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CLIMATE SUMMIT: "THE WORLD IS ON RED ALERT"

Anna Pha

"Tomorrow will be too late to do what we should have done a long time ago," Fidel Castro warned the 1992 Earth Summit (Rio Summit). Almost thirty years on, global warming and climate change are on the precipice of irreversible change. The growing recognition of the urgency by world leaders was reflected at the virtual climate summit called by US President Joe Biden from 22nd to 23rd April.

Leaders from forty countries took part in the summit making new, concrete commitments to step up the pace of their reduction in greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions. It was recognised that the next ten years are critical if there is any chance of keeping the rise in global temperatures below 2 degrees C, let alone the preferable 1.5 degrees C.

The earth is warming more quickly than previously predicted by scientists. 2020 was the hottest year on record – 0.82 degrees C above the 20th century average.

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, called on leaders everywhere to take urgent climate action. "Mother Nature is not waiting, he said. "We need a green planet – but the world is on red alert."

Polar ice sheets and glaciers are melting at an alarming rate causing oceans to rise and changes to ocean currents. Permafrost regions are releasing additional methane and CO2 due to thaw. Warming and acidification of oceans (in particular, in the southern hemisphere) are bleaching coral reefs and impacting biosecurity. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and are set to worsen. The future of humanity is at stake.

Australia, in a relatively short space of time, has experienced drought, bush fires of a nature never seen before, unprecedented flooding, and the devastating cyclone in the north west of Australia. The year 2019 was the hottest on record in Australia and 2020 the second hottest.

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) gives us until 2030 to make radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, and until 2050 to reduce these emissions to zero if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

SUMMIT PLEDGES

Leaders from forty countries including China, Russia, India, the UK, Canada, the US, South Korea, Australia, and Kiribati (who spoke for the smaller Pacific islands that face inundation), took part in the two-day summit.

Biden called for an end to fossil fuel subsidies. He spoke on human health and security, water, coastal management, food security, water scarcity, and human impacts. He also covered the issues of stopping deforestation and the loss of wetlands, and restoring marine and terrestrial ecosystems, logging, and the importance of traditional knowledge of local and indigenous communities in ecosystem protection.

The **US**-led the way by pledging to cut emissions by 50-52 per cent by 2030 (double its previous target) compared with 2005 levels and net zero by 2050.

Canada upgraded its plan to reduce emissions to 40-45 per cent by 2030, relative to 2005 levels – a significant reduction from its previous target of 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Brazil committed to achieve net zero by 2050, end illegal deforestation by 2030, and double funding for deforestation enforcement with financial assistance from the US.

China pledged that its use of coal would peak in 2025 and the country would achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. President China's Xi Jinping said he would "strictly control" the country's coal-fired power plant construction over the next five years and "phase down" coal consumption in the five years from 2025.

The **European Union** is putting into law a target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 and a net zero target by 2050.

Japan increased its 2030 target from twenty-eight per cent to forty-six per cent by 2030 compared with 2013 levels.

South Korea said it would stop its state institutions coal power overseas and strengthen its commitment to be consistent with its 2050 net zero goal.

South Africa announced that it intends to strengthen its commitment and shift its intended emissions peak ten years earlier to 2025.

The **United Kingdom** said it would legislate for a seventy-eight per cent reduction in emissions below 1990 levels by 2035. (NB Scotland in 2020 was producing 97.4 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources.)

A DISGRACEFUL PERFORMANCE

What did Australia pledge? Nothing. Absolutely nothing new. Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison waffled on about technology. "For Australia, it is not a question of if or even by when for net zero, but importantly how." Instead of a commitment, former PM Tony Abbott's Paris target of 26-28 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 remains. He could not even give commitment for net zero emissions.

"In Australia our journey to net zero is being led by world class pioneering Australian companies like Fortescue, led by Dr Andrew Forrest, Visy, BHP, Rio Tinto, AGL and so many more of all sizes." In other words, it is being led by fossil fuel companies! He could have added that Australia, the world's largest exporter of liquefied gas and second largest of coal, is still expanding its fossil fuel industries.

Morrison boasted about Australia's (highly questionable) achievements as though the rest of the world could not see Australia's performance. He touted clean hydrogen, carbon capture, green steel, and energy storage as the way forward.

He concluded: "Future generations, my colleagues and excellencies, will thank us not for what we have promised, but what we deliver. And on that score Australia can always be relied upon." This appears to be a shallow, arrogant attempt to play down his failure to give a new, enhanced commitment and put down those who did.

Put simply, the Coalition government has no plan, no target and shows no evidence of a serious commitment to addressing climate change. It serves the interests of the wealthy fossil fuel industries that splurge large political donations on it. It is not fit to govern.

WHAT AUSTRALIA SHOULD DO

The Climate Council's acting CEO, Dr Martin Rice, says Australia should be reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by seventy-five per cent by 2030, and reaching net zero emissions by 2035.

Climate Council spokeswoman Professor Leslie Hughes said Australia is far from where it needs to be. "For too long Australia has been focused on protecting the interests of the fossil fuel industry rather than protecting our citizens from the ravages of climate change. The international community is judging us, and won't tolerate further inaction," she said.

Australia has great potential to be one of the world's most successful producers of renewable energy, having an abundance of sun, wind, and oceans.

"Right now, we are on track for catastrophic climate change of 3 degrees C of heating and maybe more. At just over 1 degree C of heating, we are already paying a serious price, as we have seen with the recent Black Summer bushfires, prolonged drought, and the third mass bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef in five years," Climate Council expert Professor Will Steffen said.

Urgent action is required. The Communist Party of Australia calls for:

- The government to make a commitment to reduce ghg emissions by seventy-five per cent on 2005 levels by 2030 and for net zero by 2050
- A rapid and just transition to renewable energies in consultation with the trade unions, while ensuring employees in the fossil fuel industries are given new employment and training as appropriate
- A plan for regional development that protects regional and rural communities which includes wind and solar energy development and storage
- An end to the billions of dollars in fossil fuel subsidies
- Cancellation of the military industry projects and providing a just transition to other forms of manufacturing
- Redirection of infrastructure spending to the expansion of public transport
- Encourage the use of electric vehicles and provide charging stations across the country
- End logging and create and protect our unique ecosystems and biosecurity
- Take mitigation and adaptation measures, drawing on Indigenous knowledge and practices
- Plan land use, protect waterways and end water-thirsty crops such as cotton
- Not carry out any activities on the lands of indigenous people that would cause environmental degradation or that would be culturally inappropriate.

"Capitalism created the looming environmental catastrophe. It cannot play a role in its solution," Dr Hannah Middleton said in the CPA's new publication, *Fighting for the Future*.

"[Capitalism] will not redirect the trillions of dollars from the military and corporations toward saving us from environmental catastrophe. They will not end government subsidies for the fossil fuel and extraction industries."

Middleton summed it up: "The issues are clear: either we advance to a society geared to meet human needs and to live sustainably with the environment or we allow corporate profits to continue to dominate and see humanity and our planet destroyed. We are at a crossroads – people and environment before profit or profit before people and our planet."

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MORRISON'S HYDROGEN SCHEME ANOTHER MARKETING PLOY

Yet again, the Morrison government is trying to pull the wool over Australia's eyes. This time, Prime Minister Scott Morrison is attempting to sell the Australian public on his government's investment of over $530mil for hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects, as part of this month's upcoming budget – adding to the $70mil promised from last year's budget for hydrogen and $50mil for CCS. According to the ABC, the spending will see "$275.5mil towards developing four more hydrogen production hubs in regional areas" and "$263.7mil towards CCS projects and hubs in an attempt to reduce fossil fuel emissions."

Morrison is attempting to flex his "green" credentials boast saying: "We want to make clean energy more affordable and reliable, while looking for ways our investments can get more people into work. [...] Our technology-first approach will see Australia achieve its emissions reduction goals while continuing to grow our export industries and also supporting our trading partners' efforts to decarbonise."

Indeed, hydrogen itself does not pollute. But hydrogen takes a lot of energy to make, and there are different ways to produce that energy, ultimately resulting in four production methods: "Green" hydrogen (renewables), "Black" or "Brown" Hydrogen (coal), "Grey" Hydrogen (gas), or "Blue" Hydrogen (CCS). Only the "Green" hydrogen process results in zero emissions. Thus, in the process of *making* hydrogen, the other non-"Green" methods produce emissions. The government is intending to produce hydrogen through renewables and gas.

CCS is also being touted as a revolutionary technology that is anything but. The Climate Council states that CCS "involves capturing, transporting and storing greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel power stations, energy intensive industries, and gas fields by injecting the captured greenhouse gases back into the ground" where it is stored for use. However the problem with "storing the captured CO_2 in a suitable underground location [is that it] is simply unavailable for many facilities where the CO_2 is produced." Furthermore, the Climate council states that the process is costly, still produces emissions, and is ultimately unproven.

Following this announcement, the Climate Council stated that "'Clean hydrogen' is becoming a purposefully misleading term" because "it describes hydrogen generated either from renewables or from fossil fuels associated with a carbon capture and storage technology." In making a push for "Green" hydrogen the Climate Council asked, "[a]s one of the sunniest and windiest countries in the world, why would we invest in any other type of hydrogen?"

That is a good question, and the answer is obvious: the Coalition is in the pockets of Australia's largest mining companies. Their influence in Australian politics means that the Morrison government will obfuscate the issue of climate action despite the vast majority of Australians being in favour of it. We must not forget that Morrison, who is leading this "clean" energy charge, in 2017 came into parliament with a lump of coal singing its praise. Australia needs to be part of the global effort to reduce emissions. However, because of the Coalitions commitment to coal and gas, we will become increasingly isolated on this issue. If we do not tackle climate change seriously and stop with these half-hearted misdirections, there won't be much of a future left.

PRESS FUND

The Coalition is not fit to govern. Still in the pocket of the fossil fuel industries, PM Scott Morrison's presentation at US President Joe Biden's climate summit was nothing short of disgraceful. Roll on the next federal elections when they can be thrown out of office. We'll be there fighting for a new government and action on climate change. Thank you to everyone who generously contributed to the Press Fund.

A Maarbani $20, M Mannion $20, E Seymour $25, Digireb $20.

This week's total: $85. Cumulative Total: $1,335.

CP OF TURKEY, JOINT STATEMENT: NO TO PATENTS ON VACCINES!

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a great tragedy for more than a year now. In this period, in many countries, millions of workers have caught the disease, losing their health, their jobs or even their lives. On the other hand, in the same time frame, some companies that have sold essential needs, food, hygienic materials, masks and finally, vaccines, as commodities, have become among the wealthiest in the world. The capitalist class has turned the pandemic into an opportunity for greater exploitation of workers in order to make more profits.

Several vaccines that have been administered since the end of 2020 are developed by pharmaceutical monopolies. There is a substantial level of information on the clinical efficacy and dose intervals of these vaccines. Despite some of them being administered cautiously due to some adverse effects, they can effectively contribute to tackling the pandemic. However, since the administration of the first shot, only around 2.16 per cent of the world's population could have been fully vaccinated.

The main method of combating communicable diseases is widespread, rapid and effective immunisation. Unfortunately, capitalism in the 21st century has been incapable of implementing this basic formula for a worldwide infection, as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic. The reasons for this situation are clear: despite all vaccine development studies having been conducted thanks to public funds and the collaborative efforts of thousands of scientists, in the great capitalist powers the final product was seized by pharmaceutical monopolies under the name of intellectual property, or so-called patents. Today, vaccines can be produced only in a number of countries. While the most powerful imperialist countries are ordering many more vials beyond their needs and getting a larger share on the stocks available now and in the future, tens of countries, mainly the economically less developed, would only be able to vaccinate a small part of the population, in an uncertain future. This is turning a blind eye on the deaths of the citizens of those countries from a preventable cause.

The most dangerous scenario in the case of infectious diseases is the vaccination of a very limited part of the population, which would facilitate the evolution of the virus so that it would have more advanced properties. This is what is happening right now.

The COVID-19 pandemic will not disappear from the world at once. Moreover, the social and environmental conditions created by capitalism show us that humanity will be facing such epidemics again, though in other ways. The COVID-19 pandemic will also continue until an effective treatment targeting the virus is found and/or a massive and rapid vaccination is achieved; and the best-case scenario is that humanity will continue to live with the coronavirus with reduced morbidity and mortality. Therefore, it is in the common interest of the working class and the popular strata to struggle for priority to be given to vaccines and treatments against infectious diseases.

Patents or intellectual property rights have had an impact not facilitating the production of vaccines as argued, on the contrary, they slowed down the immunisation of masses.

But we cannot leave any issue concerning public health to the "good will" of profit-seeking monopolies and the competition between them.

Taking into account and valuing the actions of solidarity and cooperation, initiatives and efforts developed by some countries, as communist and workers' parties of the world, we are jointly calling for:

- The abolition of the so-called intellectual property rights, namely patents, on all COVID-19 vaccines and treatment formulations used or being developed, as well as necessary legal regulations for this in all countries.
- Production, distribution and implementation of vaccines must continue entirely by public means and the intensification of popular intervention. Public health systems have to be immediately expanded and strengthened.
- We denounce speculation on vaccines. All information on vaccines and treatment formulations should be presented transparently to international scientific organisations. Research in this field should be carried out with the principle of international solidarity and cooperation, not competition
- Anti-vaccine campaigns and unscientific disinformation must be decisively addressed.

The peoples must strengthen their struggle for the protection of health. We need to come into conflict with the interests of the monopolies, which sacrifice human lives for profit!

SIGNATORIES

SolidNet Parties
Communist Party of Australia
Party of Labour of Austria (PdA)
Progressive Tribune-Bahrain
Communist Party of Bangladesh
Communist Party of Belgium
Brazilian Communist Party
Communist Party of Brazil - PCdoB
Communist Party of Britain
New Communist Party of Britain
Communist Party of Canada
AKEL, Cyprus
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
French Communist Party
German Communist Party
Communist Party of Greece
Hungarian Workers' Party
Communist Party of India (Marxist)
TUDEH - Iran
Communist Party of Ireland
Sociliast Movement of Kazakhstan
Communist Party of Luxembourg
Communist Party of Mexico
Communist Party of Norway
Communist Party of Pakistan
Palestinian Communist Party
Palestinian People's Party
Philippines Communist Party [PKP 1930]
Portuguese Communist Party
Romanian Socialist Party
Communists of Serbia
Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (PCPE)
Communist Party of the Workers of Spain (PCTE)
Communists of Catalonia
Communist Party of Sri Lanka
Sudanese Communist Party
Communist Party of Swaziland
Communist Party of Turkey
Communist Party of Ukraine
Communist Party of Venezuela

Other Parties

Fronte Comunista (Italy)
Galizan People's Union

ANZAC DAY AND AUSTRALIA'S DARK FOREIGN POLICY

Jan Dieles

Sunday 25th April marked 106 years since Australian and New Zealander troops landed on the Gallipoli peninsula of the then-Ottoman Empire, to fight and die in their thousands under an uncaring British command in pursuit of British imperial interests.

A tragedy worth commemorating, indeed. The tragedy of the horrors that wars, especially wars conducted on behalf of the interests of a foreign power, bring.

But this is not quite how it is being spoken about; indeed such an interpretation would be decried as sacrilege by much of the mainstream media and politicians.

The opportunity is being taken to promote a message that is utterly hypocritical. It is, in brief: let's do it again.

On ANZAC Day, Mike Pezzullo, Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs, delivered a vile, provocative speech lauding the US-Australia alliance and containing talk of a new, approaching war.

"Later this year, Australia and the United States will mark the 70th anniversary of our military alliance. We seek to be militarily self-reliant in all contingencies short of great power war. Nonetheless, our national defence strategy has at its heart the protection afforded to Australia in the most perilous circumstances by the military might of the United States, including by way of the deterrence effect of its nuclear arsenal, and its willingness and preparedness to wage war against a major power adversary. [...]

"Today, as free nations again hear the beating drums and watch worryingly the militarisation of issues that we had, until recent years, thought unlikely to be catalysts for war, let us continue to search unceasingly for the chance for peace while bracing again, yet again, for the curse of war. By our resolve and our strength, by our preparedness of arms, and by our statecraft, let us get about reducing the likelihood of war – but not at the cost of our precious liberty."

It doesn't take a genius to spot that the implication is the US' desired war against China. Our "precious liberty" sure does a lot of travelling ... from Korea to Vietnam, to Afghanistan and Iraq, now China. And always somewhere with vast resources the US has their eye on, and a government that doesn't roll over and do the US' bidding like ours does.

Do we want another war conducted on behalf of the interests of a foreign power?

A number of ALP figures criticised Pezzullo's speech. However, the ALP is just as committed to grovelling at the feet of the US – recall Albanese in January: "The great tragedy of the recent past is the power of America's example has been diminished from within. It is in Australia's interests as a US ally to encourage the restoration of that power."

To criticise the gross irresponsibility of Pezzullo's speech and the warmongering rhetoric from other Liberal National Party figures, although correct, is only more hypocrisy from a party that is just as committed to upholding the guarantee that we will be forced to take part in these unjust US wars: Australia's lack of independence.

If you ask Australians "when did Australia become independent?" probably the main answer you will receive is 1901, with Federation. These days, the story of Federation is usually taught with this implication.

Of course, this has no resemblance to the historical truth. Federation was merely the merging of multiple already-self-governing British colonies into one large British colony. Australians would still be considered British subjects for decades, and Australia was legally subject to acts of British parliament until 1986.

At the time of Federation there were Australian troops in South Africa (Second Boer War) and China (Boxer Rebellion) fighting on behalf of the British Empire and its imperial interests. Again in 1914, Australian troops were dispatched to fight under British command, and even by the time of World War II Australian troops were still considered British, although with more autonomy in some cases.

It was after the devastation of WW2 that the United States overtook Britain as the world's foremost hegemonic power, and Australia's primary allegiance immediately began to shift from the world's most powerful empire, to ... the world's most powerful empire ... but the new one.

And although the United Nations had just been established as an attempted vehicle of world peace, the US, on its new single-minded anti-communist mission, wasted no time perverting it into a vehicle of war.

When the Chinese revolution overthrew Kuomintang rule in the mainland and the "Republic of China" regime had been confined to Taiwan Province and a few other islands, backed up by the US military, the US refused to recognise the People's Republic of China and began the extended farce of continuing to recognise Kuomintang rule over all of China, and keeping the "Republic of China" in the UN seat of China.

(It is interesting to note that at this point, the US had no confusion about the fact that Taiwan is part of China, and no objection to their Taiwanese puppet regime's claims over the South China Sea, Tibet, Xinjiang, and even all of Mongolia.)

The Soviet Union began a boycott of UN Security Council meetings in protest. The US took that opportunity to push through a resolution on Korea that began the international intervention in the Korean War, which resulted in millions of Korean civilian deaths, and hundreds of Australian troops killed in action.

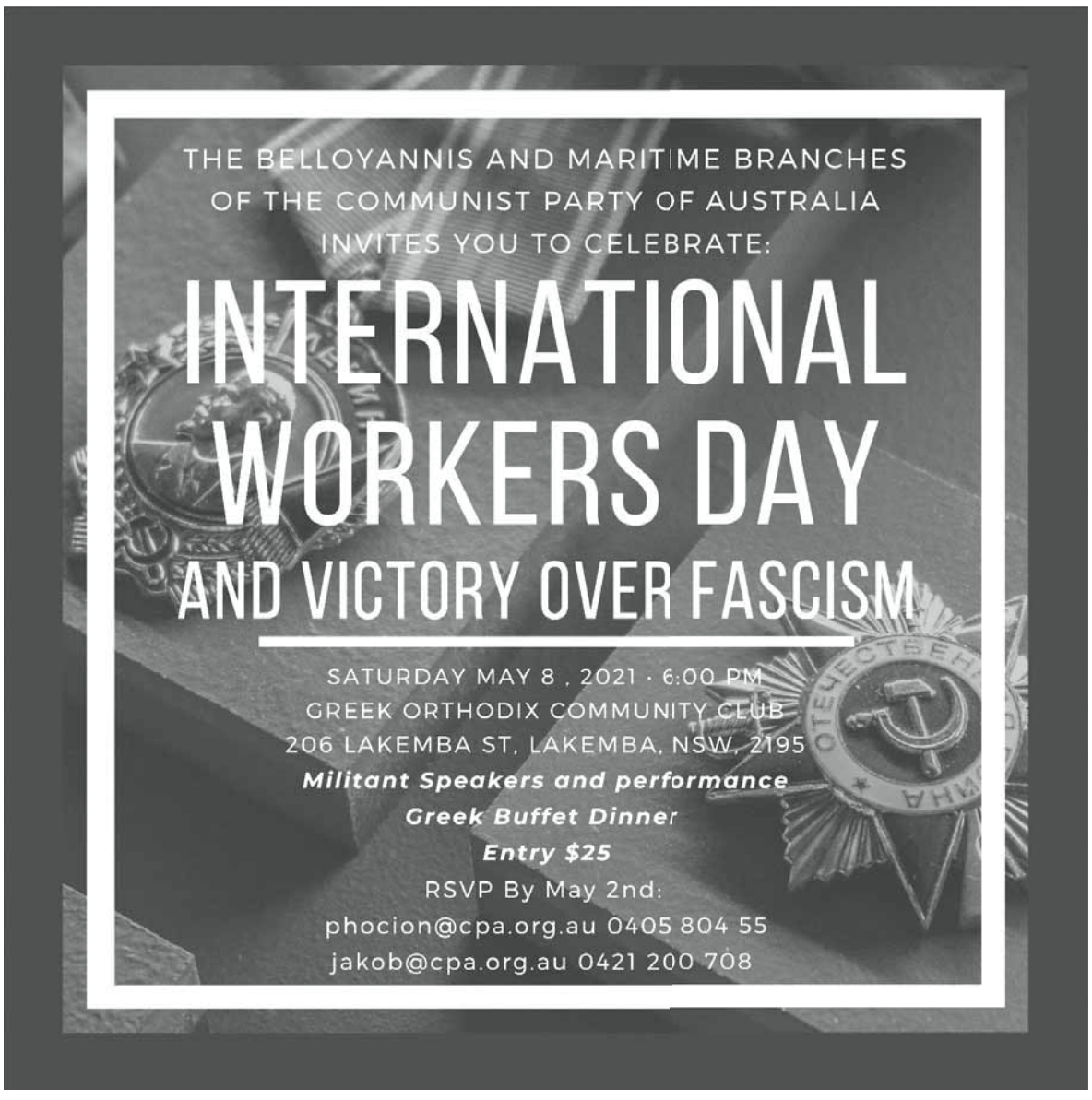
ABC News covered a 70th anniversary commemoration of the 1951 Battle of Kapyong (today in South Korea), 23rd April. The coverage was notable for being another case of irresponsible rhetoric at a highly sensitive time. It repeatedly emphasised that the battle was a victory against Chinese troops, and was also fought in defence of "democracy." (What sort of democracy this was supposed to be is unclear, as South Korea spent the next four decades under a series of brutal right-wing dictatorships propped up by the United States, and today continues to be a dictatorship of the chaebol monopolies.)

While the auspiciousness of the 70-year figure is no doubt part of the justification for this story, it is hard to imagine the political messaging implied by placing this story in the present context was not considered in the editorial process.

The story also stresses South Korea's "gratitude" for the service of Australian veterans, and that the sacrifices of veterans were the price for "the peace the peninsula currently enjoys." A very bad joke?

Any gratitude held by South Koreans for Australian participation in the Korean War is of similar quality to Australian gratitude for being supposedly protected by the American nuclear umbrella.

Enough of all these wars! Enough of all these lies! Enough of all this destruction in pursuit of the economic interests of the already-wealthiest countries! Let's make Australia a country that is genuinely peaceful, and genuinely independent. ✪



PUTIN'S PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

On April 21, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the Federal Assembly, a combined gathering of members of the Federation Council (Senators), the State Duma (Parliamentarians), Cabinet ministers, Regional Governors, representatives of selected State Departments, Agencies and the media.

Almost 450 journalists were accredited to cover the event. The address primarily focussed on current achievements and setbacks in the country and outlined future domestic social and economic plans. While the larger part of the address was devoted to domestic policies and plans, key foreign policy objectives were also outlined, as well as possible steps in resolving present and future challenges. The following are extracts from the speech on international affairs.

The meaning and purpose of Russia's policy in the international arena is to ensure peace and security for the well-being of our citizens, for the stable development of our country. Russia certainly has its own interests we defend and will continue to defend within the framework of international law, as all other states do. And if someone refuses to understand this obvious thing or does not want to conduct a dialogue and chooses a selfish and arrogant tone with us, Russia will always find a way to defend its stance.

At the same time, unfortunately, everyone in the world seems to be used to the practice of politically motivated, illegal economic sanctions and to certain actors' brutal attempts to impose their will on others by force. But today, this practice is degenerating into something even more dangerous – I am referring to the recently exposed direct interference in Belarus in an attempt to orchestrate a coup d'état and assassinate the President of that country. At the same time, it is typical that even such flagrant actions have not been condemned by the so-called collective West. Nobody seemed to notice. Everyone pretends nothing is happening.

But listen, you can think whatever you like of, say, Ukrainian President [Viktor] Yanukovych or [Nicolas] Maduro in Venezuela. I repeat, you can like or dislike them, including Yanukovych who almost got killed, too, and removed from power via an armed coup. You can have your own opinion of President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko's policy. But the practice of staging coups d'état and planning political assassinations, including those of high-ranking officials – well, this goes too far. This is beyond any limits.

Suffice it to mention the admission made by the detained participants in the conspiracy about a planned siege of Minsk, including plans to block the city infrastructure and communications, and a complete shutdown of the entire power system in the capital of Belarus! This actually means they were preparing a massive cyberattack. What else could it be? You know, you cannot just do it all with one switch.

Clearly, there is a reason why our Western colleagues have been stubbornly rejecting Russia's numerous proposals to establish an international dialogue on information and cyber security. We have come up with these proposals many times. They avoid even discussing this matter.

What if there had been a real attempt at a coup d'état in Belarus? After all, this was the ultimate goal. How many people would have been hurt? What would have become of Belarus? Nobody is thinking about this.

Just as no one was thinking about the future of Ukraine during the coup in that country.

All the while, unfriendly moves towards Russia have also continued unabated. Some countries have taken up an unseemly routine where they pick on Russia for any reason, most often, for no reason at all. It is some kind of new sport of who shouts the loudest.

In this regard, we behave in an extremely restrained manner, I would even say, modestly, and I am saying this without irony. Often, we prefer not to respond at all, not just to unfriendly moves, but even to outright rudeness. We want to maintain good relations with everyone who participates in the international dialogue. But we see what is happening in real life. As I said, every now and then they are picking on Russia, for no reason. And of course, all sorts of petty Tabaquis are running around them like Tabaqui ran around Shere Khan – everything is like in Kipling's book – howling along in order to make their sovereign happy. Kipling was a great writer.

We really want to maintain good relations with all those engaged in international communication, including, by the way, those with whom we have not been getting along lately, to put it mildly. We really do not want to burn bridges. But if someone mistakes our good intentions for indifference or weakness and intends to burn or even blow up these bridges, they must know that Russia's response will be asymmetrical, swift and tough.

Those behind provocations that threaten the core interests of our security will regret what they have done in a way they have not regretted anything for a long time.

At the same time, I just have to make it clear, we have enough patience, responsibility, professionalism, self-confidence and certainty in our cause, as well as common sense, when making a decision of any kind. But I hope that no one will think about crossing the "red line" with regard to Russia. We ourselves will determine in each specific case where it will be drawn.

I will now say, just as I always do during the annual addresses to the Federal Assembly, that the improvement and qualitative strengthening of Russia's Armed Forces continues on a regular basis. In particular, special attention will be given to the development of military education both at military school and academies and at military training centres at civilian universities.

By 2024, the share of modern weapons and military equipment in the armed forces will reach nearly 76 percent, which is a very good indicator. This share in the nuclear triad will be over 88 percent before this year is out[...].

As the leader in the creation of new-generation combat systems and in the development of modern nuclear forces, Russia is urging its partners once again to discuss the issues related to strategic armaments and to ensuring global stability. The subject matter and the goal of these talks could be the creation of an environment for a conflict-free coexistence based on the security equation, which would include not only the traditional strategic armaments, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, heavy bombers and submarines, but – I would like to emphasise this – all offensive and defensive systems capable of attaining strategic goals regardless of the armament.

The five nuclear countries bear special responsibility. I hope that the initiative on a personal meeting of the heads of state of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, which we proposed last year, will materialise and will be held as soon as the epidemiological situation allows.

Russia is always open to broad international cooperation. We have consistently advocated the preservation and strengthening of the key role of the United Nations in international affairs, and we try to provide assistance to the settlement of regional conflicts and have already done a great deal to stabilise the situation in Syria and to launch a political dialogue in Libya. As you know, Russia played the main role in stopping the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is on the basis of mutual respect that we are building relations with the absolute majority of the world's countries: in Asia, Latin America, Africa and many European countries. We are consistently expanding as a priority contacts with our closest partners in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa], the Commonwealth of Independent States,[Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine], and our allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation [a military organisation of seven former Soviet states].

Our common projects in the Eurasian Economic Union are aimed at ensuring economic growth and the wellbeing of our people. There are new, interesting projects here, such as the development of transport-and-logistics corridors. I am sure they will become a reliable infrastructure backbone for large-scale Eurasian partnership. The Russian ideas of this broad, open association are already being put into practice, in part, via alignment with other integration processes.

All these projects are not just geopolitical ideas but strictly practical instruments for resolving national development tasks.

I began today's Address with urgent healthcare issues, and concluding it, I would like to say the following. Nobody in the world knew what misfortune we would have to face. However, we, citizens of Russia, have already done much and will do all we can to counter the threat of the epidemic. Our country has reliable resources for this. We created them in healthcare, science, education and industry in previous years.

However, we must definitely move forward. We have mapped out national development tasks. Naturally, the challenge of the epidemic has made objective adjustments to our work. Today's Address contains instructions on demography and family support, as well as on efforts to fight poverty, increase incomes, create jobs, improve the business environment and raise state management to a new level.

Full speech: **http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65418**

Fight for the Future

This attractive new booklet is a call to action to save our planet and humanity.

It argues that humanity is at a crossroads. The insatiable drive for profits by capitalism is leading to irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Capitalist governments – and the giant corporations they work for – are refusing to act on the warnings of the great majority of the world's leading scientists.

A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs.

The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system.

The pamphlet insists that we must confront the reality that what we do now will forever alter the course of humanity and all life on Earth. Now more than ever we must fight for a better system. Our lives are more important than their profits.

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OP-ED: SOFTENING ITS MATES UP FOR ANOTHER WAR?

Eileen Whitehead

Has anyone actually scrutinised the piffle that Anthony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, recently came out with? It shows how delusional and deranged the ideological obscurantists in Washington really are. I quote:

"China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system; all the rules, values and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to, because it ultimately serves the interests and reflects the values of the American people."

When this outrageous statement is dissected and analysed, it becomes the vacuous drivel it actually is. Who does the "*we*" refer to? Certainly not the ordinary US citizen but rather, I suspect, the capitalist ruling class. How many military bases does China have around the globe, threatening other nations? The US military spending for 2019 was $718.7bil compared to China's $266.4bil. It would appear that the "international systems, relationships and rules," referred to by Blinken are most likely its 800 US bases, supposedly protecting the interests of its capitalist class.

Australians should be very, very concerned by the current threatening language and belligerent political insolence coming out of Washington. I'm waiting to hear the line that China has weapons of mass destruction next! Signs of Washington's panic about China's superior scientific and technological capability, especially in telecommunications, became apparent when it resorted to accusing Huawei in 2020 of violating sanctions and stealing technology from T-Mobile – claims which have been denied. Could the US be targeting Huawei because it is seen as a threat to American business interests? Huawei and ZTE are way ahead of US telecommunication companies, and, rather than compete on a free market, Washington uses pressure with its immense military, diplomacy and its well-practised propaganda machine.

China's "soft" influence in the global south also has Washington worried. The Belt and Road initiative not only aids China, it aids those countries who would have no financial support from the IMF (International Monetary Fund). The US views the help these countries receive from China as an existential threat to Western imperialism.

The Chinese government under the leadership of the CCP has raised millions of its people out of poverty post World War II. Compared to America, China is still relatively poor – its GDP per capita being one quarter that of the US. It is nonsense to imagine that China wants a war with the US. All the belligerent, bully boy tactics are, as usual, coming from America and, with Joe Biden at the helm, there's little likelihood of an about face.

Australians should be very concerned about this situation. Our government seems joined at the hip with America, to the extent we should perhaps become known as its 51st state. The direction which the ANZUS treaty, signed between the US, Australia and New Zealand in 1951, is taking should be of grave concern to Australians. It was intended to provide for mutual aid in the event of aggression and for settling disputes by peaceful means, but increasingly it seems to be involving Australia in US-initiated wars. And with the current aggression being shown by Biden, our national sovereignty is directly threatened by having US troops stationed on our soil.

The Friends of the Earth reported that, in 2011, Australian Defence Minister Stephen Smith and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced an increase of US forces on Australian soil with the build-up of the Stirling Naval Base in Perth and the stationing of 2500 US troops on permanent rotation in Darwin. Smith denied these would be "bases" as such. The Pentagon report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies stated, "the next phase of enhanced access arrangements with Australia" will include the stationing of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in Perth, infrastructure development on RAAF bases to accommodate US bombers, drone deployment from the NT and the stationing of US marines on Australian soil.

In November 2012, the AUSMIN meeting of the US Secretaries of State and Defense and Australian ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defense announced the beginning of "joint facilities," or bases, on Australian soil. In 2013 it was announced that the number of US troops stationed in Darwin would double. Australia has been hosting US military interests for decades at Pine Gap, which in 2012 expanded its surveillance and satellite communications capacity by the installation of a new radar dome. Pine Gap was strategic in the deployment of bombing missions in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Pine Gap is a US base to which Australian politicians must request access. Officially, it is a collaboration between the Australian Department of Defence and the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, but in reality this obscures the real purpose of Pine Gap which is a CIA-run spy base designed to collect signals from US surveillance satellites in geosynchronous orbit over the Equator.

In addition, a new communications base was built in 2008 for US purposes at Geraldton in northern WA and another at North West Cape, also in WA – which used to be a very low frequency submarine communications facility, but is now being upgraded with the construction of a space radar telescope. This will be used to keep track of adversary satellites in space which, in the event of war, the US would set about neutralising. This takes the use of these facilities in a very new direction and connects Australia with a US-led space war.

This recently proposed base is expected to be used for tracking and destroying enemy satellites. All three of these existing bases make Australia a strategic military target. The US has been holding military exercises with Australia for over fifty years. In recent years, Australia has been involved in US-led military activity that has killed flora, fauna and humans, left oil fields burning, exposed civilians to toxic chemicals, left environments radioactive, and destroyed infrastructure vital to maintaining health and welfare of communities. It would make for interesting research to know exactly the amount of carbon emissions these exercises produce.

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) was formed in response to the 2011 deal between the Gillard government and the Obama administration to base a "permanent rotation" of US Marines and aircraft in Darwin, as well as using the Delamere Weapons Range (south of Katherine), the Bradshaw Field Training Range (near Timber Creek), and the RAAF base at Tindal.

A very important consideration to be had here is how important is Australian sovereignty to this nation? Why are we allowing "foreign" troops on our soil. For more detailed analysis, Tom Gillings' *Project Rainfall: the secret history of Pine Gap* is well worth the reading. ✪

Special Appeal Reds go Green

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising $10,000 for solar panels.
The panels will not only make substantial savings in electricity bills but also put into practice our commitment to a sustainable future.

They involve a substantial cash outlay, but we believe that every measure we can take to reduce carbon emissions is important. It is not enough to preach "green." We must act "green"!

We are looking to *Guardian* readers and CPA members and supporters to assist us with this important project.
Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how small or large. Send your contribution today.
All contributions will be acknowledged in the *Guardian*.

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Send your contribution to 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, email info@cpa.org.au or pay by PayPal on cpa.org.au

Commemoration Al-Nakba (Catastrophe Day)

Sunday 16th May 2pm
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills NSW

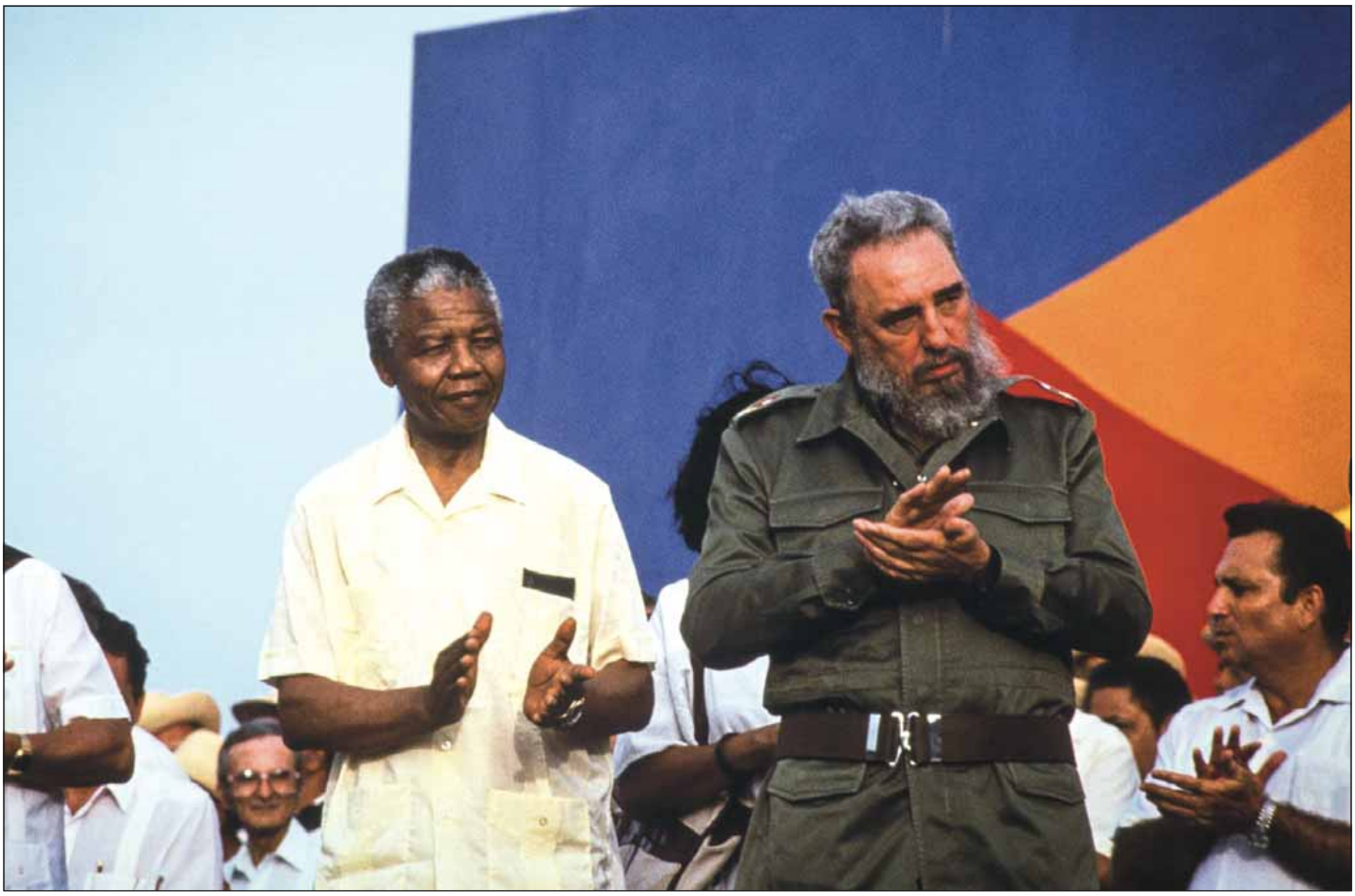
Palestinian guest speakers
Movie about Palestine

May 15, 1948, marks the anniversary of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians being driven from their homes, and hundreds of Palestinian villages were destroyed. This was followed by the Declaration of Independence creating the Zionist state of Israel.

Tea, coffee & biscuits will be served

Queries: 0431 275 434

MANDELA



Raymond Suttner

When Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, he asked me to write his speeches. At one point, Thabo Mbeki and myself were both designated as official speech writers. I didn't think Mbeki was so keen and I certainly was not very keen, because my main job was as ANC head of political education and that entailed a great deal of work.

However, I did put a lot of effort into writing the speeches, because I understood that everything you wrote for Mandela would become historic, so you had to ensure that you chose every word carefully. I remember at the time that if I was asked to do a speech, I would go home in the afternoon and bring it in the next morning. Carol Paton, who is now the editor-at-large at *Business Day*, would edit it and then I would give it to Mandela's office.

Over time, I indicated to him that I would prefer not to write speeches, and I did so less often. But there were certain types of speeches that he specifically wanted me to do, for example, when he was awarded an honorary doctorate from a university and had to speak to the type of audience that I knew well.

There was one speech I did want to write and that was when he went on a visit to Latin America, which included calling on Cuba. That was very important for me, because I knew the critical role the Cubans had played in the defeat of the apartheid defence force in backing the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola, Fapla, in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale.

That was a historic moment in the defeat of colonialism in southern Africa and of apartheid in both South Africa and South West Africa, as Namibia was then named. I was keen to go to Cuba in any case, because I was then a communist in the SACP leadership. I had more than a soft spot for Cuba – I admired almost everything I knew about Cuba and I wanted to see it for myself. I wanted to write Mandela's speech for Cuba in order to thank the Cubans for what they had done for South Africa and for the people of southern Africa, as well as for many other countries. I requested to be part of the delegation and it was agreed.

This trip to Cuba with Mandela was in July 1991, almost thirty years ago. He also visited a number of other Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Mexico, Jamaica, Brazil, Argentina and Peru. Other than Jamaica, I was not particularly interested in visiting these countries because most were then, to varying degrees, under reactionary governments. Although we did interact with people outside of governments in various countries, in general these meetings were but a prelude to the main destination.

The visit to Jamaica was, however, interesting and moving. Many Jamaicans thronged the streets to applaud Mandela. We attended a huge reggae concert and we watched the Jamaican Parliament in action. The parliamentarians had an interesting way of applauding – a rhythmic patting of the parliamentary benches with their hands, which sounded like a cross between a bass guitar and a drum.

MEMORABLE RECEPTION

When we arrived in Cuba, it was a very different reception from the other places. On every street pole there was a picture of Mandela, and the ANC colours were on display throughout Havana. A special song had even been composed for Mandela by Pablo Milanes, one of the island's top musicians. As I recall it, we only went to Havana and Matanzas, where the celebration of the 38th anniversary of the start of the revolution was to be held during our visit.

Before that we visited various sites, one of which was a sport complex. People sometimes underestimate how important boxing was to Mandela, who turned to Fidel Castro during the visit and said, "What's happened to Stevenson?"

Teófilo Stevenson was a champion heavyweight boxer who by then had won three Olympic titles for Cuba. In response to Mandela's question, Castro called up Stevenson from somewhere in the crowd below. He came up and the two boxers hugged one another.

There was a press conference shortly after Mandela's arrival. Some people from the Western media and diplomats criticised the ANC and Mandela himself for having close relationships with Cuba, which they described as a dictatorship.

Mandela got very angry. But it was an anger that was controlled and logical, and he made it clear that those countries that had not offered any support to the South African struggle had no right to prescribe to the ANC with whom it should be friends.

From the very beginning, the Cuban people and their government had made it clear that they were prepared to offer every resource within their capacity to help with the South African struggle. And this was at a time when few of the Western countries

I wanted to write Mandela's speech for Cuba in order to thank the Cubans for what they had done for South Africa and for the people of southern Africa, as well as for many other countries.

A IN CUBA

were prepared to assist at all. Mandela said he was not prepared to be advised who his friends should be when the Cuban people and government had proved themselves over many decades.

INSTRUCTIONS AND PROTOCOL

I was to write the speech Mandela would give at the Matanzas gathering. When I started to work on it, some Cuban officials visited me to ask if I was the speech writer. When I confirmed this, they told me that there was a particular format for addressing Castro: "First secretary of the Communist Party, president of the Council of State and of the government of Cuba, president of the socialist republic of Cuba, commander-in-chief, Comrade Fidel Castro."

They also asked me if I was going to mention Che Guevara and José Martí, a foundational figure in Cuban liberation history. I said I intended to do so. They gave me some information they thought I should consider including in the speech, which I used. When Mandela delivered his speech and mentioned Guevara and Martí, the audience stood up and applauded.

(I had asked these officials whether it was possible for me to stay longer and receive training in political education, but they said that I should rather make a separate visit later. Shortly after my return to South Africa, I learnt that the person who was head of the equivalent of political education in the Cuban government and Communist Party had been dismissed for corruption or similar irregular conduct. That may have been one of the reasons they were not ready to make any form of commitment in regard to my request.)

When we went to the stadium for Mandela's address on 26 July, he was wearing the Cuban shirt that many South Africans who had been in the struggle wear, the *guayabera*. Mandela and Castro obviously related very well to each other and embraced and walked together to the platform. The crowd applauded Mandela warmly.

In Mandela's speech, which is published in a book together with Castro's, tribute was paid to the role of the Cubans in contributing to the liberation of South Africa. It was also a statement of the aims of the ANC as a future government and the close relationship that it would continue to have with the government and people of Cuba.

CASTRO'S RESPONSE

Castro had not seen the speech before Mandela delivered it. But he immediately responded with a speech that was about an hour long, which was not the longest speech he had ever made. It was beautiful. He expressed his admiration for Mandela and said how important it was to have him voice the appreciation of the South African people for Cubans' contribution towards their liberation.

He then gave an analysis of the international situation, and I remember the impression it made on Mandela, who would later repeat Castro's reference to the trillions in debt owed by the United States.

Many people don't understand that Castro was not a conventional popular political orator. He was a very learned person. He always read a lot and was knowledgeable on a range of topics. Before I wrote Mandela's speech, I had read quite a few of Castro's, and the interjections showed the people's appreciation. They would often shout, "Fidel, Fidel, give the Yankees hell!"

He appeared to be very popular. And as far as I could see, the revolution had the support of the majority of the people. This is not to say that the Cuban people were docile. Deborah Shnookal of Ocean Press, which had special rights to publish books from Cuba, said to me that the Cubans "whinge" a lot. I remember hearing a story about a man complaining about the price of petrol. The person who told me this said they asked him what car he drove and he said he didn't have one.

Mandela also had a meeting with Castro, during the course of which he told the Cuban leader "we may walk out of the talks". I think Mandela thought that this would strike a chord with the militant Castro. But he responded by saying, "And how do you see the process unfolding if you do that?"

ALWAYS STRATEGIC

What I realised then – and this is something that Mbeki confirmed later – is that Castro was militant but always strategic. He didn't admire radical actions and militancy just for their own sake. He always wanted to understand how a process would unfold and what strategies informed what one was doing to achieve a particular goal.

I learnt later, when Mbeki was launching the South African Democratic Education Trust series on South African resistance history, that at a certain point when they were in exile, Castro had asked the ANC leadership to visit Havana to discuss the Freedom Charter. Mbeki and others thought it would be a simple task because they knew the charter so well.

When they got there, Castro said to them, "In the Freedom Charter, you are planning to nationalise the mines. But are you in the position to actually run the mines?" And he pointed out the Cubans' lack of preparedness for certain consequences of their revolution.

For example, the Cubans were famous for making a rum that, before the revolution, was named Bacardi. When they defeated the Batista regime, one of the sources they hoped to use to fund some of their programmes was the export of this rum. But Bacardi had copyrighted the use of the name and the Cuban revolutionaries could not use it.

What Mbeki was saying is that Castro showed that the question of government was not a simple case of nationalising this and that, or seizing this or that, and no less a militant than Castro led the ANC to understand this better, some time before 1994.

FORESIGHT AND WISDOM

It is well known that the collapse of the Soviet Union and its allied states presented new challenges to Cuba, which had received considerable assistance, notably a supply of subsidised oil and other products, from the USSR. This happened to a state that was already embattled by US sanctions.

At the time, we were all grappling with the meaning of the gradual collapse of the former Soviet bloc. At one point, Winnie Mandela asked Castro, "What do you think of Gorbachev?" He paused a moment and said, "You don't go into the middle of the ocean and throw away your oars."

None of us had heard this kind of commentary on the period of perestroika and its consequences for Soviet communism. It is not, of course, a complete explanation of the Gorbachev period and how it contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, nor on whether his actions were decisive in the demise of Soviet socialism.

What may be the most fruitful way of relating to this comment is to revert to Castro's reaction to Mandela saying that the ANC might walk out of the talks. In a sense, to have walked out of the talks would have been to throw away the method that had been found to break the deadlock between the forces of apartheid and the forces of liberation.

The comment on Gorbachev is, in a sense, an echo of the comment on Mandela "walking out." Many of us who emerged from insurrection were sceptical of negotiations on South Africa's future. Mandela had the foresight to find a way out of what Antonio Gramsci had called a "reciprocal siege."

New Frame

NEW ZEALAND'S DIVERGENCE FROM FIVE EYES INTELLIGENCE NETWORK

Valentin Cartillier

New Zealand has seemingly broken ranks with the other members of the Five Eyes intelligence network over their attempt to exert political pressure on China through the network. NZ has found that the Five Eyes has overstepped the bounds of its original purpose of intelligence gathering and sharing, and that it is now making statements on a whole range of issues including trade, technology and Beijing's actions in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea.

Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said she is "uncomfortable with expanding the remit" of the Five Eyes partnership. She stated that:

> "The Five Eyes arrangement is about a security and intelligence framework and it's not necessary all the time on every issue to invoke Five Eyes as your first port of call in terms of creating a coalition of support around particular issues and the Human Rights space, for example."

This statement is part of NZ's desire for a more "independent" foreign policy from its Five Eye counterparts as it seeks to establish better trade relations with China in light of the expansion of the free trade policy between the two countries. Outlining NZ's future with China, Mahuta said that they want to cultivate mutually respectful ties with China, despite the various disagreements between the two countries on particular matters; however, to achieve this end they'd need to treat each other fairly and honestly.

Prime Minister Jacinta Ardern has expressed a similar sentiment and sees the actions of Five Eyes having the potential to start a trade war with China. We are already seeing the effects of the heightened tensions with China in Australia, with the Australian government intervening in and revoking Victoria's Belt and Road Initiative with China under the guise that it's not in Australia's national interest. For a more detailed explanation see *Guardian* "Australia Scraps BRI Agreement," #1959.

These disputes have been going on for some time with China openly condemning the statements made by Five Eyes. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said back in November 2020, regarding the Five Eyes joint statement on the Hong Kong protests:

> "No matter if they have five eyes or ten eyes, if they dare to harm China's sovereignty, security and development interests, they should beware of their eyes being poked and blinded."

In April, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying accused the Five Eyes of taking "coordinated steps to gang up on China" after Australia and NZ signed a joint statement about Xinjiang. In light of this, NZ has been taking a more diplomatic approach to their relationship with China. Most recently, NZ has declined to join thirteen countries, including all of its Five Eyes partners, in expressing doubt over the World Health Organisation's (WHO) report on the origins of coronavirus. NZ wants to independently analyse the report before commenting on the findings. The other countries have claimed that the WHO's report was delayed and lacked access to complete data. China has perceived this as yet another unfounded attack against them.

WHAT IS FIVE EYES?

Five Eyes is an intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its origins can be traced back to the end of WWII and the alliance formed with the adoption of the Atlantic Charter. One of the main motivations for this alliance was to combat what they saw as the threat of Soviet influence in the post-WWII geopolitical landscape. Winston Churchill, in particular, was convinced that if English-speaking countries didn't band together there would eventually be a "hot" war with the Soviet Union. He stated in his "Iron Curtain" speech of 1946:

> "Neither the sure prevention of war, nor the continuous rise of world organisation will be gained without what I have called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States... the continuance of the intimate relationship between our military advisers, leading to common study of potential dangers[...]"

Even a cursory glance at history since then will clearly show that these English-speaking countries have been the primary aggressors and instigators of war. As the Cold War progressed, the Five Eyes intelligence network was initially used to spy on the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc but now it monitors communication worldwide. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the Five Eyes has turned its gaze towards South-East Asia and, in particular, the rise of China.

Five Eyes in recent years has brought in a number of "Third Party Partners" sporting the awkward titles of: "Five Eyes Plus Three Against China and Russia" this included France, Germany, and Japan in 2018 to share information on the foreign activities of China and Russia to assess their threat levels; "Five Eyes Plus Three Against North Korea" composed of France, Japan and South Korea to monitor North Korea's military activities; "Six Eyes"; "Nine Eyes"; "Fourteen Eyes"; the list goes on. Apparently, China must have already poked them as each country only seems to be able to contribute one eye.

IMPLICATIONS OF NEW ZEALAND'S POSITION

The break in ranks has unsurprisingly received a lot of criticism from the other Five Eyes countries. New Zealand has been described by the capitalist media as "the weakest link in the chain," according to The *Guardian*'s (UK) diplomatic editor, that they have "blindsided Australia" according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*), and that Australia needs to "reset" its relationship with NZ "if New Zealand, and other Pacific states, are to be pulled back from China's orbit," according, again, to an *SMH* opinion piece.

China has been NZ's biggest trading partner since 2017, accounting for twenty-nine per cent of its export revenue. As mentioned above, NZ is attempting to foster less hostile, more respectful diplomatic and economic ties with China, and it has therefore deemed that the lockstep "diplomacy" of Five Eyes is not in its interests.

However, the waters have been muddied regarding NZ's relationship with Five Eyes. Mahuta, less than 24 hours after declaring that she was "uncomfortable" with Five Eyes expanding its sphere of operations, reaffirmed New Zealand's commitment to the alliance, "New Zealand is a real beneficiary of the arrangement and will continue to actively engage with the Five Eyes alliance as we always have." What this active engagement will look like in relation to Mahuta's statement that "we would much rather prefer to look for multilateral opportunities to express our interests on a number of issues" remains to be seen.

While it is not entirely clear how New Zealand will balance its relationship with China alongside its commitment to the Five Eyes network, as it stands, their position is more nuanced than simply falling in line with the other members. New Zealand is asserting its right to determine its own foreign policy and has called out the other Five Eyes countries for overstepping their boundaries in an ongoing bid to antagonise China. ✪

NZ is attempting to foster less hostile, more respectful diplomatic and economic ties with China, and it has therefore deemed that the lockstep 'diplomacy' of Five Eyes is not in its interests.

AUSTRALIA SCRAPS BRI AGREEMENTS, EAGER TO INJURE RELATIONSHIP WITH NUMBER ONE TRADE PARTNER

Casey Davidson

The Morrison government has vetoed the state of Victoria by cancelling four agreements it had with other nations relating to cooperation and education. Two of the agreements were made with China as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the others with Syria and Iran. It is no coincidence that the countries are deemed to be enemies by the United States, and it is clear that Australia's government chooses to fall in line with its US puppet-master, rather than making decisions that benefit the Australian economy or its people. While a broad campaign to demonise China makes it near impossible to build diplomacy and understanding, the general Australian public continue to lose opportunities.

Two of the cancelled agreements were made long before the current Victorian administration. The Protocol of Scientific Cooperation was an agreement between Syria and Victoria made way back in 1999, and encouraged scholarships, and shared research. In 2004, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was made between Iran and Victoria's education department, mainly for the purposes of teacher professional development. It wasn't until 2018 that the current Victorian premier, Daniel Andrews signed an MOU as part of China's BRI, and then a framework agreement in 2019.

Andrews attended the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) in Beijing in 2017 as the only subnational leader from Australia. The premier describes that the visit aligned with "the Victorian Government's vision for Victoria to become China's gateway to Australia." The event was China's highest profile economic and diplomatic event of the year, hosted by President Xi Jinping with over 1,500 delegates from over 130 nations, including 29 foreign heads of state and government leaders, heads of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The non-legally binding MOU signed by Andrews in 2018 is basically centred on finding new opportunities for China and Victoria to cooperate in developing infrastructure, and to create the ability for businesses and organisations on both sides to more easily make partnerships and investments.

The framework agreement signed in 2019 was developed by a working group co-chaired by Andrews and China's National Development and Reform Commission Vice Chairman, Ning Jizhe, which delves deeper into specific needs for Victoria, including boosting trade in agriculture, food, and cosmetics, therefore creating job opportunities. China would build Victorian infrastructure and discuss ongoing shared interests such as high-end manufacturing, biotechnology, agricultural technology, innovation, training and how to deal with an ageing population.

Although Western talking points may describe these agreements as "debt-trap diplomacy" as dubbed by former-US Vice President, Mike Pence, the fear mongering and propaganda campaign is no match for reality. One scathing story about the BRI which vastly dominated the Western sphere was in relation to a port development in Sri Lanka, which was misrepresented, by not including all of the facts about the situation, namely that the debt accounted for just five per cent of Sri Lanka's total unpayable debt.

This one example is used to discredit the BRI even though there are an overwhelming number of success stories across the world. The BRI is massive – the total investment is equivalent to sixty-two per cent of global GDP, impacts seventy countries and 4.8bil people. Ports in Greece, the Netherlands, and Germany have been further developed to create thousands of jobs, boost local economies, and increase flow of people and products. Rail links from France to Malaysia reduce transport time by avoiding sea freight, and allow more ability to exchange special products like French wine, agricultural products and car parts. Luxembourg and China have an agreement that allows time-sensitive products like fresh fruit and pharmaceuticals to be flown in.

Hydroelectricity plants have gone up in developing nations like Uganda, providing electricity to millions. And it's not just infrastructure for trade that the BRI invests in, but also the ability for countries to share expertise to better develop systems for enhanced prosperity.

China has created exceptional opportunities for countries in the Global South and the Global North. Even the northern US state of Alaska dubbed the years from 2000 to 2011 as the "Dragon Decade," when it took advantage of the Chinese market to invest in Alaskan natural resource commodities – trade skyrocketed from $100mil to a phenomenal $1.5bil.

So why would Australia force Victoria out of such an opportunity?

Illustration: Tang Tengfei/GT

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne has announced that the move was not intended to target China, but to maintain a "consistent approach to foreign policy" – which is actually to contain China. Australia remains in lock-step with US foreign policy, helping maintain US hegemony and imperialism, and this sentiment has done nothing but ramp up in recent years.

Australian soldiers have murdered innocent civilians in Afghanistan, and have supported the US in destruction and bloodshed in Iraq and Syria. It is no wonder that the Australian federal government also cancelled a Syrian and Iranian agreement, to maintain this "consistent approach."

The national scheme was developed just last year in December in response to Andrews' cooperative approach to China, giving the Commonwealth the power to veto deals between states and territories with foreign entities.

As countries across the world with varying political systems latch on to the BRI and work towards developing stronger ties with China for mutual advantage and developing understanding, Australia sits in the past holding on tighter to the irrefutably biggest human rights abuser, the US – an empire with a thousand foreign military bases, continuing its bullying through sanctions and tariff wars, with the goal of creating a world of "blocks" once again, as the New Cold War escalates. In contrast, the state of Victoria could have boosted its economy, creating more prosperity for farmers, workers and businesses, creating more understanding and peaceful relations along the way.

And although Payne argues that the move is not intended to target China, the Chinese government, news sources and citizens alike have expressed their disappointment. Wang Yiwei, Director of the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University of China, described the move by the Australian government as "an egregious incident where economic cooperation is undermined by politics." Chinese news company, *People's Daily* commented that "what [Australia is] doing is reversing the wheels of history, which not only gives a blow to the confidence in cooperation of the two sides [...] but also seriously damages the image and reputation of Australia."

Examples of comments from Chinese citizens on social media platform, Weibo, include "Australia has no dignity. [We] need to give them a lesson"; or "Some [countries] just don't deserve respect". Another user posted, "Australia is mad. Now they are determined to be the lackey of America. Where is the spirit of contracts?" While spokesperson for the US and Defence funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), Albert Zhang, speculated that the comments were unlikely "organic" due to Weibo's connections to the Communist Party of China, it seems somewhat naive to suggest that Chinese citizens would not have some kind of emotional response to the provocative decision.

Additionally, Chinese users on Facebook page, 21SilkRd, have posted similar opinions in response to the BRI agreement cancellation. Comments to the sentiment of "they are digging their grave deeper and deeper," "it's their loss," "it's a major mistake," or "let them be isolated" dominate the comments section. It is important to analyse which is more believable – speculation coming from ASPI, a think tank literally funded by US weapons manufacturers, or comments from everyday Chinese citizens. Those who prefer to think the citizens are brainwashed clearly have a discriminatory attitude towards Chinese people.

People's Daily comments that "on one hand, [Australia] hopes to destroy the bilateral relationship with China. On the other hand, they are dreaming of making a fortune by riding on China's train of fast development. Does this really make sense?" This is an important question for consideration, and there is a vast divide in the Australian ruling class about the rising political tensions, and Australian companies missing out on being part of China's win-win strategies which would help them grow and develop.

It's a dangerous move to pull out of these agreements, and its possible China will start looking to trade more with cooperative nations, especially in regards to iron ore exports – a huge proportion of Australia's GDP. It is not economic coercion coming from China, as some Australian outlets have described it, but a rational decision to trade with less provocative and more respectful countries.

It is not good enough to base trade relations on human rights violations, especially when the majority of these talking points are also coming from US-backed think tanks, and are vastly complex internal issues to which China is dealing with carefully. Australia should look to itself – to its war crimes, indigenous deaths in custody, and treatment of refugees, and stop behaving with a supposed moral high ground. ✪

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MEN'S FOOTBALL: WHAT'S NEXT FOR FOOTBALL FANS

The strength of supporter action prevented a power grab by football's elite as a new Super League disbanded just days after it was officially announced.

Once the backlash began, several of the clubs involved scurried to become the first to withdraw in an attempt to save face, as fans united against football's latest gluttonous venture.

The fallout from these frantic few days appears to have brought about a wider realisation that fans need to have more of a say in how football is run.

Despite this, the idea that supporters are able to assume a position of power at these clubs through raising money to buy shares is probably unrealistic.

The 50+1 ownership model seen in Germany, which ensures supporters and members remain the majority shareholder, may appear to be the way forward, but could be more difficult to apply in England.

The European Super League led to suggestions that these clubs would soon become little more than franchises, but many of them already are.

In their current state, they might be too far gone when it comes to converting them into fan-owned institutions and this is why many fans have already sought alternatives lower down the league pyramid.

But this doesn't mean there can be no supporter involvement at these big clubs or that current owners cannot be held to account.

No group has invested more into these clubs than the supporters and they should not have to invest any more money to be seen as worthy shareholders.

Many families' support goes back generations, whether that be in the local communities that helped shape these 100-plus-year-old institutions, giving them their unique characteristics, or overseas supporters who embraced this identity and helped spread it around the globe.

It has been a difficult moment for fans of these breakaway clubs, the majority of whom were dead against these proposals. During the past week, they were regularly presented with the idea that the clubs they support are gone – if they want to join a Super League let them, good riddance.

Just as it was unfair to these supporters to say "good riddance" to their clubs once a Super League was suggested, it is unfair to ask them to invest further large sums of money to be able to have a say in the running of their clubs.

In his apology to Liverpool fans, principal owner John W Henry constantly referenced "your club." If he and others are to back their words up with actions, they need to make sure supporters are represented at the board level in the future.

Such supporter representation has been mentioned as part of a fan-led review on football announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport this week.

It will be chaired by Conservative MP Tracey Crouch, who is a qualified coach and manages a local girls team at grassroots level.

Both major political parties in Westminster have included domestic football reforms in recent election manifestos, and some of these measures might finally be put into action.

Crouch says the review "will look closely at the issues of governance, ownership and finance and take the necessary steps to retain the game's integrity, competitiveness and, most importantly, the bond that clubs have with its supporters and the local community."

The Super League threatened the fabric of the English football leagues. The plans to trickle money down was vague, as they often conveniently are, and it was a move to put the majority of the money football makes in the hands of a cabal of already rich owners.

Many of the clubs who were involved in the Super League are already crippled by debts despite the large sums the game makes each year.

The failed launch of this new league was yet another example of how some of the top clubs in world football are among the worst run.

Different supporter groups will have different levels of satisfaction with their club's current owners, but they are now all united in one cause after the realisation that they have been taken for granted for too long.

The lack of consultation from owners with fans before agreeing to such a seismic change in the football landscape summed up the attitude of the former towards the latter.

On this occasion, fans had support from broadcasters in the form of passionate arguments from pundits on various channels, but too often these broadcasters have themselves neglected supporters.

And as covered in [a previous] column, the plans for a reformed UEFA Champions League are themselves little more than a Super League under a different guise, and many other issues which have been festering for some time remain.

We might now be about to witness the strength of fan power, but supporters groups now need to use the anger sparked by the shameless Super League plans to build momentum and go after the areas of the game which have been rotten for some time.

The Super League backlash should serve as a prologue to further action which gets to the root of the problems in the game and the way it's run, including Uefa's latest plans.

As Leeds United manager Marcelo Bielsa said on Monday: "Football is not only a business, football belongs to everybody. The real owners of football are the ones who love the badge and without them, football would disappear."

Morning Star

XI CALLS FOR "UNPRECEDENTED AMBITION, ACTION" TO BUILD COMMUNITY OF LIFE

- We should protect nature and preserve the environment like we protect our eyes.
- China welcomes the United States' return to the multilateral climate governance process, and looks forward to working with the international community, including the United States, to jointly advance global environmental governance.
- China will strictly control coal-fired power generation projects, and strictly limit the increase in coal consumption over the 14th Five-Year Plan period and phase it down in the 15th Five-Year Plan period.

Last Month, Chinese President Xi Jinping [...] called on the international community to work together to foster a community of life for humanity and nature with "unprecedented ambition and action."

"Faced with unprecedented challenges in global environmental governance, the international community needs to come up with unprecedented ambition and action," he said while addressing the Leaders Summit on Climate via video link from Beijing.

COMMUNITY OF LIFE

To build a community of life for man and nature, Xi made a six-pronged proposal, including staying committed to harmony between man and nature, green development, systemic governance, a people-centred approach, multilateralism, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

"We should protect nature and preserve the environment like we protect our eyes," the Chinese president said, adding that failure to respect nature or follow its laws will only invite its revenge.

Reiterating the idea that "green mountains are gold mountains," Xi said that protecting the environment is protecting productivity, and improving the environment is boosting productivity. "The truth is as simple as that."

He also stressed that protecting the ecosystem requires more than a simplistic, palliative approach, calling for following the innate laws of the ecosystem and properly balancing all elements and aspects of nature.

"We need to look for ways to protect the environment, grow the economy, create jobs and remove poverty all at the same time," he said, adding that the goal is to deliver social equity and justice in the course of green transition.

JOIN HANDS, NOT POINT FINGERS

In the journey toward global carbon neutrality, Xi called for strengthening partnerships and cooperation, learning from each other, and making common progress.

"We must join hands, not point fingers at each other; we must maintain continuity, not reverse course easily; and we must honor commitments, not go back on promises," he said.

China and the United States issued a joint statement a few days ago, vowing to cooperate with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis.

China welcomes the United States' return to the multilateral climate governance process, and looks forward to working with the international community, including the United States, to jointly advance global environmental governance, Xi said.

Aerial photo taken on Feb. 24, 2020 shows the Haizhu wetland and the Canton Tower in the distance in Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province.(Photo by Xie Huiqiang/Xinhua)

Calling the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities "the cornerstone of global climate governance," he said that developed countries need to increase climate ambition and action and make concrete efforts to help developing countries strengthen their capacity and resilience against climate change.

Xi urged developed countries to support developing countries in financing, technology and capacity building, and refrain from creating green trade barriers.

"The historical responsibility, development stage, and coping capacity of developed and developing countries are different, and that's why the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should always be followed," said Xu Huaqing, director of the National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation.

CHINA IN ACTION

Reiterating China's goal of striving to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, Xi said that the period of China's commitment to move from carbon peak to carbon neutrality is much shorter than what might take many developed countries.

"That requires extraordinarily hard efforts from China," Xi said.

The targets of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality have been added to China's overall plan for ecological conservation. An action plan toward carbon peaking is being formulated, and China's national carbon market will also start trading.

"China will strictly control coal-fired power generation projects, and strictly limit the increase in coal consumption over the 14th Five-Year Plan period and phase it down in the 15th Five-Year Plan period," Xi said.

As a participant, contributor and trailblazer in global ecological conservation, China has also been doing its best to help developing countries build capacity against climate change.

A number of green action initiatives have been launched, covering wide-ranging efforts in green infrastructure, green energy, green transport and green finance to bring enduring benefits to the people of all Belt and Road partner countries.

"I am confident that as long as we unite in our purposes and efforts and work together with solidarity and mutual assistance, we will rise above the global climate and environment challenges and leave a clean and beautiful world to future generations," Xi said.

People's Daily ✪

VENEZUELA TO PRODUCE INSULIN UNDER RUSSIAN LICENCE

Mainstream media have not told you this: Venezuelan laboratories will manufacture millions of insulin drug capsules over the next five years, under an agreement between the Government of Venezuela and the Russian biotechnology company Geropharm.

According to a press release from Geropharm, the plant will be established at the facilities of the Socialist Company for the Production of Biological Medicines (*Espromed Bio*) in Caracas.

Geropharm will provide both capital and technology for the venture, and its experts will train Venezuelan personnel on the manufacturing know-how.

The agreement also includes the supply of insulin "analogs" (genetically modified and fast acting) from Russia. Venezuela will guarantee the purchase of the new plant's total output over the five-year contract period.

Suffering from a harsh United States-led international financial blockade, Venezuela has experienced acute shortages of insulin and other drugs necessary to attend the country's 2.96mil patients affected by diabetes mellitus.

By 2019 "international insulin manufacturers [had] practically completely stopped deliveries of vital insulin drugs to Venezuela", the Russian lab said.

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NO CRIME LASTS A HUNDRED YEARS

Photos: Yaciel Peña

Twitter's news feed did not stop. Facebook played live videos, one after another. Before the restless eyes of those following everything related to Cuba posted on social networks, this Saturday and Sunday before last, it was impossible not to notice that something was afoot.

From distant China and Australia to nearby lands across the Americas, photos began to circulate of people, some Cuban and many other nationalities, comparing the US economic, commercial and financial blockade of the island to a virus, one that is as harmful and in need of elimination as SARS-COV-2.

This coming June 23, once again, representatives of Cuba's revolutionary diplomacy will submit to the United Nations the draft resolution calling for an end to this genocidal policy. That is why, this weekend, the world came out to give its firm support to our longstanding demand that the US government lift the blockade.

First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee and President of the Republic Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, who is an active leader on Twitter, joined the global demands on this platform.

The President noted the dozens, hundreds of people, who launched "Bridges of love" in more than fifty cities on several continents, and those of Santa Clara and Las Tunas in Cuba, "demanding the same thing in all languages," he wrote.

Seconds later, in another tweet, he compared the global protest to an "unstoppable wave" in the midst of a global epidemic.

"#EliminateTheBlockade is demanded everywhere. Today there are thousands, tomorrow it will be millions, and one day it will be all of humanity. There is no crime that lasts 100 years, nor a sovereign people that accepts submission," Díaz-Canel stated.

The first worldwide caravan against the blockade of Cuba took place the weekend of 27-28 March. At that time, solidarity organisations and Cuban residents abroad on the five continents, in cars, on motorcycles and bicycles, expressed their opposition to this brutal US policy and held virtual and physical meetings to explain the impact of the blockade and the more than 240 sanctions adopted by the Trump administration, not one of which has been rescinded by Joe Biden.

Now, one month later, new countries joined the initiative, with Cuba, once again, in the lead.

Villa Clara and Las Tunas were both sites of caravans against the blockade.

On bicycles, motorcycles, scooters, skateboards and light vehicles, among others, many young people could be seen, who, in this way, also expressed their gratitude to the nations that joined the worldwide mega caravan.

In Havana, a beautiful regatta and a giant mural were two of the most notable initiatives that saluted global activism. A bevy of small boats emerged on the Havana waterfront to extend a bridge of solidarity,

Europe, once again, was among the most active regions of the world, judging by the number of actions and messages published.

Many joined the mobilisation in Italy, Spain, Belgium, France, Serbia, Ireland, United Kingdom, Russia, Turkey, and the German cities of Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Bonn, Munich, Bremen, Bielefeld, Hamburg, Schwerte, Chemnitz, Dresden, Leipzig, and Stuttgart.

The website Siempre con Cuba, devoted to solidarity with Cuba, reported actions in Africa, where residents in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Botswana, South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia, Benin, Tunisia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Angola sent messages of support to the Cuban struggle for sovereignty.

Activities were also carried out in Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Belize, Panama, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Uruguay, Argentina, and other American nations.

THE MEGACARAVAN, ALSO IN THE US

The blockade was also denounced in thirteen states and twenty-one cities in the United States, Lianys Torres Rivera, head of the Cuban Mission in the United States, reported on her Twitter account.

Cuban citizens residing there, and locals in solidarity, demanded the resumption of consular procedures; the elimination of the measures imposed by Trump; and the removal of Cuba from the State Department's list of countries allegedly sponsoring terrorism.

Granma

PROTESTS DEMANDING VACCINES SWEEP PANDEMIC-RAVAGED INDIA

Article by combined sources via *People's World*

Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M) supporters are staging demonstrations across pandemic ravaged India demanding adequate supplies of COVID-19 vaccines and life-saving medicines for government hospitals.

The party is calling for universal mass vaccination across India, funded by the central government. It accused the government of trying "to absolve itself of the colossal health crisis that it has created" after New Delhi announced on Tuesday that would shift responsibility for vaccination to regional and state administrations.

"This policy is a deliberate attempt to liberalise vaccine sales and deregulate prices without augmenting supply," the CPI-M said in a statement. "A mass vaccination program has to be free and universal. This has been independent India's heritage and practice."

A massive wave of coronavirus cases has hit the country since mid-March, with hospitals running out of oxygen supplies amid desperate pleas for beds and medicine. The country has confirmed 16mil cases so far, second only to the United States, in a country of nearly 1.4bil people. Its death toll so far is 186,920.

The situation is worsening by the day with hospitals taking to social media to plead with the government to replenish their oxygen supplies and threatening to stop admissions of new patients.

A major private hospital chain in the capital, Max Hospital, tweeted that one of its facilities had one hour's oxygen supply in its system and had been waiting for replenishment since early morning. Two days earlier, they had filed a petition in the Delhi High Court saying they were running out of oxygen, endangering the lives of 400 patients, of which 262 were being treated for COVID-19.

A year ago, India was able to avoid the shortages of medical oxygen that plagued Latin America and Africa after it converted industrial oxygen manufacturing systems into a medical-grade network. But many facilities went back to supplying oxygen to industries and now several Indian states face such shortages that the Health Ministry has urged hospitals to implement rationing.

A total of 332,730 new cases and 2,263 deaths were recorded Friday, the highest figures yet. With vaccines increasingly hard to come by, the crisis is likely to escalate. In Rajapalayam, CPI-M local secretary B Mariappan said that the hospital there had run out of the vaccines four days ago.

"Even today, people had to return home disappointed, as the hospital authorities said that they did not have stocks of vaccine," he said.

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