solidarity then go on to lament the lack of action by the US Empire, and their allies:

“The West has denounced Russian intervention in strident terms. But they have been reluctant to take any serious action. Both US President Barack Obama and

German Chancellor Angela Merkel have ruled out sending troops into Ukraine.”<sup>8</sup>

This is because the NATO backed fascists have done the work of imperialist troops! Better to arm proxy forces, even if fascist, than to send in your own uniformed mob. Solidarity here are pining for the West to take “serious action”. It illustrates well the political direction the “Russia is imperialist” theory pushes you – in the direction of the Oval Office in Washington.



Above: Photo of Ukrainian militia brandishing the NATO flag alongside the fascist flags of the Azov Battalion and the Nazi swastika. NATO used fascist gangs to usurp the Ukrainian government in February 2014, as part of its provocations against Russia. [www.21stcenturywire.com](http://www.21stcenturywire.com)

The Socialist Alliance, publishers of *Green Left Weekly*, equivocates on the question of Russian “imperialism”. It appears to be a case of trying to hold on to some fragments of one’s heritage, while also partially chiming in on the anti-Putin/anti-Russia corporate bandwagon. Some of their leading members hold different public positions within the organisation. For example, Chris Slee subscribes to the Russia is “imperialist” theory,<sup>9</sup> while Renfrey Clarke opposes it.<sup>10</sup> Yet *Green Left Weekly* largely orients itself to real US led imperialism in retrospectively supporting the “independence” of Ukraine in 1991.<sup>11</sup> Needless to say, what occurred was not “independence” as such, but a capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the Union of

<sup>7</sup> <https://redflag.org.au/article/left-can-oppose-russian-intervention-syria-without-capitulating-our-own-rulers> (12-05-2016)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.solidarity.net.au/imperialism/imperialist-rivalry-and-putins-russia/> (12-05-2016)

<sup>9</sup> <http://links.org.au/node/3795> (12-05-2016)

<sup>10</sup> <http://links.org.au/node/4629> (12-05-2016)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/56944> (12-05-2016)

Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), arguably the greatest setback for the world's working class to have ever occurred. "Independence" for Ukraine meant the recreation of capitalism, which in turn led to social and economic catastrophe, which ultimately led to the intervention of NATO and a fascist-led coup. In fact, if the USSR had not been overthrown by capitalist counterrevolution, there would be no basis for fascism in Ukraine today. Working people can well do without such "independence".

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP), to their credit, continually warn about the dangers of a US led war on Russia. Their World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) is full of well researched information on the ongoing military, political and diplomatic brinkmanship and war being carried out by the NATO countries against Russia. They are also skilled at noting how propaganda weapons such as allegations of Russian athletes being on state sponsored doping programs, are used at precise times which coincide with the geopolitical objectives of the US ruling class. They correctly observe that the current unproven allegations against Russian athletes are aimed at getting Russia banned from the Rio Olympics as well as attempting to prevent Russia from holding the soccer World Cup in 2018.<sup>12</sup> However, the SEP in practice are known to be reclusive, and rarely take part in political activity where other left parties are involved.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) has quite good positions on the question of Russia and Ukraine, at least on paper. They do stand in opposition to the NATO installed fascist-led government in Kiev in February 2014. They also have defended the right of the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) to operate, and defended them against persecution by the ultra-nationalists – despite some of the actions of the KPU. The CPA noted that the KPU sought governmental and parliamentary alliances not only with Victor Yanukovich's Party of the Regions, but also with reactionary nationalist Yulia Timoshenko, who is

now a part of the fascist Kiev junta.<sup>13</sup> However, the CPA, like the SEP, is known for abstention and lack of activity on many fronts, and the anti-war sphere is another one.

One left group which is very active, however, was inactive on the whole question of the US led fascist coup in Ukraine. Trotskyist Platform (TP), which ordinarily puts forward a class struggle perspective on most issues, fell in with other left groups which were paralysed by the events and the aftermath of the events in Ukraine in 2014. The cardinal error which TP commits is that it takes seriously the claim that Russia is "imperialist". Although, in their lengthy article on the situation in Ukraine, they do not mention the word imperialist in relation to Russia, they do state that Russia is a "rival" to the imperialist West.<sup>14</sup> But for Russia to be any kind of "rival" to the imperialist powers – the US, Britain, France etc. – which are backed by Canberra – it would have to be "imperialist". But this is plainly false.



**THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF OUR "MORAL HIGH GROUND" WASN'T SHAPED LIKE IRAQ...**  
*selfevidenttruths-euripides.blogspot.com*

This topic would need a separate study in itself. Suffice to say, for Russia to be "imperialist" a number of factors would have to be proven. Firstly, it would have to be proven that finance capital completely dominates the Russian economy. Secondly, it would have to be proven that the Russian state aggressively uses its military power to prize open markets in foreign countries by threats,

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/05/14/dope-m14.html> (14-05-2016)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cpa.org.au/guardian/2014/1665/15-culture.html> (14-05-2016)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.trotskyistplatform.com/down-with-natoaustralian-meddling-in-ukraine/> (18-05-2016)



invasions, occupations and wars. Thirdly, it would have to have a network of military bases in many parts of the world, OR it would have to co-operate its military alongside the United States, Britain, France, Germany and so on. Clearly, none of these factors exist.

Russia's economy only began to recover from the total devastation of the 90s when Putin and his allies began re-taking parts of it back into state hands. The military conflicts the Russian state has been involved with have been primarily defensive, actions which defended Russia in a territorial or political sense. And in recent times it is quite obvious that Russia is the military target of the US-led West, despite necessary agreed ceasefires where Russia and the US are both militarily active – though for different sides, in Syria.

TP does correctly raise the demand for the lifting of Western sanctions on Russia. However, on other issues such as the US led bombing against Libya in 2011, TP were vociferous in their opposition to NATO. Yet in relation to Russia, their mention of NATO is negligible. In Ukraine, the NATO powers, later backed by Canberra, were instrumental in the installation of a fascist-led government in Kiev. This is while NATO for years has been completing a military encirclement of Russia. In the last couple of years, this military encirclement has pushed the region to the brink of war. The latest US provocation was the switching on of an \$800 million missile "shield" in Romania.<sup>15</sup> Just imagine if Russia had moved ANY troops anywhere near the US, let alone surround it, let alone set up missile bases on their doorstep. This is the reality for Russia today. Yet it appears that TP cannot mention NATO's extremely dangerous provocations against Russia. If they did, it would tend to undermine their claim that Russia is merely a "rival" to the US led West. The reality is that despite Russia being capitalist, it is still enemy number one, alongside Red China, as far as the US empire is concerned. The left needs to defend Russia **despite** its socio-economic system and **despite** its

political leadership. Working people have a side where Russia defends itself against NATO.



Above: Syrian grateful for the backing of Russia and China against the proxy US led war. China provided diplomatic support through the UN to defend Syria, while Russia – at the invitation of the Syrian government – provided military support. [www.21stcenturywire.com](http://www.21stcenturywire.com)

### The struggle against fascism

TP seems to view the conflict in Ukraine as one between Ukrainian fascists and Russian fascists, and therefore tries to apply a "plague on both your houses" position, albeit with words backing the Donbass "self-determination" struggle. They raise the reports of attacks on Roma people in Ukraine, and attribute them to what they call the "pro-Russian" side.<sup>16</sup> However, some reports have stated that while some assaults of Roma people in Ukraine were carried out, there is no hard evidence that these were in fact carried out by the "separatists".<sup>17</sup> It is of course a huge concern that the Eastern Ukrainian resistance included some with pro-monarchist, pro-tsarist and even pro-Nazi **political views**, in amongst pro-Soviet, pro-USSR, pro-Lenin political views. It is a massive contradiction, born of the rift between the loss of living standards that accompanied the destruction of the former USSR, and the rejection of bureaucratic and politically repressive rule that occurred during those times. In the process of rejecting the lack of workers' political

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-13/us-missile-shield-starts-up-in-romania-to-russian-fury/7410566> (18-05-2016)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.trotskyistplatform.com/down-with-natoaustralian-meddling-in-ukraine/> (19-05-2016)

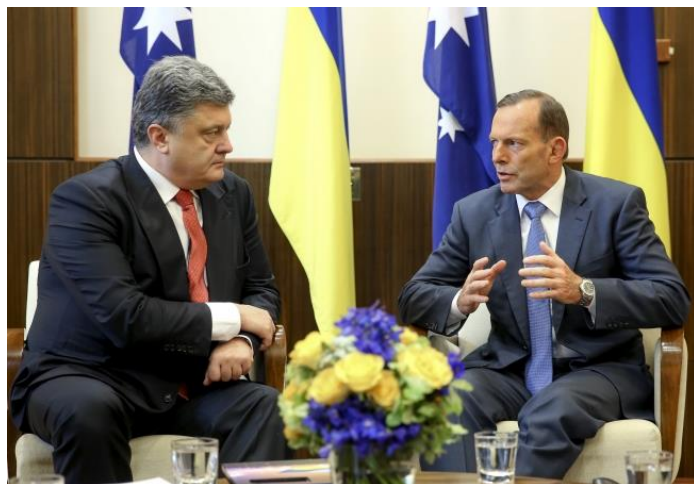
<sup>17</sup> <http://khpg.org/index.php?id=1397936989> (19-05-2016)

rights in the former Soviet Union, some turned to nationalism, tsarism and even fascism.

TP is correct to call for a political struggle within the Donbass resistance for the victory of internationalist, pro-working class politics, which overcomes backward political views. Yet the contradiction is that those within the resistance with shady political views are in practice fighting back against US and NATO backed fascism. The principal axis of the struggle there is the one against US imperialism, which in the case of Ukraine is backing real fascism. The resistance in the East of Ukraine was not, as TP claim, one of “self-determination”. The Eastern Ukrainians did not desire self-determination as such – they simply refused to live under a fascist government – and thus were forced to declare their own regional republics. They did this by taking up arms, and with incredible bravery, facing shelling and missiles from the NATO backed Kiev military. The dynamic of the Donbass struggle is overall a struggle against a fascism which hails its origins with fascists who fought *with the Nazis* in World War II. This is its character *despite* the presence of some tsarist and anti-Semitic views amongst those who have joined the anti-fascist resistance.

TP is also correct to note that Canberra has played its own role in backing the US/NATO juggernaut in Ukraine, and by extension, Ukrainian fascism. At the time Liberal PM Tony Abbott openly embraced US backed Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, and jetted to Ukraine to join his “advisory council”.<sup>18</sup> Canberra also blasted Russia, without a shred of evidence, for the downing of Malaysian airlines flight MH17. This appeared to be a part of the US plan to destabilise Russia, by any means. Yet while TP makes muted calls to oppose Canberra’s “meddling” in Ukraine, the best way to do that would be to oppose fascism in Ukraine, while defending Russia against NATO. Yet this is precisely what TP did not, and cannot do. Such actions would undermine its view that Russia is merely a “rival” of the US. And since no one doubts the US is imperialist, labelling Russia a

rival is tantamount to labelling Russia as imperialist also. For only an imperialist power can “rival” another imperialist power.



Above: Then Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott enthusiastically embraces NATO backed ultra-nationalist Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. The Australian ruling class is extremely belligerent towards Russia, to the extent of forming ties with the fascist backed Kiev junta. Photo from [www.mw.ua](http://www.mw.ua)

Without formally endorsing the right-wing “Russia is imperialist” theory, TP tips their hat in this direction, placing them in the company of those who they correctly criticise for their opposition to Red China – groups such as Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance and Solidarity. They all of a sudden go very quiet with their opposition to NATO, which is marked because they were at the forefront of opposing NATO’s criminal actions against Libya. It is notable that they have also been silent on Russia’s intervention against the US proxy ISIS forces in Syria. Even outright opponents of the Russian state cannot openly disapprove of Russia’s jet fighters taking out the genocidal ISIS mercenaries. If they were consistent, they might claim that such actions were intended as part of “rivalry” with the US.

The moment a left group utters the word “imperialism” in relation to Russia, they are propelled into the camp of NATO, despite their intentions. There is only one imperialism, and it is led by the US. Any mention of Russia as “imperialist” *or* as a “rival” of the US, immediately lets the US Empire off the hook – its monumental crimes are

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-21/tony-abbott-visits-ukraine-joins-international-advisory-council/7262822> (19-05-2016)



lessened or forgotten, and it even begins to attract some sympathy – as if it is being targeted by “evil” Russia. Workers can start believing US propaganda about the deployment of huge military arsenals in Eastern Europe as “routine exercises”. US planes on the borders of Russia being warned away can start to be seen as “Russian aggression”. This is how the US aggressor can, through sophisticated corporate propaganda, be seen as “just doing its job”. This is how imperialist wars begin. Left parties, more than others, should know better.

In practice, TP was a part of the left’s *silence* on the imperialist war provocation against Russia, which included the arming and political backing of fascists in Ukraine. They joined with the Socialist Alliance, Socialist Alternative and Solidarity in either quietly backing, or attempting to remain neutral, on NATO backed fascists and ultra-nationalists taking power in Kiev. The underlying reasons lay either in original opposition to the Soviet Union, OR, falsely ascribing “imperialism” to the current Russian state. In practice, they meant the same thing – a deathly silence when Russia and the anti-fascist resistance in Ukraine desperately needed international solidarity. At best, at least they did not hail the fascist coup as a “revolution” – despite some of them using this label for similar activity in Libya and Syria. At worst, it meant tacit endorsement of yet another US sponsored effort at regime change - an effort which could have sparked World War III.

## No to NATO

The central axis of the West’s confrontation with Russia is the use of NATO, what should be a Cold War relic, to aggressively strengthen US imperialism vis-à-vis Russia. While workers cannot politically endorse the Russian government or the Russian state, workers internationally have an enormous stake in defending Russia against NATO and against US led imperialism. Washington, with Canberra’s backing, seeks the destruction of any semblance of independence from Russia in any sphere – political, diplomatic or military. The world’s workers have a vital interest in pushing back against a rapacious US imperialism, which is lashing out in inverse

proportion to its economy’s prospects. The US Empire is prepared to ally with, or arm, anyone – even Nazis – to further its goals.

The main political line in Ukraine for workers is to see the defeat of NATO and its fascist allies. In practice this will mean forming a temporary bloc with pro-Russian forces, but only insofar as they are combating Western aggression. There should be an internal political struggle amongst the anti-fascist resistance for genuinely internationalist and socialist aims. International workers and left parties can assist this struggle by resolutely standing with the anti-fascist resistance against US backed Nazism. Ultimately, there needs to be a political movement for workers’ power and for socialism in Europe and Russia, as the only ultimate prevention of war. *Hands off Russia!*



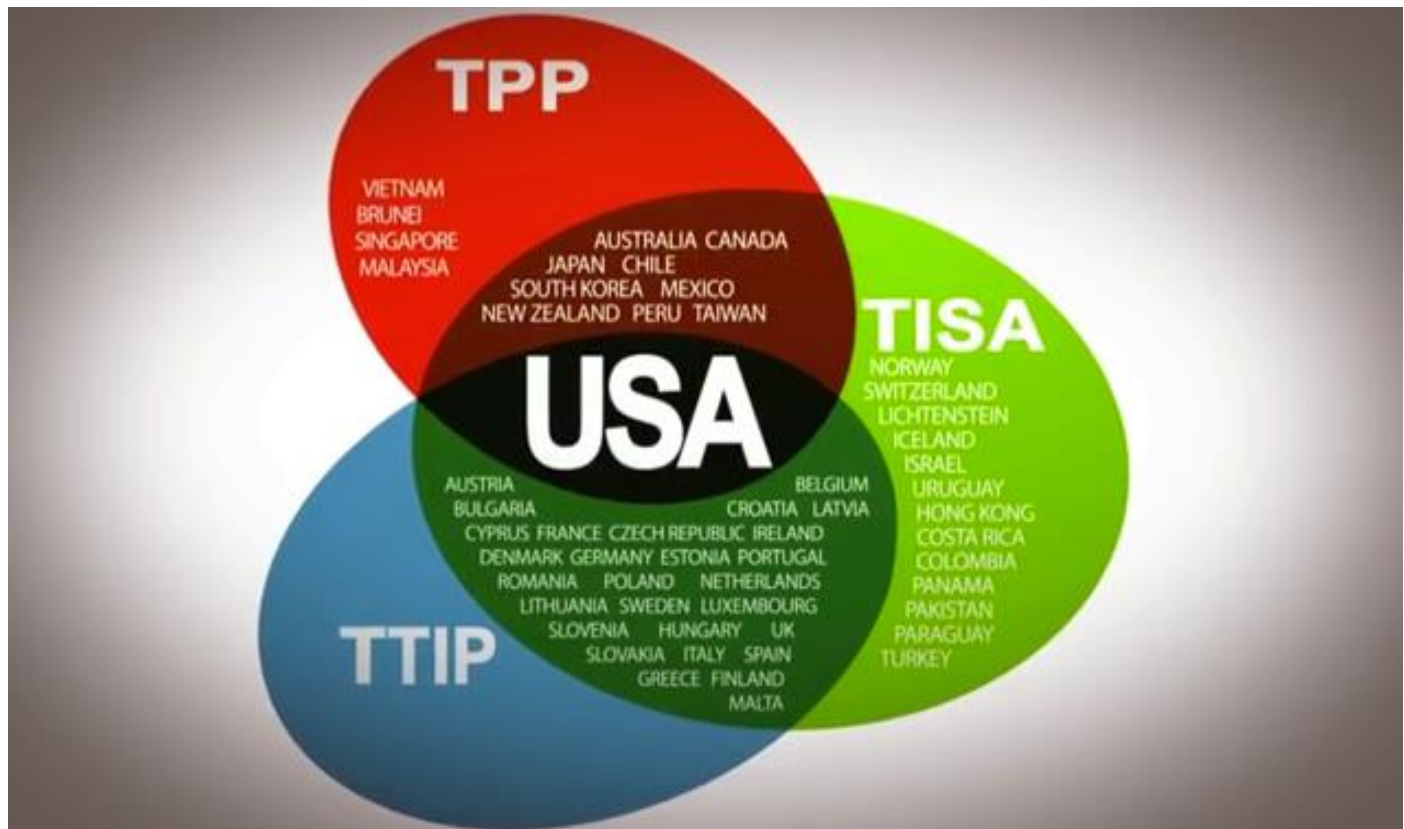
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# TTP, TTIP, TISA AND THE 'NEW WORLD ORDER'



[www.bilaterals.org](http://www.bilaterals.org)

By Kurt Unmack

Paralysis. In the face of perhaps the most significant attack on working people in the last 50 years, there is a state of paralysis. Or at least in the land of Oz. Hundreds of thousands of people have, however, mobilised across Europe, the United States, and New Zealand against “the Trinity”. “The Trinity” is the trio of “free trade” agreements which surpass anything the notorious US led World Trade Organisation (WTO) was able to cobble together. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the Trade In Services Agreement (TISA), represent a new configuration of the Bretton Woods trade order established largely by the US and its allies in the wake of World War II. The rise of Red China’s powerhouse economy, coupled with a more independent Russia, is posing a huge problem for the US ruling class – a world increasingly

independent of them. It is something they cannot tolerate. Hence the attempt of “the Trinity” to pull the world away from trade and other interaction with the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and back into the fold of the US. Without significant resistance, working people across the globe will bear the costs.

## Not just about Trade

Even pro-business supporters of the TPP admit that the TPP is not just about “free trade”. Encompassing 12 Pacific Rim countries, the deal covers 40% of world trade, and is worth an estimated \$28 trillion. It is more about what they refer to as “economic governance”<sup>19</sup>, the restructuring of whole economies for the benefit of the largest

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/tpp-will-the-transpacific-partnership-really-benefit-australia-20151006-gk24so.html> (03-04-2016)

corporations, at the expense of any pretence of protections for working people or the environment. Even that aim, however, is subordinate to the overall aim of US-led imperialism attempting to undermine Red China. Led by the US, the TPP also covers Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. China is excluded from this “Pacific Rim” as it is the intended target. Unfortunately, the nationalist leadership of Vietnam has, on this issue, forfeited its’ socialist pretensions and joined in this attack on China.



Above: US President Obama gives away the real reason for the imposition of the Trinity Agreements – the aim to counter the powerhouse economy of Red China. Image from [www.cafe-babylon.net](http://www.cafe-babylon.net)

The TTIP is similar to the TPP, albeit between European Union (EU) countries and the US. The mega-deal has several purposes, one of which is to drag the EU away from conducting trade with Russia, in favour of the US. Even the United Kingdom’s famed National Health Service (NHS) could well be even further undermined, with health services potentially being open for “competition”. Current EU member nations banking regulations, food and environmental safety laws could well be reduced to the lower US standards. EU governments have admitted that jobs may be lost to the US, where

labour standards and Union rights are nowhere near as strong.<sup>20</sup>

As the capitalist production for private profit system has declined over recent decades, and is in effect in recession, capital has flowed from areas which previously provided an adequate rate of profit, such as manufacturing, and into areas such as services. Services cover a vast section of the economy, from banking and finance, to health, education and even funeral services. This marked trend is covered by the third part of “the Trinity” – the Trade in Services Agreement, or TISA. Led by the Australian government, the EU and the US, TISA allows corporations providing services to bypass national regulations on a whole raft of items. The abolition of restrictions on the operation of financial services multinational corporations would enable, for example, personal and financial data to be “shared” across borders and across the globe. The Australian government boasts that the TISA is worth \$51.1 trillion,<sup>21</sup> of which working people will see zero. As Wikileaks has pointed out, the TISA specifically excludes the BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.<sup>22</sup>

### Secrecy

Almost all of the TPP, TTIP and TISA agreements are negotiated in secret, largely by representatives of huge corporations. Elected politicians and appointed government representatives are not informed, and nor have they had an opportunity to even read relevant documents. Many opponents of the Trinity rightly highlight this clear abrogation of even bourgeois democracy. Yet even though the total secrecy of the TPP and similar agreements is a step more concealed than what usually takes place, the day to day operation of capitalist “democracy” includes such contempt for “their own” citizens. While working people should oppose the secrecy of

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/what-is-ttip-and-six-reasons-why-the-answer-should-scare-you-9779688.html> (03-04-2016)

<sup>21</sup> <http://dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/trade-in-services-agreement/pages/trade-in-services-agreement.aspx> (03-04-2016)

<sup>22</sup> <https://wikileaks.org/tisa-financial/press.html> (03-04-2016)



deals which vastly affect them but which they have no control over, neither should demands be put forward for parliaments to be “sovereign” or “independent”. The class content of capitalist “democracy” means that working people are excluded from decision making as a matter of course, with or without free trade deals.

Wikileaks has been able to release some parts of the text of the TPP, TTIP and TISA. The rest remains secret. This factor has led some who are outraged by this practice to believe that the imposition of the Trinity is part of a “New World Order”, part of a “one world government” conspiracy. Yet there are far more terrestrial reasons for the imposition of the Trinity – the US cannot tolerate a rival, or any emerging economy to even develop, with assistance from actors which are not subservient to the US Empire. The BRICS countries, riding on the coattails of socialist China and independent Russia, represent a mortal threat to the predominance of US control over the planet. Wikileaks founder Julian Assange surmises:

“The basic idea which comes across from reading U.S. strategy papers is the construction of a new grand enclosure... And to put inside this grand enclosure the United States, 51 other countries, 1.6 billion people, and two-thirds of global GDP. To integrate Latin America away from Brazil and towards the United States. To integrate Southeast Asia away from China and towards the United States. And to integrate Western Europe, pulling it away from Eurasia as a whole and towards the Atlantic.”<sup>23</sup>

Without politically endorsing the leaderships of the BRICS countries, working people should defend the right of the BRICS countries to conduct trade, cultural and diplomatic ties with any other country or countries they so choose, free from interference from the US Empire. In fact, even countries usually subordinate to Washington have partially broken ranks with it over the establishment of

the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The AIIB, a multilateral development bank established by the Chinese government with the aim of funding infrastructure for Asia<sup>24</sup>, is in effect a rival to the US controlled World Bank. After initially being warned away from joining the AIIB, Australia eventually signed on, along with other usual imperialist US allies the UK, France and New Zealand. It’s a pragmatic recognition by such ruling elites that the US is reaching its limits as the one world superpower, while still remaining a political partner in its murderous reign. For the US, it means its other attempts to regain the power to plunder the world unhindered accelerate. Unfortunately, this means the US ramping up its reckless military provocations, from Eastern Europe, to the Middle East, to the South China Sea, to the Sea of Japan. In part driven by a faltering capitalist economic slowdown, it is no exaggeration to say that the TTP, TTIP and TISA is the trade war which could trigger a shooting war.

In some respects, it could be understandable that some workers, struggling to comprehend the scale of the attacks contained within the TPP, would view them as part of an omnipotent other worldly force – a “New World Order”. Everything from their jobs, basic public services such as health and education, the right to protest and the right to use the internet without being spied on are all under severe threat under the TPP. Even bourgeois democratic rights such as the right for elected bodies to pass laws benefiting those who elected them are likely to be trashed mercilessly. Capitalist politicians do not represent working people in any case, but even their right to read documents before being expected to vote on them could be withdrawn. It can appear that indeed, some alien force is dismantling what generations before us have built.

Yet this is not a “New World Order” brought into being by mysterious spirits. It has very material roots. The capitalist world system has been brought to its knees through its own contradictions. At the same time, Red China is offering an alternative model of development – a form of socialism, however distorted. It is linking with other emerging economies such as Russia and Brazil, and forming blocs that give developing economies an option NOT to deal with the plunder of the US Empire and its rapacious World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). In fact, the Trinity (TTP, TTIP, TISA) could well be designed to

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<sup>23</sup> <https://hacked.com/tpp-ttip-tisa-secret-trade-negotiations-threaten-government-sovereignty-individual-rights/> (03-04-2016)

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.aiib.org> (03-04-2016)

supplant the previous trinity (WTO, IMF, WB). The US ruling class views any country which fails to fall into its line, and which dares to deal instead with any of the BRICS countries, as apostates – or worse. They then become targets for regime change, either by funding “Colour Revolutions”, working towards the dismembering of the state itself, arming proxy forces within the state, or simply the next target for open invasion. The “New World Order” is in reality an Empire in its death throes lashing out, attempting to retain the power it once had.

### Workers disarmed

In the face of these huge attacks, there has been resistance – but not here. In October 2015, a reported 250 000 people turned out to a huge rally against the TTIP in the German capital Berlin.<sup>25</sup> In the New Zealand city of Auckland in February this year, thousands of protesters marched in the streets and blocked traffic against the signing of the TPP.<sup>26</sup> Yet in Australia, almost nothing. Some resolute individuals have organised some speakouts, which, despite their best efforts, have only drawn handfuls of sympathisers. How to explain the lack of action? Partially, it can be explained by the opposition of some Union leaderships and some left parties to the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA). In July last year, several blue collar Union leaderships led the charge against the signing of ChAFTA, organising rallies in several major cities. Ostensibly intending to oppose clauses where Chinese companies could bring Chinese labour to work on projects in Australia worth more than \$150 million, in fact the rallies were laden with overt anti-socialist content. Railing against Red China, the actions swung easily in behind the US war drive against China. Claiming not to be racist, the rallies were nonetheless a factor in excusing, or endorsing, US provocations against China, especially their military manoeuvres in the South China Sea.

Some left parties, such as the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the Socialist Alliance (SA), joined with anti-communist Union leaders and the fascist Party For Freedom (PFF) in turning out for some of these actions. Even mainstream commentators remarked on the

inherently xenophobic nature of these rallies.<sup>27</sup> Thus, all of these parties effectively lined up behind US imperialism against the socialist state of the People’s Republic of China. Given this, it is now difficult for them to go on to oppose the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is a US led soft war against China, which could spill over into a hard war. The Socialist Alliance has openly called for the overthrow of the Chinese socialist republic since 1999, whereas the CPA has a nominal position defending China – which is nonetheless overridden by virulent nationalism in the case of the ChAFTA. The Party For Freedom directly opposes China due to right-wing anti-communism. Yet right and “left” united to condemn China – effectively becoming arms of the US Empire.



Above: An anti-TTIP protest action in Europe, lampooning the TTIP as a “Trojan horse” for general attacks on working people and the environment. There has been mass opposition organised to TTIP in Europe, in contrast to little organised opposition to the TPP in Australia. Image from [www.popularresistance.org](http://www.popularresistance.org)

To our knowledge, Socialist Alternative (SALT) did not join the anti-socialist rallies against China. Nonetheless, their political position was the same. An article by Tom Bramble in their newspaper *Red Flag* states that “ChAFTA and the related Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two governments are a threat to pay and employment conditions in Australia”.<sup>28</sup> Yet both the Japan-Australia Free Trade Agreements and the South Korea- Australia Free Trade Agreements contain very similar arrangements, but neither SALT nor the CPA nor SA have raised nary a word against them. Later in the same article, Mr Bramble recognises that Union leaders

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/10/berlin-anti-ttip-trade-deal-rally-hundreds-thousands-protesters> (06-04-16)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/no-arrests-at-auckland-tpp-protests-cops-happy-with-conduct-of-officers> (06-04-16)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-01/berg-anti-chafta-campaign/6739280> (16-04-16)

<sup>28</sup> <https://redflag.org.au/article/why-we-should-oppose-free-trade-agreement-china> (11-04-16)

effectively did nothing to oppose the federal budget of 2014, and basically nothing to oppose the tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs lost in recent years. Yet this correct observation should lead to the conclusion that Unions and the working class here should work to organise all workers on these shores, regardless of nationality. More workers in Australia helps build the economy which then generates more jobs for all workers. We would agree it is necessary to organise workers into Unions to oppose exploitative conditions. Yet this can be done without also opposing China at the behest of US imperialism. Some left parties – the CPA, SA and SALT – on this issue tend to subordinate themselves politically to the US Empire, despite their intentions, and despite their self-confessed socialism. Hence, these left parties would have difficulty with then turning against the US to oppose the TPP – as their position against ChAFTA would be exposed for all to see.

Working people here should be clear – China, as a sovereign socialist republic, has the right to conduct trade on whatever terms are necessary for the survival of their state which is the precious gain of the 1949 revolution. This includes trade deals with capitalist states, and even the imperialist states which would do anything to see it overthrown. These trade deals ultimately assist workers in China, as well as workers in Australia. Trade with Red China is vital for the Australian economy, depressed as it is economically by the ongoing financial crisis. The jobs of Australian workers are not threatened by relatively small numbers of Chinese labour working for a short period of time on projects on the Australian mainland. Rather, the jobs of Australian workers are continually threatened, and are actually slashed in their thousands, by Australian capitalists seeking an adequate rate of profit. Workers here need to demand that jobs come **at the expense of the profits** of the obscenely wealthy corporations, especially the banking and mining corporations. In the process, all workers regardless of nationality or origin need to be organised by Unions to defend their rights and interests.

What is unconscionable is for the US Empire to attempt to re-write the rules of trade and the basic economic structure of any country other than their own. Yet this one of the very functions of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism. Capital must expand or die. When the opportunities for a return on investment in the home country dries up, capital demands access to other countries. The capitalist state obliges, using many means, from free trade deals to military invasion to arming

counterrevolutionary domestic opponents to sending in foreign mercenaries. It's no exaggeration to say that free trade leads to war. The recent wars on Libya and Syria led by the US and backed by the UK, France and to a lesser extent Australia, are indicators that the faltering profit system in the West cannot re-boot itself. The "creative destruction" of war is unfortunately one of the only methods to restart the billionaire's system.

The role of the Trade Union bureaucracy backing the US Empire politically is particularly marked in Australia. Rather than fight against the US Empire in its drive to war, the conservative bureaucrats aid and assist it, and even pull their own members behind it. The Union bureaucracy is paid handsomely for its political role in support of the US Empire via the lackey Australian ruling class, and they reciprocate. In the case of ChAFTA, they go one step further and aid and assist the US Empire in its war against a socialist state. In fact, the interests of workers lie in defending China against all political and military manoeuvres by the US Empire. But this is unthinkable for the Union bureaucracy, as well as the left parties which tail them. If war does break out between the US and China – not at all impossible given the extreme US-led provocations in the South China Sea – these left parties may be forced by the logic of their positions to follow the Union bureaucracy into coming behind the US juggernaut.

There is no "New World Order". There is, however, a US Empire which, driven by the most rapacious ruling class in history, is prepared to risk global conflagration in a desperate attempt to regain what power it once had. The only road for working people is resistance. What is required is **large-scale class struggle** against the TPP and the Trinity internationally. This should be led by Unions, bringing in their train all manner of layers of the people which rely on the working class for their upkeep – students, pensioners, unemployed and more. The political perspective should be one which defends Red China, and seeks to work with it to defend one of the only functioning economies remaining. It must have an anti-imperialist perspective – that denies the US and its allies such as Canberra any political or ideological legitimacy. This will require a break with the misleaders of the Trade Union bureaucracy as well as left parties who ride on their coat-tails. In defending China against the US, the movement must inevitably pose the struggle as one of socialism over capitalism, and seek to mobilise working people to this end. The working class has no country, but we have no less than a world to win.



# FOR A UNIFORM 35 HOUR WEEK WITH NO LOSS IN PAY!

7 HOURS WORK

8 HOURS REST

9 HOURS PLAY

*(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed at Labour Day in Brisbane on May 2, 2016. The issue of a shorter working week with no loss in pay to address the scourge of unemployment remains a crucial demand for the workers' movement at all times, but especially during an ongoing capitalist economic crisis. Less hours worked per workers means that the available work is spread around, and more workers have disposable income.)*

02-05-16 – Workers! We need to take stock. We are faced with an ongoing economic crisis, one which is not of our making, but has been thrust upon us. The system of private production for private profit has once again come to grief, or at least in those countries where capitalism rules. Europe, the United States, Japan and Australia are all gripped in an economic crisis which appears to have no end. This crisis has many consequences, not the least of which is ever-increasing unemployment. Thousands of sackings have hit Australian workers over the last eight years. It is not only manufacturing which is closing down, other industries are also shedding jobs. Working people, both employed and unemployed, are suffering, and something must be done.

If the system cannot generate jobs for all, then the available work must be shared around, so that all those who can work, have work. And this must be done **without** a decrease in weekly earnings for workers. This will mean an increase in hourly pay

rates, but we must be clear – this increase must come **at the expense of the profits of big business** and government coffers. We know that 600 of the largest corporations in Australia essentially pay no tax, and we know that the privatised banks (one of which *once was* publicly owned), rake in billions of dollar in profit each year. This is to say nothing of corporations such as the 7 Eleven Convenience stores, now infamous for drastically underpaying its staff. Australia is literally swimming in cash, but very little is finding its way into the pockets of those who produce this wealth – working people.

There are several reasons why there needs to be a reduction in working hours with no loss in pay. Firstly, it will begin to address the chronic problem of unemployment and underemployment which plagues Australia. The official rate of unemployment of around 6% is widely regarded as suspect. According to these figures, anyone with one hour of work per week is not counted in these figures. Underemployment added to unemployment realistically adds up to around 18% of the workforce.

Youth unemployment is a severe problem. We have the tragic situation where young people leaving school and university cannot find work, and it is extremely difficult for them to get a start in whichever careers they wish to pursue. This generation, just starting in life, is being ground down by a system in crisis. The severe downturn in manufacturing and other industries means less firms taking on new apprentices. The cutbacks to the public sector mean less young people being

employed full time, or on a permanent basis. Outsourcing usually results in casual and part-time work.

Those over 50 years of age are having extreme difficulty finding work. Some figures show that those over 50 years of age on average spend at least 2 years simply looking for work, before an opportunity *may* arise. This is simply a waste of labour, to say nothing of the suffering and poverty it causes amongst senior Australians. Recently the federal government increased the retirement age to 67, meaning more seniors will need to find work. While we should also campaign to restore the retirement age to 65, we also need avenues for those over 50 to be gainfully employed.

### **The Scourge of Exploitative Unpaid Overtime**

Research from the Australia Institute has found that the average Australian worker performs six hours of unpaid overtime **every week**. It is estimated that this amounts to a figure of over 100 billion dollars **each year**.<sup>29</sup> This is on top of working weeks in some areas which are 38, 40 or more hours per week. If a uniform 35 hour week across all industries and across the public sector was legislated and enforced, in the vicinity of 1 million extra workers would be required based on a workforce of 10 million. It would pump more money into the economy while increasing tax revenue. If accompanied by a clampdown on massive tax evasion by monopoly capital (big business) alongside an increase in the corporate tax rate from 30% to 50%, it could result in a huge expansion of public sector expenditure including public hospitals, public education, public transport and public housing.

### **The Origins of May Day**

As we march to mark International May Day, it is important to note its origins. In 1889 the Second International adopted a resolution “calling for the simultaneous celebration of May 1<sup>st</sup> 1890 in all

countries, in memory of the courageous but tragic action of the Chicago workers on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1886.” On that occasion 6 workers were killed and 50 injured during a demonstration of over 40 000 workers demanding an eight hour day. Australian workers were in the forefront of the struggle for an 8 hour day, including strikes, from the 1850s onwards. In 1948 the Commonwealth Arbitration Court granted workers a 40 hour week acknowledging in its decision that “this working class claim has been and is the basis of industrial dispute and unrest.” (*In Union Is Strength*, Turner, Ian, p.102)

### **Workers Taking the Offensive**

A uniform 7 hour day, if won through struggle, would be a significant victory for workers. The labour movement is in desperate need of such victories. Once one such victory is won, it will spur confidence amongst workers and Union members to demand more, or even to demand conditions which have been lost over the last 30 years. Workers in many workplaces are being pushed to the limit daily, and feel that they have little option but to cop being pushed around and bullied by supervisors and managers. In many workplaces, especially in construction, the safety of workers and the general public is being put at risk due to the cutting of corners and a race to build. Some workers are being pushed beyond what they are capable of doing, and are being pushed out of work if they can’t “perform”, i.e. produce quality work at breakneck speed.

ENOUGH! The labour movement must fightback against these injustices – but the best place to start is to demand a uniform 35 hour week with no loss in pay. This should be a nationwide effort across all industries. Spread the word far and wide, through your workplaces, through the community and especially through your Unions. *Join the campaign!*

### **For a 35 Hour Week Campaign**

Post: PO Box 66 Nundah QLD 4012

E: [7hourcomms@gmail.com](mailto:7hourcomms@gmail.com)

Ph: 0421 408 692

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<sup>29</sup>  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/unpaid-overtime-hours-increase-for-australian-workers/5902296>  
(23-04-16)

# SHUT DOWN THE PENAL CAMPS! WITHDRAW FROM US LED WARS! UNIONS MUST DEFEND REFUGEES!



Above: Part of the week long picket at Lady Cilento Hospital in South Brisbane for Baby Asha. Many rallied daily to demand to allow an injured baby and her mother to stay in Australia, rather than be shipped back to a detention camp on Nauru. Photo from [www.thecouriermail.com.au](http://www.thecouriermail.com.au)

*(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed at the Palm Sunday Rally for Refugees, 20-03-2016.*

20-02-2016 – As we go to press, the protest by refugee supporters outside the Lady Cilento Hospital in South Brisbane has won a partial victory. Baby Asha, a one year old girl and her mother were transferred from the hospital to “community detention” in Brisbane, rather than be sent back to the hell-hole of Nauru. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton claimed that this was not a back down in the face of protests, and that the issue had been “hijacked” by refugee advocates.<sup>30</sup> The Liberal Party Minister went on to state that the baby and her mother could yet be returned to Nauru. The 10-day picket by refugee supporters has once again highlighted the barbarous practice of the detention of children, and indeed adults, in off-shore detention centres which are little more than penal camps specialising in the imposition of unbearable torment.

Baby Asha was amongst 80 children which was part of a group of 267 refugees which faced imminent deportation to Nauru.<sup>31</sup> Australia has already become notorious internationally for its appalling treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. As if to further entrench Australia’s backward status, the case of Baby Asha followed a High Court ruling that the Australian government has the power under the constitution to detain people in other countries, and that such conduct was within the law!<sup>32</sup> If ever there was an exhibition of the limits of the rule of law under the profit system, this is it. When the detention and effective torture of innocent people fleeing desperate situations is found to be legal, the entire system condemns itself. It is a dead end seeking justice in such courts. These are the very courts before which working people cannot afford the small fortune required to either defend themselves, nor bring a case before them. It is

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-21/baby-asha-brisbane-doctors-agree-to-community-detention-plan/7187716> (20-02-16)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.amnesty.org.au/action/action/41212/> (20-02-16)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/high-court-finds-offshore-detention-lawful-20160202-gmk5q6.html> (ibid)



another lesson reaffirming the negative case with regard to the alleged neutrality of the capitalist state.

The barbarous practice of the rape and/or sexual assault of refugees by detention centre guards on Nauru and Manus Island rightly horrify all those with a bare minimum of human compassion, on top of the already atrocious situation of incarceration without committing any crime. Combine this with reports that asylum seekers on Nauru are told that they will never be settled in Australia. The psychological trauma this could trigger is almost unimaginable. The scale and extent of the pain inflicted on those who have harmed no one and are looking for a safe place to live, is difficult to believe *IF* one looks at the situation in isolation. However, it can and must be explained if we are to move towards a strategy which can finish it.

Groups such as the Refugee Action Collective (RAC) perform laudable work organising meetings, rallies and pickets in an effort to put an end to the abominable treatment of those seeking protection. However, the valuable **organisational** work RAC performs is undermined by a political outlook which tends to focus on appealing to the humanity and compassion of people from all walks of life, from the rich to Union officialdom, from workers to politicians, from the churches to the business elite. All those “who care” are encouraged to take part. The approach tends to be one which assumes that the sum total of a movement is greater than its constituent parts. The political outlook is that of a “broad” or “popular” front. Workers plus Union officials plus church ministers plus students plus liberal political parties or groups and so on add up to – an unstoppable movement, or so the conventional wisdom goes. However, if the strategy should be a mere matter of one plus one, simply building in a linear fashion until “everyone” is on board is all that is required. Unfortunately, politics does not work solely by the method of simple arithmetic. If this was the case, there would be no need for science, nor study, nor theory.



Image from [www.walkleys.com](http://www.walkleys.com)

No matter how complex modern day society has become, it is a basic Marxian precept that it rests on the turbulent relation between labour and capital. This is not only the case for the historically required workers insurrection, but the reality for political struggles now, including the struggle for refugee rights. One of the main reasons why there is a deepening of the cruelty towards refugees and asylum seekers now, as opposed to the 1970s and 80s, is that the capitalist economic system is in far worse shape than it was in previous decades. It is true that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) introduced mandatory detention in the early 90s, but world capitalism entered a precipitous decline beginning in 2008, and has yet to recover, if it ever will. Accordingly, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers worsens almost in direct relation to how far the rate of profit for the “captains of industry” declines. The capitalist class, and its political machines, are acutely aware of how much they need to increase racism and nationalism in a time of economic crisis, to prevent workers from uniting against them. If skilful enough, the financial elite can divert all anger at the deteriorating living conditions towards “the other” – refugees, migrants, or anyone “not from here”.

All this is well known to the left parties which buttress RAC, such as Solidarity (SOL), Socialist Alternative (SALT) and Socialist Alliance (SALL).

Despite their intentions, in practice such groups commit the cardinal error of entering an unprincipled bloc with the liberal wing of the ruling class – either in the form of pro-capitalist Union officials, or self-serving political parties and groups such as the ALP, the Greens, or GetUp! What this means for the refugee rights movement is that almost all of the actions initiated by RAC, while necessary in themselves, **become politically subordinate** to forces which aim to prevent any systemic challenge to capitalist rule. Such actions are thus confined within a liberal framework – the shell of pleading for reprieves from “our” politicians and other elites. Far from applying “pressure” to the system, such actions strengthen the very “democratic” façade which, with a federal election looming, will be wheeled out once again. Refugees, however, continue to suffer regardless.



Image from [www.naururefugees.wordpress.com](http://www.naururefugees.wordpress.com)

Occasionally, the forces of the “left” wing of the capitalist class directly involve themselves in the struggle for refugee rights – precisely in order to restrict the political demands, or even to garner support for their political ends. A classic case was the picket at the Lady Cilento Childrens Hospital in mid February. While this action involved many people who wanted to contribute, and did temporarily prevent a deportation to Nauru, it was also politically handed over, at crucial times, to

operatives of the ALP, GetUp! and the conservative Union bureaucracy, including representatives of the Queensland Council of Unions. (QCU). The takeover of the movement by such forces was both a help and a hindrance. Numbers swelled, and protestors were heartened by some backing (finally!) by some Unions. However, it soon became apparent that the real aims of the QCU, the ALP, GetUp! and the Greens were both the upcoming Brisbane City Council and Federal Elections, and the **political containment** of the refugee rights movement in an election year. Some Union officials gave fine sounding speeches, it is true, but it was not backed by Unions mobilising workers. For example, members of Together/ASU – the main public sector Union in Queensland – were not even sent an email about the action!!

The left parties who predominate the organising committees of RAC (SOL, SALT, SALL) were either oblivious to this manoeuvre, or willingly took part in it. Moreover, their strategy remains that of building the broadest possible front on the lowest possible common denominator. They apply their theory that the broader the movement, the more politically powerful it is. This is an inversion of reality. The broader the movement (in terms of the left and right joining hands), the more **powerless** it becomes – and the refugee rights movement is forced to refight its battles over and over and over again. Parties and groups representing a section of the “left” wing of the ruling class (i.e. the ALP, GetUp!, the Greens, Union officialdom etc) cannot “free the refugees”, or anyone else for that matter. This is because these forces have a material interest in **preserving, not abolishing**, the real source of refugee oppression – the capitalist economic casino.

The theme of this year’s Palm Sunday rally is “Stop the War on Refugees”. This is rich coming from RAC and its SOL, SALT and SALL drivers. These groups have stood solidly behind the US led imperialist wars of regime change in Libya and Syria, wars which have created untold numbers of refugees. They were also silent when NATO installed a fascist junta in Ukraine, to undermine Russia. Such groups whine about “Russian imperialism”, which is an implicit

endorsement of the NATO juggernaut. They are even more silent while the US is relentless with its hostile provocations against Red China, especially in the South China Sea, but also against the DPRK (North Korea). This is the golden thread which binds these left parties to the nationalist Union bureaucrats, the ALP, the Greens, and “community” groups such as GetUp! – “grassroots community activism”, in the service of imperialism. GetUp! is at least halfway honest about where its funding comes from – some Union leaderships, but it also admits being a part of billionaire financier George Soros’ death star like constellation of regime change NGOs, such as Avaaz.org and MoveOn.org.<sup>33</sup> SOL, SALT and SALL, who do not receive such funding, nonetheless continually deny ever politically backing US/UK/FRA/Turkish/Saudi/NATO armed jihadists in Libya and Syria, while at the same time being the loudest voices calling for the overthrow of the African or Middle Eastern states targeted by the US Empire. Neither have SOL, SALT or SALL raised virtually any call for the withdrawal of Australian troops from the Middle East. Indeed, while Australian troops assist the US empire in the horrific game of regime change – an aim they share – why would they?

What this means for the vitally important refugee rights movement is that while it remains politically subordinate to imperialism domestically and internationally, it will remain a plaything in the hands of those we should be protesting against. Thankfully, the intervention of the Russian, Iranian and Hezbollah forces on the side of the overwhelmingly popular Syrian government has tipped the balance in Syria in favour of the world proletariat. As we write, a ceasefire between the US led forces and their armed mercenaries, and the anti-imperialist forces of Syria, Russia, Iran and Hezbollah is being etched out. Regardless of whether it holds completely, the situation on the ground is that the NATO powers have been soundly defeated in Syria. Hundreds of thousands have paid with their

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.getup.org.au/about/donations-disclosure> (20-02-2016)

lives for this victory, something that should never be forgotten. But it is another example which demonstrates that the US Empire and its murderous reign at the apex of world capitalism does not always win. This is something we need to keep in mind as we struggle for refugee justice.



Image from [www.greenleft.org.au](http://www.greenleft.org.au)

We would suggest that the refugee rights movement’s tasks are threefold. Firstly, it needs to seek to combat the influence of liberal capitalist elements (the ALP, Greens, Union officials, GetUp! etc) and not cede leadership to such elements when they barge their way into the movements to bolster an election campaign or to back yet another US led war. This means seeking to politically combat left parties which act as proxies on the ground for more conservative political forces. The aim should be the mobilisation of all working class forces and their supporters **independently**, not only from the major parties, but all political groups working for them, be they paid or unpaid.

Secondly, the refugee rights movement **needs to orient to the mobilisation of Unions** in defence of refugee rights. This is not just because the movement backs anyone who is progressive, but because the mobilisation of labour is one of the few things that has the possibility of winning lasting gains for refugees and asylum seekers. We must reiterate that the main reason why the unspeakable abuse of refugees recurs is to divide the working class yet further, in order to prepare for further attacks, as



the capitalist system slides deeper into recession. Unions will not be able to defend themselves if they do not defend refugees. The main obstacle to the mobilisation of workers and their Unions are the self-serving Union officials, who seek only to extend their well-remunerated careers, rather than fight for the cause of working people. Such officials must be positioned so that they **MUST** call meetings of members and start organising. Refugee rights supporters should not accept no to a demand for a meeting of members and delegates to address urgent issues.

Thirdly, ***the refugee rights movement needs to oppose all imperialist wars***, which generate and exacerbate an already dire refugee situation internationally, as a result of the ongoing failure of free market capitalism. Today this means opposing the US led war on Syria, NATO belligerence in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, and US warmongering against Red China. It means demanding that all Australian troops be withdrawn from the Middle East (Iraq, Syria) and be withdrawn from all war games with the US aimed at China and the DPRK. Anyone of these conflicts could spill over into a world war – an unprecedented nightmare for refugees and the world's working people. The struggle to end war should be simultaneously a struggle for socialism – a collectivised world economy where working people are free to move based on an international division of labour.

***SHUT DOWN THE PENAL CAMPS!      WITHDRAW  
FROM US WARS!***

***UNIONS MUST DEFEND REFUGEES!***

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Image from [www.ibtimes.co.uk](http://www.ibtimes.co.uk)

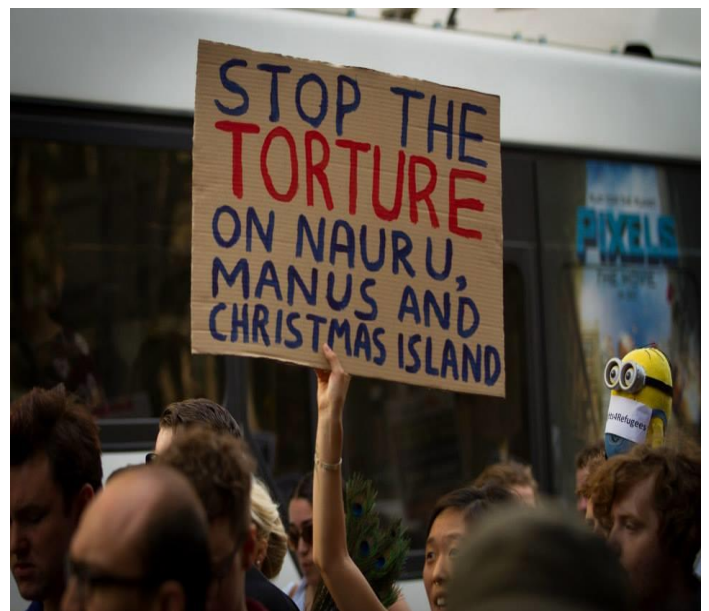


Image from [www.markjisaccs.com](http://www.markjisaccs.com)

The ML Group appreciates any relevant contributions that workers and their supporters would like to make for publication in *Red Fire*.

If you have a report or story about a workers' struggle in your workplace, or photos from a social justice struggle in your area, you are welcome to forward them to us. We will make an effort to include them in the next issue of *Red Fire*.

Send contributions to: [mlgroup271@gmail.com](mailto:mlgroup271@gmail.com)

Thank you

# NO TO WAR WITH CHINA!

## LIFT THE SANCTIONS ON THE DPRK!



Above: “Foal Eagle” military exercises clearly display the US flag alongside the South Korean flag, as the troops train for a landing on the shores of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). [www.northkoreatimes.com](http://www.northkoreatimes.com)

*(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the ML Group in March of 2016)*

09-03-2016 – It’s a scenario that would have seemed unimaginable even six months ago – a new war in the Pacific. Yet this is precisely what working people across the world stare in the face. The US Empire, smarting from its defeat at the hands of the Russians in Syria, have yet again ramped up its hostile provocations against the People’s Republic of China, with Canberra obediently falling in behind. It follows on from Resolution 2270 passed by the United Nations Security Council<sup>34</sup>, imposing the harshest possible sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), for the “crime” of preparing for its own self defence in response to

unending hostility from the US government. This year’s “military exercises” – in reality live practice for an invasion – on the doorstep of the DPRK will be the largest ever, involving troops from the US, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and others. The slightest error in these war games could trigger a global war – a war in which working people will be the ones who suffer first, and the worst.

It’s the supreme irony – China and the DPRK are almost universally referred to in the West as tyrannical communist dictatorships in which basic democracy is absent. At the same time, Washington and Canberra are preparing for major military operations against both China and the DPRK – ***without seeking, let alone gaining, any semblance of public support for war.*** We must ask, where exactly is the dictatorship? Working people here and

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12267.doc.htm> (10-03-2016)



internationally generally harbour a passionate hatred for war, which is one reason why the respective Western ruling classes do not even present the question for discussion, let alone debate. To be sure, many unsuspecting people will be drawn in by the corporate media's compliance, and presentation of the question as if there is no other option. But it is essential for workers and all those opposed to war to speak out and protest loudly, not only for elementary justice, but to prevent a catastrophic war from engulfing the globe.



Above: A modern apartment building in the DPRK capital Pyongyang, beside spacious parks. The socialist economy operating in the DPRK guarantees its citizens many rights which working people in the West have never experienced. Housing, for example, is provided to all at no cost. Working people in the DPRK do not have to endure a lifetime of backbreaking labour in order to pay off a modest dwelling.

In Australia, there is an acute housing crisis, where housing is becoming unaffordable even for those with full-time work. Young people, students, pensioners and others will hardly ever get a chance to own their own home. All governments, Labor, Liberal or Labor/Green, have carried out the privatisation of large swathes of public housing. Such actions push up both housing prices and rents. The DPRK, with its socialist housing benefits, and the threat of an alternative example, is one of the key reasons why the US Empire would like to see the DPRK destroyed.

Photo from [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk)

or those of toady allies in the South China Sea. Part of the US “pivot to Asia”, the goading of Taiwan, the Philippines and Malaysia to pursue spurious claims to reefs and islands they previously had little interest in, is part of the US strategy to build a new “coalition of the willing” against Red China. Like the disaster of Iraq which the previous “coalition of the willing” carried out, the ultimate agenda is no less than war. Unfortunately, the leaders of socialist Vietnam have prostrated themselves to the US against China, an act of disloyalty. Canberra has added fuel to the tinder-box by flying its own “freedom of navigation” operations through the disputed areas.<sup>35</sup>

The arch-reactionary US/Australia alliance has used so-called “freedom of navigation” operations on and off for decades, stretching back to the Vietnam War. One can imagine what the reaction from Western powers would be if China or Russia simply claimed “freedom of navigation” and flew fighter bombers up and down the east and west coasts of the US and Australian mainlands !! Bear in mind, the US has once again signalled that its advanced long-range B1 bombers may well be stationed in northern Australia.<sup>36</sup> Given the release of the Australian government’s Defence White Paper, which contains \$195 billion worth of military spending in preparation for war, China has every right to believe that it will be targeted sooner rather than later.

Working people might ask, why would Washington and Canberra want war with China, when there is so much trade at stake? Indeed, China’s powerhouse socialist economy is a major reason why Australia has not sunk into a recession anywhere near as deep as Spain or Greece. There are some indications that the Australian ruling class is to some extent divided in going all the way to war with the US. However, all of the parties of the capitalist class currently represented in what passes for the federal parliament, are in lockstep with Washington, from the Liberals to the ALP to the Greens and Nationals.

<sup>35</sup> <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/did-australia-secretly-conduct-its-own-freedom-of-navigation-operation-in-the-south-china-sea/>

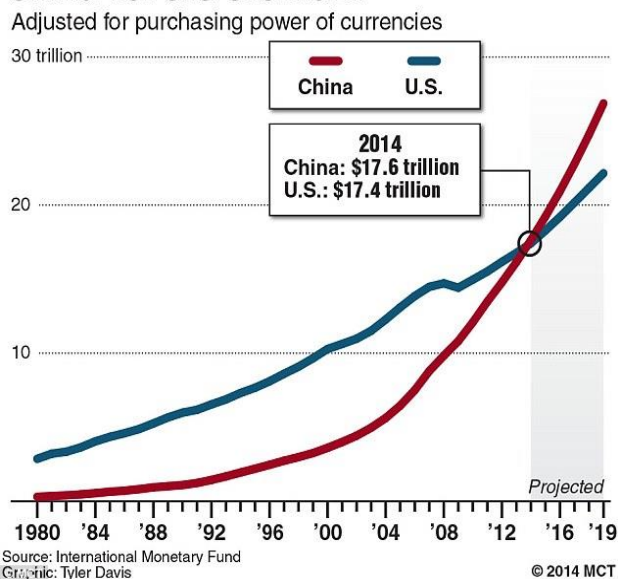
<sup>36</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-08/long-range-bombers-could-rotate-through-nt-general-says/7231098> (10-03-2016)

Barely a month passes without yet another open US provocation against China from either their military



It seems suicidal, but not from the pathological rulers of the US Empire, who are driven to a state of frenzy by China's inexorable rise. Make no mistake, China's rise is due to its predominantly collectivised i.e. state owned, and planned economy. However much "capitalism" appears on the surface in the People's Republic, its real drivers are its gigantic state owned enterprises, precious gains of the 1949 socialist revolution. The US, in contrast, is in a state of deep recession, with its workers paying a heavy price through unemployment, poverty and crumbling infrastructure.

## China vs. the U.S.: GDP



Above: Graphic showing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of China being projected to surpass the US by 2017. China's massive economic growth is underpinned by state ownership of the strategic parts of the economy, including, but not limited to, banking, finance, infrastructure construction, steel production, electricity generation and distribution, railways and ports. The state can thus drive the economy, as it is predominantly in the hands of the socialist state. The majority privately owned economy in the US simply cannot compete, and indeed has been mired in crisis since 2008. Graphic: Tyler Davis

The US knows that the longer it allows China to rise unimpeded, it will soon overtake the US as the number one world power. US rulers cannot allow any challenge to its bloodthirsty rule of the planet, and certainly not from an arch enemy socialist state. The US of course is not militarily strong enough to invade and overthrow 1.3 billion people, but that does not for a moment slow their other plans to

undermine or break up Red China. One is the funding of numerous "labour rights" and "human rights" NGOs in China, another is the backing of anti-socialist religious and national groups within China, from Tibet to Xinjiang to Hong Kong. Another major plan is the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) – a massive free trade deal with 12 Pacific Rim countries specifically excluding China. The TPP is quite literally the economic arm of the "pivot to Asia" – the plan for the US to station 60% of its external forces in the Pacific by 2020. Needless to say, the "pivot to Asia" is a euphemism for war.

No less a preparation for war is the annual US-led "military exercises", carried out on the doorstep of the DPRK. This years "Key Resolve/Foal Eagle" operation will be the largest ever, containing some 300 000 troops – an amount close to the number which invaded Iraq in 2003. As usual Australian troops will be participating, but for the first time New Zealand troops will also take part. These war games are quite literally a rehearsal for an invasion of the DPRK – a socialist state which has defied the US war machine for 60 years. As in the original Korean War, the US and their imperialist allies aim to overthrow not only the DPRK, but also set the stage for the undermining and/or break up of China itself. China's leadership is well aware of this, despite its treacherous vote in favour sanctions on the DPRK in the United Nations.

Working people have no interest in a war with China or the DPRK. In however a distorted form, the conflict between Washington and Canberra on the one hand, and Beijing and Pyongyang on the other hand, is a battle between capitalism and socialism. If war does break out, working people need to refuse to participate in such a war, up to and including the point of taking concerted industrial action, regardless of whether conservative Union officials back us. Ultimately, such a struggle can only be successful as a struggle for the victory of socialism. Capitalism needs war to survive, but working people do not need capitalism.

**NO TO WAR WITH CHINA!**

**LIFT THE SANCTIONS ON THE DPRK!**

