

RED



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HANDS OFF IRAN! NO MORE WESTERN BACKED REGIME CHANGE WARS!

(The following article is from www.redfireonline.com While the content it refers to is dated from the start of the year, the US government and its allies in Israel and Saudi Arabia continue to seek the violent overthrow of the Islamic Republic of Iran.)

03-01-2018 – Like a broken record, the same old regime change rhetoric is being wheeled out once again by the paid and unpaid agents of Western imperialism. In the name of “human rights”, “democracy” and “freedom”, we are once again

being softened up for yet another Western backed regime change war – this time on Iran. This follows the catastrophic regime change wars waged by the US Empire and its domestic and international allies on Libya and Syria. Regime change intervention was also attempted by the US Empire in Yemen, Ukraine, Venezuela and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or “North Korea”). Many of these interventions could have triggered World War III – nuclear Armageddon.

It's a dead giveaway – when “protests” in Iran are backed by US President Donald Trump, Hillary “Destroyer of Worlds” Clinton, the Zionist Israeli state, and the Wahabist Saudi Arabian monarchy, you know they are suspect. When the same celebrities who cheered on arguably the dirtiest imperialist war in history – the six year war on Syria – clamour to cry crocodile tears for “freedom” in Iran, you know something is off. When US Senator John McCain – known for posing in photos with Ukrainian fascists and ISIS mercenaries, and farcical US Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Nikki Haley – infamous for the absurd claim that the DPRK is “begging for war” – tweet in favour of an alleged democratic uprising, you know the reality must be the opposite.

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.

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This is of course not the first time that the US has attempted to foment a “colour revolution” in Iran. In 2009, some protesters hit the streets claiming, without a shred of evidence, that the elections which resulted in the re-election of then President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad were fraudulent. The US hailed a “Green Revolution” which, however, did not gain anywhere near majority support amongst Iranian people, and was subdued by the security forces. This time, sources from inside Iran have stated that the protests in Iran over the last week are much smaller than the ones in 2009, and so have even less chance of gaining mass support amongst Iranians.

In fact, what have been more or less ignored by the Western corporate media are pro-government demonstrations which have been held, which vastly outnumber the anti-government rallies. Last Saturday, pro-government demonstrations were held in 1200 cities and towns across Iran. These rallies have been held every year since 2009, to demonstrate opposition to attempts by Iran's international enemies to foment destabilisation.¹ The chances of the current anti-government demonstrations gaining overwhelming support amongst Iranians are miniscule. But that is not the point – their aims are precisely to gain international “assistance” – in the form of a US led regime change war, a la Syria. The parallels with the so-called Libyan “rebels” in 2011 openly calling on NATO to bomb their country are striking.

Another clue that Western governments and some of their client states are behind the anti-government protests, is the fact that “economic” demands very quickly became “political” demands. Apparently beginning over concerns about unemployment and inflation, chants have rapidly moved towards a line identical with that of the US deep state designs for the Middle East. Reports have it that some protest chants went: “Let go of Palestine...not for Gaza, not for Lebanon...I'd give my life for (only) Iran.”² Without mentioning it, this refers to Iran's role in preventing the victory of ISIS and Al Qaeda in Syria, along with the assistance of the Lebanese Hezbollah – not to speak of Russia. Iran currently has the permission of the Syrian government to clean up the remnants of ISIS which are still in Syria, and still being backed by the US government, though not openly. If Iran, Russia and Hezbollah had not intervened to help defeat the US funded mercenaries, Iran would almost certainly have been the next target. The Iranian military's actions were necessary not just for the survival of

¹ <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-counters-protests-with-pro-government-rallies-521392> (03-01-2018)

² <https://www.activistpost.com/2017/12/what-the-hell-is-happening-in-iran.html> (03-01-2018)

Syria, but for the survival of Iran itself. Yet the anti-government protestors condemn the Iranian government for possibly even saving their own lives.

It should be noted that there are indeed some serious economic problems in Iran, which working people would be justified in protesting about. Reportedly there is 12% unemployment, along with 25% youth unemployment. Economic growth is stagnant, and inflation is pushing up the price of necessary items such as food. Yet in fact, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamanei has been one who has been vocal in demanding government action about this! The Western supported protestors target Khamanei regardless, giving the game away as to what they are really demanding. What is more, the US led economic sanctions on Iran are to a large degree responsible for some of the poor economic conditions within Iran. And in fact, Iranians arguably have more democratic rights to protest about such things than the citizens of the governments now assaulting them – Israel, Saudi Arabia, and arguably the United States.

While the world's workers need not politically endorse the economic or political actions of the theocratic Iranian government, it is in the interests of the working class to stand by Iran during imperialist attempts to undermine or overthrow its state. In addition, there is a dire need to stand with anti-imperialist and non-imperialist states whose actions are, for the moment, preventing the US and their allies from launching a nuclear holocaust. Such states include Iran, Russia, China, Syria and the DPRK.

One system is responsible for the ongoing threat of a global nuclear war, from which much of humanity may not recover. This is the system of capitalist-imperialism. A worker led struggle to uproot this system and replace it with socialism is an urgent task. As part of this, an anti-imperialist anti-war movement must be built to not only demand an end to civilisation threatening wars, but to demand

the restoration of basic living standards which the profit system has denied us. *HANDS OFF IRAN!*



Above: The top photo is from www.reuters.com dated January 3, 2018. It shows a pro-government rally in Iran, at the same time as the anti-government actions were held. Largely unreported by the Western media, the pro-government rallies attracted tens of thousands more people than the anti-government rallies, which were immediately backed by the US and Israeli governments, and virtually all liberals, including almost all Western left parties. The photo below, from the Tasnim News Agency, shows a rally in Mashad, Iran, on January 4, with participants burning the US and Israeli flags. Liberals and imperialist governments claim that the anti-government rallies began in Mashad and spread. Here is evidence that not even everyone in Mashad backed the protest actions. Out of a population of 80 million, it is clear that the vast majority did not back the regime change actions.

MANUS ISLAND: EVACUATE NOW!

ORGANISED LABOUR MUST LEAD THE FIGHT TO FREE THE REFUGEES



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

(The following article appeared on www.redfireonline.com on 01-11-17) As we go to press, the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Defence Force is preparing to enter the Manus Island refugee detention centre, where around 600 men remain, fearful for their safety if they are forced out.³ Earlier this year, the PNG army fired live ammunition into the detention centre, and there have also been machete and knife attacks against the asylum seekers by some aggrieved locals. The Manus Island detention centre is being closed after a ruling from the PNG courts which found that its establishment was unconstitutional. Full responsibility for it lies with the Australian government, which has funded these hell-hole death camps on Nauru and PNG to the tune of billions of dollars.

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-01/manus-island-army-to-remove-600-men-from-closed-centre/9106700> (01-11-2017)

As of today, reports indicate that electricity generators have been removed from the detention centre, which could mean that toilets and running water would cease to function. There are photos of refugees diverting rain water from building guttering into wheelie bins, so as to ensure they have some water when the cut off takes effect. This truly farcical but all too real medieval like siege is overseen by the current Immigration Minister Peter Dutton, and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who repeatedly claim that these refugees remain the responsibility of the PNG government. Far from it. All of these refugees, who attempted to flee to Australia in fear for their lives, were unceremoniously dumped by the Australian government in what are in reality death camps, funded by private sector contracts authorised by the Australian government. To avoid mass casualties of those who have not committed any

crime, the federal government must evacuate Manus Island detainees to Australia immediately.

Refugee rights at an impasse

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

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This racism is poison for the labour movement. The workplace is the only place in capitalist society which is truly integrated. All production depends on cooperation between workers regardless of their nationality, culture, language or religion. The Union movement simply cannot even begin to organise workers to defend themselves from the effects of the dire capitalist recession afflicting

Australia, the US and Europe, unless they take action to decisively extinguish all traces of racism. While many groups and institutions in society oppose racism towards refugees from a moral, philosophical, religious or even political standpoint – such as the Greens, liberal NGOs, small businesses, church groups, social-welfare bodies – **only the working class has a material interest in overcoming and defeating racist ideology and practice.** This is why it is a vital necessity for the Union movement to be the leading force against the appalling abuse of refugees and asylum seekers who have made it to these shores.

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

This is by no means done directly. Some Union officials openly back the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and urge workers in that direction. However, the ALP is itself so exposed on the question of refugee rights – it established the mandatory detention of refugees, as well as off-shore detention – that that option is often a no go. So in steps an organisation such as GetUp! – an ALP front if ever there was one. GetUp! was created in 2005, as a result of funding from some Unions. As it poses as simply an independent activist group, and initiates campaigns on popular issues – for refugee rights, against coal mining and so on – many are unaware as to its core political role.

However, Liberal Party politicians are certainly aware of the overall role of GetUp! driving campaigns which easily fit into the agenda of the ALP and the Greens. They have pushed for an Australian Electoral Commission inquiry into its funding.⁴ The Australian Workers Union (AWU) recently had its offices raided as a politicised action to discredit the ALP, and Opposition leader Bill Shorten specifically. While workers should resolutely condemn and oppose any raids on any Union offices, they should also seriously question why the officials of some Unions hand members money to bodies such as GetUp!

Refugee rights in the service of war

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

As we have mentioned on several occasions previously, the refugee rights movement, such as it is, has a fatal flaw. *It does not seek to highlight the reasons why refugees are created in the first place.* Impoverished people fleeing the harsh economic conditions in the third world are one aspect. In

recent years, however, a much larger proportion are fleeing the US led imperialist wars which have been waged around the world – inevitably with the backing of Canberra. Yet the activist refugee rights movement in this country is largely led by some misguided left parties which have not opposed these wars which have the potential to unleash World War III. These left parties have been some of the most vocal proponents calling for regime change in Libya and Syria – and the US/NATO juggernaut obliged. Refugees fleeing from the Middle East and North Africa were then welcomed by these refugee rights groups, the effect of which was to justify further war against sovereign countries.

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

Needless to say, with the world hurtling towards a World War III scenario, the refugee rights movement needs a clinical break from its previous practice of being manipulated by the politically savvy interests of private capital. For it was not only for the wars on Libya and Syria that the refugee rights movement was mobilised to flag wave. The US Empire is also in the throes of encircling Russia. NATO has installed 31 000 troops in Poland, has spent \$3 billion on building up presence in the former Eastern bloc countries, in a

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

“Cold War 2.0”.⁵ NATO’s backing of fascists in Ukraine, sponsoring a coup, was also aimed squarely at Russia, along with the war to destroy Syria. When the former PM Tony Abbott openly blamed Russia for the shooting down of flight MH17, without a shred of evidence, the refugee rights movement – as with the liberal intelligentsia – were virtually silent. Can anyone imagine the refugees produced by a war against Russia?

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

The other assault on Red China are the continual threats to its socialist neighbour, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or “North Korea”). All that the DPRK has ever stated is that if it is attacked, it will respond. Yet the US Empire, and not only President Trump, whips up such irrational demonisation of the DPRK that millions of working people regrettably do not question the wild allegations. In the last six months there has been the very real threat of nuclear war with the DPRK – a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. Yet, again, we have virtual silence from the refugee rights movement, and those who in the past prided themselves on their anti-war credentials. This is

unfortunately not a coincidence. The refugee rights movement, to the mistaken left parties, to the labour bureaucracy, to the ALP, to the Greens, to GetUp! – all of them fall into line, some consciously, some not - behind the aims of Australian imperialism.

For labour action to free the refugees

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

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⁵ <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/346825-nato-russia-cold-war-stoltenberg/> (01-11-17)

FREE JULIAN ASSANGE! NO TO THE NEW McCARTHYISM



Above: Julian Assange speaks on the balcony of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. www.pbs.org

(The following article first appeared at www.Redfireonline.com on 29-11-2017)

If you cast your mind back a few short seven years, Wikileaks became a virtual household name by releasing a tranche of 250 000 odd classified State Department cables. Soon after, Wikileaks released the infamous “Collateral Murder” video, apparently supplied by US soldier Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, which showed the US military in 2007 blowing away Iraqi civilians, including two Reuters journalists. Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, became a whistleblowing hero, along with Chelsea Manning. Manning was imprisoned and no doubt tortured for seven years. Julian Assange now remains held inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London. The British police maintain they will arrest Assange if he steps outside, and, if so,

many fear the UK government would deliver Assange to the US government.

At the time, Wikileaks was a revelation in journalism, although some dispute whether the publishing of documents is actually a form of journalism. Nevertheless, the organisation displayed a “drop box” on its website, where any employee or someone working for a wealthy government or corporation could anonymously deposit cables, emails or other documentation which they believed could expose a fundamental social injustice. Wikileaks would then release the documentation, and the “leaker” would be protected. The Wikileaks organisation would then cop the barrage from what is now called the deep state. Julian Assange willingly put himself on the line, an act of unheralded bravery.

Then, all manner of left parties universally hailed Wikileaks and Julian Assange as heroes of a new age, as trailblazers whose exposure of the global capitalist elite powers could open a path to a breakthrough the socialist left had been seeking for decades. All socialists rallied behind Julian Assange, an Australian who grew up in Queensland, and praised his name to the heavens. The Socialist Alliance was the most vocal in the defence campaign, rightly calling on the Australian government to offer Julian Assange full consular assistance, rather than colluding with the US government in a vicious persecution.⁶ Although Socialist Alternative at the time had not yet launched its newspaper *Red Flag*, they were at the time as loud as any other in defending Wikileaks for exposing US war crimes.⁷ Solidarity quite correctly at the time pointed out that the release of information about the criminal activity of the imperialist powers only points to the need for “a broader fight against a system run by a privileged few who care nothing for democracy and will hurl millions into the hell of war”.⁸ These left parties were joined by many others who had vigorously opposed the war on Iraq, and others opposed to the never-ending war on Afghanistan.

Where are they now?

Fast forward to today, and it is a totally different story. Julian Assange remains an effective prisoner in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, unable to leave the building. Wikileaks continues to operate somehow, a testament to Assange and his team. Yet where are the left parties who were so outspoken in their defence, several short years ago? Where are the socialist led campaigns to free Julian Assange? They have all but vanished,

⁶ <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/socialist-alliance-defend-wikileaks-and-julian-assange> (01-12-17)

⁷ <https://redflag.org.au/article/it%E2%80%99s-other-oscars-and-yet-again-winner-slips-away> (01-12-17)

⁸ <https://www.solidarity.net.au/mag/back/2011/31/fight-to-hold-the-powerful-to-account-has-just-begun/> (01-12-17)

and ironically imperialist war is the reason once again.

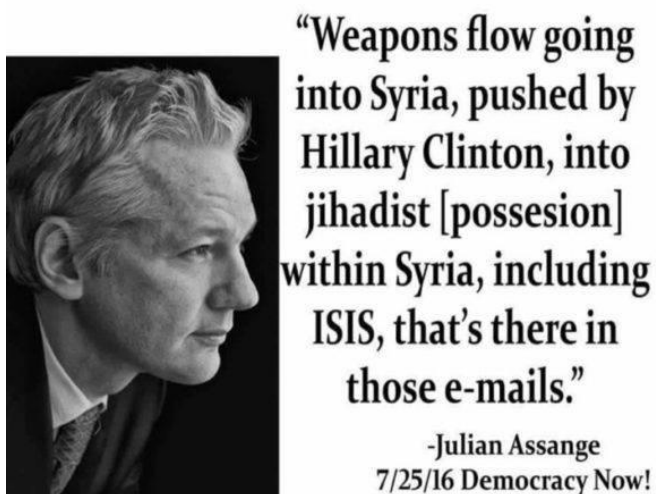


Above: Just some of the destruction of Libya carried out by NATO's terror bombing which destroyed the Libyan state, leading to a state of utter chaos and rival warlords fighting each other for control. Some left parties who originally hailed Julian Assange and Wikileaks rapidly dropped them when Assange opposed the war on Libya, but they backed it – lauding a mythical “revolution”. www.poandpo.com

The imperialist led wars on Libya and Syria were starkly revealing as far as who, in practice, stands against US/UK/AUST plunder of the planet, and who justifies or apologises for this madness. It has recently been revealed that literal black slavery has reappeared in Libya in 2017,⁹ several years after the then Wikileaks defending left parties stridently advocated the overthrow of Colonel Gaddafi's Green Libya – which was duly carried out by NATO. Early in 2017, after Hilary Clinton – arguably the most corrupt and evil politician on earth – lost the US presidential election to Republican Donald Trump, she turned against “Russia” and Wikileaks, blaming them, and many others for her defeat. Julian Assange shot back on social media by referring to her as

⁹ <https://www.theroot.com/how-obama-s-worst-mistake-led-to-the-libyan-slave-tra-1820879083> (02-12-17)

the “butcher of Libya”,¹⁰ as she was US Secretary of State at the time. Clinton later bragged and joked about the lynch murder of Colonel Gaddafi. To this day, not one of the left parties which defended Wikileaks during 2010, but welcomed the NATO destruction of Libya in 2011, have uttered a word of remorse. In addition, since that time they dropped Wikileaks and Julian Assange cold.



Above: Julian Assange exposed the role of Hilary Clinton and the US ruling class for their actions in flooding weapons into the hands of ISIS fighters, who wreaked unspeakable havoc across Syria. Some left parties which earlier defended Wikileaks soon abandoned them after it became clear that Julian Assange was opposed to the war of regime change, while they steadfastly upheld it.
www.matzav.com

Failed war of regime change on Syria

Soon after the brief but incredibly destructive NATO war on Libya, which left no functioning state, the West’s war for regime change in Syria ignited. The same left parties which defended Wikileaks earlier, then cheered on the elimination of Libya, again leapt into action calling for the overthrow of Syria. Julian Assange and Wikileaks saw through it all, and was summarily ex-

communicated – by the left parties which formerly defended them, and by the capitalist powers waging the war. Despite the lurid claims of a “popular uprising” emerging in Syria in 2011, Wikileaks disclosed information confirming that real US state plans for the destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic – in concert with Israel and Saudi Arabia – dated back to 2006.¹¹ Assange explained how the conflict was prolonged by the use of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to funnel weapons in Syria – which found its way into the hands of all manner of genocidal mercenary terrorists, from Al Qaeda to Al Nusra to ISIS. Moreover, he explained how this motley collection of allies were intended to undermine the influence, if not the existence, of Iran and Hezbollah.

The war on Syria was thus arguably the dirtiest war in the history of world imperialism. It dragged on for six years, and the Syrian government is still in the throes of expelling the last of the US backed barbarians from the country. Julian Assange and the Wikileaks organisation are founded on the basis that the public has the right to know the truth about what is happening in their world. Julian Assange himself has demonstrated immense bravery for continuing to speak out against imperialist war crimes, even while he is still barred by the British Government from leaving the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. The left parties which swore blind they would defend Wikileaks showed no such courage. They dropped Wikileaks like a sack of spuds once it became clear that Wikileaks would play no part in apologising for the war on Syria, and would continue their work of exposing US imperialism – regardless of whether it was headed by a George Bush or a Barack Obama.¹² Julian Assange may not be a Marxist

¹¹ <http://www.mintpressnews.com/wikileaks-us-israel-and-saudi-arabia-planned-overthrow-of-syrian-govt-in-2006/221784/> (02-12-17)

¹² <http://www.truth-out.org/progressivepicks/item/33180-wikileaks-reveals-how-the-us-aggressively-pursued-regime-change-in-syria-igniting-a-bloodbath> (02-12-17)

¹⁰

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/799812/wikileaks-julian-assange-hillary-clinton-us-election-russian-hacking-fbi-emails> (02-12-17)

revolutionary, but even he was far too left wing for those parties who played a large part in **demobilising** any prospective anti-war movement. Thankfully, the intervention of Russia in defence of Syria in 2015 turned the tables and effectively defeated the US led proxy war.

The New McCarthyism

Russia's defeat of the scourge of ISIS, with the assistance of Iran and Hezbollah, did more than save Syria. It thoroughly exposed the role of US deep state collusion with a myriad of terrorist outfits. Russia had already been subject to NATO expansion on its European borders for years previously, but the prevention of what for the US rulers should have been a straightforward toppling of a non-compliant Middle Eastern government tipped anti-Russian hysteria over the edge. Combined with this was the US Presidential Elections of 2016, which was supposed to be a cakewalk for the Democrats and ultra-war hawk Hilary Clinton. As we know, the American people feared Clinton in the White House far more than Donald Trump, who at that time was at least promising some change of direction domestically, along with a seeming position of peace with Russia.

US politics has moved on since that time, with the Trump administration effectively abandoning almost everything it stood for during the elections. To a degree, the Democrats and the deep state operatives may have pushed Trump to be even more belligerent in terms of war than he was planning to be. Regardless, the Clinton camp has lashed out furiously at all and sundry, effectively refusing to accept the vote of the American electorate. Wikileaks was and is accused of colluding with Russia to turn the US election in favour of Donald Trump. As with all accusations of "Russian interference", there has never been any evidence put forward whatsoever. Wikileaks did release emails of the

Democratic National Committee Chairman John Podesta during the US election campaign, which revealed staggering levels of collusion of Hilary Clinton with Wall Street.¹³ Russia could not have had anything to do with these arrangements if they tried.



Above: The ridiculous "Russiagate" attempted scandal, pushed by the US deep state and the Democrats tried unsuccessfully to link Julian Assange and Wikileaks to the Russian government, without even a shred of evidence. Despite Russia remaining a capitalist state since the overthrow of socialism in 1991, the attempt to blame Russia for all and sundry is a distorted version of anti-communism, to which many liberals and some left parties fall victim. www.bloviatingzeppelin.net

The baseless yet relentless and slanderous allegations against Russia – a new McCarthyism - continue in the US, and have reached a level of absurdity which threatens basic public discourse. Russia's RT news and current affairs broadcaster has now been forced to register as a "foreign agent" in the United States, years after operating there without incident.¹⁴ Other foreign news services, which also operate in the US, such as BBC, NHK, China Daily and Al Jazeera, have not

¹³

<https://twitter.com/wikileaks/status/784498891936915456?lang=en> (02-12-17)

¹⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-media-restrictions-rt/russias-rt-america-registers-as-foreign-agent-in-u-s-idUSKBN1DD25B> (02-12-17)

been forced to do so. More than this, the US Congress has now stripped RT America of its Congress credentials,¹⁵ meaning that RT journalists are blocked from attending White House press conferences. As if this was not enough, US comedian Randy Credico was recently summonsed by the US House Intelligence Committee for an interview on “Russian interference in the 2016 elections”.¹⁶ Credico has refused, saying his radio show is covered by the First Amendment. He has no doubt it is because he has had contact with Julian Assange, and the US government is trying to silence Wikileaks.

The system at an impasse

Wikileaks’ slogan is “We open Governments”. The work that Wikileaks does is eminently commendable, and Julian Assange and his team play a heroic role in exposing the crimes of the world’s most powerful governments. The bravery should be recognised, **and the left and the Union movement should agitate and organise for the release of Julian Assange.** Unions in Australia especially should take up this cause, for the Australian government is certainly not acting to protect one of its citizens for overtly political reasons. It is in the direct interest of working people internationally to have access to information on what the governments that claim to represent them are really doing.

Yet here is the rub. The capitalist system worldwide is at an impasse, and only has more war, more poverty, more unemployment and more environmental devastation to offer. The top officials of the Union movement here are tied by a thousand threads into this system, and will not break with it unless subjected to immense pressure from the rank and file. These well-heeled officials in turn carry out the foreign policy

of Canberra, which is not only directed currently against Julian Assange, but against Russia, which threatens world nuclear war. The left parties which originally defended, and then abandoned, Wikileaks tail after these conservative Union officials, as they maintain the same foreign policy – the backing of the US Empire. They play their part in the new McCarthyism.

To move the seemingly immovable Union bureaucracy, a genuine revolutionary workers’ party is desperately needed. While access to uncensored information remains critical, and the work of organisations such as Wikileaks remain invaluable, the exposure of the crimes of the global elite will not end them. This requires the uprooting of the system of capitalist imperialism, which can only fall via the working class seizure of the means of production, the displacement of the rule of capital, and the founding of a workers’ government. **FREE JULIAN ASSANGE!**

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www.redfireonline.com



¹⁵ <https://www.rt.com/usa/411361-rt-congress-credentials-withdrawal/> (02-12-17)

¹⁶ <https://www.rt.com/usa/411210-credico-assange-russia-investigation/> (02-12-17)

WEST PAPUA: CAN INDEPENDENCE DELIVER?



Above: West Papuan independence supporters on the march. www.onwestpapua.com

By Adam Baker

To the casual observer it appears to be an open and shut case. An indigenous people are occupied by a superior military power, which attempts to forcibly integrate the inhabitants within the larger and more powerful state, denying national and cultural rights that all people should enjoy. The oppressing power installs settlers in the occupied region, who, over time, come to overwhelm the original inhabitants. This power enjoys the backing of the “advanced” First World powers, which supply it with political and diplomatic support, along with state of the art military hardware. In response, the international left backs a movement for independence, linking with the domestic leaders, while applying political pressure to “their own” wealthy but rapacious governments. It all sounds straightforward. But in the case of the independence movement for West Papua, as in

many things political, issues are not all what they seem.

Parallels with East Timor?

Progressive minded folk might object – but isn’t it a re-run of the situation of East Timor, where we have an obligation to back an independence movement? In fact, while not ignoring *some* similarities, there are several reasons why the situation of West Papua differs significantly. Firstly, East Timor was militarily invaded by Indonesia in December 1975, days after a declaration of independence was made following the withdrawal of the former colonial power Portugal. The Indonesian military occupied East Timor from 1975 until 1999, when a United Nations (UN) sponsored referendum resulted in an overwhelming vote in favour of independence. Pro-Indonesian militias then embarked on a rampage, slaughtering around

1400 people, and pushing hundreds of thousands into West Timor as refugees. A UN badged INTERFET (International Force for East Timor) Force was sent in, which had the effect of preventing further violence. Although the exact role of the UN and the Australian military forces in East Timor at the time was dubious, East Timor was recognised as an independent nation in 2002.¹⁷

This military invasion and occupation of East Timor in 1975 was not recognised by the UN, not backed internationally, and in reality only the Australian government openly sided with Indonesia. In the case of West Papua, there was no overt military invasion, though Indonesian rule in West Papua came about in deceitful circumstances. The western part of Papua New Guinea was once a Dutch colony, but the Netherlands prepared for withdrawal during the 1950s. In 1961, West Papuans first raised the “morning star” flag, and sentiment for independence began.

However, Indonesia soon asserted what it believed to be its sovereign rights over the area, and a conflict broke out with the Dutch and indigenous West Papuans. In 1962, a UN sponsored treaty known as the “New York Agreement” was drawn up, which appointed Indonesia the temporary administrator. The agreement included a clause of which the intent was that all West Papuans would be able to vote in a referendum on independence. Unfortunately, when this referendum was held, the Indonesian military held 1026 West Papuans at gunpoint, and threatened themselves and their families with elimination if they voted for independence. This so-called “Act of Free Choice” was approved by the UN, despite the circumstances, and this remained in place for decades afterwards. West Papuans dub it the “Act of No Choice”, and it forms one of the planks of independence sentiment today.

Transmigration

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_East_Timor (26-12-2017)

There are also significant differences between East Timor and West Papua in relation to Indonesia’s long running transmigration program. The Indonesian government claims that transmigration is a necessity to alleviate population pressures on the densely populated islands such as Java, Bali and Madura, and assisting the development of outer areas such as Kalimantan, Timor and West Papua. There seems to be credence in critiques of transmigration from some groups, which claim that transmigration in Indonesia has barely alleviated the population pressures at all, and has led to significant environmental damage through forest and land clearing. Despite this, it has had the financial backing of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank throughout the 80s and 90s.¹⁸

Many West Papuans see the Indonesian government’s transmigration program as an attempt to outnumber them over time, to make them a minority in their own land. There is some justification in this view, as there are many reports of the Indonesian government backing transmigrants that identify their traditional lands as suitable for settlement, clear the forests, and then give indigenous West Papuans the “choice” to live in a transmigration settlement area as a minority.¹⁹ This understandably fuels antagonism towards the Indonesian government and the transmigrants themselves, and fosters further sentiment for independence.

The sheer numbers are vastly different though, between West Papua and East Timor. A research paper by Dr Jim Elmslie, a specialist in West Papua studies at the University of Sydney, estimates that the current non-Papuan population in West Papua now comprises 51.27%, or around 1.8 million, whereas the Papuan component comprises 48.73%, or around 1.7 million. This is incomparable

¹⁸ <http://www.downtoearth-indonesia.org/old-site/ctrans.htm> (26-12-2017)

¹⁹ <http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1990/10/marr.html> (26-12-2017)

to the situation four decades ago, where Papuans made up 96.09% of the total population.²⁰ This is the “slow motion genocide” West Papuan independence supporters refer to.

The transmigration issue for East Timor, on the other hand, was not in the same league. While there was transmigration into East Timor, it was at a significantly lower rate, and by no means ever attained a majority. On the contrary, it is estimated that between 1970 and 1990, the non-Timorese population in Timor (mainly comprising Indonesian, Chinese and Portuguese descendants) rose from 1.6% to 8.5%.²¹ Thus, at the time of the UN sponsored referendum on independence in East Timor in 1999, the non-Timorese population in East Timor would presumably have not exceeded even 10% of the total. This 10% was excluded from the vote in 1999, where over 80% of the people of East Timor voted for independence.

UN petition

In August this year, West Papuan independence activists delivered a petition to the United Nations in Geneva, symbolically swimming across Lake Geneva to present it. Exiled West Papuan independence identity Benny Wenda stated that the petition had been signed by 1 804 421 people, which was comprised of 1 708 167 indigenous Papuans and 96 254 Indonesian settlers. Dr Jim Elmslie estimates that this represents 70.88% of the indigenous Papuan population.²² Reportedly, hard copies of the petition were smuggled from area to area in West Papua after the Indonesian government blocked its distribution online.

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https://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace_conflict/docs/working_papers/West_Papuan_Demographics_in_2010_Census.pdf (26-12-2017)

²¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/east-timor-old-migration-challenges-worlds-newest-country> (26-12-2017)

²² <http://humanrightspapua.org/news/23-2017/273-papua-independence-petition-delivered-to-the-united-nations> (27-12-2017)



Above: West Papuans with copies of the independence referendum ready for presentation to the United Nations. The petition was signed by around 1.8 million mostly Papuans, representing about half of the population of all those residing in the land mass of West Papua. www.freewestpapua.org

The petition and its dramatic submission certainly attracted worldwide attention, but it also raises a potential problem for the West Papuan independence movement. What way would the other half of the population of West Papua vote, if given the opportunity? Moreover, given that almost all of this part of the population are non-Papuans, what incentive would they have for voting for independence? The cultural and ethnic divide between the Melanesian Papuans and the Austronesian Indonesians is one that can create animosity, given that the Austronesian transmigrants appear to be backed by the Indonesian government at the expense of the indigenous Melanesians. The strategy of large parts of the West Papuan independence movement seems to rely upon calling for a UN overseen referendum on independence. Yet if this was to come about, there seems little guarantee that the vote in favour of independence would be overwhelming, given that a little over half of the population are non-Papuan. This is not to deny the fact that elementary justice should allow some form of fair ballot to take place, to replace the discredited “Act of No-Choice”.

Religious divide

In addition to the ethnic division, there is also the religious aspect. The Austronesian transmigrants are overwhelmingly Islamic in religion, and it seems some of them are more strident in defending this than others. The Melanesian Papuans, apparently due to large scale missionary work, appear to be overwhelmingly Christian, which appears to co-exist with their tribal ties. There can be a perception, therefore, that the West Papuan independence movement is backing a Christian West Papua against a Muslim Indonesia. This potentially sets up an unhealthy dynamic in a world political environment where US imperialism has been guilty of deliberately whipping up extreme Islamophobia to generate support for its regime change wars, most recently in Syria.

There was an instance where a “Free West Papua Party” turned up to speak at a rally organised by the ultra-racist far-right group Reclaim Australia in Perth. Reportedly, some West Papua independence supporters also turned out to a Reclaim Australia event in Cairns. To its credit, large parts of the Free West Papua movement in Australia issued a statement expressly disassociating itself from the “Free West Papua Party” and from Reclaim Australia. The statement, signed by around 40 representatives of various West Papua independence supporters, rejected the use of racism or religious exclusion entirely, and especially in the case of the struggle for West Papua’s rights.²³ The statement did acknowledge some tension between Christianity and Islam in West Papua, but claimed that this tension has not yet generated into a religious conflict which has broken out in other parts of Indonesia. In our view, the Free West Papua movement needs to be more forthright in declaring that their movement does

not attempt to exclude anyone on a religious, cultural or ethnic basis.

Development divide

As in so many class struggles throughout history, the religious aspect is often a cover for very real class struggles bubbling away. This is reflected in the West Papuan divide between the relatively developed coastal cities and towns, and the overwhelmingly rural interior. Austronesian transmigrants predominate in the coastal cities, especially the capital Jayapura, and are the most prevalent in the jobs in the private sector, and those connected with commercial activity. These areas attract higher educated Indonesians, who also dominate in manufacturing, and an estimated 90% of jobs connected with trade.²⁴ As more transmigrants arrive in the West Papuan cities, they naturally form connections with “their own”, which affords them more job opportunities, which unfortunately crowds out indigenous Papuans.

Indigenous Papuans are then often forced back into economic activity such as subsistence farming, which is obviously not as lucrative, and which has little connection to the modern, cash and international economy. This, along with a lack of development in such areas, contributes to a justifiable resentment towards transmigrants, and towards Indonesia in general. While the Indonesian government is spending large amounts of money on West Papua, very little of it reaches the rural interior, overwhelmingly inhabited by indigenous Papuans. This leads to issues such as poorer education outcomes, where apparently 56% of Papuans have less than primary education, and 24% have remained illiterate. The lack of development indicators are stark, as in many rural Papuan interior areas, 80% of villages have no electricity, 90% have no telephone, and 83.5% have

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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B27n3cmOkql4OUQ3WTZyc0syU28/view> (27-12-2017)

²⁴ <http://apjif.org/2011/9/37/David-Adam-Stott/3597/article.html> (28-12-2017)

no access to banking or credit facilities.²⁵ Combine this with the fact that around half of Papuan villages are accessible only by dirt road, and one can see how many Papuans might follow the offered “solution” of independence.



Above: Part of the Trans Papua Road, being built across West Papua by the Indonesian government. West Papuan independence supporters need to articulate how an independent West Papua would be able to fund and maintain such infrastructure. At the same time, if such infrastructure is being built without adequate consultation with all those living in Papua, there is of course a case for demanding this. Image from www.infrastructureasiaonline.com

Infrastructure spending by Indonesian government

Perhaps in an effort to divert West Papuans from taking the path of demanding all out independence, the Indonesian government of President Joko Widodo (also known as “Jokowi”) has pledged to accelerate infrastructure development. Last February, the Indonesian government announced it was spending US \$371 million on infrastructure and housing in the provinces of Papua and West Papua, including a trans-West Papua highway.²⁶ The Indonesian

government has also prioritised the improvement of facilities at the regional airports at Saigun, Weror Tambrau, Marinda and Fakfak.²⁷ Plans for the building and running of a railway in West Papua are also well in the pipeline, with the proposal to run a railway line from the city of Sorong in the West through to Manokwari in the East, passing through South Sorong, Maybrak, Teluk Bintuni, South Manokwari and Manokwari.²⁸

Electricity infrastructure is also receiving Indonesian government investment. Joko Widodo announced the building of six new electricity infrastructure projects on his fifth visit in October 2016, including 4 hydro-electric power plants, and around 200 kilometres of power lines.²⁹ Much more would be needed to electrify all of West Papua, but it would seem the Indonesian government is keenly aware of the need for this infrastructure, and the need for it to be NOT seen as only benefiting Jakarta.

Military and political repression

Of course, all of the infrastructure development in the world is unlikely to completely offset other Papuan grievances, such as the military and political repression that it accompanies. The Indonesian military regard the raising of the West Papuan morning star flag as high treason, and often those who attempt to raise it risk long jail terms if caught. It is also claimed that 500 000 Papuans have perished in skirmishes with the Indonesian military. For their part, the Indonesian military claim they are only responding to an armed insurgency. The Indonesian military are accused of slaughtering pro-independence Papuan

ent-invests-rp-7-6t-in-infrastructure-in-papua-w-papua.html (28-12-2017)

²⁷ <https://en.antaranews.com/news/106427/president-prioritizes-infrastructure-development-in-west-papua> (28-12-2017)

²⁸ <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/321489/indonesia-steps-up-plans-for-west-papua-railway> (28-12-2017)

²⁹ <http://papuanews.org/jokowi-inaugurate-6-electricity-infrastructures-in-west-papua/> (28-12-2017)

²⁵ <http://apjff.org/2011/9/37/David-Adam-Stott/3597/article.html> (28-12-2017)

²⁶ <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/02/15/governm>

fighters, and, in turn, the Indonesian military accuse the Papuan militias of taking non-Papuans hostage.

There is also little doubt that the Australian government backs the Indonesian government's position, and "respects the territorial integrity" of the Indonesian archipelago. After the experience of East Timor, however, many Indonesians simply do not believe such Australian government assertions. Nevertheless, there appears to be strong evidence that Indonesia's Detachment 88 is trained and supplied by the Australian Federal Police.³⁰ Detachment 88 are suspected to have been behind the gunning down and murder of Mako Tabuni, who was at the time the deputy chairperson of the National Committee for West Papua (KNPB). In fact, it is not only the Australian Federal Police who "train" and "advise" the Indonesian police, but the police of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Canada.³¹

Independence with which politics?

In the case of East Timor in the early 1970s, the Indonesian government and its backers in Australia and the US appeared to be concerned, with some justification, that an independent East Timor would be a communist outpost, a Cuba in the Pacific. The political leadership of the various East Timorese pro-independence groups was certainly left-leaning. However, so far it appears that the politics of the various West Papuan independence groups are not so left wing. Many on the left perhaps understandably believe that an indigenous people fighting for their rights will automatically adopt progressive, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics. This is not usually the case, and in fact, in the absence of a strong trade union movement, or strong left-wing workers' parties, the politics can often tend towards liberalism – which is a component pillar of capitalism.

The Indonesian government is doing what it is doing to West Papua not because it is Indonesian, or because it is predominantly Islamic. The problem is *capitalism* in Indonesia, including West Papua, and of course including the United States, Australia and New Zealand. This is one reason why independence for West Papua – if this means the setting up of a small capitalist state in the Indonesian archipelago – will scarcely solve the problems that capitalism in the region is responsible for in West Papua – poverty, unemployment and under-development. East Timor is now discovering this, even as we can acknowledge that the Timorese are of course in a better situation without the presence of the Indonesian military.

From this distance, it appears that the politics of the various pro-independence West Papuan groups has not developed in an anti-capitalist, much less a socialist direction. Some leftists will point to Lenin's support for the right of nations to self-determination as justification for endorsing the West Papuan independence movement wholesale. Yet Lenin also always stressed that the interests of socialism and the interests of the socialist revolution take priority over a struggle for national self-determination. That is, working people cannot discount a genuine desire for national self-determination, especially that of a former colonial country. At the same time, nationalism has its own logic. If you wage a campaign on strongly nationalist terms, it often directly leads to recognising the nationalism of all nations – even the huge imperialist powers, which are responsible for your oppression in the first place. The nationalism of a small nation, thus often becomes dependent on larger and stronger patrons. Hence the West Papuan independence movement, as much as it criticises Australian and British government backing of the Indonesian government, at the same time appeals to Australian and British parliamentarians to raise and

³⁰ <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2012-08-28/papuans-claim-australian-link-to-death-squad/4228710> (29-12-2017)

³¹ <http://www.jclec.org/stakeholders> (29-12-2017)

fight for West Papuan independence within their “corridors of power”. The independence movement, in fact, becomes dependent on the large states it inveigles us to campaign against.



Above: Map showing the relative size of West Papua (In dark shade) to the rest of Indonesia. West Papua is some 25% of the land mass of Indonesia, with a relatively small percentage of the population. This is one reason the Indonesian government gives for its transmigration programs, as well as developing the infrastructure of an area of the Indonesian archipelago which has previously not seen it. This does not mean that the Indonesian government’s development of West Papua benefits all Papuans, especially indigenous Papuans. Image from www.news.mongabay.com

Under world capitalism, a small state can barely survive unless it has the backing of very large states. This is why an alternative for West Papua should be a perspective of uniting the working class of all of Papua – non-Papuan and Papuan alike – in a struggle to overthrow capitalism in Papua, Indonesia, and throughout the Asia-Pacific, not the least in Australia and New Zealand. Independence gained in this way would have the potential to address the issues of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment in West Papua, concern over which is currently being

directed towards a movement for (capitalist) independence. This requires the building of Marxist vanguard parties in Papua and Indonesia in the struggle for a socialist Asia-Pacific.

As far away as this perspective may appear, nationalism ultimately offers very little for the working people of Papua. It also does not advance the class struggle in neighbouring Australia, where solidarity can end up being an exercise to lobby for concessions from the Australian government – rather than working to delegitimise the ruling class in the eyes of the workers. Nevertheless, it can be recognised that the West Papuan people should have the right to determine their own affairs, if indeed this is what they choose, up to and including the right to secede to form their own state. Such a binding referendum, however, would have to include the entire 3.5 million people who inhabit West Papua, indigenous and non-indigenous alike.

Working people internationally should also demand the Indonesian government allow all political activity in West Papua, including that which agitates for independence, to proceed without interference. The flying of the morning star flag should not attract any punishment, let alone jail terms. At the same time, working people should urge the West Papuan independence movement to link with non-Papuans in Papua and Indonesia in a joint struggle against Indonesian capitalism – which is underwritten by its imperialist sponsors. A socialist West Papua as part of an Indonesian workers’ republic would vastly advance the interests of the workers of West Papua, and spur on class struggle throughout the Asia-Pacific. This would be a movement worth fighting for.

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CHANGE, ABOLISH OR OVERTHROW?

WHICH WAY TO INDIGENOUS JUSTICE?



Above: The start of the January 26 Invasion Day Rally in Melbourne in 2018. Image from www.heraldsun.com

By Paul Nave

26-01-2018 – As the calendar marks another January 26, the spotlight is once again focused on the revealing fact that Australia's national day marks the beginning of an attempted extermination war fought against the indigenous people of this land. The war raged for 150 years, and its legacy remains burned into the very establishment of the imposed capitalism the British Empire spread in the days of its colonial "grandeur". In many ways the war continues, and Aboriginal people still cop the iron heel of oppression which no amount of "reconciliation" can gloss over. For example, Aboriginal people

represent no more than 3% of the total Australian population, yet make up 28% of the prison population. A staggering 48% of juveniles in police custody are Aboriginal. The United States of America was founded on African-American chattel slavery, yet today 0.6% of African-American men and women languish in the notoriously overpopulated US prison system. By contrast, 6.7% of Aboriginal men and women are behind bars in the "wide brown land".³²

³²

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/aboriginal-prison-rates> (18-01-2018)

The life expectancy gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people remains at around 10 years, with Aboriginal people perishing, on average, 10 years before non-indigenous people. By the government's own figures, much greater incidences of circulatory, respiratory, nutritional and endocrine related disease account for most of this, as well as increased rates of cancer.³³ Figures for the rates of indigenous employment are particularly galling. As recently as 2015, less than half (46%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 15 were employed.³⁴ The housing conditions for indigenous people, especially in remote areas, are arguably worse than comparable Third World standards. On Palm Island, there is an average of 17 people per household staying or living there, often in only 3 bedroom dwellings. In the Northern Territory (NT), 90% of all homeless people are Aboriginal, and the NT is the location for 60% of all "severely overcrowded dwellings".³⁵ The "cashless welfare" trials – first used only on Aboriginal people, where welfare payments are quarantined onto a credit card – directly sets up apartheid like system of open public discrimination.³⁶ These elements are only a part of the real oppression faced by the first inhabitants of what became Australia, a presence that pre-dated British colonialism by some 60 000 years. White Australia does indeed have a Black history, but one that is continually trampled on – with January 26 as the "national day" representing an open wound.

Change the Date or Abolish Australia Day?

³³ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/mortality-life-expectancy-2008-2012/contents/summary> (20-01-2018)

³⁴ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4714.0~2014-15~Main%20Features~Labour%20force%20characteristics~6> (20-01-2018)

³⁵ <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/overcrowded-houses> (20-01-2018)

³⁶ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-02-15/shopping-with-basics-card-like-apartheid/331940> (20-01-2018)

January 26 marks the first landing of Captain Cook at Sydney Cove in 1788. From that date, the genocide and dispossession of the Aboriginal people began (hence "Invasion Day"). It was not until 1967 that Aboriginal people were officially recognised as part of the Australian population. This stark injustice has been protested by Aboriginal people and their supporters for decades – the first known protests taking place in 1938. Australia was established as a colonial-settler state, but genuinely acknowledging the prior custodianship of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would call into question the legitimacy of the Australian nation. Hence, the Australian ruling class attempt to deny this history, while its police and state institutions deal out horrific levels of repression against indigenous people.

In recent years, demands to change the date of Australia Day have become louder and louder, prompting the radio station Triple J to cease playing its "Hottest 100" on January 26. Last year in Melbourne, Invasion Day protests gathered a crowd of 50 000. The Australian Greens have been prominent in supporting demands to change the date of Australia's national day from January 26 to another day. A Greens Victorian MP, who is herself indigenous, reportedly received death threats for suggesting that the Australian flag should be flown at half-mast on January 26, to recognise that the day is a day of mourning for many Aboriginal people.³⁷ Struggles to change the date of Australia Day will need to confront and defeat the prevalent racism that has resulted from its colonial history.

This year, the Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR) have raised the demand "Abolish Australia Day", seemingly as a counter to the demand to #changethedate. WAR play a tremendous organisational role in facilitating and enabling political action to fight the ongoing injustices

³⁷ <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/aboriginal-mp-receives-vile-threats-over-australia-day-flag-call-20180119-h0l51i.html> (20-01-2018)

perpetrated against Indigenous people. WAR certainly have a point that the “change the date” demand is being backed by some conservative and mainstream elements, who seek to foster a kind of liberal nationalism. The Greens and the ABC funded Triple J are certainly at the forefront of this drive, but it is even backed by some employers. However, while the struggle of the Aboriginal people against their oppression is always progressive, it does not necessarily flow that the politics of the leading Aboriginal groups will follow in this direction. WAR’s political program is that of Aboriginal nationalism.³⁸ We argue that all nationalisms represent a dead end for working people, and Aboriginal nationalism, especially the separatist variety sometimes given credence by WAR, is also problematic.

Below: Australian Greens leader Richard Di Natale supporting the “Change the Date” campaign. The Greens support for Change the Date is a reflection of the views of the “liberal” wing of the ruling class, who can live with a change of the national day, given that its profits will be unaffected. At the same time, this demand should be critically supported by working people and their indigenous allies. www.theaustralian.com.au



In asserting their own Aboriginal nationalism, by raising the demand “Abolish Australia Day”, WAR effectively deny the only national identity available

to their non-indigenous allies, the most important of which is the multi-racial working class. For workers, neither is Australian nationalism the answer, as the fundamental division, as in all capitalist societies, is between the working class and the ruling (capitalist) class. However, we argue that the demand to change the date of Australia’s national day should be given **critical support** by working people, *only insofar as it represents the wresting of an important concession from the elite* who are responsible for the oppression of both the indigenous people and the working people. The support is critical, because it can easily be recognised that liberal and conservative working class opponents (corporations, employers, NGOs, the Greens and even some within the ALP and the LNP) can also come behind this demand – and some already have.

What is a nation?

Russian revolutionary leader VI Lenin once quipped a nation is “the bourgeoisie together with the proletariat”. This apparently off-hand remark nonetheless exposes all nationalisms as inimical to the interests of working people, in Australia and internationally. Marxists recognise that nations correspond to a particular socio-economic mode of production (capitalism), which came into existence with its rise, but will fade away into irrelevance once it stagnates into decay, to be replaced by a superior and higher mode of production (socialism). Nations are constituted historically, politically and economically, over a period of time. There is no doubt that the Australian nation was founded on barbaric genocide against the Aboriginal people, who were forcibly dispossessed. The profit system was then established on the mainland as well as surrounding islands, on the backs of the exploitation of wage labour. Despite the Aboriginal people not being fully integrated into the working class, through no fault of their own, it is the shared oppression that the Aboriginal people experience alongside Australian workers which is the key to their liberation. This remains

³⁸

https://issuu.com/BrisbaneBlacks/docs/war_manifesto_d91595ceee8754 (20-01-2018)

the case even as we recognise that the oppression of Aboriginal people is in many ways more substantial than that of working class oppression.



www.abc.net.au

The demand to Abolish Australia Day certainly sounds militant, but does not offer a way forward. WAR are correct to imply that simply changing the date of Australia's national day will do little to address the ongoing issues the Aboriginal people face. We do not critically support a minor reform in order to thereby garner greater support for the Australian nation, much less the billionaire class which rules Australia. On the contrary, we critically support democratic reforms in order to allow the best conditions for the building of working class opposition to capital – the real source of Indigenous and working class oppression. Minor reforms, once achieved, tend to highlight the fact that conditions have not substantially changed, and attention often then turns to more basic aspects of capitalist exploitation.

WAR can also refer to indigenous people as "First Nations People". Through this they imply that the approximately 500 Aboriginal tribes which inhabited what is now known as Australia were actually nations – either already established or in the making. These did occupy certain areas of the continent, and spoke their own languages. But the possibility of an Aboriginal nation – either one single one or five hundred small ones - coming into being through mutual economic exchange and the development of a definite political economy was

annihilated by the invading British colonialists, who went on to establish their own nation over the top of the remnants of their brutal conquests.

This nation today contains vast inequality, being a component link in the chain of global capitalism, not to speak of being a willing vassal of US imperialism. As such, its economy today is in dire recession, and has been since the onset of the "global" financial crisis in 2008. Unemployment, poverty, homelessness, relentless de-funding of health and education are just some of the inevitable results. What is needed is the **overthrow** of the rule of capital and the establishing of a workers government, as part of the first rounds fired in struggle for world socialism. Only with workers in power will the long suffering Aboriginal people have a chance to seriously address their intolerable material conditions. In part, WAR does recognise the necessity for working class support, through their various contacts with some Unions.

For revolutionary integration

To be sure, it is understandable that some Aboriginal groups may make the error of adopting variations of cultural or black nationalism **in the absence** of a strong working class and left-wing movement. The chief culprits for this dire state of political affairs, where most younger workers can barely imagine what class struggle looks like, are the conservative and craven careerists of the trade Union bureaucracy, who ideologically defend capitalist rule. With a few exceptions, these well-paid Union careerists have almost totally abandoned the Aboriginal people to their fate – when they should be at least helping to mobilise workers to defend indigenous rights. This manifest misleadership of the Unions is assisted by some left parties, who recognise the betrayal of the Union leaders, but fear a political break with them.

In a similar way in which the Black Panther Party in the US was formed as a reaction against the tame liberalism of Martin Luther King, WAR appears to be a militant Aboriginal reaction to the abject lack

of Union-led defence of the oppressed people of Australia, and the lack of a strong left-wing workers party. Despite the heroic bravery of the Black Panthers, their black nationalism impeded their political development in the direction of genuine Marxism – despite some adopting off-cuts of Maoism. The Black Panthers were unable, or chose not, to link with the US working class, and thus were eventually eliminated by the murderous police actions of the US state. We sincerely hope that nothing like this will be the fate of WAR, but their adoption of the ideas of Aboriginal and/or cultural nationalism loom as a barrier to forming the necessary bonds with Australian workers.



Above: Brisbane Invasion Day Rally 2018. www.sbs.com.au

A bridge must be found between the primitive socialism of the Aboriginal tribes and the advanced socialism which supersedes capitalism as a higher mode of production, where advanced technology is used for the purpose of reducing, and eventually eliminating, alienated labour. That bridge is the multi-racial and multi-ethnic Leninist vanguard party, **integrating** the most class-conscious militants from amongst the Aboriginal, migrant and Australian born working class communities. Such a party will champion Aboriginal liberation as a component part of the socialist revolution which must overturn the rule of the banks, the CEOs, and the stock exchange.

The centralised political power of the ruling elite, with its army, its courts, its prisons and civil service

must be met by the centralised political power of the working class, despite all manner of its heterogeneous cultures, backgrounds, indigenous and non-indigenous heritage, languages and so on. So long as the majority of Australian workers follow, or cannot articulate an opposition to, conservative Union leaderships, there will be no revolution – and no liberation for Aboriginal people – in this country. A revolutionary workers party is aimed at resolving this crucial issue. Let us build it now.

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Above top: Joy Brimble at the Brisbane Invasion Day Rally 2018. Above below: Two protestors in Melbourne displaying "not happy Jan26" shirts. www.abc.net.au

ISRAEL/USA: HANDS OFF PALESTINE AND SYRIA!



By Kurt Unmack

10-12-2017 – The nightmare scenario has come true. Last Wednesday, US President Donald Trump fulfilled one of his campaign promises to recognise Jerusalem as the political capital of Israel, and to relocate the US embassy from Tel Aviv. Outrage in response shot around the world, and there was even opposition from within Trump's own cabinet. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defence Secretary James Mattis reportedly opposed the moving of the US embassy to Jerusalem, mainly out of concern for the safety of US diplomatic staff.³⁹ It would be a mistake, however, to view this move as some new outrage that Trump alone was

determined to push. In June this year, the US Senate voted 90 to zero passing a resolution affirming that Jerusalem remains the "undivided" capital of Israel.⁴⁰ There was not one vote against from the Democrats or Republicans, although there were ten abstentions.

The response from Palestinians has been swift and decisive. Demonstrations have hit the streets, after the ultimate outrage from the Trump administration, on top of 69 years of Israeli military occupation, funded, armed and backed by the US Empire. Reportedly there have already been three Palestinians killed in by the Israeli Defence Force

³⁹ <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/363616-mattis-tillerson-warned-trump-of-security-concerns-in-israel-embassy-move> (10-12-17)

⁴⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/senate-unanimously-passes-bill-marking-50-years-since-jerusalem-reunification/> (10-12-17)

(IDF), and 750 injured. The IDF has apparently bombed several sites throughout Gaza, and has targeted towns such as East Jabaliya and Khan Yunis.⁴¹ Huge demonstrations in solidarity with Palestine have taken place in European cities such as Paris. Most notably, tens of thousands of Yemenis, even under the terrible conditions of a Saudi-led war against them, have taken to the streets of Sanaa in solidarity with Palestine.

Selective “gates of Hell”

Many in the East and West have commented that Trump’s attempt to move the US embassy to Jerusalem will open the “gates of Hell”. For much of the Palestinian solidarity movement in the West, however, they are quite selective as far as these scenarios play out. For the last six years, the “gates of Hell” have been a reality in neighbouring Syria, but most Western supporters of Palestine have been as quiet as a church mouse on that issue. This is despite the fact that if the US government, in concert with the Zionist Israeli state, had been able to overthrow and destroy the Syrian Arab Republic through its ISIS proxies, Palestine’s “gates of Hell” would have been opened years ago. It is doubtful that Palestine could survive in the Middle East without Syria and its allies Iran and Hezbollah – which, along with Russia, played a key role in defeating the US/UK and Israeli backed genocidal mercenaries they sent into Syria.

This Palestinian solidarity movement is now moving into gear, pretending as if the US/Israeli proxy war did not happen. In the case of Israel, it was a direct war on Syria. The IDF military has repeatedly bombed Syria during the last six years, of which the Western Palestinian solidarity movement, especially in Australia, said not one word. Even Al Jazeera, the news outlet which played an abysmal role during the US/Israeli war for regime change on Syria, sometimes reports on

the Israeli attacks on Syria.⁴² In September, October and November of this year, the Israeli military has struck targets within Syria. It aims to take out Hezbollah and especially Iranian military activity. Iran was specifically invited by the Syrian government, as was Russia, to assist in the defence against the US armed mercenaries, which went under many names – Al Qaeda, Al Nusra, ISIS and others. Needless to say, the Zionist Israeli state has no legal authority to decide who the Syrian government can invite into Syria – but then it attempts to bomb them anyway. This is a war crime – but the Western Palestinian solidarity movement only moves when Israel bombs Palestine, but not Syria.



Above: Graphic showing just some of the Israeli air strikes on Syria, which have occurred regularly for years. Unfortunately, most of the Palestinian solidarity movement are silent when Israel bombs Syria. Image from www.legalinsurrection.com

To be sure, some Palestinian solidarity activists are well aware of the role of the Israeli state in the war on Syria. It was not as if it was hidden. This role extended to Israel not only regularly bombing Syria – but expressly working with the major barbarian terrorist groups. The reports of the Israeli state treating wounded Al Qaeda fighters at no cost in their hospitals are legion. But it goes much further

⁴¹ <http://www.theleadersnews.com/israel-bombs-gaza-750-palestinians-injured-3-dead/> (11-12-17)

⁴²

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/israel-attacking-syria-171023081211645.html> (11-12-17)

– there is evidence that the Israeli state provided logistical and financial aid to all Al Qaeda allied mercenaries who then committed unspeakable war crimes against innocent Syrians.⁴³ Pioneering whistle-blower Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, posted an interview with former Mossad (Israeli secret service) chief Efraim Halevy, and reported that the Israeli government was “quite openly backing Al Qaeda in Syria.”⁴⁴

Australian rulers join imperialist slaughter

Canberra, as usual, backed the Israeli/US war on Syria, even sending troops and jet fighters to Iraq and Syria. Again large parts of the Palestinian solidarity movement on these shores was silent, either out of confusion or out of deference to those left parties, which had not only abandoned their earlier vocal support for Julian Assange and Wikileaks,⁴⁵ but had swung behind arguably the dirtiest imperialist war of regime change in world history. These Australian left parties were even silent when the Australian government admitted bombing Syria on September 16, 2016,⁴⁶ killing Syrian soldiers. These actions, or inactions, earned them the ignominious nickname of “the imperial left”. These parties – and unfortunately large parts of the Palestinian solidarity movement – ignored the fact that while the treacherous Hamas leadership openly backed Israeli/US orchestrated regime change in Syria, several other Palestinian armed groups joined the operations to defend Syria. The most notable was the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), but there were other Palestinian militias who fought with the Syrian pro-government forces. This includes Liwa Al-Quds, Jaysh al-Tahrir al-

⁴³ <https://www.alternet.org/grayzone-project/israeli-support-al-qaeda-allied-forces-syria> (13-12-17)

⁴⁴ <https://twitter.com/julianassange/status/857891820801581060?lang=en> (13-12-17)

⁴⁵ <https://redfireonline.com/2017/12/03/free-julian-assange-no-to-the-new-mccarthyism/> (13-12-17)

⁴⁶ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-18/australian-jets-involved-in-botched-air-strike-on-syrian-army/7855610> (13-12-17)

Falastini, and Quwat al-Jalil.⁴⁷ As far as we are being told, Australian troops are still in Iraq and Syria, and the Australian government has not issued any statement against the Trump Administration’s outrageous provocations on Jerusalem. Working people here can help undermine the Australian government’s subordination to Israeli/US designs by demanding: ***Australian Troops: Out of the Middle East!***



Above: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi declares victory over ISIS in his country on December 9, 2017. While warning against ISIS sleeper cells, Al-Abadi stated that ISIS had effectively been removed from Iraqi territory. www.thetimes.co.uk

Israel/US/ISIS defeated in Syria

It does not seem a coincidence that the latest US imperialist provocation on Jerusalem comes at almost exactly the same moment that the final defeat of Israeli/US proxies ISIS has been announced. On December 9, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi declared final victory over ISIS, after three years of operations.⁴⁸ Russian President Vladimir Putin made a surprise visit to Hmeimim near Latakia in Syria, effectively announcing that the task to retain Syria as a unitary sovereign state was complete. He also warned that should the

⁴⁷ <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/quwat-al-jalil-a-pro-assad-palestinian-syrian-militia/> (13-12-17)

⁴⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-islamicstate/iraq-declares-final-victory-over-islamic-state-idUSKBN1E30B9> (13-12-17)

terrorists (ISIS) again raise their heads, they will again face further strikes, such that they “haven’t seen so far”.⁴⁹ In short, Israel and the US, along with Saudi Arabia, France, the United Kingdom, Australia and others (Turkey initially, but it switched sides) suffered a humiliating defeat in Syria. Imperialism in Syria was defeated by the heroic Syrian defence, with the assistance of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. While some US troops and other terrorists remain in Syria, overall its defeat in Syria is a victory for the workers of the world, and arguably the first defeat of US imperialism since the Vietnam War.

Indignant, the US Empire has lashed out in many directions, including against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or “North Korea”), threatening the Asian region and the entire world with nuclear war. Even despite the very real possibility of total annihilation, the DPRK’s heroic defiance of the US has matched that of its ally Syria. The DPRK’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement condemning the Trump Administration’s declarations on Jerusalem, and pledged support and solidarity with “the Palestinians and other Arab peoples in their just cause to regain their legitimate rights”.⁵⁰ The imperial left, which is hostile to the DPRK as well as towards Syria, again misreads anti-imperialist direction.

Which way to Palestinian liberation?

While we can support the **actions** of the governments of Syria, Iran, Russia and also Hezbollah in defeating US imperialism in Syria, thereby protecting Palestine, we also recognise that only one form of anti-imperialism has a chance of forever removing the mortal danger. That is the anti-imperialism of a combined working class

⁴⁹ <http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/16872/putin-declares-victory-during-sudden-syria-visit-assembles-grand-regional-strategy> (13-12-17)

⁵⁰ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/north-korea-condemns-dotard-trump-over-jerusalem/articleshow/61997477.cms> (13-12-17)

movement to overthrow capitalism in the Middle East, which is underpinned by US led imperialism. This requires the building of genuine Marxist vanguard parties in the Middle East, and internationally, as well as on Australian shores. As far away as this perspective currently seems, there is little other option. In fact, the current impasse highlights the express limits of all the political variants of the Palestinian liberation movement which have thus far been attempted.



Above: The flags of Palestine (left) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). The DPRK government, which does not recognise Israel, issued a statement condemning US President Donald Trump’s statement that Jerusalem be recognised as the capital of Israel. Many in the Palestinian solidarity movement, however, remain hostile to the DPRK, which does not assist building anti-imperialist pressure against the US Empire, especially on the issue of the liberation of Palestine.

www.democracyandclassstruggle.blogspot.com

The recent actions of the Trump Administration on Jerusalem show how the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement misfires. While BDS appeals to imperialist governments (sanctions) to bring the Israeli state to heel, it is plain to see that it is imperialism which maintains the Zionist Israeli state, and that therefore imperialist governments (whether US/AUST/UK/FRA etc.) cannot be allies in the struggle for Palestinian liberation. Nor can, or should, the profit-gouging corporations (divestment) be allies, which act as an arm of the

imperialist states. And asking workers with a trifling amount of disposable income (boycott) due to capitalist recession to buy their way to geo-political strength is like wishing for magic.



Above: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh meeting with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad in 2006. Hamas treacherously sided with the US/ISIS/Al Qaeda/Saudi/Israeli powers gunning for regime change in Syria, despite their stated hostility to Zionist Israel. Islamist leadership is not capable of effectively leading Palestine to liberation.
www.thehindu.com

The traitorous actions of Hamas in effectively siding with Israel and the US against Syria directly exposes them and highlights how Islamist leadership ultimately is neither anti-imperialist nor anti-capitalist. Nor is the dead end of Palestinian nationalism, whether in the form of the hopelessly corrupted Mahmoud Abbas, the former PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) negotiator Saeb Erekat, or much of the Western Palestinian solidarity movement, largely headed by parts of the imperial left. The reason is that all of these political forces, through various means, act and aim for a **capitalist** Palestine, which they call a “free” or “independent” Palestine. But even if this was possible, this would not address the poverty, unemployment and economic malaise which blight both Palestine and Israel. Both the “two-state” and the “one-state” options do not propose to change

the existing *mode of production*, leaving Palestinian solidarity activists, in an act of cognitive dissonance, to campaign for capitalism in the Middle East.

The fact is that capitalism in the Middle East cannot be overthrown without the joint efforts of both Arab and Hebrew workers in Palestine and Israel. This can only be carried out through a joint struggle for *socialist revolution*, culminating in a bi-national Arab-Hebrew workers state (i.e. NOT a capitalist state). Palestinian workers cannot deal with their sell-out bourgeoisie without the aid of the millions strong Israeli proletariat, and the Israeli working class cannot rid itself of the deeply ingrained Zionist ideology without linking with Palestinian workers in the same struggle. Here in Australia, workers can aid this struggle by working directly to undermine the pro-Zionist ruling class, not least by demanding the ripping up of the Australia-US (war) alliance. **ISRAEL/USA/AUST: HANDS OFF PALESTINE AND SYRIA!**

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LET THE RUSSIANS PLAY! NO TO THE NEW COLD WAR



Above: Russia as a country was banned from the 2018 Winter Olympics for alleged “state sponsored” doping of athletes. No hard evidence was produced, but Russian athletes who were allowed to participate had to compete under the flag of “Olympic Athlete from Russia (OAR)”. Above are some of the jerseys worn by some of the ice hockey players. www.weaponews.com

By Leo Rose

As if the McCarthyist hysteria could not possibly get any more deceitful, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) recently issued a statement banning Russia from participation at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea (“Republic of Korea” or ROK). Claiming that Russia systematically manipulated anti-doping rules during the Sochi Winter Olympic Games in 2014 and since, the IOC Executive Board effectively banned the Russian uniform, the Russian flag and the Russian anthem from the 2018 games. Amongst other measures seemingly out of the script of a 1960s era James Bond film, the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) was suspended from the IOC, ROC President Alexander Zhukov was suspended as a member of the IOC, and the Russian Minister of Sport (Vitaly Mutko) and his

deputy (Yuri Nagornyykh) were banned from any participation in all future Olympic Games.⁵¹

On hearing this, one might think that the IOC must have a mountain of substantial evidence to take such vast and sweeping steps. But, no, the IOC has based its outrageous actions on the Schmid Report – which is based on the “testimony” of a Russian who defected to the US in 2015, and is now under a US witness protection program. Grigory Rodchenkov, whose defection previously led to the McLaren Report which then led to the partial ban of Russia from the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and the total ban of Russia from the Paralympics, doesn’t deny that he has been involved in serious wrongdoing. Russia’s own Investigative Committee into the matter declared that it had enough

⁵¹ <https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-suspends-russian-noc-and-creates-a-path-for-clean-individual-athletes-to-compete-in-pyeongchang-2018-under-the-olympic-flag> (09-12-17)

evidence to show that Rodchenkov had destroyed the doping tests of Russian athletes required by world anti-doping agencies, as well as the letters asking as to their whereabouts.⁵² This was done for his own financial gain – and reports have it that he now has a fancy apartment and a brand new ‘Infinity’ car in the US provided for him.

That is, the Russian government has admitted that there were serious and illegal moves on the part of Rodchenkov and a group of his contacts while they operated in sports labs in Russia. They admit this was a crime, and have moved to prosecute Rodchenkov, and have called for his extradition from the US to do so. What the Russian government has expressly denied, however, are the repeated claims by the IOC and others within the US government that Rodchenkov’s malfeasance was in any way “state sponsored” or directed from the Russian government, and certainly not ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin. In fact, they have stated that the Schmid Report concurs with their own findings – guilt on the part of Rodchenkov, but no evidence at all of the deception of the world anti-doping bodies by the Russian Ministry of Sports or the Russian government.⁵³ The Russian government doesn’t deny that doping is a problem in elite sports in every country, including their own. But the relentless US claims of state-sponsored sports doping in Russia is nothing more than a tissue of lies.

The corruption of Olympic legitimacy

Any remnants of impartiality, fairness and sportsmanlike conduct from the bodies running the Olympics now lie in shreds, if indeed they existed in the first place. The Olympic Committees are being used as tools in the New Cold War against Russia, succumbing to political pressure originating

from Washington – or perhaps being handsomely paid to act as mouthpieces. The IOC doesn’t hide that it is sponsored by some of the largest capitalist corporations in the world, almost all of them headquartered in the West, or in countries allied to the US, such as Japan and South Korea. General Electric, Toyota, Samsung, Proctor & Gamble, Bridgestone, Coca-Cola, Dow Chemical, Intel, and Visa are amongst them.⁵⁴ The Chinese based Alibaba is also there, which may be one reason why China has not been targeted in the Olympic aspect of the New Cold War.

The Olympics are supposed to be about sport. In a class divided society, and in a world where the US Empire is struggling to maintain its unipolar world, we would be naïve to believe that politics does not play a role. But the current level of the manipulation of the Olympic movement to serve the deadly political interests of US imperialism beggars belief. In the same way in which there is zero evidence to back the absurd claim that Russia interfered with the 2016 US presidential elections, there is zero evidence to back the lurid claim that there is a “state-sponsored” program of sports doping in Russia. It is precisely on zero evidence, though, that McCarthyism, old or new, functions. All that is needed is attempted smear and baseless allegations, repeated many times by Western governments and the corporate media arms which are effectively capitalist state media. As the saying goes, a lie repeated a thousand times eventually becomes accepted as truth. Yet working people do not always buy the snake oil.

The thoroughly corrupted officials of the Olympic movement have also maintained their ban on the Russian Paralympic Team, which was banned from participation in the Rio Paralympics. This move is beneath contempt. Disabled people face a lifetime of difficulty and hardship, enduring practical and social isolation, a lack of acceptance, and physical travails that few able-bodied people have to even

⁵² <http://russia-insider.com/en/ill-destroy-all-russian-olympic-sports-next-5-years-shocking-statements-runaway-wada-informant> (09-12-17)

⁵³ <http://tass.com/sport/979259> (09-12-17)

⁵⁴ <https://www.olympic.org/sponsors> (09-12-17)

contemplate, let alone deal with on a daily basis. All measures to include the physically and mentally disabled to take part in society at a level which they are able should be encouraged, not discouraged. Paralympic sport is one activity that can give some disabled people some meaning, and even some recognition, in their lives. The fact that Washington does not blink twice in causing immense hardship to the disabled people of Russia in order to maintain their rotting carcass of world “leadership” speaks volumes about who they are. It also exposes Russophobia as something particularly loathsome.

Payback for defeat in Syria

As transparently false as the claims of state backed Russian sport doping are, there are very real political reasons why this nonsensical game is wheeled out time and again. Principally, the main reason is that Russia upheld what was left of international law and intervened in Syria – at the invitation of the Syrian government – to take on and militarily defeat the regime change war waged by the US government. The US was backed in this atrocious proxy war by the governments of the United Kingdom, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Israel, Australia, Canada, Denmark and others. Of course, this was all done in the dirtiest way possible – the direct funding and arming of genocidal mercenary terrorists flown or trucked into the Syrian Arab Republic. These barbarians, under a myriad of names – ISIS, Al Qaeda, Al Nusra, the “Free Syrian Army”, the “Syrian Democratic Forces” – unleashed the most merciless horror in history upon the people of Syria, especially those who were seen to be supporting their own secular government, led by President Bashar Al-Assad. This war caused the deaths of up to 400 000 people, the overwhelmingly majority of whom were Syrian civilians or Syrian soldiers defending their country. It was arguably accompanied by the largest compendium of lies and media distortions of the truth of any war previously seen.



Above: A Russian strike fighter operates in the skies over Syria. Russia’s air power was used to defeat ISIS in Syria, which had always been operating as US government proxies. The US government could not intervene, for then it would have been obvious to the world who was really backing ISIS. For defeating the US backed mercenaries in Syria, the US government has returned fire in every conceivable way, from accusing Russia of hacking their presidential election (without evidence), to strong arming the International Olympic Committee into banning Russia from taking part at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. Photo from the Russian Defence Ministry.

Currently, this war is in some parts still live. Israeli Defence Force jets still sporadically bomb parts of Syria.⁵⁵ Largely, however, the US war for regime change in Syria was defeated, and Russia’s contribution, beginning on September 30, 2015, was decisive. Russian air power, via the superbly engineered SU-24 and SU-25 jet fighters, dealt blow after blow against the Western armed ISIS forces. With the assistance of Iran – who were also invited by the Syrian government – and the fighters of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, Washington’s regime change manoeuvres came to zilch. The Russian government expertly checkmated the US deep state by inviting the US government to take part in the war against ISIS. The US was paralysed, as it would lose too much political face by coming to the aid of ISIS – which

⁵⁵ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/lebanese-media-israel-bombed-hezbollah-weapons-depot-in-syria/> (09-12-17)

was a CIA operation to start with. Neither did the US want Russia to gain any legitimacy by joining with them to take out their own intelligence assets. Politically exposed, the US stood down, gradually withdrawing logistical support for the ISIS Frankenstein.

Crimea goes home

The defeat of the US in Syria was arguably its first defeat in a major imperialist war since Vietnam. This burns the US deep state, and their operatives in the Democrats and the Republicans, more deeply than anything else. No one is supposed to be able to stand up to the US, let alone defeat their war plans. But it was not only the people of Syria, and Iran, and Russia, and Hezbollah that dared to defy the US. The population of Crimea did also, in response to the US led NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) installed fascist coup in Kiev in February 2014. The illegal coup, backed by fascists on the ground who literally hailed their predecessors who worked with the Nazis against the Soviet Union during World War II, presented Ukrainians with an ultimatum – succumb to NATO backed fascism, or get out.

Crimea had been “gifted” to Ukraine by then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1954.⁵⁶ Yet in reality, the overwhelming majority of Crimeans are ethnically Russian, and have been for centuries. When in fact Ukraine abolished the constitution of Crimea and sent in troops in 1995, no one in the West uttered a sound.⁵⁷ Now the Western media repeats over and over that Russia “annexed” Crimea. Actually, Crimeans voted overwhelmingly to re-join Russia, in March 2014, rather than live under NATO armed fascism from Kiev. How overwhelming? By a vote of at least 96%!⁵⁸ It doesn’t get any more convincing than that. Despite

⁵⁶ <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/why-did-russia-give-away-crimea-sixty-years-ago> (09-12-17)

⁵⁷ <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/03/28/so-who-annexed-crimea-peninsular-then.html> (09-12-17)

⁵⁸ <http://www.fort-russ.com/2015/02/crimea-was-it-seized-by-russia-or-did.html> (09-12-17)

this, the US and Western governments repeat endlessly that Russia “annexed” Crimea. In this instance, it was not even the actions of the Russian government which stymied regime change in Ukraine. Even voting in favour of re-joining Russia, in an area considered for centuries to be Russian anyway, and in order to avoid Nazi-led fascism - is enough for the US state to claim “Russian aggression”. The mind boggles.



Above: A billboard in Crimea warning of the very real options – union with Russia or occupation by Nazis. Given the recent NATO backed fascist coup in Kiev, quite understandably Crimeans voted overwhelmingly – by around 96% - to rejoin Russia. Crimeans are by a large majority ethnically Russian in any case. Western governments repeatedly lie to claim that Russia “annexed” Crimea. Yet Crimea is still falsely used by the Western media to claim, without basis, of Russian “aggression”. www.rt.com

Just who is meddling in whose elections?

The US orchestrated banning of Russia, via the IOC, is also calculated to cause maximum damage to the prestige of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who will be running as a candidate in the Russian elections of 2018. The US deep state also hopes that any showcasing that Russia will be able to do via the hosting of the 2018 (soccer) World Cup will likewise be undermined. These insidious moves expose once again the laughable claim of Russian meddling in the 2016 US Presidential Elections – the reality is entirely the other way around.

Washington's candidate in the Russian elections – Alexei Navalny – has been the recipient of funding from the notorious National Endowment for Democracy (NED)⁵⁹, the US deep state body charged with subverting and overthrowing governments, and/or countries, which are independent of the US and their allies. Navalny has been found guilty of embezzlement, and is currently banned from running in the Russian elections next year, due to this criminal conviction. Cue Washington's nefarious manipulating of the International Olympic Committee.



Above: Russian fans protest the IOC decision to ban Russia from the 2018 Winter Olympics at the World Cup Biathlon. Image from www.theguardian.com



www.abc.net.au

⁵⁹ [https://www.sott.net/article/290848-Meet-Alexei-Navalny-The-US-State-Departments-inside-man-for-regime-change-in-Russia-\(09-12-17\)](https://www.sott.net/article/290848-Meet-Alexei-Navalny-The-US-State-Departments-inside-man-for-regime-change-in-Russia-(09-12-17))

There is a crying need for an anti-imperialist anti-war movement, and not just because the US is hell bent on bringing Russia to heel. Working people will not be able to take the first step in defending their deteriorating living and working conditions unless they start to break from the foreign policy of Washington, backed as it is by Canberra. Unfortunately, most Australian left parties either agree with the targeting of Russia, or are silent in the face of anti-Russian hysteria. As we have mentioned previously, today's Russophobia contains elements of both racism and anti-communism **despite** the overthrow of socialism in the former Soviet Union more than 25 years ago. At the very least, workers should demand that all bans on Russian participation in the Olympics be lifted, as well as all Western trade sanctions.

The US has Russia in its gunsights, and any conflict with Russia will mean the catastrophe of nuclear war. Working people need to be clear that in this eventuality, the US ruling class, and not Russia, will be at fault. While the Russian government defends a form of capitalism within its own borders, which will eventually need to be overthrown by an insurgent working class, workers internationally must avoid at all costs inadvertently conspiring with the US to take down Russia, via US backed NGOs or indeed Alexei Navalny. In the meantime, Russia must be defended against NATO and US led brinkmanship, which is inching the world closer and closer to World War III. A desperately needed campaign to normalise relations with Russia can begin by demanding: *LET THE RUSSIANS PLAY!*

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QLD ELECTIONS 2017 – Little Choice for Working People

Statement of the Workers League



Above: The climate destroying Adani Coal Mine was one of the issues of the Queensland Election in 2017. www.350.org.nz

(The statement below was released by the Workers League in the run-up to the Queensland Election which took place on 25-11-2017. As it happened, the Labor Party was returned to government, while the Greens won a seat in the state parliament for the first time.)

The Queensland Elections, due to be held on November 25, 2017, offer almost nothing to the majority of working people. The economic crisis of the capitalist profit system grinds on, while corporations and the governments that serve them continue to make working people pay. Unemployment, poverty, housing distress, and a skyrocketing cost of living are just some of the obstacles many people face on a daily basis.

The Labor Party (ALP) government of Annastacia Palaszczuk has governed with a slim majority, overcoming the widely despised Liberal National Party (LNP) government of Campbell Newman, who shredded public services, jobs and civil liberties, in 2015. While the ALP has enacted some very minor legislative reforms, the notorious Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment bill, known as the VLAD laws, are still largely in place. These laws give the government effective power to ban any organisation, at any time. The economy is dragging itself along, more or less in recession. And the ALP has openly displayed its arrogance and disdain for people and the environment, not to say the Great Barrier Reef and the possible future of humanity, by strongly backing the Adani

coal mine in Central Queensland. This mine will pump out as much carbon as the entire country of New Zealand for the next 60 years – with unlimited ground water, a mining royalties holiday and much more. Palaszcuk's opportunistic announcement that an ALP government would veto the \$1 billion dollar loan from the federal government was a last minute ploy to give the impression that the Adani abomination will not go ahead. In reality, both an ALP and LNP government would barely stand in the way.

Unions have circulated material which points out that the LNP government is proposing \$11.6 billion worth of funding cuts – but they are not actually using the word “cuts”. Professor John Quiggin has calculated that this would equate to the elimination of 22 500 jobs from the public service. LNP leader Tim Nicholls claims that he has “learnt his lesson” from the disastrous axing of 14 000 jobs from the public service in 2012, when he was Treasurer. Like all establishment politician promises, such words are hot air. There may also be job cuts with an ALP government, as their budget costings also flagged a hacking into the public service, albeit not as many as would be likely with the LNP in governmental power.

The Greens are hoping that this election will be the first one in Queensland history to elect a Green Member of Parliament, or perhaps several. It is true that the Greens may be the beneficiary of a Labor Party which is giving inexcusable backing to the apocalyptic Adani Carmichael coal mine. The Greens are offering, at least on paper, some benefits that would benefit working people. Such things include the placing of retail, generation and distribution of electricity into public hands, \$1 public transport fares, longer leases and a cap on rents for those renting

housing, and the retention of public land for schools, public parks and public housing.⁶⁰

The Consumer Rights and No Tolls party are also offering some easing of the cost of living. Although running a handful of candidates, we agree with the abolition of all tolls on roads, and the keeping of power, water and roads publically owned and controlled. The abolition of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and free University education are also worth supporting.⁶¹

The Socialist Alliance is running a candidate (Kamala Emanuel) in the central Brisbane seat of McConnell. For working people, its policies on paper are largely supportable. The three main demands, if achieved, would be a step forward. The halting of the Adani coal mine, the removal of the medical procedure of abortion from the criminal code, and a vast expansion of public housing are positions that progressive minded people can agree on. The policies of taking back public assets already sold, no to privatisation and sell-offs, and job creation through public works programs would be a much needed counter to relentless cuts and outsourcing.⁶²

On the right, there is the potential danger of One Nation. Although One Nation did not achieve a substantial vote in the last Western Australian elections, Queensland is unfortunately the home of One Nation, and of Pauline Hanson. Like all far-right and potentially fascist parties, One Nation combines vicious racism with populist and even left-wing sounding positions. Politically aware workers are not fooled though – One Nation, while at the moment led by backward elements, could open the door to even more right-wing attacks on Unions and working people. One Nation also regularly votes with the Liberal Party

⁶⁰ <https://greens.org.au/qld/initiatives> (24-11-17)

⁶¹ <https://www.no-tolls.org/> (24-11-17)

⁶² <https://socialist-alliance.org/news/vote-1-kamala-emanuel-socialist-alliance-mcconnel> (24-11-17)

in the federal parliament, making a mockery of its claim to be for the battlers.

While One Nation appears to tack left by supporting a “people’s bank”, opposing the raising of the retirement age to 70, and opposition to the privatisation of water, gas and electricity, the undercurrent of ultra-nationalist racist bile is clear. For example, One Nation oppose the wearing of the burqa by women of the Islamic faith in public places, government buildings and schools, opposes the teaching and “infiltration” of Islam, and the building of any more Mosques with the bizarre claim that Australia is a “Christian country”. The stock standard blaming of immigration for “overloading” water, sewerage, housing and roads is laughable, but all too real.⁶³

Class struggle desperately needed

The fact that the potentially fascist One Nation is poised not only to win a substantial number of seats, but form government in concert with the LNP speaks volumes about the lack of class struggle in Queensland, and Australia generally. The mere existence of the far-right, buffoonish as they might be in the persona of Pauline Hanson, should sound urgent alarms amongst the left and the workers’ movement. There is a desperate need for a genuine class struggle workers’ movement not only to head off the right wing One Nation, but simply to defend themselves. Yet the leadership of the Union movement is arguably as conservative as it ever has been – barely active, or driving workers and Unions back into the ALP and/or the parliamentary system itself. The problems of vanishing penalty rates, high unemployment, casualisation of work – where it exists – are at crisis levels. This flows on to issues such as the blatant rip-off of electricity and water prices. Yet still there is no attempt by the Queensland Council of Unions, or Union

leaderships generally, to even begin to organise any kind of workers’ fightback.



Above: Graphic showing electricity prices doubling in Australia over a ten year period. All Queensland governments have effectively privatised electricity generation and distribution, causing rapid price increases. www.energymatters.com.au

These Queensland elections are a part of the show of parliament – one of the most effective ruses the ruling class uses to portray the illusion of democracy. The capitalist system only goes through the system of parliamentary charades due to the fact that it is easier for them to rule if the masses are convinced that they have some form of representation – or at least that they don’t yet know of an alternative. Parliaments, however, are set up to exclude the working class from the exercise of decision making, or political, power. A revolutionary workers’ party may decide to run in the elections run by the capitalist class, but it would do so with the aim of leading the workers beyond a parliament which does not represent them, to a workers’ government, underpinned by a workers’ state.

This internationalist workers party needs to be forged. In its absence, there is little choice on offer. In any case, there are no real solutions to be found for working people from the sham political system imposed upon them, nor from

⁶³ <http://www.onenation.com.au/principles> (24-11-17)

the elections they provide. Much more can be won for working people by positioning the conservative leaderships of the Unions, and building class struggle movements – culminating in a genuine workers’ party. However, there is a danger of even bigger setbacks if the outcome in these elections is an LNP, or an LNP/One Nation coalition government. Indeed, the left should be ready to organise a serious fightback should this outcome occur.

A critical vote

We therefore advise workers to cast a critical vote for non-LNP/One Nation candidates. We advise a critical vote for the Socialist Alliance where they are standing, followed by other nominally progressive candidates such as the Consumer Rights and No Tolls Party, followed by the Greens, then the ALP, then the LNP with One Nation last. We do so with no overall political endorsement of these parties, but simply as a damage limitation exercise for working people.

This critical stance is important, for on many crucial issues, all of these parties stand on the opposite *class* side of the barricade. For example, on vital international issues, the Greens, the ALP, the LNP and even the Socialist Alliance stand together. In effect, all of these parties stood for the US imperialist wars on Libya and Syria, whatever their attempted justifications. All of them, to a lesser or greater degree, join with the US deep state in its barely believable verbal and military provocations against Russia – which threatens the termination of Europe, if not the world. Russia’s effective prevention of US led regime change in Syria constitutes a large factor in their irrational Russophobia. All of them are deeply hostile to the overturn of capitalist rule in China, Vietnam and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or “North Korea”). Given that there still remains the imminent danger of a US instigated nuclear war against the DPRK, this is no small oversight. All of them either support or

fail to oppose the US led provocations in the South China Sea, for fear of being seen to defend Red China. Foreign policy may officially be within the purview of federal politics, but there is no difference in the personnel of these parties at local, state or federal level.

We also acknowledge working people who feel there is no option at all that is an answer, and thus vote informally, or do not bother to turn up at the polling booths altogether. We understand this sentiment, and in part agree that it is not always apathy, but a reasonably considered option amongst options which offer little or nothing. The fact that the informal vote has been increasing in recent years indicates that more and more people are turned off by the whole parliamentary show.

Ultimately, no substantial problems that working people experience can be solved by voting in elections which are set up to ensure their exclusion. The real source of the unemployment, the poverty, the lack of affordable housing, the lack of public transport, the endless cuts to public services and the ongoing climate collapse is the capitalist system of private production for private profit. This private production nevertheless uses social labour, to accumulate all of the untold wealth in this drastically unequal society. What is required is the overthrow of the rule of capital, and the initiation of a socialist order. A prerequisite to begin this task is a workers’ party which fights for a workers’ government. The Workers League seeks to take the first steps on this path, and invites all those who agree to join us.

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NO WAR ON DPR KOREA!

LIFT THE SANCTIONS!

STATEMENT OF THE WORKERS LEAGUE



Above: The DPRK parades one of its long-range missiles. Due to the extreme danger of a US strike on the DPRK, the development and production of such weapons remain it's only guarantee of self-defence. www.12newsonline.com

(Since this statement was released, the two Koreas engaged in some co-operation at the 2018 Winter Olympics, effectively rebuffing the US.)

05-12-2017 - As we go to press, the US and its puppet South Korean navy are completing yet more threatening war manoeuvres right on the border with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK – or “North Korea”). This comes on top of the most extensive US, Japanese and Republic of Korea (ROK or “South Korea”) military war games ever this year, which are carried out **annually**. These “exercises” are little more than a dress rehearsal for an invasion and overthrow of the DPRK – something which is barely even concealed. There is nothing “routine” about them – unless threatening a sovereign nation with annihilation can be called “routine”.

Vanishing standard of living linked to war

The world teeters on the brink of a thermonuclear war. One side, and one side only, is responsible for this indescribable calamity – the US Empire, loyally backed by servile politicians in

Canberra. The ruling class of the United States is presiding over a decline preceding a collapse similar to that of the Roman Empire of ancient times. Its capitalist for-profit economy is in many areas barely functioning, and US working people are paying a heavy price. Australian workers are also suffering, as the falling rate of profit for big capital results in bare-faced assaults such as stagnant wages, high unemployment, a skyrocketing cost of living and homelessness at chronic levels. Minimal working conditions, such as the right to be paid for working on a weekend, are being abolished. Basic liberal democratic rights and civil liberties, such as *habeas corpus*, and the right to form an organisation, are being torn to shreds. Many young people – the “millennials” – face a future of insecurity, joblessness and poverty.

Make no mistake, all of these privations and more are directly linked to the threat of nuclear war, which is twisted in the corporate media to be because of a “threat” from the DPRK. In reality, the DPRK has done, and is doing, everything which is humanly possible to avoid a

war with the United States. For over six decades, all the DPRK has ever stated is that if it is attacked, it will respond – which is the inalienable right of every human being, let alone every sovereign nation on planet earth. The DPRK has repeatedly offered to suspend the testing of nuclear weapons in exchange for an end to the yearly military “exercises” – which practice invasion – on its border. This has been ignored. The DPRK has offered to abolish its nuclear weapons program altogether, if the US will withdraw all of its nuclear weapons and its 30 odd thousand permanently stationed troops from South Korea. This has been ignored. Recently in the United Nations, the DPRK was one of the first countries to vote *in favour* of a resolution banning the development, testing and use of nuclear weapons. This too, has been ignored.

The unavoidable political reality is that it is the ultra-hostile position of the US government over many years which has forced the DPRK to develop and produce nuclear weapons. And as its vote in the United Nations in favour of banning the production and use of nuclear weapons shows, the DPRK would prefer, a thousand times over, not to have to divert what relatively scarce resources that are available to them to a military defence program. The economy of the DPRK may be tilted heavily towards military spending, but it is the height of hypocrisy for the strongest imperialist power in world history to repeatedly threaten the DPRK with elimination – and at the same time condemn it for “neglecting its own people”. The resources that the DPRK has assigned to military defence, which has only ever produced a ***deterrent against a military attack***, and nothing more, are resources which have, so far, ensured the survival of the DPRK. It hardly needs to be said that the recent US led wars against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria are proof positive that the DPRK’s decisions on its military spending have been eminently correct.

Lift the Sanctions!

The US in recent years has specialised in waging wars of regime change against countries which provide free health care and education to its citizens. Libya and Syria, pre-US invasion, willingly spent some of its resources in this way, and so does the DPRK. In fact the DPRK goes much further, to provide free housing, universal employment, and constitutionally guaranteed holiday leave from work, amongst other things, to all of its 25 million civilians. While certain distortions exist in the DPRK – who amongst us can claim that any socio-economic system is perfect? The fact is that the form of socialism which survives in the DPRK co-habits with the enormous strength and prosperity of next-door neighbour China, which also operates a socialist economy, albeit with differing restrictions. The unending US led sanctions on the DPRK, dramatically escalated this year, are ultimately aimed at overturning the socialism which has been achieved in the DPRK and China. In addition, the threatened war on the DPRK by the US will not just be against the DPRK but against China, and also Russia. Russia, while not socialist, has also stood in the way of total US planetary domination, e.g. Syria.

The world’s working people must demand an immediate lifting of all sanctions and trade blockades on the DPRK, the immediate cessation of all US led military exercises near the DPRK (including South Korean, Japanese and Australian participation) and the removal of all US military hardware, nuclear weapons and personnel from South Korea. We must also demand the closure of the US spy bases in Australia, including Pine Gap and Nurrungar, and the removal of US troops from Darwin. Working cannot resist the attacks on their own jobs and living conditions without also resisting their international extension – the threat of nuclear war. ***HANDS OFF THE DPRK!***
