

RED FIRE

ISSUE #8

\$2

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!



SO WHO ANNEXED THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA THEN?

BY ARINA TSUKANOVA

(The following article first appeared at www.strategic-culture.org on 28-03-17)

Due to the international media's continued claims about the «annexation of Crimea», it's been difficult for the citizens of the US and Europe to make sense of the details of the peninsula's recent history. Exactly three years ago, on March 16, 2014, the Crimeans were offered a choice: to rejoin Russia or to return to the constitution of 1992 that proclaimed Crimea a legal, democratic, secular

state whose relationship with Ukraine was based on bilateral agreements. That constitution was unilaterally abolished by Kiev on March 17, 1995, and here's what's surprising: no one at that time in the West demanded that the Ukrainian government stop violating the provisions of international law and the rights of the inhabitants of the Crimean peninsula. And then in 1995, special ops forces from the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU) landed in Crimea and Sevastopol in order to establish «Ukrainian law and order», seizing the

building housing the Supreme Council of the republic, where the administration of the acting president of Crimea, Yuriy Meshkov, was also headquartered, and demanding that he be turned over. Since Meshkov refused to vacate his office, they tried to poison him. Much later he described how his drink had been poisoned, and that later in the hospital he was refused proper medical care. Only an emergency evacuation to Moscow miraculously saved his life.



Yuriy Meshkov, Crimea President in 1991-1995

In this manner, **the real annexation of Crimea by Ukraine, which no one condemned, was completed in 1995.** It all began in 1991 with a power grab by the Ukrainian parliament, which annexed the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, forcibly joining it to Ukraine despite the results of the January referendum about re-establishing Crimea's autonomy. The annexation by Ukraine culminated in the revocation of the constitution and the liquidation of the office of the president of Crimea. However, no one in Europe or America introduced sanctions against this new Ukrainian state that had flagrantly trampled on the right of nations to self-determination: according to the 1989 census, three-quarters of the population of Crimea were not ethnic Ukrainians.

From standpoint of the overwhelming majority of Crimea's residents, a historical injustice was redressed in March 2014: Ukraine was stripped of what it had obtained illegally between 1991 and 1995 using deception and military force. In the eyes of Crimeans, Ukraine's claims to the peninsula and the support of those claims by the West look very odd. In the 1990s, the world «overlooked» Ukraine's annexation of Crimea, and no one was concerned that the rights of the inhabitants of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic had been violated. But when those citizens again took it into their heads to determine their own destiny in 2014, an international scandal blew up that still burns today.



A rally in Simferopol in support of Crimea sovereignty, June 1992

Furthermore, Ukraine is floating the idea of dragging the peninsula «back» under its jurisdiction, knowing perfectly well that the Crimeans themselves are overwhelmingly and unequivocally opposed to this. It is very strange that over the course of the last three years the international community has not once listened to the voice of this majority. Moreover, international sanctions have not been imposed against Ukraine for its attempts to leave the inhabitants of the peninsula without water or electricity. Kiev has actually been working against the Crimeans, under

the slogan: «Crimea will either be Ukrainian or uninhabited!»

In 2014, Kiev ordered the North Crimean Canal (built by the USSR between 1961 and 1971) to be cut off, as a result of which the acreage of irrigated land in Crimea declined by 85%. At the end of September 2015, a group of Ukrainian «activists», representing the ultra-right organizations Right Sector and Azov battalion as well as several fugitives from the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar People organized a transportation «blockade of Crimea»: the highways into Crimea were shut down to prevent Ukrainian goods from reaching the peninsula, with the intention of thereby triggering a food shortage and a rise in food prices, due to the complexity and expense of obtaining supplies from mainland Russia by sea, air, or across the Kerch Strait.



In mid-2014 Ukrainian media bragged about drying up the North Crimean Canal

Later, when it turned out that the plan had come to naught and that the «food blockade» had mostly caused harm to small shops owned by Crimean Tatars, the chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, unexpectedly claimed that the blockade «was instigated by several people, including the leaders of the Mejlis, but it had no connection with the institution of the Mejlis itself». As a result, Ukrainian businesses, which were

deprived of the opportunity to sell food to Crimea, suffered the most from the actions of the «blockaders». In the peninsular, however, wholesale merchants quickly adapted to obtaining their supplies from Russia, domestic producers got a shot in the arm, and traveling markets popped up, offering products from as far away as Belarus.



Activists blocking a cross-point to Crimea in Kalanchak, Kherson region

By late 2015, the sponsors of the «trade blockade» of Crimea realized that they had not achieved their goal: there was no sign of hunger, nor a significant increase in food prices, nor social protests on the peninsula. In addition, many residents of Crimea began to ridicule the blockade on social media, publishing photographs from markets and stores that showed nothing resembling a food shortage, on the contrary they documented that meat, bread, milk, and cereals were easily available and that fish and fruit were in fact abundant. Then formally uncontrolled by Kiev Crimean Tatar activists led by Lenur Islyamov blew up electricity pylons in the neighboring Kherson region of Ukraine supplying the peninsula. Crimeans were left without electricity on the eve of winter. Since at that time the energy bridge from Russia had not yet been built, a state of emergency was declared on the peninsula. Kiev then set about to blackmail the inhabitants of the peninsula: they were offered electricity in exchange for signing an agreement

with an electric company that included a line acknowledging Crimea and Sevastopol to be part of Ukraine. This blackmail ended in a massive failure. Only 6.2% of the Crimean residents surveyed supported the Ukrainian proposal, and 93.1% rejected it, agreeing to endure their difficult conditions for several months. The contract with Ukraine was not finalized on Kiev's terms.



Supplying Crimea electricity pylons in the Kherson region, blown up by blockade «activists», October 2015

For three years the Western democracies have been turning a blind eye to the historical choice made by the people of Crimea. Ukraine has repeatedly tried to challenge this choice through provocations, blockades, and blackmail. However, the people of Crimea used to live without electric lights or heat and to endure inconveniences and deprivations, if only to avoid becoming once again part of Ukraine.

Another conspicuous result of Crimea's transition to Russian jurisdiction is also telling: it turns out that, contrary to Ukrainian and Western propaganda, there are no conflicts between the Russian and Ukrainian populations in their shared home. Without the Ukrainian nationalist element in Crimea, it becomes clear that between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples there is no enmity, no tensions, and no reason to fight one other.

Three state languages are officially recognized in the republic: Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar. And Muslim mosques peacefully coexist with Russian Orthodox churches. Were it not for the warmongers who are trying to jump-start the underground activities of Hizb at-Tahrir and other radical organizations in Crimea, Crimea would have no other problems, except one - coping with the devastation wrought by Ukraine.



New mosque in Crimean Tatar Voinka village, built in 2010 on donations by the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov

Throughout all the years of its independence, Ukraine enjoyed what it had inherited from the USSR in Crimea, without investing a cent in the peninsula, as a result of which Crimea today lags noticeably behind Russia's flourishing Kuban region. For the last three years Russia has been actively investing in Crimea (annual subsidies amount to more than \$600 million, which does not include the multi-billion-dollar investments in the construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge, which is a separate line item in the budget). Despite the enormous pressure from the international sanctions, these measures are already bringing real benefits to people's lives.

DON'T FALL FOR ONE NATION!

FOR STRUGGLE BASED LEADERSHIP OF THE UNIONS!



Above: Former One Nation candidate Margaret Dodd has become disillusioned with the running of One Nation by leader Pauline Hanson. Despite this, One Nation could possibly receive 23% of the vote in the upcoming Queensland election. Image from www.hotcopper.com.au

(Following is the text of a Workers League flyer)

22-02-2017 – It would have seemed implausible even just a few years ago. One Nation, spitting vile racism, logic defying Islamophobia and ugly ultra-nationalism, is fast becoming a “normal” part of the Australian political system. One Nation was effectively ushered out of the political system around 15 years ago by both left-wing anti-racist protests and the political establishment itself seeking to eliminate a potential rival. In 2003, One Nation leader Pauline Hanson spent 11 weeks in jail for fraudulently obtaining electoral funding. Now, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s indication that the Federal Liberals will not follow former Liberal PM John Howard’s policy of preferencing One Nation last, is an indication of the re-emergence of One Nation – at least in terms of capitalist electoral politics.

In state elections, the Liberal Party is falling over themselves to either join, or work with, One Nation. With a Queensland election looming later this year, four former Queensland Liberal National Party (LNP) Members of Parliament (MP) have crossed over to sign up with One Nation.¹ This reflects a large degree of opportunism, with One Nation now apparently polling at a staggering 23% support amongst the Queensland electorate.² In Western Australia, with a state election due in March, the Liberal Party is now preferencing One Nation above their traditional conservative

¹ <http://www.wauchopegazette.com.au/story/4441546/queensland-lnp-torn-on-one-nation-preferences-as-turnbull-rules-out-doing-a-john-howard/?cs=7> (18-02-2017)

² <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-11/pauline-hanson-one-nation-gains-support-in-qld-opinion-poll/8262182> (18-02-2017)

coalition partners, the Nationals.³ It is possible that by the end of the year, there could potentially be Liberal and One Nation coalition governments in two of Australia's states.

Some commentators have noted that 15 years ago, people would generally not admit publically that they support One Nation, but they would just vote for One Nation in the privacy of the ballot box. Now, more people are no longer embarrassed about it, as One Nation more and more becomes noted as a "regular" parliamentary party. How did this come about? Firstly, it should be noted that developments in Australian politics do not occur in a bubble sealed off from the rest of the world. Political developments here are inextricably linked to the world political and economic situation. The issues which caused the serious economic crash in the West, which began in 2008, have not been resolved, and to some extent have even become worse. This has driven a further deepening of assaults on the living and working conditions of working people, in tandem with reckless and lawless imperialist wars being waged overseas. At this late stage, capitalism can only save itself by turning against those who produce its life giving surplus value.

In Australia there has been relentless job cuts from all industries, as well as the public sector. The cost of living continues to climb, resulting in a homelessness crisis. Housing itself is now virtually unaffordable for young people and most graduates. The ongoing privatisation of essential public services has pushed electricity, gas, water and sewerage services to prices which reduce the spending power of large swathes of workers. Those still in employment are often working at a breakneck pace, enduring oppressive bullying and harassment from managers. The future for young people, let alone older workers, looks bleak. This is part of the war at home, which both reflects, and is

an extension, of the wars being waged by the US – with the support of Canberra – in the Middle East and North Africa, and potential wars with Russia and China.

Rise of ISIS produces Reclaim Australia – and One Nation

Such attacks on working people had been ongoing for around 35 years, with varying degrees of intensity. Yet it was Washington's war on Syria – backed by Canberra – which provided the pretext for the fantastic invocation of "ISIS" (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). In reality, ISIS were, and are, barbarous mercenaries hired by the governments of the US, Saudi Arabia, the UK, France, Qatar and Turkey (although Turkey has come to accept that the war of regime change in Syria has failed), with the assistance of Israel. The gruesome brutality of ISIS in Syria, especially the beheading of innocents, spurred the formation here of "Reclaim Australia", which was under the massive illusion that ISIS was primarily a part of the Islamic religion. The fact that some ISIS mercenaries were a part of the Wahabist sect of Islam, which remains basically at war with all other strands of Islam, was ignored or not understood.

It was at this time that Pauline Hanson and One Nation re-emerged, chiming in with the less than worldly understanding of Reclaim Australia. Proclaiming "No Mosques, No Halal" and more, One Nation rocketed back into popularity, at least in the electoral sphere. Reclaim Australia, comprised at its core of Neo-Nazi groups, split into groups such as the United Patriots Front. Counter-demonstrations against Reclaim Australia were largely successful, especially in Melbourne, where the racists were outnumbered, often at least by a ratio of 5 to 1. Yet the counter-demonstrations were often led by some left parties – such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, as well as some anarchists – which were some of the strongest backers of what they termed the "Syrian Revolution". Given the context that the only forces attempting to overthrow the Syrian state were ISIS, Al Qaeda and other Western armed mercenaries, it

³ <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/liberals-to-put-one-nation-ahead-of-nationals-in-unprecedented-election-deal-20170211-guaw3p.html> (18-02-2017)

appeared to Reclaim Australia – and those who would go on to back One Nation – that the “left” actually supported ISIS and Al Qaeda in the name of “defending Muslims”. With some justification, these elements were repulsed by the “left” appearing to back ISIS, and thus steered themselves sharply to the right – into the arms of One Nation.



Above: Al Nusra genocidal mercenaries in Syria. This group, along with Al Qaeda and others, received funding and arms from the US, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, the UK, France and others, in an attempt to overthrow the Syrian government. Their unimaginably brutal methods of killing led some who were not fully aware to believe that these death squads were simply an extension of the Islamic faith. In turn, some then followed Pauline Hanson into One Nation after she called for the banning of Halal food and the building of Mosques. Image from www.kielarowski.net

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 enquiries 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

There were sections of the left, and other anti-war and anti-imperialist activists, which defended Syria against the US-led war for regime change. These elements, some of whom were involved in the Hands Off Syria group, almost led a lone hand against a predatory war of the great powers. Yet with all of the corporate media, the federal government and most of the “left” baying for the blood of President Assad, these activists could not spur a desperately needed anti-war movement. Such a movement would need to overcome not only the fraudulent “left”, but also the top echelons of the Union bureaucracy.

The support, electoral or otherwise, for One Nation is unfortunately broader than those who are prepared to mobilise under the ultra-nationalism of Reclaim Australia or the United Patriots Front. Tragically, some sections of the working class are turning to One Nation, often out of a desperate lack of political options. In the absence of a Union movement which is prepared to fight for workers needs, and a corresponding workers party, some workers feel they have no option but to turn to demagogues such as Pauline Hanson **even if** they personally disagree with racist discrimination against “foreigners” or against those professing the Islamic faith. It is not that they necessarily “don’t care” about humane treatment for those of “difference”. However, they can be easily led into extreme xenophobia if they believe that the protagonists are also, in some way, “fighting the system” which exploits them.

Careerist Union officials refuse to fight

Perhaps the prime reason why some workers are turning to the far-right One Nation is that they have seen, and experienced, an almost total lack of response from Union leaders to the plight of their ever-worsening living and working conditions. There are some exceptions where Unions have organised some resistance, in some workplaces, and managed to hold off the most savage reproaches of capital. Overall, however, there is total silence from top Union secretaries even after the most egregious broadside against working

people in their workplaces, and/or in society in general. For example, recently it was revealed that Australia Post CEO Ahmed Fahour is paid 5.6 million dollars per year.⁴ This is on the backs of job cuts, and over-inflated prices that people now have to pay for a postal service. Not one Union official spoke out against this indefensible public theft. In fact, even conservative PM Malcolm Turnbull politely suggested the CEO was being paid too much.

Again, in January the story broke of the unbelievable collection of thousands of dollars of fake debt from Centrelink welfare recipients – some of the most vulnerable people in the country.⁵ This time, there were *some* statements from the Union representing Centrelink workers – the Community and Public Sector Union. CPSU Assistant National Secretary Michael Tull mentioned that thousands of jobs had been cut from the Department of Human Services over the last five years, and that 36 million phone calls to that department had gone unanswered last year.⁶ Yet, as far as we can tell, there was little or no attempt to help organise staff to resist management attempts to ram through the virtually illegal collection of unowed “debts”, let alone an attempt to organise workers in other departments to take action. Major attacks are raining down on working people repeatedly, with little or no response from Union leaders. It is such inaction which contributes to some workers concluding that Unions and the workers movement, and by extension, the left in general, does not exist or does not do anything. These factors drive some workers to what they see as the only option – One Nation.

⁴ <http://www.afr.com/brand/chanticleer/ahmed-fahours-salary-a-symbol-of-board-weakness-20170208-gu8ks1> (19-02-2017)

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/17/centrelink-under-scrutiny-over-use-of-robo-debt-system-to-target-aged-pension> (19-02-2017)

⁶ <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/public-service/centrelinks-debt-debacle-its-going-to-get-worse-says-union-20170109-gto51j.html> (19-02-2017)



Above: The Centrelink “Robo Debt” scandal was one of the worst examples of the government attempting to claw back money from welfare recipients who did not owe anything. This criminality was barely responded to by the Union movement, who had the responsibility to defend all working people. Working people see that the Union leaderships are not fighting and imagine there is no alternative. Some mistakenly believe that One Nation offers some way out. Image from www.australianvoice.livejournal.com

It is not that Union officials themselves back One Nation – many of them oppose it. The problem is that Union officials and top ranking secretaries have a material interest in maintaining the system which produces the likes of One Nation – the rule of capital over labour. They may offer words in defence of workers at the hands of unscrupulous employers, and may even spend their working hours defending some workers against some of the worst excesses of some employers. Nevertheless, most Union officials, and certainly the top leaders, pay themselves very handsomely – using members’ money – for their “service”. Some officials are paid many times more than the workers they represent. These comfortable salaries, while not comparable to CEO pay, provide them generally comfortable lifestyles, generous superannuation, ability to invest in property, and more. To speak out against the faltering profit system, not to speak of helping to organise workers to fight back, potentially jeopardises their careers and their retirement nest

eggs. So they opt to protect themselves, while workers suffer.

For struggle based leadership of the Unions

One Nation's re-emergence is the product of several interlocking factors, but perhaps the most prominent is the fact that it is the product of the lack of leadership of the workers' movement, principally by over-remunerated Union big-wigs, whose loyalty to Australian capitalism prevents them from speaking out, let alone helping to organise a mass workers' fightback against the onslaught of a faltering system. Yet Union members, and working people in general, are not powerless victims. On the contrary, faced with the obstruction of well-heeled officials, it is by no means beyond workers to rise against do-nothing officials, sweeping them aside and forging a leadership willing to fight on all fronts for the re-establishment of basic rights and decent living standards. Chief amongst the demands that workers should raise throughout the Union movement is the demand for: **a 30 hour week with no loss in pay!** The struggle for such a demand has the potential to re-ignite a long dormant Union movement, which will directly undermine working class backing of the likes of One Nation.

The workers striving towards a class struggle leadership of the Unions is at the same time an effort to form a workers' party. Such a party will seek to mobilise all workers in their own interests, which coincide with the interests of society at large. Paraphrasing Marx, the working class cannot raise itself up, cannot liberate itself from its condition without at the same time shaking the entire foundations of capitalist exploitation to the core. The socialist objective – working people's ownership of the major means of production, communication and exchange – must remain as the strategic goal. A workers' government will soon demonstrate to millions of workers that their interests lie in the collective welfare of all working people.



Above: A rally on January 31 in Melbourne against the Centrelink Robo-Debt scandal. While there appears to be some involvement from the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and the National Union of Students (NUS), there was no concerted effort by Union leadership to take serious action. The welfare system is a necessary safety net, but the Union movement should be waging a struggle for jobs for all, through fighting for such demands as a shorter working week with no loss in pay. This would necessitate a struggle to replace the current class-collobrationist leadership of most Unions with a class-struggle leadership. This is bound up with the struggle for a workers party. Image from www.greenleft.org.au



WORKERS LEAGUE

NO TO WAR! US/AUS: HANDS OFF THE DPRK!



Above: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) holds a mass celebration of the 105th birth anniversary of the country's founder and Eternal President, Kim Il Sung. Image from www.hindustantimes.com

By Paul Nave

19-03-2017 – Speaking during a visit to South Korea (“Republic of Korea” – ROK), new US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced that US “strategic patience” with North Korea has ended.⁷ He implied that military action against North Korea, whose real name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), remained ‘an option’. US representatives claimed that the DPRK's growing nuclear and missile arsenal is the principle reason for Rex Tillerson's trip to the ROK. These comments were widely interpreted to mean that the US could realistically be weighing up its chances with a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK. Referring to US President Donald Trump's penchant for commenting on the social

media forum Twitter, one facebook commentator summed it up by writing “we are one tweet away from war”.

The notion that the US, and the world, is under imminent threat from an attack launched by the DPRK is the ultimate in fake news. Like most of the statements emanating from the corporate media mouthpieces of the Western ruling classes, the claim that “we” are under threat from the DPRK, with or without nuclear weapons, is the direct opposite of the truth. What is palpably real is that it is the US state, backed by Tokyo and Canberra, which is daily threatening the DPRK with annihilation, and that the possibility of a US attack on the DPRK is closer than ever. It is the US which is currently engaged in some of the largest war games ever staged on the border with the

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2017/mar/17/us-strategic-patience-north-korea-rex-tillerson-video> (25-03-17)

DPRK. The US and its puppet South Korean military carry out military “exercises” named “Key Resolve” and “Foal Eagle” each year, where the drills, right on the sea, land and air border with the DPRK, are barely concealed dry runs for invasion and “decapitation” regime change.

The publication of **RED FIRE** involves considerable expense, but it is a task which is willingly undertaken to advance the struggle for socialism.

The Workers League welcomes any donations that all supporters of the workers’ cause are able to contribute. Any donation, no matter how small, is greatly appreciated.

Pay into:

Commonwealth Bank

BSB: 064 105

A/C: 1044 8421

Sometimes even the pretence of attempting to deny the aim of the US led manoeuvres is dispensed with. It was reported in *The Independent* that a South Korean official told Yonhap News that this year’s Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises will “practice missions to infiltrate into the North, remove the North’s war command and demolition of its key military facilities.”⁸ It doesn’t get much clearer than this. Regime change may not be the official name, but regime change is certainly the game. And just as it was in 1950, in 2017 the gunsights are aimed not just at the northern half of the Korean peninsula, but the giant next door neighbour – the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The Chinese governmental leadership, despite distancing itself from the DPRK, and even voting with the US in the UN against the DPRK, nevertheless warned the US not to provoke things beyond control. On May 8 China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi likened

⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/navy-seals-north-korea-kim-jong-un-assassination-training-osama-bin-laden-team-six-a7631056.html> (25-03-17)

the US and the DPRK to two accelerating trains coming towards each other on the same track. He warned: “The question is: are the two sides ready for a head-on collision?”⁹

DPRK/China vs US

The Western corporate, and even liberal, media constantly whip up a frenzy of demonization aimed at the DPRK. It is so intense that even normally left-leaning and progressive working people can start to believe the fantastic lies told about the “paranoid peninsula”. What working people are generally not told is that the DPRK is one of the most advanced socialist societies on the face of the planet. DPRK citizens enjoy zero unemployment, free housing, free healthcare, free education, opportunities for sport and cultural activities, and a much cleaner environment than workers in the West are exposed to. While there appears to be political problems in some areas, the basics of a socialist state are in place, and they have been won through incredible sacrifice. When the US, backed by their allies including Australia, waged war from 1950 to 1953 in order to prevent a socialist revolution on the Korean peninsula, and to roll back the Chinese socialist revolution, up to 4 million Koreans and Chinese volunteers were slaughtered. The bombardment of a furious capitalist ruling class which had just lost China and was in the process of losing Korea, resulted in the annihilation of close to 30% of the North Korean population at that time.¹⁰

Understandably for the DPRK, they live their lives as if this happened yesterday. And, given the unceasing hostility of the US state for the six decades since, the DPRK has little option but to proceed this way. Today, the 1.4 billion people

⁹

http://shanghaiist.com/2017/03/08/us_nk_collison_course.php (25-03-17)

¹⁰ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/know-the-facts-north-korea-lost-close-to-30-of-its-population-as-a-result-of-us-bombings-in-the-1950s/22131> (26-03-17)

which buttress the Chinese socialist state has provided a basis to propel its economy to a position of overtaking the US as the world's number one economy. 30 years of economic growth in China at a rate of 10%, which has "slowed" in recent years to around 7%, shows little sign of stopping. While the US cannot tolerate a capitalist rival, a socialist rival causes even more problems. Sooner or later, working people will demand a Chinese style economy – one which provides jobs, prosperity, infrastructure development and more. The arguments for free enterprise and free markets wear exceedingly thin for most workers in the West. In Australia, many workers face joblessness, casualization of work, and relentless attacks on those who have work – such as the removal of penalty rates. There is a technical recession, and every day sees less and less government spending on essential services such as public transport, energy, education, healthcare and more.

Western rulers need war

Given that the Western countries do not possess state owned enterprises which buttress a workers' state, as in China and the DPRK - the US, Europe, Japan and Australia cannot simply order private capitalists to invest. Much needed investment in infrastructure will simply not occur unless the captains of industry receive what they regard as an adequate rate of profit. In China, on the other hand, the Communist Party led government can simply order its state owned enterprises to invest regardless of the rate of profit. Even the private sector – which is not so clear cut in China – has to line up its ventures within the framework of the Five Year Plan. The result is sustained development, and usually plentiful jobs for working people. The free marketeers in the West have no such levers. As working people there lose more and more jobs, and wages growth declines, capitalists cease to

invest. A downward spiral begins, as classically analysed by Karl Marx. Almost nothing except "creative destruction" can restart production.



Above: The DPRK Supreme Leader, Marshal Kim Jong Un. Although routinely referred to as "crazy" by the Western media, the DPRK leadership retains an entirely rational position of self-defence against a US led Empire, which has not ceased its economic blockade and military threats in over 60 years. Image from www.cnn.com

As if on cue, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop on March 26 claimed that the DPRK has developed ballistic missile technology capable of reaching Australia.¹¹ The fact that the DPRK has stated countless times, for decades on end, that they will only defend themselves if attacked is immaterial for the vassal Australian political class. There is but one purpose for warnings that "we" could be hit by the DPRK – the preparation of working people to come behind, or at least not oppose, a US led pre-emptive strike and/or invasion of the northern side of the Korean peninsula. The fact that this could be catastrophic even for the US and Australian imperialists, by drawing a massive China acting in self-defence, is beside the point. The US and their vassal states may have to take that risk, in order to save their system. If things are left as they are, China will become the world's leading force, economically, diplomatically and politically – if it is not already.

¹¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/north-korea-ballistic-missiles-could-hit-australia-foreign-minister-julie-bishop-warns-2017-3> (27-03-17)

DPRK and China's nuclear deterrent prevents war

The hysteria generated when the DPRK is forced to test a missile, or even just to launch a satellite, is entirely one-sided. The DPRK seriously began developing a nuclear deterrent when former US President George W Bush proclaimed that the DPRK, along with Iran and Iraq, was part of an "axis of evil" which needed to be eliminated. Given what has since occurred to Libya – where former leader Colonel Gaddafi gambled by agreeing with the West to relinquish nuclear or conventional weapons, and then in 2011 could not defend Libya against a regime change war which claimed his life, the DPRK's decision to develop a nuclear deterrent makes perfect sense. Further, the US led war on Syria has added further weight to the verdict that the DPRK had little choice but to develop a nuclear deterrent – or face annihilation. As Yongho Thae, a DPRK embassy representative in London has stated, the DPRK's actual policy is to denuclearise the Korean peninsula. In order to reach that objective, the DPRK has little option but to develop effective nuclear weapons.¹²

The People's Republic of China also has little choice but to defend its socialist revolution through the use of nuclear weapons. Imperialism, led by the US but backed by Canberra, showed what appalling destruction it is capable of during the Korean War of 1950-53 – which was aimed as much at the newly victorious revolution in China in 1949, as it was against the socialist inspired Koreans. Red China then had no alternative but to develop nuclear weapons, and is today one of the five nuclear weapons states recognised by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Recently, China reportedly moved some long range nuclear capable missiles to the Heilongjiang province, which borders Russia. This was in response to US

President Trump ramped up rhetoric targeting China.¹³ Despite this, China, like the DPRK, stridently advocates the ridding of nuclear weapons from the world. President Xi Jinping, in a speech at the United Nations in Geneva recently, stated that "Nuclear weapons should be completely prohibited and destroyed over time to make the world free of nuclear weapons."¹⁴



Above: President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, speaking at the United Nations in Geneva. Amongst other things, President Xi stated that the world should, over time, be made free of nuclear weapons. Image from www.ibtimes.com

The equation is thus: China and the DPRK desire an end to nuclear weapons the world over. While capitalist imperialism exists, however, the threat of invasion and/or war by the US and its allies, remains ever present, and at the present time more likely. The only element which can stay the hand of US led imperialism, the only aspect which can make the US ruling class think twice about waging war, is the existence of nuclear weapons in those states which are targeted. Therefore, contrary to the "advice" working people receive from the corporate media, **it is the readily**

¹³

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/china-deploys-long-range-nuclear-capable-missiles-russian-coast-us-president-donald-trump-a7548296.html> (30-03-17)

¹⁴ <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2063383/chinas-xi-calls-world-without-nuclear-weapons> (30-03-17)

¹² Interview with Yongho Thae, conducted by Carlos Martinez in London in 2013.

deployable nuclear weapons in the DPRK and China which is currently preventing a world war.

This is why working people must defend the right of socialist states, or others states independent of the West, to test, develop and prepare their own nuclear weapons stockpile. It is capitalist imperialism which threatens the world with obliteration, not the DPRK, and certainly not China.

Defence of socialism and defence against war are linked

The system of generalised commodity production using private property for the purpose of private profit is in terminal crisis. Recession plagues the US, Europe, Japan and Australia. As we have learnt previously, however, capitalism can survive any crisis provided working people are not provided with a viable alternative. War could well break out despite efforts to prevent it. If it does, working people must be clear that it is in our interests to defend the socialist and other independent states against the encroaches of US led imperialism, in whatever form it takes. For working people in the capitalist states, the outbreak of war must be combated with both a defence of the socialist states and a vital struggle for socialism in the capitalist states. In such a struggle, there will be no room for “broad” campaigns involving an assortment of moderate and wealthy liberal organisations and other operatives of the “enlightened” ruling class. The struggle against imperialist war, as well as the struggle for socialism, can only begin on the basis of the leadership of the working class, which then draws in other non-antagonistic elements – class conscious students, pensioners and so on. A split in the Union movement will likely to be necessary, due to the ongoing conservatism of most Union officials. And most especially, a workers vanguard party, which combines the most advanced leaders of the class, will be vital

to provide leadership in a time of both self-defence and upsurge. We have a world to win.



www.abcnews.go.com



www.atimes.com

Above: Images from the military parade marking 105 years since the birth of the DPRK's founder and "Eternal President" Kim Il Sung. While the Western corporate media paint the DPRK as a pariah state, recent developments may well be applied to the US under President Donald Trump. The Trump Administration is threatening the DPRK with regime change, "pre-emptive war", and much worse. This threatens to bring catastrophe to China and all of Asia. The Australian government is lock step with the US with their war threats. Workers here need to strongly oppose such a war while also defending the DPRK.

DEMAND UNIONS FIGHT FOR:

- 1. A 30 HOUR WEEK WITH NO LOSS
IN PAY**
- 2. PUBLIC HOUSING AS AN OPTION
FOR ALL**
- 3. LIVABLE UNEMPLOYMENT,
DISABILITY AND PENSION
BENEFITS**
- 4. FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE
BANKS**
- 5. PUBLICLY PROVIDED HEALTH
CARE**
- 6. PUBLICLY PROVIDED EDUCATION**
- 7. PUBLICLY OWNED ASSETS -
ROADS, RAIL, PORTS,
ELECTRICITY, WATER, GAS,
TELECOMMUNICATIONS.**

8. AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Crisis after crisis besets Australia, and indeed the world. Here, we have very high unemployment, record numbers of homelessness, housing unaffordability, skyrocketing costs of living and the decimation of basic democratic rights. Privatised banks rake in unprecedented profits through blind rip offs through fees extracted from working people. Increasingly privatised health care and education are placing an unbearable burden upon the majority, who cannot afford private health care – or are robbed of service if they can. Refugees continue to be tortured by government policy, and most Aboriginal people face a daily struggle to survive. Canberra continues to back the US wherever it wages predatory imperialist wars or conducts regime change operations – from Libya to Syria to Ukraine to Eastern Europe to the South China Sea. Climate distortion is already dangerous, and is claiming lives through heatwaves, bushfires, floods, droughts, storms and cyclones. And this is just for starters.

As backward as the Turnbull Liberal government is, it is not the cause of these multiple crises on its own. Just as Obama and Clinton in the US prepared the path for Trump and Bannon, it was Rudd and Gillard here which paved the way for Abbott and Turnbull. And nor do the Greens provide any alternative, much less the disillusioned elements following the nationalist One Nation. All of the parliamentary parties are a component part of the capitalist system – the system of private production for private profit using social labour. No matter how many soothing words they offer, no element of the parliamentary gravy train is the least bit interested in fighting against the cause of the crisis afflicting working people – for they are part

of it. The same goes for the honeyed phrases of top Union officials – some of whom make moving speeches decrying the ongoing assaults on workers. If these Union officials cared about the workers more than their overpaid positions, they would set about organising a broad scale fightback. They could do this for a start by calling meetings of members, and offering their meeting spaces for working people supportive of Unions, to organise various anti-capitalist campaigns.

The “March in March” organisers may have good intentions. However, their political strategy is doomed even before it is enacted. The top Union secretaries, the Labor Party, the Greens, NGOs and so on – will grasp any opportunity to promote themselves and simultaneously derail any serious class based fightback from beginning. “Community” mobilisations, consciously or unconsciously operating on a cross-class basis, strengthen the capitalist system rather than undermine it. Australians cannot be “united for a better government”. We are divided into classes, and unless we mobilise the working class, not the “people”, in a struggle for socialism, our efforts will only bolster well-paid bureaucrats. In the meantime, we must demand Unions lead the defence of working people.

Workers League

PO Box 66 Nundah QLD 4012

workersleague@redfireonline.com

www.redfireonline.com

**YOU CAN'T FIGHT TRUMP AND TURNBULL WITH SHORTEN
AND DI NATALE!**

DEFEND REFUGEES BY OPPOSING IMPERIALIST WAR!



Above: Highlighted are the seven countries from which US President Donald Trump “banned” immigrants arriving to the US. In fact, President Obama had already, in 2015, issued steep restrictions on visas for people from these countries, with the exception of Syria, attempting to enter the US. Image from www.abc7ny.com

(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the Workers League at an action called to protest against the so called “Muslim Ban” of US President Trump.)

11-02-2017 – Selective outrage is flavour of the week. In the wake of US President Donald Trump’s executive order banning the entry of people from 7 Middle Eastern and African Muslim majority countries, protests have materialised at US airports and other locations around the world. Claiming to oppose racism and Islamophobia, these actions have focused attention on the first weeks of the Trump Administration. Australian

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s phone call to the US President, where presumably the PM attempted to get Trump to honour the deal he signed with Obama to take refugees from Manus Island and Nauru, turned into a running joke.¹⁵ One could argue that if President Trump refuses the sordid deal, more pressure can be placed on the Turnbull government, to bring the refugees, who are enduring unbearable suffering, to the Australian mainland.

¹⁵ <http://www.news.com.au/world/north-america/american-comedy-shows-having-a-field-day-with-trumpturnbull-phone-call/news-story/9a6e48a56ae11550437871095eeca2ad> (04-02-2017)

Yet, as US comedian Jimmy Dore noted, why is it ok to bomb the seven Muslim majority countries, but it's not ok to ban them from entering the country?¹⁶ Where were these people – who are now protesting the ban on some Muslim immigration – when Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton were either bombing or arming and funding “Islamic” mercenaries in an open war for regime change in the seven proscribed countries – Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen? Why is it fine to send drone bombs, as well as high technology “ordinary” bombs, and to arm ISIS and Al Qaeda, and funnel them into an overseas country to overthrow their government and behead innocent men, women and children – yet to ban refugees fleeing from those same countries is somehow beyond the pale? Murder, torture, slaughter – no problem. Not stamping passports? That's outrageous!

Behold the logic of the liberal. Any crime, no matter how heinous, can be excused, justified, or even lauded, if it is carried out by the liberal side of capitalist politics. When the conservative side of capitalist politics does exactly the same, the liberals throw up their hands and shriek in horror. The hypocrisy is limitless. Especially considering the work of Seth Frantzman, who found that, in fact, there was a “Muslim ban” before the 2017 “Muslim ban”. The Trump executive order does not mention six of the seven countries – it only specifically mentions Syria. The other six countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen – were selected by the previous Obama administration. The “Terrorist Travel Prevention Act of 2015”, was signed into law by the US Congress on December 18, 2015, as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of FY (Fiscal Year) 2016.¹⁷ The only reason why this two year old law

was not fully enacted was that it was attached as a rider to the spending bill. Yet, the list was drawn up, and placed in the drawer, by the Democrats, led by Obama, with Hilary Clinton at his side, two years beforehand. All Trump did was to add Syria, and voila!

It is not just another example of liberal logic – it is a spin-off of what we have experienced here for some time – a pro-war refugee rights movement. Of course this is a direct contradiction in terms. Yet this is what has occurred. Some left parties – such as Socialist Alternative (SAIt), Socialist Alliance (SAll) and Solidarity (Sol), which have been behind the “fight Trump” actions thus far, have also helped organise the refugee rights movement – **while at the same time standing strongly behind the imperialist wars which have created the current refugee crisis.** Unfortunately, some in the Refugee Action Collective have fallen in with the pro-war “left”, and have joined in the calls for regime change – in Libya and Syria – alongside Canberra, which is responsible for the detention and torture of refugees in off-shore prison camps. As we have stated previously, it is impossible to defend refugees without opposing the imperialist wars which create them.

No to war on Iran, Russia, China

To be sure, there is plenty about the first two weeks of the Trump administration that working people should oppose. For example, on February 3, Trump's National Security Advisor Michael Flynn announced new sanctions on Iran, targeting 25 individuals, in response to a ballistic missile test carried out by Tehran.¹⁸ Also, the new US Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Nikki Haley, asserted that US sanctions on Russia will remain until Crimea is returned to Kiev.¹⁹ The fact that over 95% of Crimeans voted to re-join Russia

¹⁶ <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/46349.htm> (04-02-2017)

¹⁷ <https://sethfrantzman.com/2017/01/28/obamas-administration-made-the-muslim-ban-possible-and-the-media-wont-tell-you/> (04-02-2017)

¹⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-idUSKBN15H253> (04-02-2017)

¹⁹ <https://news.tj/en/news/world/20170203/236299> (04-02-2017)

after the US and NATO powers helped install a fascist backed coup government in Kiev in early 2014, doesn't seem to enter the equation. These moves counter Trump's campaign rhetoric, where he gave every indication he would work with Russia to fight ISIS in Syria, and maintain peace generally. In addition, Trump's newly sworn in Secretary of State and recently retired Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, made provocative statements about not only attempting to stop China "building islands" in the South China Sea, but also blocking China's access to them.²⁰



www.ronpaulinstitute.org

Any of these actions could precipitate the unthinkable – war against Iran, Russia and China. In effect, this will be a third world war. World War III – one would think that not only left parties, but the entire liberal intelligentsia and their organisations – such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Get Up! etc., would step up and speak out against such potentially civilisation-threatening conflagrations. One might expect this – if one forgets the liberal compendium. Contained within it are strict allegiances to the wars of the US Empire, especially against those nations which have been, or are, anti-imperialist. Iran, Russia and China are demonised by the entire Western ruling classes

²⁰ <https://www.desmogblog.com/2017/02/02/rex-tillerson-south-china-sea-exxon-russia-offshore-oil-gas> (04-02-2017)

for this reason. Liberals, from Amnesty International through to Medicines Sans Frontiers through to some left parties, cannot be relied upon to oppose such wars. In fact, they may well be their loudest backers.

In the same way in which working people in the US cannot "fight Trump" using the Democrats and the Green Party, working people in Australia cannot "fight Turnbull" using the Labor Party and the Greens. Why? Because whatever disagreements the Liberal, Labor and Greens parties have, these parties represent and speak for the same class interest – that of the ruling class. This is why, despite whatever noises the Australian Greens make crying foul over the mistreatment of refugees, they do not desire, for example, working people led by Unions taking concerted action to end this horror. This could lead on to other areas of serious class struggle, which could shake the capitalist system. This type of action is the only one which can end the torture of refugees – not the making of fine arguments in favour of "human rights" or "decency". Labor's Bill Shorten and the Greens' Richard Di Natale, despite whatever consoling words they may offer, remain part of the system which incarcerates refugees. The refugee rights movement generally recognise that the Labor Party cannot be an ally. Yet many of them still hold on to vague hopes that the Greens can fill the void. This is mistaken.

Many refugee rights supporters imagine that liberalism in general stands for fair treatment of people, and that "at least" they are not conservatives. Yet liberalism is just one part of the whole of capitalist imperialism – so it includes backing of wars, poverty, spying on citizens, the shredding of even basic democratic rights, capital's relentless assault on jobs and working conditions, and everything else. This is one reason why we can expect that the entirety of the liberal establishment – from liberal corporate

media such as the Sydney Morning Herald, through to Amnesty International, to Get Up!, to Oxfam, right through to left parties such as Socialist Alternative – will not oppose the imperialist war designs of the Trump administration against Iran, Russia (despite Trump’s pre-election words), or China. They may well be – as was the case during the wars of regime change against Libya and Syria – ground troops for organising support for these wars – perhaps under the guise of “refugee rights”. Why? Because all liberals agree with conservatives that Iran, Russia and China are “repressive regimes”.

The Socialist Alliance brandish placards which state: “Resist Trump’s Agenda”.²¹ Yet the fact that they, along with the liberal establishment, agree with the Labor Party and the Greens when it comes to Iran, Russia and China, lets the cat out of the bag. To “fight Trump”, and to “fight Turnbull”, in any sense, requires a break with both the liberal and conservative wings of Washington and Canberra. This is the case for refugee rights as much as all of the other important issues the working class faces in 2017 – ironically the centenary of the world shattering event which was in the interest of the working class – the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. We state again, refugee rights will remain in the service of the US Empire, unless it opposes all of the wars, and potential wars, which the US Empire threatens. Further, it is axiomatic that **those who came behind the wars of the Obama Administration cannot lead the fight against the wars of the Trump Administration.** Nor can they lead a refugee rights movement.

For a class struggle against war and for refugee rights



Above: Map showing the location of the town of Deir ez-Zor, which was bombed by the US on September 19, 2016. The Australian government admitted that it also took part in the attack which killed around 70 Syrian soldiers. The left parties which backed the Syrian “revolution”, and who protest the Australian government’s gross mistreatment of refugees, fell silent when this attack was launched, and for some time afterwards. Refugee rights supporters must oppose the wars waged by the Australian ruling class. Image from www.katehon.com

Of course, the current predicament is not due solely to the misleadership of parties which call themselves socialist. A much, much larger slab of the blame falls on the top Union officials, from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), down to the branch secretaries and other officials of localised Unions. To our knowledge, not one Union official has spoken out, let alone organised, any opposition to the refugee creating wars in Northern Africa and the Middle East over the last five years. This is to say nothing of actually organising workers, or even calling a meeting of Union members, to discuss and decide what to do about the world imploding. Nor did any Union official speak out when the Australian military admitted, on September 19 last year, that they were part of a bombing raid in Syria on the town of Deir Ez-Zor, which slaughtered at least 60 Syrian soldiers. Unfortunately, the top officials of the Union bureaucracy are solidly behind the foreign policy of Australian imperialism. So too are the liberal intelligentsia, and bringing up the

²¹ <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/brisbane-rallies-against-trump-05-02-2017>

rear are the opportunist “socialist” parties. The way we are trending, Trump could launch a war on Iran, and be applauded by the “left”, and by Union officials, for taking down a “totalitarian regime” !!!



www.dw.com

Humanity is running out of time. It faces the imminent threat not only of nuclear war, but the potential termination of at least large slabs of civilisation through ecological collapse and runaway climate failure. Working people cannot afford being herded, once again, back into the arms of the liberal wing of what passes for politics under the corrupt influence of corporate-run “democracy” – whether that be the Democrats in the US, or Labor and the Greens in Australia. What is desperately needed is a class struggle fight against imperialist war and for the rights of refugees, in the course of leading the workers in a battle for their liberation. This entails a **split** with all liberal forces, not unification with them.

Working people should be clear of their role in the event of war being triggered by US recklessness, driven by the faltering economies of the West. If the US Empire starts such a war, working people would have a military brief with the anti-imperialist axis – Iran, Russia and China – but without writing a political blank cheque for the leaderships of such states. Of these states, only one – China – remains a workers state. The US Empire and its bloc, on the other hand, including the governments of the UK, France,

Germany, Japan, Canada, Australia, as well as its Gulf allies such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, constitute the obstacle that working people must rid themselves of to eliminate the threat of war and to ensure decent living and working conditions for refugees worldwide.



Above: An action in Dresden, Germany, welcoming refugees. Internationally, as well as here in Australia, to make genuine strides towards ending racism and the creation of refugees, a movement opposing the imperialist camp of leading ruling classes which are pushing the world to the brink of disastrous wars, not to speak of the ongoing threat of runaway climate change. Such a movement would need to have a class struggle basis. Image from www.dw.com

For refugee rights, as for other issues facing working people, the key is to politically break from all liberal institutions. Rather than more Greens or Independents, what is required is a party composed of, and committed to, the workers of all lands. Such a party would use class struggle methods – large meetings, strikes, demonstrations and other forms of mass action, to empower working people themselves and build the class solidarity which can cut out the roots of the dire politics which produces the Trumps of this world. Such a party could not be formed without a series of battles with the well-paid Union officials who grow rich through preventing the rising of the workers. Refugees especially, cannot wait any longer.

JOBS NOT CASINOS!

HOUSING NOT HOTELS!

PUBLIC NOT PRIVATE!

Queen's Wharf, Brisbane



Cost:
\$2b

Completion: 2022
Six star hotel, 2 five star hotels, casino, rooftop garden, 2000 plus apartments.

Above: The Queens Wharf "development" will contain at least 2500 poker machines, as well as luxury hotels and apartments. It will be built on prime CBD land which will effectively be privatised. Image from www.smh.com.au

(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the Workers League at the "Instead of a Casino" rally and occupation of Queens Park in Brisbane)

22-04-2017 – The Queens Wharf Mega Casino and luxury hotel "development", in the middle of Brisbane city, has begun its seven year construction period. Nine hectares of previously public land is fenced off, with the demolition of previously state owned buildings set to begin. All of this is to make way for not only 2500 poker machines, but an **unlimited** number of traditional and electronic gaming machines, which has recently been approved by the Queensland

government.²² The Echo business consortium will also build 2000 apartments and 1100 luxury hotel rooms with four, five and six star ratings, from the Ritz-Carlton and Rosewood brand names.²³ The plans include a bridge, which may not happen as it has not yet been funded, from South Bank across the river into the casino floor. Family entertainment indeed!

Working people generally should not attempt to take a moral position of opposition to gambling

²² <https://realmoneycasinos.com.au/queensland-approves-crack-cocaine-of-gambling-at-queens-wharf-6502/> (14-04-17)

²³ <http://www.smh.com.au/business/echo-consortium-to-build-2000-apartments-for-2b-queens-wharf-complex-20150721-giguyx.html> (14-04-17)

per se – as we know that billionaire developers represent an alien class and so have an alien perspective of what is and what is not moral. However, working people do have a right to demand decent working and living conditions, and fight for them in opposition to the government which, in this case, clearly represents the billionaires. The fact that these governments are approving the building of a casino and luxury apartments entirely reveals the depth of the economic crisis of the system of private production for private profit. There is a severe recession, because virtually no new value is being created. Whole industries, for example the auto industry, are closing down. Little or no manufacturing is occurring. Unemployment is rife, especially amongst youth. Wage growth for those still in work is the lowest it has ever been in history. What government public spending exists is more and more geared towards providing business opportunities for the private sector – such as the Queens Wharf Casino.

The Right To The City organisation is correct to frame the discussion as “Instead of a Casino”. Instead of luxury apartments and exclusive motel rooms which few working people can afford, what is desperately needed is a state run program of building ample public housing. The building of quality but affordable public housing could not only house the homeless, but will help exert downward pressure on the astronomically high cost of housing. Instead of a casino, there could be a state run program of public works, to upgrade and expand an affordable public transport system – given that Brisbane’s public transport is one of the most expensive in the world, and the passenger rail problems are legion. Instead of a casino, public money could be spent on replacing the millions of dollars of funding ripped out from under schools and hospitals by successive Labor and Liberal federal governments.



Above: An artist's impression of the completed Queens Wharf development. If completed, the luxury hotel towers will dwarf historic buildings, as well as the state parliament, as well as a University. Image from www.theaustralian.com.au

Union leadership is key

The only Union action that we know of on the issue of the casino was a rally led by the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) on November 30 last year. The rally was not against the casino, but was calling for construction related jobs for the casino to be given to local workers, rather than 457 visa workers!²⁴ There are two points to be made here. One, Union leaderships should not be encouraging competition against “foreign” workers by lining up with “local” employers. This nationalism encourages racism and xenophobia, which is poison for a workers movement. Two, rather than going cap-in-hand to the employers and pleading for jobs, Union leaderships should be demanding jobs through such demands as: **a shorter working week with no loss in pay.** A national campaign for a 30 hour week, or a six-hour day, has the potential to turn around the widespread demoralisation amongst working people. Workers can see society going

²⁴ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/industrial-relations/unionists-march-to-back-jobs-for-locals-on-queens-wharf/news-story/f796cc35bd1a52af04d946b712114ff2> (14-04-17)

backwards, and are prepared to fight, but they see no one leading a fightback. Nationalist and conservative Union leaders need to be pushed aside if they will not even organise a struggle to prevent workers from falling into an abyss.



Above: Casinos inevitably produce problem gambling. While the workers movement should not take a moral position for or against gambling, it should be noted that it is telling that the decline of the rate of return of profit for capital leads to the construction of casinos. Casinos may provide some entertainment for some, while producing problems for others. However it does not contribute to the process of the production of goods and services, or the construction of much needed infrastructure. Image from www.meldmagazine.com.au

Working people must be aware, if they are not already, that the huge number of problems in society, domestically and internationally, are all linked to the crisis of the capitalist mode of production. The construction of a casino is linked to the thousands of homeless people sleeping on the streets each night. Public space being privatised is linked to increasing harassment on public transport by security services. Banks raking in record profits is linked to schools and hospitals being starved of funds. Youth being offered a future of joblessness, poverty and stress is linked to the ever increasing salaries of politicians who sleep on parliamentary benches. The wholesale destruction of the Great Barrier Reef is linked to the threat of nuclear war launched by the Western powers against anyone who dares to stand up to them.

Unfortunately, a “community” campaign against the Queens Wharf casino is unlikely to stall the ceaseless operations of capital. Everyone, all in together, means power is ceded to those currently holding it. What is required is the intervention of the working class. The obstacle to mobilising this class are the careerist leadership of most Unions, who collaborate with the government, its state, and the corporations it serves. The struggle for class leadership of the Unions is bound up with the struggle for a workers party. To be worthy of the name, a workers party must fight for a workers government, the first step towards the overthrow of the rule of capital, and the initiation of the socialist order.



www.todayinbermuda.com

RED FIRE welcomes any contributions that those who support the cause of the working people are able to make to the publication.

Any photos, articles, stories from Union struggles in your workplace or your local area, are more than welcome. **RED FIRE** aims to be a publication for workers, and to aid the struggle for socialism.

All contributions are greatly appreciated.

Send to:

PO Box 66 NUNDAH QLD 4012

E: workersleague@redfireonline.com

Ph: 0421 408 692

CHANGE THE DATE!

FOR ABORIGINAL LIBERATION THROUGH WORKERS UNITY!



Above: Part of the Invasion Day Rally in Sydney on January 26, 2017. www.abc.net.au

(The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the Workers League at the Invasion Day rally in Brisbane on 26 January, 2017)

26-01-2017 – 229 years after the first British colonialists landed in Sydney Cove, what became the Australian nation state still “celebrates” the beginning of a genocide against the original inhabitants, who had tended this continent for upwards of 50 000 years. A war of near extermination was carried out by the colonialists for 150 years against the Aboriginal people, first with guns and unimaginable cruelty, then by horrific governmental oppression. The Australian nation, such as it is, could not have been founded

without these barbaric practices, which were both official and unofficial policy. It is a perverse affront that January 26th, the day the settler-colonialists arrived in 1788, is still marked as Australia’s national day.

The physical war of extermination of Aboriginal people may have ended, but the oppression of Australia’s indigenous peoples remains as entrenched as it has ever been. A few statistics will illustrate this. Figures from recent years indicate that the suicide rate of indigenous people is **four times** higher than that of the non-

indigenous population.²⁵ The unemployment rate for indigenous people is **three times** that of those who are not descended from the traditional owners.²⁶ Most revealingly, Aboriginal people are **fifteen times** more likely to be thrown in prison than those who have no Aboriginal lineage.²⁷ In a very real sense, Aboriginal people remain prisoners in their own land.



Above: Thousands turned out to the Invasion Day rally in Melbourne. The large turnout speaks to the level of support for decent and just treatment of all of Australia's indigenous people, despite the official neglect of the Australian state. www.sbs.com.au

To even begin to redress the historic and present crimes being inflicted upon the indigenous people, at the very least Australia's national day must be changed to a date, any date, which does not mark the beginning of a colonialist war. While the changing of Australia's national day would be a progressive reform, by no means would it mean

²⁵

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-natsisps-strat-toc~mental-natsisps-strat-1~mental-natsisps-strat-1-ab> (05-01-17)

²⁶

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20Nov+2013> (06-01-17)

²⁷ <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-age-editorial/aboriginal-prison-rates-shame-our-nation-20160408-go1y5o.html> (07-01-17)

the end of the oppression of the Aboriginal people. The oppression of the Aboriginal people is bound up with the **capitalist mode of production**, which was established over the top of them, and all other working people who ended up here. The capitalist socio-economic system requires deep divisions within the working class, to prevent them from uniting to liberate themselves and other repressed layers. Working people are also oppressed by the capitalist private profit system, though to a lesser extent than Aboriginal people. Liberation for Aboriginal people is thus linked to workers' liberation, which can only be realised through a united struggle for a workers' republic, i.e. for socialism.

International socialism is an ally

Aboriginal political resistance, therefore, falls into error if it inadvertently tilts against socialism. Such a political direction aids Australian (and international) capitalism – the source of their subjugation. The Warriors of Aboriginal Resistance (WAR) play a tremendous organisational role in leading a fight for justice for indigenous people. On occasion, however, WAR can adopt positions which, we suggest, are harmful both for the liberation of Aboriginal people and working people generally. For example, in Issue #7 of *The Black Rising*, WAR's publication, an article appears criticising Australia's compulsory voting laws. It is a valid concern that Aboriginal people today are being directed to vote for the very establishment which was, and is, responsible for their colonisation, and it is correct to raise a discussion of alternatives. However in doing so, WAR fall into the arms of the very establishment they wish to disown. They write:

The Australian government, **like North Korea**, (emphasis added - WL) enforces compulsory voting laws meaning that the federal government expects us Aboriginal people to vote in its elections. Australia

expects us to help choose the next leader of the government which invaded our ancestors only 228 years ago. We are required to vote for a person to represent the very same government who refuses, to this day, to sign a treaty and formally acknowledge Aboriginal sovereignty and title. We are expected to participate in this colonial structure and perform the civic duties of a good citizen while the federal government mines and pollutes our land, deregisters, desecrates and builds over our artefacts and sacred sites.²⁸

We do not, of course, dispute that the Australian government refuses to sign a treaty, refuses to recognise Aboriginal sovereignty, presides over an order which blocks the advance of Aboriginal people, and much more. Yet by simultaneously criticising North Korea – whose real name is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), WAR line up with the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, billionaire magnates and virtually the entire Australian ruling class. These elements of private capital, and their underlings, also virulently oppose the DPRK, from the standpoint of preventing the advance of socialism. For whatever distortions that may exist in the DPRK, the fact is that they defend their system of socialism, and have done so against the might of US imperialism for 60 years. Workers remain in power in the DPRK, preventing the US and Australian ruling classes from forcing capitalism back onto the entire Korean peninsula, and by extension, into China and Vietnam. **The DPRK is thus an ally, not an opponent**, of global capitalism – and is therefore an ally of workers and the oppressed in all lands. This includes

²⁸ <https://theblackrising.com/2016/12/04/australias-compulsory-voting-laws-no-room-for-dissent/> (08-01-17)

working people in Australia, and, especially, Aboriginal people.

For defending socialism, the DPRK is almost universally demonised in the West. It is frequently vilified by the corporate media, often without a shred of evidence, or even basic facts. Regrettably, WAR has also chimed in with the false allegations constantly directed at the DPRK. For it is **not true** that the DPRK “enforces compulsory voting”. Here is Article 66 of Chapter V of the Constitution of the DPRK:

All citizens who have reached the age of 17 have the right to elect and to be elected, irrespective of sex, race, occupation, length of residence, property status, education, party affiliation, political views or religious belief. Citizens serving in the armed forces also have the right to elect and to be elected. A person who has been disenfranchised by a Court decision and a person legally certified insane do not have the right to elect or to be elected.²⁹

That is, DPRK citizens have the **right** to elect their representatives, and to stand for election themselves, enshrined in their constitution. Needless to say, they have this right regardless of how much money or property they may possess. In practice, in the Australian capitalist political system, millions of dollars are required to run an effective campaign against the major parties. The almost total turnout for elections in the DPRK, combined with relentless Western propaganda, may give the unenlightened the impression that voting is compulsory in the DPRK, yet this is not the case. DPRK citizens overwhelmingly support their government for several reasons, one of which is that the DPRK remains a workers state.

²⁹ <http://www.kfausa.org/chapter-v-fundamental-rights-and-duties-of-citizens/> (09-01-17)

Thus the DPRK, as it is currently formed, aligns with the class interests of Korean workers. It is not only a defence against the ever-present threat of a US invasion which leads most Koreans in the North to collectively back their nation. It is also the constitutionally guaranteed free healthcare, education, and even housing, plus - guaranteed employment. It is likely that none of this would remain if the US was able to overthrow the DPRK.

Moreover, the Korean people are the indigenous people of their land – their history stretches back at least 5000 years. When the US and Australia launched a war on Korea in 1950, essentially to prevent socialism prevailing on all of Korea, and also to undermine the recently victorious Chinese socialist revolution, 4 million Koreans perished. Out of this unprecedented brutality emerged an independent socialist Korea in the north, and an occupied, capitalist Korea in the south. The DPRK thus gives more weight to the claim that the only way for an indigenous people, or for any working people, to free themselves from capitalist rule is to struggle for your own workers republic. Therefore, we would suggest that WAR should ally themselves with, or at least not oppose, the workers movement.

For a united Aboriginal, “ethnic” and Australian born workers party

The Aboriginal people suffer intolerable discrimination in Australia, “Australia Day” being but one manifestation. The Aboriginal **struggle** against this dire situation is thus always progressive. However the **politics** of the leadership of this struggle is another matter, especially if it develops in isolation from a strong workers movement, and a united workers party. In fact, separated from a workers movement, and particularly the Union movement, it is often the case that the politics of certain leaders of the Aboriginal struggle can veer towards conservative, liberal, and/or anti-socialist ideas.

WAR’s condemnation of the DPRK is but one example.



www.zebedeeparkes.com

To be sure, WAR are not at all responsible for the situation they find themselves in. The main culprit for the abandonment of the struggle for Aboriginal rights is the leadership of the Australian Union movement, from the ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) down to the highly paid top officials of various Unions around the country. There is some rhetoric from Union officials about supporting Aboriginal rights, but little to no action. In many instances, Aboriginal rights do not even appear on the radar of most well-heeled Union officials. Under these circumstances, it is understandable that the leaders of the Aboriginal rights movement look to other means, or other political ideologies.

However, history has yet to provide a systemic opponent of capitalism other than socialism. WAR and similar groups are in a sense correct to demand special attention to the struggle of Aboriginal people, for the suffering of the Aboriginal people is unique and does require a tailored approach. We agree that the struggle for justice for Aboriginal people cannot simply be swept into a generalised workers movement, as if it was only a component part of a movement towards socialism. What is required is a workers’ vanguard party, which can champion Aboriginal rights, and the rights of all other oppressed

peoples, in a mighty mass movement which aims to end the rule of capital.



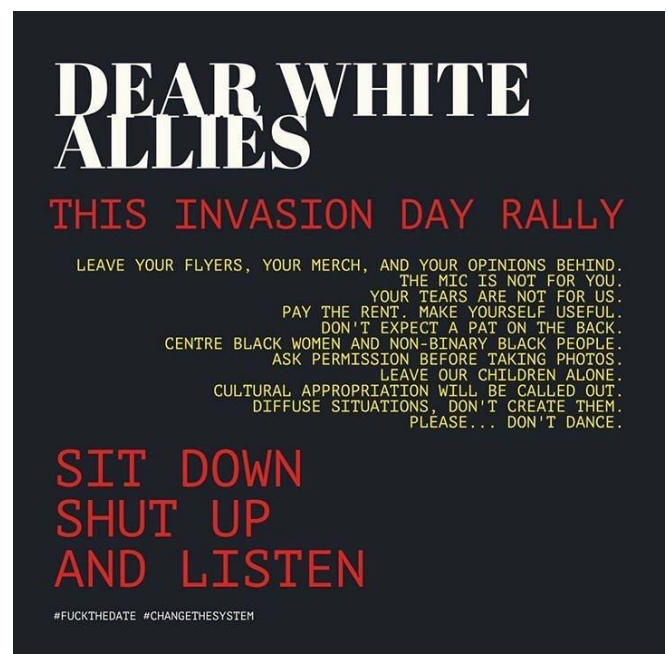
www.alamy.com - HJ69WD

Above: An Invasion Day rally by supporters of the Aboriginal people in Berlin on January 26, 2017. Image from www.alamy.com

The class character of the workers vanguard party should not be in doubt – only the combined working class has the power to challenge the rule of capital. Yet the various social movements should not be competitors for the leadership of the workers. Rather, the best elements of them should be integrated into the vanguard party. This includes the most class conscious elements of the movement for Aboriginal rights. There cannot be a separate workers party for white Australian workers, and another party for Aboriginal workers. WAR and similar groups are in a sense correct to demand that the Aboriginal struggle should not be subsumed within a general struggle for the rights of all minority ethnicities, and migrant groups – for the indigenous people are neither migrants nor “ethnic”. Yet neither should they be totally separated from them when struggling against a common foe.

The workers vanguard party should thus be multiracial and multi-ethnic. It should combine pro-worker Aboriginal people, Australian born “white” workers, and pro-worker migrants of various national backgrounds. Such a party will strive to win the movement for Aboriginal rights

to the theory and practice of Marxism, the program for workers emancipation. The Aboriginal rights movement will not be asked to forsake any of its culture or its history for the pursuit of socialism. On the contrary, the workers party will demand the inclusion of all Aboriginal particulars, alongside the special needs of all oppressed strata which rely on the working class for their existence. The combined and integrated struggle of all working people, through their vanguard party, is the guarantor for the successful combination with the Aboriginal struggle for elementary justice. The Aboriginal struggle and the workers struggle will either go forward together, or fall back separately. FOR ABORIGINAL LIBERATION THROUGH WORKERS UNITY!



Above: This meme was circulated on Facebook by some Aboriginal activists. There has been some tension between groups such as WAR and some socialist parties. The left should not support any other left party being excluded from marches when they clearly support the struggle of the Aboriginal people. This is an example of how the politics of the Aboriginal resistance can go astray if it is abandoned by the labour movement. The top Union officials are responsible for this, however, not the workers.

HANDS OFF OUR PENALTY RATES!

Penalty rate changes

HOSPITALITY AWARD

Full-time and part-time employees:
(no change for casuals)

175% ▶ 150%

FAST FOOD AWARD

(Level 1 employees only)

Full-time and part-time employees:

150% ▶ 125%

Casual employees:

175% ▶ 150%

RETAIL AWARD

Full-time and part-time employees:

200% ▶ 150%

Casual employees:

200% ▶ 175%

PHARMACY AWARD

(7.00am – 9.00pm only)

Full-time and part-time employees:

200% ▶ 150%

Casual employees:

200% ▶ 175%

Above: Chart showing the reduction in penalty rates for workers in Australia. www.thenewdaily.com.au

(The following is a statement issued by the Workers League on 11-03-2017)

11-03-2017- In late February, the grossly misnamed “Fair Work Commission” handed down its decision on the penalty rates of some of Australia’s lowest paid workers. It decided that Public Holiday and Sunday penalty rates be watered down to Saturday rates for workers in the Retail, Fast Food and Hospitality sectors.³⁰ The decision means some of these workers would be up to \$6000 dollars a year worse off.³¹ There have been all kinds of social spending cuts for the last 35 years that workers have had to endure, but this one is different. This is not like not offering a much needed pay increase – this is a pay cut. This is literally capital taking money out of workers pockets and forcing them to work longer for less pay. Worse than this is the precedent it sets. If there is no sustained backlash, it will be only a small step towards abolishing the Saturday rates of pay, and from there effectively establishing one flat pay rate no matter what time of the day or night workers toil, from Monday to Sunday.

In addition, there is little doubt that this will flow on to other industries, and into all areas of the private and public sector. Employers negotiating collective bargaining agreements, where they still exist, will simply point to other industries where weekends are treated as weekdays, and use that to lower their wage bill – regardless of the effect on workers livelihoods. The argument that most workers now work from Monday to Sunday is spurious. This is more about the falling rate of profit, and the inability of capital to restart production, which went into a downward spiral with the onset of the “global” financial crisis in

2008. In fact it was only “global” for the capitalist economies. Yet even from the point of view of the “captains of industry”, less income in the pockets of workers means less money spent on goods and services, leading to more business slowdown, and thus further job losses. We have seen this repeated throughout history, most especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Union Officialdom complicit

In the face of one of the largest full frontal assaults on working people in a generation – and there have been many- what has been the response of the Union leadership? Essentially, nothing. From what can be observed by the mass of workers, there have been no meetings of Union members organised, no strikes, hardly any demonstrations, and hardly any Union officials even speaking out. This had been coming for at least the last two years, and still nothing. Some Union officials have sent emails (!) to their members, denouncing the cuts to penalty rates, and asking them to sign an online petition (!!). This type of response is risible, and can barely be taken seriously. It is no wonder that large numbers of workers see little point in joining a Union, when most officials disappear at the very time that they are needed. Unfortunately, due to the absence even of a statement in defence of workers, many workers believe that Unions are legislatively prevented from taking action.

Yet this is far from the case. With some exceptions, Union officials effectively operate as agents of capital within the workers movement. Their entire careers, for which they are paid much more money than the workers they supposedly represent, are guaranteed IF they can restrict workers from challenging the destruction course of the profit system. They do this in a number of ways – even by organising rallies which on the surface appear to be militant. For example, on March 9, rallies were held in most

³⁰ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-23/penalty-rates-decision-likely-to-reignite-political-debate/8293952> (11-03-2017)

³¹ <http://www.mamamia.com.au/penalty-rate-decision/> (11-03-2017)

cities by some Unions such as the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU). The theme was “Stop the War on Workers” by – the Turnbull federal government. That is, the politics of the militant rallies, with militant unionists in some cases walking off the job – was electoral. Their basic message, even if not stated openly, vote Labor – in 2019. No pledges to undertake a nationwide industrial campaign – just electoralism.



Above: The Orwellian named “Fair Work Commission” made the decision to drastically cut penalty rates for retail and hospitality workers. This sets in place a dangerous precedent, where employers from now on will be arguing that penalty rates should not apply in their industry. The lack of a response from the Union leaderships is clear for all to see. At the very least, a national campaign to defend and maintain penalty rates should be launched. Image from www.abc.net.au

Demand Officials Act

It should be clear that the real source of the penalty rate cuts, and all of the other attacks raining down on workers, do not just come from the Liberal Party. The Labor Party is no alternative, and works in tandem with the Liberal Party to maintain the system. The source of the penalty rate cuts is the declining capitalist economy – but workers are far from powerless in

the face of these attacks. The depth of the crisis of profitability for capital means that even a well co-ordinated struggle will face stiff opposition. Yet the possibilities for this have not even been tested. Union members, and all working people, should direct their demands to the top Union secretaries of the Union bodies in each state, and demand they immediately call meetings of members and delegates, to organise a nationwide campaign. Union members need to be able to discuss and put forward their own proposals for action.

It needs to be recognised that the struggle to force Union leaders to act in defence of workers is at the same time a struggle to forge working class political leadership. This needs to take the form of a mass, class struggle based, workers party. Hundreds of years of social democracy, and the experience of the socialist countries, have taught us that even just to defend the existing living standards of the current generation of workers, a vanguard party which fights for a workers government is the only type of organisation capable of leading a genuine resistance to the onslaught of a system in peril. Such a party can be built out of efforts to forge a general strike, and similar actions. The catalyst for action now can be the assault on penalty rates, but once in struggle, larger questions begin to be posed. *HANDS OFF OUR PENALTY RATES!*



www.sbs.com.au

NO TO WAR ON SYRIA!

US/AUS TROOPS: OUT NOW!

SAUDI/ISRAELI/UK/FRA: HANDS OFF!



Above: The now infamous photo supplied by the White Helmets, the UK funded front group, which works directly with Al Qaeda in Syria. The photo highlights the fact that the mercenaries are not wearing any gloves. If sarin was the nerve agent, these people would be dead in minutes. It was clearly a fake, staged incident, blamed on the Syrian government, in order to bring in even more Western support for armed death squads. Image from www.syriagenerals.wordpress.com

(The following is a statement issued by the Workers League)

08-04-2017 – In days just past, the US launched 59 cruise missiles from warships aimed at the Syrian air base of Al-Shayrat, outside of Homs. The claimed trigger is a claimed chemical attack on civilians in the town of Khan Sheikhoun in the province of Idlib, which the Western corporate media immediately, and without a shred of proof,

blamed on the Syrian government headed by President Bashar Al-Assad. Let it first be said that there is a long history of imperialist wars being started by false flag incidents. Perhaps the most evident was the Gulf of Tonkin incident which led to the US and their allies waging war against Vietnam and slaughtering 3 million people in the process. Another prominent one was the infamous claim in 2003 that the Iraqi government then headed by Saddam Hussein held “weapons

of mass destruction”, which could be deployed with 45 minutes. The US and their allies massacred around 1 million Iraqis, on the basis of what was confirmed to be a pack of lies.

For six years, the US state and their allies – Saudi Arabia, Israel, the United Kingdom, France, Qatar, Turkey, Australia and others – have waged perhaps the most vicious proxy war in world history against the Syrian state. It is a matter of historical record that the Al Qaeda and ISIS death squads have been armed and funded by the Western powers hell-bent on regime change in Syria.³² Around 500 000 Syrians have lost their lives in the most brutal fashion, for daring to stand independently of the US Empire. All the while, the corporate media funnelled us wild stories about “moderate rebels” being engaged in “civil war” in Syria. It was all lies, and the lies continue with the latest absurd claim that Syria, while it was in the process of defeating the Western backed barbarians, and with an international conference discussing Syria about to convene, all of a sudden decided to gas its own people. This fantastic narrative is easily disabused.³³

What we know is that the US led proxy war on Syria, using mercenary lunatics, was defeated. It was defeated by the resistance of the Syrian Arab Army, with the assistance of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. China also voted in support of Syria in the UN. The intervention of Russia, at the request of the Syrian government, was crucial in turning the tide of the war for regime change. Unable to accept defeat, and especially by Russia, the US has now decided that the game of outsourcing war with regard to Syria has not produced a

result, so now it is time for its own military to do the job. It remains to be seen whether or not the US will be able to continue with its air strikes, given that Russia and Iran, at the least, cannot accept yet another hostile provocation to their very existence.

The Trump Administration in the US has done an about face in a matter of a week. As recently as March 30, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was indicating that only the Syrian people should decide the status of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.³⁴ Yet on the 6th of April, Tillerson, when asked if the US would lead a regime change effort in Syria, apparently responded “those steps are underway”.³⁵ These about faces have as much to do with internal US politics, as the disaster the US war machine has created in Syria and Iraq.



Above: In the days after the fake chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun, Russia blocked a Security Council resolution which attempted to condemn the Syrian government for the incident. Whatever the political opinion one may have of the Russian government, it's actions in the defence of Syria have, thus far, prevented a wider war from occurring, and have pushed back the US and their allies, including Canberra, with their war for regime change. www.en.zamanalwsl.net

The moment the Trump Presidency assumed office, it was besieged by a “Fight Trump”

³² <http://www.globalresearch.ca/logistics-101-where-does-isis-get-its-guns/5454726> (08-04-17)

³³ <http://21stcenturywire.com/2017/04/04/reviving-the-chemical-weapons-lie-new-us-uk-calls-for-regime-change-military-attack-against-syria/> (08-04-17)

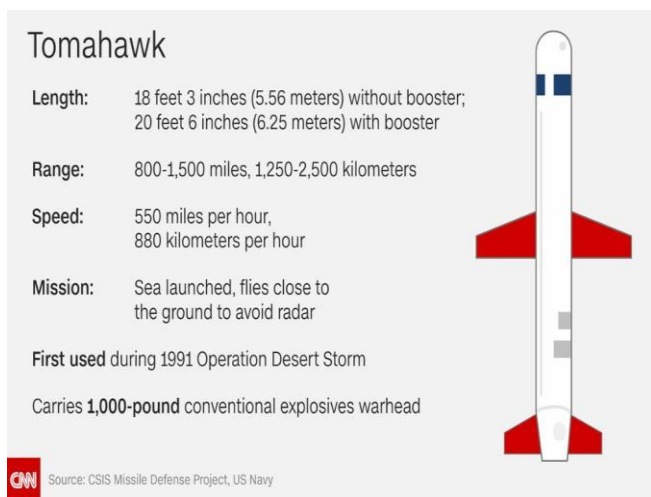
³⁴ <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-03-31/mccain-furious-rex-tillerson-saying-assad-can-stay> (08-04-17)

³⁵ <https://www.rt.com/usa/383762-tillerson-assad-syria-statement/> (08-04-17)

movement, the motivations and politics of which was always extremely murky. Strongly backed by the Democrats and the elements of the US deep state, which was horrified at a US President which did not wish to continue a strategy of confrontation and war with Russia, the “Fight Trump” movement adopted reactionary pro-war positions, under the guise of combatting the “racism, sexism and homophobia” of the Trump campaign. The “Fight Trump” movement alibied the Obama/Clinton administration for exactly the same things for which they condemned Trump. Consciously or unconsciously, the “Fight Trump” movement implicitly demanded the continuation of Washington’s extreme provocations, if not outright war, against Russia. Trump, in order to disprove the constant allegation that he was working with the Russians, had to go to war simply to save his Presidency. Otherwise, an impeachment headed by the US deep state in alliance with the Democrats may well have followed.

These elite parties of capital can only enact the needs of capital, whichever personnel they field. The same goes for all the parliamentary parties, which are a part of the economic crisis of capitalism, even if they imagine they are fighting it. The world crisis of capitalism is so deep that the rulers in the US, Australia, Europe and Japan have no answer but to once again plunge the world into war. Currently standing in the way of the US Empire are Russia, Iran, China, Syria and others. To that extent only, working people need to defend the anti-imperialist wing while also pushing forward for a socialist system in which those who labour govern.

What is desperately needed is an anti-war movement which is genuinely anti-imperialist, and is prepared to politically break from all wings of the system, from all corporate media, from all institutions which apologise for the system which is producing multiple crises. This movement should, at least, demand a total withdrawal of all US allied forces, including Australia, from Syria and the Middle East.



Above: Graphic showing some details of the Tomahawk cruise missiles, which was used in the one-off attack on Syria. These missiles, apart from the death rained down on Syria, cost US \$832, 000 each. Image from CNN on Twitter.



Above: The Syrian General Command of the Army and Armed Forces issued a statement condemning the US firing of Tomahawk cruise missiles into Syria. The statement said the attack makes the USA a “partner” of ISIS, Jabhat-al-Nusra and other terrorist organisations that have always sought to attack the Syrian army and Syrian military bases. The statement stressed that the attack violates all international laws and conventions. Image from www.sana.sy

Of course neither Trump nor the Republicans or Democrats, nor the Labor and Liberal parties on these shores, offer anything to working people.



Australia - DPRK

Friendship and Cultural Society

Brisbane Branch

CLOSE THE MANUS ISLAND AND NAURU DETENTION CENTRES!

NO TO WAR IN ASIA! HANDS OFF THE DPRK AND CHINA!

(The following is a statement distributed by the Australia-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society Brisbane Branch at the Palm Sunday Rally for Refugees on 09-04-2017)

brought to Australia immediately. We also demand that they be offered all available assistance to apply for asylum with the right to access work and social security if that is what is desired.

09-04-2017 – Conditions for refugees in the off-shore detention centres of Manus Island and Nauru remain a living hell. Reza Berati, Hamid Khazaei, Kamil Hussain, Faysal Ishak Ahmed and Omid Masoumali have had their lives extinguished in these hell-holes, and hundreds more suffer unbearable mental and physical torment. While it remains unclear whether the US Trump Administration will honour the “deal” to accept these refugees into the US which the Obama Administration signed, these innocents remain in limbo, their lives and futures hanging in the balance. The Brisbane Branch of the Australia-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society joins with many working people and progressive organisations in demanding that all refugees currently in off-shore detention centres be

The Obama/Trump danger to the region

While it is true that the US Trump Administration has adopted an anti-immigrant stance which targets those of the Islamic faith, it is also the case that the previous Obama Administration deported more people seeking a better life than any previous administration. In addition, the Obama Administration initiated the “pivot to Asia”. This policy, announced while in Australia, aims to have 60% of US foreign armed forces arrayed in the Pacific – a clear sign of impending danger, if not war, for the largest country in Asia – the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

Complaints from the US about the PRC's use of the South China Sea, backed up by patrols of the US Navy, also sound a warning to the people of the region.

The Trump Administration has also begun to escalate even further the traditional hostility of the US towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recently commented that "strategic patience" with the DPRK had "ended". This was widely interpreted to mean that the US was potentially preparing a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK, i.e., a strike which could take out the leadership of the country, and lay the ground for an invasion. In fact, the annual US led Key Resolve and Foal Eagle military "exercises", which take place on the doorstep of the DPRK, are aimed at doing just that. And this year, the numbers of the US, South Korean and Japanese troops taking part are the largest they have ever been.



Above: South Koreans protest the US deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system on the territory of South Korea. Touted by the US as a system to defend South Korea against the DPRK, in fact the THAAD system appears to be directed against the People's Republic of China (PRC). This is because the range of the THAAD missile system extends deep into Chinese territory, and also because the THAAD system will not be capable of taking out the DPRK's conventional short range Hwasong missiles, which generally operated below a "high altitude". Some Koreans in the southern half of the peninsula understandably believe that they will be in the crossfire of possible conflict. Image from www.japantimes.co.jp

The DPRK (which the corporate media refer to as "North Korea") is an independent socialist country, which has been created through enormous sacrifice. It desires, and is entitled to, equal treatment amongst all nations in Asia and the world. Its system provides employment, healthcare, education and many other services free of cost to its citizens – which is one reason why the US and its allies desire it to be erased from history. US hostility towards the DPRK is also directed against its giant neighbour, the PRC, which also operates a socialist system, albeit under different circumstances. Unfortunately, the Australian government echoes the US in virtually all matters of foreign policy, and this includes an antagonistic approach to both the DPRK and China.

Contrary to what Australian workers are generally told, it is the DPRK and the PRC which are a force for peace in the Asia-Pacific region. They have no reason, and no desire, for conflict with anyone. They have the right to defend their countries by any means necessary. The US and its allies, on the other hand, are inching towards war, especially given the recent installation of Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) missiles in South Korea. A war would be a catastrophe for the people of the region, and it would create untold numbers of refugees. All working and progressive people need to oppose such a war through, at the least, defending the national sovereignty of the DPRK, China and all countries in the region.

Visit: www.australia-dprk.org or email: ray.ferguson@tisgroup.com.au

ONAGAWA: THE JAPANESE NUCLEAR PLANT THAT DIDN'T MELTDOWN ON 3/11



Above: The Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant, operated by the Tohoku Electric Power Company in Japan. Despite being close to the epicentre of the powerful earthquake which caused a tsunami leading to around 20 000 fatalities, the Onagawa plant did not meltdown or even malfunction. At the same time, the Fukushima Daiichi plant went into meltdown largely due to some ageing and unaddressed safety issues. The lack of safety measures appear to have not been implemented by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which operated the Fukushima Daiichi plant, for many years before 2011. Image from www.kurihalant.co.jp

(We reprint an article here, which is a synopsis of a full report which is to be found at: www-bcf.usc.edu/~meshkati. Some on the left, who claim to be the most concerned about climate change, spurn the alternative of zero-carbon nuclear power in the process of adapting to misguided elements of the environmental movement. Workers need to ensure that the application of science to environmental issues remains paramount.)

By Airi Ryu and Najmedin Meshkati

Najmedin Meshkati is a professor at the University of Southern California's Viterbi School of Engineering.

Airi Ryu is a senior student and research assistant from Japan in the Daniel J. Epstein Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at the University of Southern California.

"The earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, were natural disasters of a magnitude that shocked the entire world. Although triggered by these cataclysmic events, the subsequent accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant cannot be regarded as a natural disaster. It was a profoundly manmade disaster—that could and should have been foreseen and prevented."
—Kiyoshi Kurokawa, "Message from the Chairman," *The Official Report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation*

Three years ago, the biggest recorded earthquake in Japanese history hit Tohoku prefecture, leaving more than 20,000 people dead or missing. On the heels of the destructive magnitude 9.0 earthquake came a tsunami that reached a run-up height of 30 meters in some areas, sweeping entire towns away in seconds. Within the affected area were three nuclear power plants: the Fukushima Daiichi and Daini nuclear power plants operated by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco), and the Onagawa Nuclear Power Station operated by the Tohoku Electric Power Company. While the three power stations shared similar disaster conditions, nuclear reactor types, dates of operation, and an identical regulatory regime, their fates were very different. The Fukushima Daiichi plant experienced fatal meltdowns and radiation releases. Fukushima Daini was damaged by the earthquake and tsunami, but the heroic efforts and improvisations of its operators resulted in the cold shutdown of all four operating reactors. Onagawa managed to remain generally intact, despite its proximity to the epicenter of the enormous earthquake.

Everyone knows the name Fukushima, but few people, even in Japan, are familiar with the Onagawa power station. Fewer still know how Onagawa managed to avoid disaster. According to a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency mission that visited Onagawa³⁷ and evaluated its performance, “the plant experienced very high levels of ground motion—the strongest shaking that any nuclear plant has ever experienced from an earthquake,” but it “shut down safely” and was “remarkably undamaged.”

Most people believe that Fukushima Daiichi’s meltdowns were predominantly due to the earthquake and tsunami. The survival of Onagawa, however, suggests otherwise.

³⁶ www.nirs.org/wp-content/uploads/fukushima/naaic-report.pdf

³⁷ www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/actionplan/reports/onagawa0413.pdf

Onagawa was only 123 kilometers away from the epicenter—60 kilometers closer than Fukushima Daiichi—and the difference in seismic intensity at the two plants was negligible. Furthermore, the tsunami was bigger at Onagawa, reaching a height of 14.3 meters, compared with 13.1 meters at Fukushima Daiichi. The difference in outcomes at the two plants reveals the root cause of Fukushima Daiichi’s failures: the utility’s corporate “safety culture.”

Higher ground. While the Fukushima Daiichi and Onagawa plants are similar in many ways, the most obvious difference is that Tohoku Electric constructed Onagawa’s reactor buildings at a higher elevation than Tepco’s Fukushima reactor buildings. Before beginning construction, Tohoku Electric conducted surveys and simulations aimed at predicting tsunami levels. The initial predictions showed that tsunamis in the region historically had an average height of about 3 meters. Based on that, the company constructed its plant at 14.7 meters above sea level, almost five times that height. As more research was done, the estimated tsunami levels climbed higher, and Tohoku Electric conducted periodic checkups based on the new estimates.

Tepco, on the other hand, to make it easier to transport equipment and to save construction costs, in 1967 removed 25 meters from the 35-meter natural seawall of the Daiichi plant site³⁸ and built the reactor buildings at a much lower elevation of 10 meters. According to the National Diet of Japan’s Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission (NAIIC), the initial construction was based on existing seismological information, but later research showed that tsunami levels had been underestimated. While Tohoku Electric learned from past earthquakes and tsunamis—including one in Chile on February 28, 2010—and continuously improved its countermeasures, Tepco overlooked these warnings. According to the NAIIC report, Tepco “resorted to delaying tactics, such as presenting alternative scientific studies and lobbying.”

³⁸

<https://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303982504576425312941820794> (07-05-17)

Tepco's tsunami risk characterization and assessment was, in the judgment of one of the world's renowned tsunami experts, Costas Synolakis, director of the Tsunami Research Center at the University of Southern California, a "cascade of stupid errors that led to the disaster."

Emergency response. Tohoku Electric also took a different approach to emergency response—one that was more organized, collaborative, and controlled than Tepco's. Tohoku Electric established an emergency response center at the Onagawa plant, as well as at company headquarters, immediately after the earthquake. Throughout the disaster, headquarters supported the plant operators minute by minute. Supervisors and chief engineers were dispatched to the main control rooms of the damaged reactors to make decisions, and information was sent in a timely manner to all levels of the response team.

Why did the Tohoku Electric team remain more poised and unified than their counterparts at Tepco? According to the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Facilities Research Institute, Yanosuke Hirai, vice president of Tohoku Electric from 1960 to 1975—a time period that preceded the 1980 groundbreaking at Onagawa—was adamant about safety protocols and became a member of the Coastal Institution Research Association in 1963 because of his concern about the importance of protecting against natural disasters. With a senior employee in upper management advocating forcefully for safety, a strong safety culture formed within the company. Representatives of Tohoku Electric participated in seminars and panel discussions about earthquake and tsunami disaster prevention held by the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organization. The company implemented strict protocols for disaster response, and all workers were familiar with the steps to be taken when a tsunami was approaching.

These initiatives were not part of Tepco's culture. The company had a mindset that its domination in the electricity industry was an indication of flawlessness. After the disaster, Hasuike Tooru,

the former president of Tepco, described³⁹ how management decided to lengthen the expected lifetime of power plants, even if there were severe safety consequences.

Safety culture. Government investigations of the Fukushima accident, as well as a statement by US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) chairwoman Allison MacFarlane⁴⁰, have explicitly acknowledged the vital role of safety culture⁴¹, which the NRC has defined as "the core values and behaviors resulting from a collective commitment by leaders and individuals to emphasize safety over competing goals to ensure protection of people and the environment."

The NAIIC report described the Fukushima accident as "made in Japan," because Japan's nuclear industry failed to absorb the lessons learned from Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. In the words of NAIIC chairman Kiyoshi Kurokawa, "It was this mindset that led to the disaster." Safety culture has also been implicated⁴² as a primary root cause of the Chernobyl accident.

The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station's meltdowns were not due to the natural disaster, but rather to a series of decisions by Tepco not to be proactive with safety, dating back to when the reactors were being constructed. With most other factors being similar, it was Tohoku Electric's overall organizational practices and safety culture that saved the day for Onagawa. If safety and disaster response had been properly recognized, addressed, and implemented at Fukushima Daiichi—as they were within Tohoku Electric's corporate safety culture—perhaps the disastrous meltdowns would have been prevented.

³⁹ <https://nikkan-spa.jp/104473> (07-05-17)

⁴⁰ <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1226/ML12261A373.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1133/ML1133/ML11334A146.pdf>

⁴² http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/Pub913e_web.pdf