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HIROSHIMA NAGASAKI NEVER AGAIN

Sign the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons

Build a peaceful pacific

Dr Hannah Middleton

On 6th August, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, incinerating 140,000 men, women and children. Three days later, on 9th August, a second American atomic bomb killed 74,000 men, women and children in Nagasaki. Thousands more have died since then as victims of radiation from the bombs. This must never happen again.

Today, together with the threat of environmental collapse, nuclear weapons are the greatest immediate danger confronting our species.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says: "More than 13,000 nuclear weapons are being held in arsenals across the globe. In a world rife with geopolitical tensions and mistrust, this is a recipe for annihilation."

Nuclear weapons continue to threaten the survival of humanity. The existence of nearly 13,000 weapons, ready to be launched without warning, poses an imminent threat to all.

All our hopes and plans for the future exist under the shadow of a catastrophic threat that could destroy all life on planet Earth. **The only defence is to ban all nuclear weapons**.

The *Hibakusha* (survivors) insist that: "Nuclear weapons are absolute evil that cannot coexist with humans. There is no choice but to abolish them."

UN Secretary General Guterres said:

> "the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity must motivate us to accomplish new and decisive action leading to their total elimination. We owe this to the Hibakusha ... and to our planet. [...] The Hibakusha are a living reminder that nuclear weapons pose an existential threat and that the only guarantee against their use is their total elimination [...]. This goal continues to be the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations, as it has been since the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946".

SIGN THE TREATY

The Albanese Government must sign the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Photo: Dmitrij Rodionov – commons.wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The TPNW prohibits nations from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, or allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on their territory. It also prohibits them from assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in any of these activities.

Nations are also obliged to provide assistance to all victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons and to take measures for the remediation of contaminated environments.

The Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty in June declared: "We will not rest until the last state has joined the Treaty, the last warhead has been dismantled and destroyed and nuclear weapons have been totally eliminated from the Earth."

BAN THE BOMB – SIGN THE TPNW

The overwhelming majority of the world's nations have adopted the TPNW, recognising its humanitarian basis and the moral, ethical and security imperatives which inspired and motivated its creation.

To our shame the Australian Government boycotted the historic UN talks. But eighty-four per cent of Australians want the government to support these efforts to ban nuclear weapons forever.

Who will believe the Albanese government really wants peace and security if Australia refuses to join this historic effort?

Australia has joined treaties banning chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions. Now it must sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

CANCEL AUKUS

The former Morrison government opened the door for nuclear proliferation by agreeing to buy nuclear powered submarines. Australia must repudiate the AUKUS pact and replace it with a nonaligned and independent foreign policy.

The major component of AUKUS is the agreement to transfer US technology for nuclear powered submarines to Australia.

In addition, under AUKUS Australia will be further militarised and garrisoned with more deployments of US aircraft in Australia, more US surface and subsurface vessels in Australia, more joint war games, four new military bases, two new bases for the militarisation of space, greater co-operation in hypersonic weapons, cyber warfare, underwater systems, artificial intelligence, and long range strike capabilities, and support for combined military operations in the region.

Former diplomat Bruce Haigh says: "There has been a lot of poppycock about acquiring nuclear submarines and of having them built in Australia with a lead time to delivery of 20 to 30 years. Only child politicians and their puerile advisers would be prepared to swallow such rubbish.

"The submarine deal was always a smokescreen to get US nuclear armed submarines based in Australia ...

"Where is the sense in spending over $200 billion in the face of a one trillion-dollar debt? The money would be far better spent on health, education and infrastructure.

"AUKUS is nothing more than a US takeover of northern Australia as an operational base against China. Australia has rolled over and the new Minister for Defence, Marles, has gone so far as to offer full integration of the ADF into US force structures."

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Guardian

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SCOMO'S CONTEMPT OF GOVERNMENT EXPLAINS WHY AUSTRALIA WAS SO POORLY MANAGED

It is unfathomable to think that a man who was Prime Minister no less than three months ago has so thoroughly dismissed the institution he led for almost four years. Yet, here we are with former Prime Minister Scott Morrison telling a congregation at Margaret Court's Victory Life Centre (a Pentecostal church) to not " trust in governments" and "don't trust in the United Nations."

Morrison continued:

"We don't trust in all these things, fine as they may be and as important as the role that they play. Believe me, I've worked in it and they are important. But as someone who's been in it, if you are putting your faith in those things as I put my faith in the lord, you're making a mistake. They are earthly, they are fallible. I'm so glad we have a bigger hope."

Responding to these comments Prime Minister Anthony Albanese expressed shock, stating that:

"This guy was the Prime Minister of Australia and had that great honour of leading the government. I find it astonishing that in what must have been, I guess, a moment of frankness, he's said he doesn't believe in government. It provides some explanation perhaps of why, in my view, he clearly didn't lead a government that was worthy of the Australian people. I believe that government does play a role in people's lives and our living standards. I say to young people all the time, get involved, because government will impact on the quality of your life."

Albanese is not speaking any untruths here. However, he shouldn't be surprised. Morrison's tenure as Prime Minister was marked from start to finish by the scepticism of institutions that merely pointed out inconvenient facts to Morrison's ideological spin.

When it came to climate change, Morrison consistently denied the science. Morrison told the country that his government was on track to reduce emissions by 30-35 per cent by 2030 — a target climate experts deem to be too low.

When it came to the COVID-19 pandemic, Morrison challenged the medical advice. The science was in about COVID-19, and yet Morrison gambled with this nation's health, botching a deal on vaccines when Australia – an island nation – had every opportunity to minimise the impact of the health crisis.

More than this, if any government is not to be trusted, it was one run by Morrison. The Prime Minister consistently failed to tell the truth.

Again, on climate action, Morrison stated that at COP26 that Australia's emissions dropped by twenty per cent since 2005. This was marketing spin from a world leader who refused to address carbon emissions. According to the Climate Council:

"Three quarters of Australia's emission reductions since 2005 have come from changes in land management (in other words, not cutting down as many trees). *When it comes to reducing emissions from electricity and moving beyond fossil fuels, Australia has made almost no progress*." (emphasis theirs)

Returning to the pandemic, when it came to the vaccine rollout Morrison backflipped. In March 2021, Morrison unveiled a vaccine rollout plan that by July twenty million Australians would have their first jab. Yet, when questioned Morrison lied, stating that "the suggestion that somehow there was a vaccination rate that would have put us in a different position right now to what was planned last year is simply not true."

The working class has every reason to be sceptical of capitalist governments. However, when it comes to science, where the scientific community is in large agreement, it is important that our governments be proactive and help improve our lives. It is clear now as it was then that Morrison had no intention of helping the lives of working-class Australians and it appears that the next liberal mob run by liberal leader Peter Dutton will be no different.

HIROSHIMA NAGASAKI NEVER AGAIN

Continued from page 1

WITHDRAW FROM AUKUS IMMEDIATELY

From 1946 to 1996, the US, UK and France detonated 318 nuclear devices in the Pacific region in the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia/ Te Ao Maohi, Kiribati, Australia, the US territory of Johnston/Kalama Atoll and Amchitka Island, Alaska.

Today the US is fighting to maintain its domination and control of the Pacific, pouring millions of dollars into "aid", funding the Peace Corp's return, establishing new embassies across the Pacific and appointing its first US Pacific Islands Forum Envoy.

The US, with Australian government complicity, is making war more likely by showcasing military domination in the Pacific with weapons and imperial violence.

The threat of armed conflict between the United States and China is growing, with unthinkable consequences for the peoples of Asia, the Pacific and the world.

Pacific communities are calling for an alternative future that replaces militarised security with genuine human security.

In Hawai'i, the Malu 'Aina Center for Non-Violent Education and Action is calling for the establishment of a demilitarised Pan-Pacific Zone of Peace with redirection of "the massive expenditure of funds from war-making to serve humanity suffering from lack of food, water, and other unmet human needs amid a global pandemic, and expanding climate catastrophe.

"No More War and Training for War! Restore the Pacific as an Ocean of Peace!"

BUILD A NUCLEAR FREE AND INDEPENDENT PACIFIC

Military posturing in the Asia-Pacific risks nuclear war and the potential extinction of the human species. We must instead work toward global co-operation to address the threats of climate change, to build toward peace, life and coexistence."

The lives of people around the world are at stake. We must not let those who make money and political status out of war win and start another horrific war.

We must insist that governments redirect their massive expenditure from war-making to serve humanity suffering from lack of food, water, and other unmet human needs amid a global pandemic and expanding climate catastrophe.

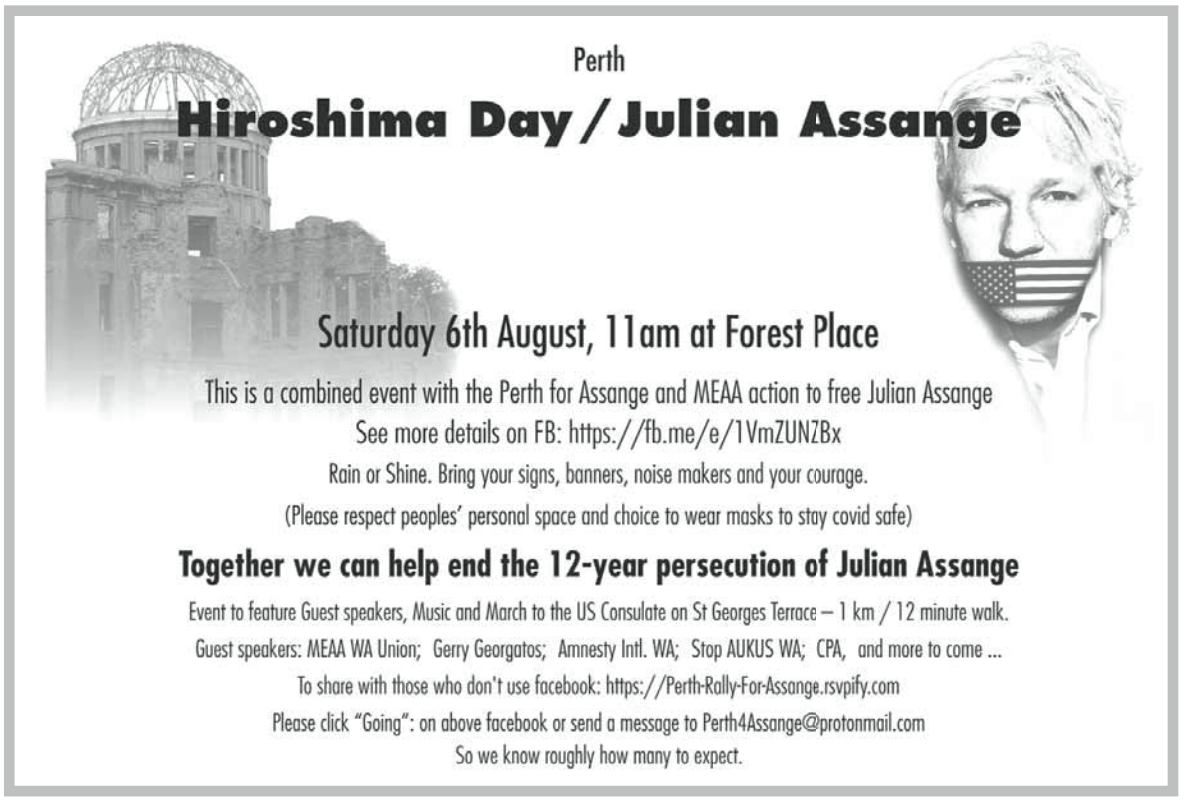
Human security is not based on escalating military spending and war games but on care for the planet and its inhabitants.

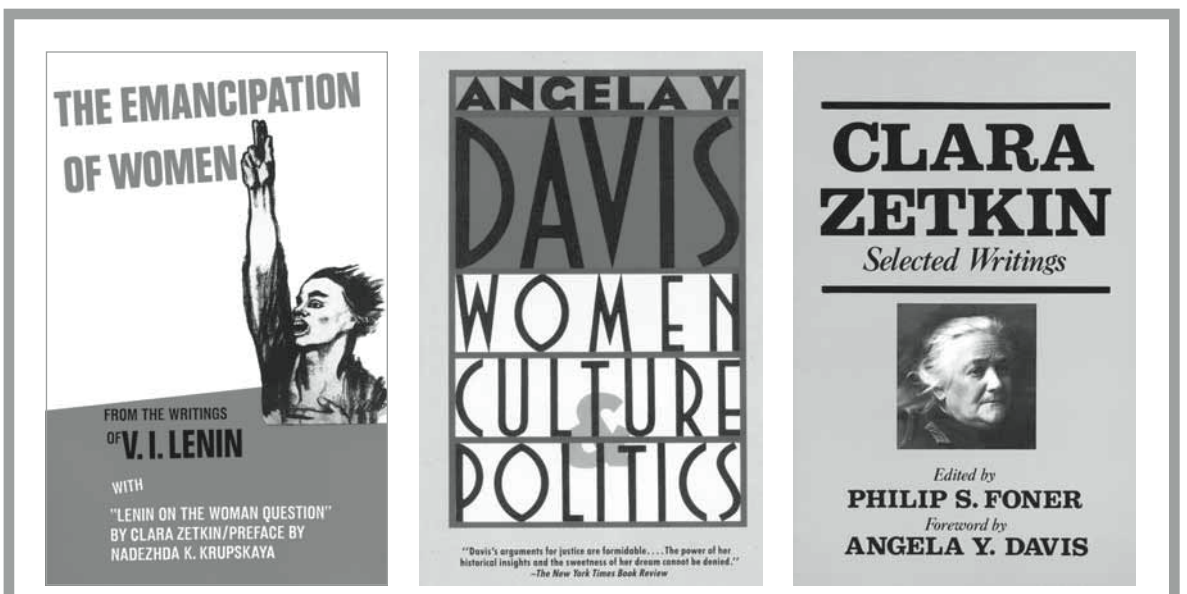
We have a responsibility to not be part of planning for a war in the Pacific that would only see untold human and ecosystem suffering and death. We call for a Pacific Zone of Peace

If spending on the military could provide us with peace, wouldn't we have achieved that already?

It should be obvious by now that countries buying more and more deadly weapons systems in an escalating arms race does not create peace or security. It has not worked in the past and it never will.

It is time for us to join together and call on governments around the world to cut military spending, and to instead invest in the true needs of the people and the planet to build a just and sustainable peace. ✪





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LISTEN TO THE SCIENCE! *STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT*

PART ONE

Anna Pha

"Overall, the state and trend of the environment of Australia are poor and deteriorating as a result of increasing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and resource extraction." (*State of the Environment 2021 report*)

The sobering *State of the Environment 2021* report paints a grim picture, reflecting the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report earlier this year. (See *Guardian*, #1999, "Climate Change Act Now!" and #2000, "Climate Change: Capitalism Killing the Earth") At the same time there are some positives with swift, planned, and coordinated action is urgently needed.

"The oldest continuing cultures in the world, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, know that 'if you take care of Country, it will take care of you'. By continuing to work together, we can heal Country and safeguard our future," the report says. We are not taking care of Country. The message and consequences are stark.

The report is a comprehensive national assessment of the health of every aspect of our environment conducted by more than thirty experts over two years drawing on the best available evidence to guide policy and action.

Previous reports have been delivered approximately every five years since 1995. They covered rivers, oceans, air, ice, land, and urban areas. The 2021 report contains new chapters on Indigenous knowledge and connection to Country, climate change, and extreme weather events.

For the very first time Indigenous voices were involved in the analysis and one of the three lead authors, Dr Terri Janke, is a prominent Indigenous lawyer internationally renowned for her knowledge of Indigenous and cultural intellectual property rights. The other lead authors are Dr Ian Cresswell, an environmental scientist at CSIRO and Professor Emma Johnston, deputy vice-chancellor for research at Sydney University.

"Combining traditional and local knowledge, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have worked together to create this first holistic assessment of the state of Australia's environment."

Photo: bertknot – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

We're born from this land. We belong to the land. And we take care of the land. We respect this land. And we should only ever take from the land what we can give back to the land.

Wurundjeri knowledge holder and Elder, Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin

DETERIORATION OF ENVIRONMENT

The report warns: "Multiple pressures create cumulative impacts that amplify threats to our environment, and abrupt changes in ecological systems have been recorded in the past five years."

At least nineteen ecosystems are on the brink of collapse.

Since 2016 the number of animal and plant species listed as threatened rose by more than two hundred to 1,918. The catastrophic 2019-20 bush fires killed or displaced up to three billion animals, which means the list is likely to grow as the consequences become clear.

Australia has lost more mammal species than any other continent and has one of the highest rates of species decline in the developed world. In all more than 100 Australian species have been listed as either extinct or extinct in the wild. The major causes of the extinctions are land clearing and invasive species.

Land clearing continues and has reached the point where almost half is used for grazing. Areas used for forestry and cropping have also increased.

Native vegetation, soil, wetlands, rivers, and biodiversity continue to decline. Alarmingly, there are now more introduced plant species than native plants in Australia. The cost of weeds to grain growers is an estimated $3.3 billion.

Australia's rivers and catchments are mostly in poor condition; water levels in the Murray-Darling Basin were at record lows in 2019 due to extraction and drought. In the past 150 years native fish populations have declined by more than ninety per cent.

There was mass coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef due to marine heatwaves in 2016, 2017, 2020, and since the report was written, another in March 2022. The coral is increasingly unable to recover in the time between bleachings.

The report warns that ocean acidification due to absorption of carbon dioxide is close to tipping point. Already it is having a disastrous effect on marine ecosystems and species.

Rising sea levels are taking their toll on coast lines and low-lying areas, including the Kakadu wetlands. Mangroves are encroaching on saltmarshes across most of Australia's coast.

There are many factors behind the decline in our environment: ongoing land clearing, invasive species, pollution, and urban expansion. Despite the numerous positive environmental initiatives there has been inadequate investment, lack of coordination, failure to recognise Indigenous knowledge and culture, and legislative failure.

"Our environment holds the key to our survival and wellbeing. The natural world is not separate from the human world – it is the source of our food, water, air and raw materials. [...] In a rapidly changing climate, with declining biodiversity, the general outlook for our environment is deteriorating. The impacts of this will affect us all."

"Indigenous knowledge and connections to Country are vital for sustainability and healing Australia. Indigenous people have cared for Country across generations, yet Indigenous knowledge and worldview are rarely incorporated, valued or accessed by non-Indigenous environmental management."

CLIMATE CHANGE

"Climate change threatens every ecosystem."

The average Australian land temperature has risen by 1.4°C and sea surface temperatures by 1.1°C since the early 20th century, with most of the increase since the 1950s.

The report describes the impacts of climate change such as the worst recorded drought from 2017-2019, the catastrophic bushfires and the months of continuous rain that followed. That was written before the most recent devastating flooding along the east coast of Australia.

"For all aspects of our environment, the outlook is affected by the increasing pressure of climate change. Increasing temperatures on land and sea, changing fire and rainfall regimes, and rising sea levels and ocean acidification are having profound effects that will continue into the future."

"Changes to our landscapes through habitat fragmentation, agricultural management practices, expansion of invasive species and other pressures are exacerbating the impacts of extreme events and inhibiting post event recovery. Competing pressures on water systems and changes in rainfall patterns are increasing the pressures on our environment."

Some of the largest impacts are being experienced in Antarctica. Apart from the impact on species in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic environments, Australia's climate and sea levels face substantial impacts.

The extreme weather events are affecting our soils, water, vegetation, and the species that rely on them including humanity.

Part 2 next week looks at the impact of environmental destruction on humans, caring for Country, and the pathway forward. ✪

"If you take care of Country, it will take care of you"

CORPORATE BOSSES' GREED ANOTHER KNIFE IN THE BACK OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORKING CLASS

As the inflation rate soars to 6.1 per cent and the Australian working class grapples with a cost-of-living crisis, corporate CEOs are taking home more money than ever.

A report from the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors (ACSI) revealed the amounts paid to the CEOs of top ASX-listed companies. On average executives of major Australian companies claimed $9.14 million in salary last financial year, more than 130 times what the average working Australian made during the same period. The highest earners on the list were Afterpay executives Nick Molnar and Anthony Eisen, the pair taking home a whopping $264 million combined. Statistics from Australian Unions showcase the rate at which corporate executives are paid, earning $0.29 on average every second, far greater than the rate of the average Australian worker.

Executive bonuses have also grown exponentially, soaring on average to 76.7 per cent of the maximum rate. Mark McInnes, CEO of Premier Investments (the parent company of Smiggle and Peter Alexander), received a bonus of $2.7 million on top of his salary, the largest of its kind. It is also worth noting that Premier Investments claimed $68.7 million in global wage subsidies during the COVID-19 pandemic from seven countries, none of which has been repaid after turning $271.1 million profit last financial year.

If it wasn't enough that the excessive salaries "earned" by these executives comes from the exploitation of the working class, these exorbitant salaries come at a time when the Australian working people are doing it tougher than ever. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis has already taken its toll on Australians, the standard of living of seventy per cent of Australians impacted. The Labor Treasurer Jim Chalmers has recently announced that inflation has rocketed forward to 6.1 per cent, far outstripping wage growth. Excessive finger-pointing has gone as economists and the government try to find the cause of the ongoing crisis, primarily blaming the war in Ukraine, recent flooding on the East Coast, and (with a hilarious irony) wage growth.

Chief economist from the Australia Institute Dr Richard Denniss explains that the real cause of Australia's inflationary crisis is private sector price increases.

"It is rising profits, not rising costs, that are driving Australia's inflation. While workers are being asked to make sacrifices in the name of controlling inflation, the data makes clear that it is the corporate sector that needs to tighten its belt," says Denniss.

Denniss goes on to state that "there is no direct link between costs of production [labour] and prices beyond the desire of firms to maintain, or increase, their profits."

If the current cost-of-living crisis is to end and similar future crises of capitalism are to be avoided than the system must change. Any society where corporate overlords can reward themselves with enormous amounts of wealth while relegating the working people to poverty is not one that works for the many. ✪

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 booklet 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.

Order your copy today! $10 including p&p

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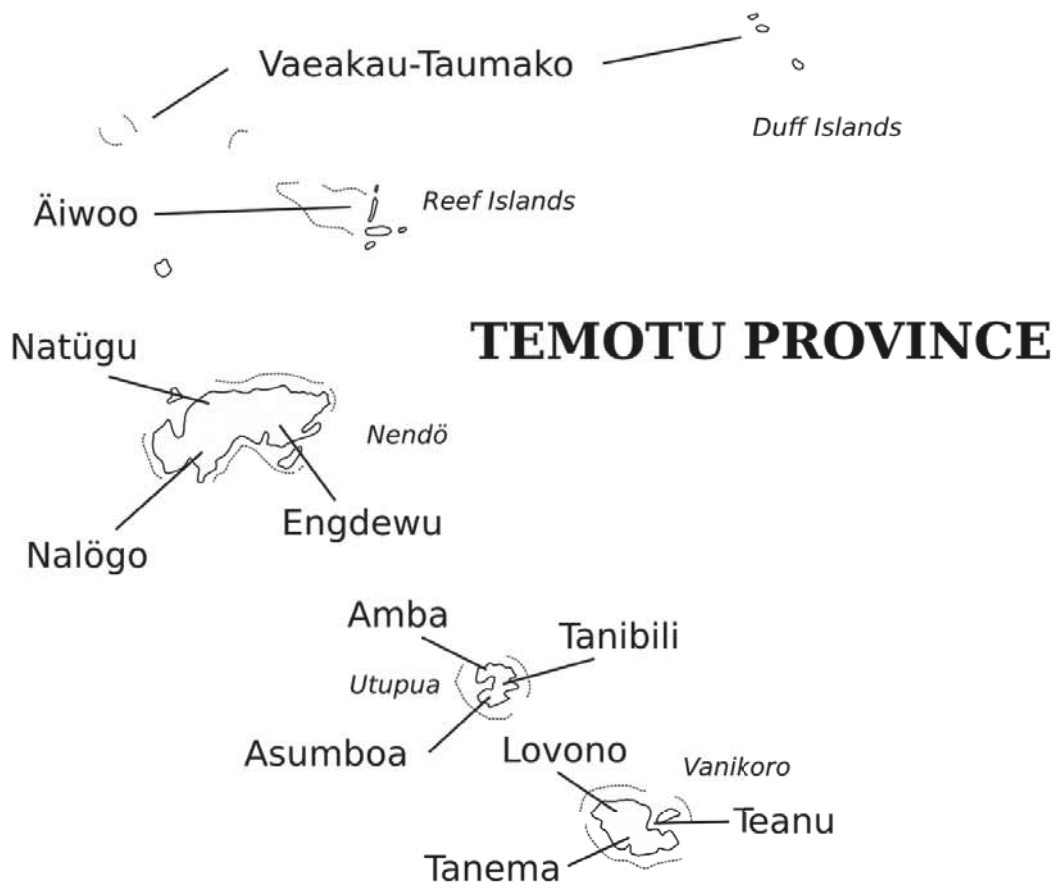
Dingo bytes

The 1959 act that brought the Reserve Bank of Australia into being, stated in its objectives that the bank will be committed to full employment, stability of the currency and "the economic prosperity and welfare of the people of Australia." Fine words, but the bank is really a clockwork mechanism that tries to manage the peaks and troughs of capitalism's rollercoaster economy. The Albanese government has set up a review panel to "examine" the above stated objectives so as to give the board over completely to corporate control. The minutes from the last RBA Board meeting of 5th July gives a pointer as to the purpose of the rejig: they show that it's businesses passing on price increases from the "non-labour inputs" that is a key contributor to inflation, and not wage growth. The RBA Board minutes noted that companies "had indicated a greater propensity to pass through cost increases to consumer prices. As a result of these price pressures, inflation was expected to increase in year-ended terms through the remainder of 2022," that is, profits are the main cause of inflation in Australia. It pointed out that wages are still only growing at 2.4 per cent in the year to March 2022, while by the Bank's own predictions inflation is tipped to reach seven per cent by the end of the year. Said ACTU President Michele O'Neil: "While corporate Australia are warning that the sky will fall in if wages keep pace with inflation they are creating an inflationary cycle by pocketing record profits and paying out record bonuses to CEOs."

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal that one in five Australians had a mental health illness during the first two years of the COVID 19 pandemic. The ABS National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, with 5,500 face-to-face interviews, is based on the World Health Organisation's international classifications. When an individual's mental health is compromised, this impacts the individual, their family, support networks and the wider community. The Institute of Clinical Psychologists notes that the incidence of anxiety and depression was increasing within the community before the pandemic. In 2016, serious mental ill-health was estimated to cost the Australian economy almost $60 billion and six per cent of GDP. A simple and cost-effective way to address existing gaps in accessible and affordable mental health care is to permanently increase the number of Medicare sessions for psychology services. Curious, if not bloody-minded, that the Albanese government is going to cut Medicare-funded services for mental health treatment.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: "Instead of recommending cleanliness to the poor, we should encourage contrary habits. In our towns we should make the streets narrower, crowd more people into the houses, and court the return of the plague. In the country, we should build our villages near stagnant pools. But above all, we should [deny] specific remedies for ravaging diseases." These were the plans of the Reverend Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) who set the ideological and economic agenda for the emerging capitalist ruling class, right up to today.

WHO IS BUILDING A MILITARY BASE IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS?



Includes languages spoken. Image: NordNordWest, Stefano Coretta – commons.wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The Australian high commissioner to the Solomon Islands, Lachlan Strahan, was forced to deny that Australia is building a military base in Temotu Province in the Solomon Islands. As reported in *The Solomon Star* in late June, local people reported a shipload of soldiers arriving in Temotu. They said that there were about sixty soldiers in uniform, along with people from different parts of the Solomon Islands. One said, "This is a small township and the soldiers are everywhere. There is no panic but some of us are wondering why they are here as we have not heard anything from the government about the military base being built at Vanikoro" (a town in Temotu).

In reply to the report, Strahan was forced to state that these activities have "nothing to do with the Australia Military base."

So what is going on? According to Strahan, there are "five Australian Defence Force engineers, three government officials, one Royal Solomon Islands Police Force official, one official from the Ministry of Police and Justice and an official from Immigration." This number is much less than what the locals are seeing on the ground.

Strahan went on to say that this is part of a long-term agreement to build a "multi-agency centre" for health, customs, police, and immigration to "look after the borders." This will be known as an "Eastern Border Outpost."

The local people in Temotu Province are not convinced. Apart from suspecting that a military base is indeed being planned, they also suggest it may be a cover for mining. A local shop owner pointed out: "Some are saying the group is here to assess bauxite deposits in the province. They may be using building the military base to avoid stirring up opposition against mining." Obviously, the history of Australian ventures in the Pacific has left behind a significant amount of suspicion in SI. Past efforts at mining have extracted valuable minerals and made profits for the Australian company but no lasting benefit for the locals. Indeed, all that has been left behind is land polluted with toxic chemicals.

Why all the secrecy? Will it be a "multi-function centre," a mine, or a military base? Perhaps this is what "multi-function centre" really means. ✪

Will politicians stop "playing politics"? Do think tanks do any actual "thinking"? How "strong" is Australia? Well it depends on who you ask in this fortnight's edition of Weasel Words!

POLITICS

/ˈpɒl.ə.tɪks/

Politics is the job of politicians. The people who do this job – politicians – sometimes do their job by criticising the job as a whole so that we – the non-politicians – will like them more. By and large other professions don't do this. You don't get dentists telling you that dentists charge like wounded bulls. Thus, by accusing another politician of "playing politics" with an issue, the accuser – also a full-time politician who thinks of nothing else – puts themselves on the side of ordinary people who just want stuff done. It's about as convincing as "the dog ate my homework" spoken by a dog.

A recent, extreme example is Scott Morrison telling a right-leaning Christian congregation that nobody trusts the government months after begging the entire country to let him run one.

Why does it work? The system we live in, bourgeois democracy, encourages us not to see the politics that operates in all areas of our life but to accept the political choices that have been made as "just the way things are." That's why professional politicians can get mileage out of pretending to stand aside from the things they do full time.

THINK TANK

/ˈθɪŋk ˌtæŋk/

Hey there, are there things you'd like people to think but which you don't want to argue for yourself, maybe because it would seem too obviously self-interested? Have you got a lot of money? Just start a think-tank, and you're away!

At first glance, "think tank" suggests a group of very brainy people thinking hard about a topic, giving the rest of us the benefit of their hard work and expertise. In fact, all think tanks are set up to reach the correct conclusions, however much research and hard thinking they might do to get there.

Some of them are more obvious about being lobby groups than others, and some have moments of independence, but they all get there in the end. Top examples at the moment are the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), set up by Murdoch's dad in the 1920s, which consistently argues for a neoliberal version of freedom and against plain packaging for tobacco products. The IPA is distinguished by not saying who its donors are and festooning its lobbyists with pseudo-academic titles like "adjunct research fellow."

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) is funded by the Australian Defence Department and various arms manufacturers but is treated by the media as some sort of gold standard for commentary on military spending (they always want more) and on relations with China (pro-conflict, also pro-demonisation).

STRONG

/strɒŋ/

Often used for things that are anything but strong. Does anyone remember Campbell Newman? The one-term Premier of Queensland used the word "strong" twenty-three times in one short speech before losing both his own seat and government in the 2015 election. We will never know if one more use of the word "strong" would have gotten him across the line.

Elsewhere "strong" is often used to describe the Australian-US relationship, which is certainly not going to go the way of Campbell Newman any time soon. The alliance is so very strong, we never get to vote on it or even question it, thanks to our fabulous two-party system. As a descriptor for Australia's role in the relationship, "strong" always looks like somebody doesn't know how to spell "servile."

HIROSHIMA NEVER AGAIN

SIGN THE TREATY TO PROHIBIT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Join the rally

Saturday 6 August Sydney Town Hall Square 2pm

Speakers

Gem Romuld (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons)

Senator David Shoebridge (Greens)

Nick Deane (Sydney Anti-AUKUS Coalition) and more

Songs by **Patrick – Red Rebels**

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Have your say!
Write a letter to the Editor
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CPA NATIONAL SCHOOL A

CLASS STRUGGLE IS PRIMARY

A speech by CPA Assistant General Secretary David Matters

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is an edited version of a speech delivered by CPA Assistant General Secretary David Matters on the reissuing of comrade Jack McPhillips' *Communists and Trade Unions*.

Comrades,
I acknowledge the custodians of this land, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to all the clans of the Eora nation. Sovereignty was never ceded and I pay my respects to elders past and present. I pay special respect to the warrior Pemulwuy who led resistance to the occupation of these lands by the British imperialists. This always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

I am also grateful to the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) for making their hall available and thank the NSW State Committee for its work in bringing this important book back to life.

I am honoured to be able to speak at this launch of the reprint of Jack McPhillips' historic pamphlet. When I read through the pamphlet, I was reminded of how influential both Jack and his publications had been in my life and career in the trade unions. He was among those in our movement whose firm commitment to our cause, Party, and class was unwavering. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of unions, awards and the different aspects of the issues confronting the working class.

When this pamphlet was released, the class and the trade unions were in tremendous turmoil both here and abroad. Socialism was in immense upheaval, and huge struggles were afoot.

This period, from the '70s to '80s, saw significant changes in political leadership with the election of Margaret Thatcher in England, Ronald Reagan in the US, Bob Hawke in Australia, and Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. Counter-revolution was on the rise throughout the world and the communist movement was being challenged both internally and externally.

With the overthrow of the Whitlam government, a new era in Australia began. The militant right was led by figures such as Peter Costello, who represented the National Farmers' Federation in legal action against meat workers of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees. In Queensland, then-Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen was responsible for waging serious wars with the unions. One of the most significant struggles of this period was the 1982 strike by railway workers who fought for a thirty-eight-hour week, which lasted forty-eight hours resulted them being sacked. The SEQEB strike in 1985 between the Electrical Trades Union and the Queensland government over working conditions and the use of casuals was a major battle which resulted in over 1000 workers going on strike.

The 1983 Federal Election win of the Hawke-Keating Labor government with Paul Keating as treasurer exposed Australia to trickledown economics. In the lead-up to the election of this Labor government, major leaders of the trade unions started secretive negotiations over a new pact called the Accord. The Accord offered the concept of a Social Wage based on the principles that, if wages were restrained and business profits increased, this growth would trickle down to workers. The basic principles espoused through the Accord were that we could defeat the extreme right and guarantee the Labor government against the overthrow of the unions in a tripartite relation with government and the employers. A Social wage would be the payment for this trade-off. The Concepts were borrowed from Soviet and communist literature, but as they were gutted of their revolutionary concept, they represented a fake promise to workers. This was class collaboration masked as socialist rhetoric.

For example, as part of the Accord, no-strike clauses were inserted into all awards under the titles of dispute settling procedures. These clauses effectively gave away the right to strike and brought unions under the provisions of the arbitration courts more quickly. Consultative Committees that embedded class collaboration in workplaces were formed. These had been resisted for years.

To bring in these provisions a struggle took place at the ACTU to adopt these terms. It took six special congresses of the ACTU to overcome the resistance. Some unions still held out. The Builders Labourers Federation, the Food Preservers Union of Australia, were among those that were victimised or had their members assigned to other unions because of their resistance. Unions were pushed into amalgamations because they were protecting their right to exist. At later stages of the Accords, industry bargaining was banned, and enterprise bargaining was introduced. The introduction of enterprise bargaining, the abolition of federal awards, and the replacement of national standards were planned assaults on workers.

The difficulty for our Party was that prominent communist union leaders such as Pat Clancy, Tom McDonald, and Pat Geraghty from the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA), and leaders such as Halfpenny Carmichael and others from the then still existing Communist Party of Australia were not only supporters of this movement but were actual advocates. The divisions over this spilled into our Party, with some Party leaders refusing Party directions to cease class collaboration.

Our Party President Pat Clancy wrote a large op-ed attacking our Party and its opposition to the Accord in *The Australian*. Later these same forces opposed the development of the socialist alliance – a coalition of our Party with other progressive forces – as left sectarianism. The split involving Clancy and McDonald was further complicated when they took part in the formation of the Association of Communist Unity. Another less hostile force, the Maritime Unions Socialist Activities Association, was also formed. These splits separated, divided, and weakened the communist movement.

In this climate, McPhillips stood firm against what he called "the fraud of the Accord." He led a struggle in the communist movement to restore the primacy of socialism and the primacy of the workers' party, a communist party, in leading that struggle. Jack taught us to be prepared, to learn our industry frontwards and backwards. To know your award and build your union as an advocate for the industry. He taught us to build alliances with the users of your industry and the public. McPhillips was no sectarian. He looked at the proposals from ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty and his cohort and guided us on how to deal with these challenges.

For example, on award restructuring, while opposing the collaborationist methods, McPhillips urged those of us still in union positions to recognise the necessity to meet the challenges of technological and other changes in our industries to grab hold of restructuring and drive it to the benefit of workers. That advice saw us get in front of the class collaborators and advance the position of workers in the bus industry. However, the attacks didn't stop. Fighting back against the resistance, class collaborators and the traitorous defection of so many former communist leaders formed an alliance between them, leading many of us to embrace guerrilla-style tactics in the struggle.

CPA Assistant General Secretary David Matters.

Additionally, despite the sinister objective of the social democrats and their collaborators in the communist movement, McPhillips saw that union amalgamation as necessary but that we should resist the conglomerate amalgamation model, instead pursuing industry amalgamation. In pursuit of this agenda, we created the informal Queensland Transport Union Federation with the Transport Workers' Union (TWU), Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union, and MUA, which later gave birth to a national federation named the Transport Union Federation (TUF). It was built on the proposals by Kelty for industry unionism, a proposal that McPhillips urged us to support. This alliance of transport unions was used successfully in favour of a maritime union struggle. That it was later subverted to a Labor Party faction has not discounted its value to transport workers. The significance of this work can be understood in the attacks of then-ACTU President Martin Ferguson from the Australian Services Union, who attacked all the leaders of the TUF who stood up at a Sydney ACTU Congress urging the implementation of ACTU policy to create and build industry unionism.

Against these attacks, McPhillips' advice was that comrades elected in this period needed to hold on fiercely to these positions because the objective was to drive all independence and independents out of the trade union movement. He believed that once we were removed it would be almost impossible to get communists back into elected positions. I reflected many times on this when under twenty-six years of constant attacks, watching how even independent-minded militants like Hughie Williams from the TWU were removed. There were quite a few others, and this is continuing in the movement.

The collaboration does not stop with changes to government. The rotations of the two-party system are used to consolidate each setback with Labor governments smoothing out the rough edges left by Coalition governments. This can be witnessed in the defeat of WorkChoices, which had some holes that enabled class struggle to drive through it. This was ultimately replaced by the far more effective *Fair Work Act* that shuts down struggle and strangles the union movement with well targeted measures.

It can take decades to build tried and trusted leadership. Workers seek and need competent leaders but when your most trusted and competent leaders go over to capitalism in the form of opportunism, this is an overwhelming situation. McPhillips was a giant against this opportunism. This was evident in the battle at the 7th SPA Congress over the Party Constitution and large parts of our Party Program, where McPhillips led a successful struggle in defeating moves to water down our program to transform our Party into an organisation that saw the social movements as primary over class struggle. This is the legacy of McPhillip's work and leadership, which the reprinting of this pamphlet only reconfirms, renewing that pledge for a new generation of workers.

McPhillips was a legend of our movement. I urge Comrades to study McPhillip's book, which is a strong argument in favour of communist work in the trade unions that places the priority of the Party as the leading force in that movement. Our Party must prioritise its work in this area. McPhillips was in firm agreement with Marx that the working class does not become a class until it is conscious of being a class for itself and conscious of its historic role as liberator of all classes in society. The creation of the communist party by the Australian working class resulted from that conscious role. The destruction of that party's unity was a criminal act against the class. Those who put their sectarian views which support reformism as a priority over the creation of the class rule of the working class are responsible – just as any bourgeois politicians – for the continued decline of the working class and its organisation. We call on them to set aside those individual egotistic views that separate them from the interests of the class. Reformism and revisionism make the class a disarmed and atomised group to be the dominated by the bourgeoisie.

Read McPhillips and be inspired and join the struggle for human liberation. Red Salute, Jack. To your firmness, your bravery, and dedication to our struggle!

A PHENOMENAL SUCCESS

"WE DON'T NEED NO (BOURGEOIS) EDUCATION!": COMRADES CONGREGATE TO AT NATIONAL SCHOOL

On the 22-24th July, comrades from across the country from South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Canberra, and Queensland met in Sydney to learn about everything from dialectical materialism to trade union activity.

On Friday, the National School had its opening night. The opening night was the pamphlet launch of the 2022 edition of *Communists and the Trade Unions* by former Socialist Party of Australia President and stalwart of the labour movement Jack McPhillips. Hosted by Assistant President of the NSW State Committee Franc Stregone, the opening night featured speeches from CPA Assistant General Secretary David Matters (reprinted on page six), Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Deputy National Secretary Warren Smith, and MUA Veterans National Secretary Jimmy Donovan. Each comrade not only spoke to the importance of communist work in the trade unions but also to the example of McPhillips' legacy. The event was hosted at the MUA Hall and live-streamed on the CPA FB page, utilising – for the first time – broadcasting software that elevated the Party's production quality to previously unseen levels. Such was the level of professionalism of the event that the NSW State Committee was receiving order requests **during** the live-stream!

Saturday started with a session on the examination of *The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism* written by V. I. Lenin. The session was led by Matters, who not only carefully explained the nature of dialectics but concretised these ideas within the context of class struggle. Matters approached the material through the lens of a working-class thinker, allowing many to give serious consideration to theory and practice. As a result, a large part of the focus was on explaining the capitalist mode of production. The second session of the day was a panel entitled *Communists in the Workplace and the Union Movement*. It featured rank-and-file members, organisers, and elected officials. There was diversity in industries, too, from the public transport, Maritime, the public sector, warehousing, and healthcare sector, each speaker talked about the particular difficulties they faced and tactics they developed. Despite their different work environments, they all had one common aim: how to immediately benefit working conditions and pay. It doesn't matter if you call yourself communist/unionist/worker. You prove yourself in deed, not in theory, by winning tangible gains. Comrades throughout the room contributed their experiences to bolster the discussion.

Sunday started with a deep analysis of dialectical materialism by *Australian Marxist Review* board member Roland Boer. Boer not only spoke to the history of dialectical materialism but also highlighted how deeply embedded in nature and how it was applied to political economy and revolutionary struggle. Boer's delivery was incredibly accessible and insightful with comrades enthusiastically asking questions and using their own examples to understand the more complex points. The final session was dedicated to an examination of the key parts of the CPA's Constitution, in particular, what duties we have as members of the Party and what can be done to build socialism.

The weekend allowed comrades and prospective members from across the country to come together, often meeting for the first time in person. After the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an immense feeling of elation and a sense of unity that simply can't be replicated online.

WHAT IS HAPPENIN

An interview with Bi

Interview conducted by
Valentin Cartillier

For many outside of Sri Lanka, the political situation inside the nation can be difficult to understand. We interviewed Bimal Rathnayake, a politburo member of the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP – "People's Liberation Front") to get a communist perspective. Rathnayake was also a member of parliament, first representing the Kurunegala District and then for the National List, making his insight into the political machinations particularly revealing.

***Valentin Cartillier (VC)*:** For the outside observer, the occupation of the presidential home on 9th July 2022 and subsequent resignation of former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa would appear as quite sudden events. Could you describe the political situation in Sri Lanka that led up to this moment?

Bimal Rathnayake (BR): Since 2020 several mass protests emerged against privatisation, alienation of public assets, corruption, and the debt crisis among others. Some of the major protests that took place were:

Against sale of East Container Terminal of Colombo Port – Since August 2020, the JVP, its trade union, and all port trade unions collectively struggled to save the East Container Terminal of the Colombo Port from alienation to India. Out of the four existing operational terminals, the Colombo International Container Terminal had already been privatised. Protests emerged when President Gotabhaya and government made plans to give the East Container Terminal to India. East Container Terminal is a deep sea container terminal under construction. It is supposed to berth larger ships and generate a large income for the Sri Lanka Port Authority.

Around January 2021 due to the massive wave of protests government had to withdraw the plan to alienate East Container Terminal. However, the government managed to sell the proposed project to build Colombo West Container Terminal to Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited.

Farmers protests, demanding fertiliser – Former President Gotabaya took an adamant and ill-advised decision to ban the importation of chemical fertiliser in February 2021. He continued this disastrous decision for almost fourteen months, halving the country's agricultural output. Since this decision, there have been mass demonstrations for more than a year from the village level to the district level, and even nationally. Farmers lost their income and had to face unnecessary and intolerable hardships due to this decision. All Ceylon Farmers Federation and other farmer organisations took the leading role in these demonstrations, which awakened the popular masses of the country.

Against the sale of Yugadanavi Power Plant – In July 2021 the Sri Lanka government signed an agreement with New Fortress Energy Incorporated Limited, a company based in the US to construct a terminal to supply gas to Sri Lankan power plants. Additionally, as part of the deal, forty per cent of shares of the Yugadanavi power plant were sold to the company.

From the beginning, the JVP, trade unions, and other progressive organisations stood against this agreement and struggled within the parliament. These struggles extended for several months, but the government and the president went ahead with the agreement without adhering to the people's will.

Against Amending KDU Act – On 8th July 2021, the *Kotelawala Defence University Amendment* bill was brought to parliament. On the same day and thereafter, ongoing demonstrations around the country were organised by Sri Lankan Student Movement, progressive trade unions, and community organisations to show opposition to this bill. Police forces, upon the instructions of the government, suppressed the demonstrating activists by using quarantine regulations. This amendment bill is clearly supposed to pave the way for militarisation and privatisation of the higher education sector threatening free education. It also destroys the free, fearless, and progressive culture that a university should have by providing significant discretionary powers to the minister and military officials. However, due to the continuous public pressure against this bill, it has been postponed indefinitely but has not been withdrawn yet.

Against salary disparity of teachers and principal services – Similar to the aforementioned proposed amendment, collective strike action continued for several months by the teachers. This is one of the biggest teachers' strike action we have observed in the post-independence history of Sri Lanka. School teachers in Sri Lanka are doing immense service at their jobs while receiving considerably less salary. School teachers of Sri Lanka have been demanding to resolve their salary disparity, a problem that has not been resolved for the past twenty-four years. More than fifty unions have joined in this struggle and they were supported by the parents, students, trade unions and general public. Several massive demonstrations were organised around the country. These massive protests continued for about four months until the government decided to give in to the teachers' demands.

Against the sale of Trinco Oil Tank Farm – Trinco Oil Tank Farm is a very valuable asset for Sri Lanka but has been appropriated to India since 2002. The Sri Lankan government has an opportunity to reacquire it in 2023. The JVP has continuously demanded that the government of Sri Lanka reacquire this asset for the storage facilities for the utilisation of Ceylon Petroleum Cooperation as it lacks storage facilities.

According to the opinion of the Ceylon Petroleum Cooperation employees, among the ninety-nine tanks, there are at least twenty tanks with the capacity to store fuel for a month, fifty-three tanks which can store fuel for two months, and eighty-six tanks which are capable of storing fuel for three months. However, instead of reacquiring it in January of 2022 the Sri Lankan government re-leased these oil tanks to India. The JVP and its youth union held protests, press conferences, and marches against this deal.

General Strike on 28th April – The Trade Union Coordinating Centre (TUCC) called a general strike demanding the immediate resignation of the government and demanding other workers' rights related issues.

6th May General Strike – After the successful general strike the TUCC organised its local committees all over the country and called for another general strike. On the 6th May, the country totally stopped from north to south and millions of people, small trades, farmers, everybody joined with the militant and peaceful protests in all towns

The *Kotelawala Defence University Amendment* bill is clearly supposed to pave the way for militarisation and privatisation of the higher education sector threatening free education.

G IN SRI LANKA?

mal Rathnayake

of the country. From dawn to dusk, they occupied all the towns and demanded the immediate resignation of the president and the government.

Due to the peoples' power, the president convened a special cabinet meeting and informed then Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksha to step down.

***VC*:** What is the class character and demographics of these protests, and what position has the JVP taken up in regard to them?

BR: The main social forces who are protesting are working people, farmers, students, women, the Sri Lankan diaspora, and some sections of the middle class. However, these protests are mainly fought and led by working-class people, the left and progressive parties, trade unions, women's unions, students and youth unions, left-oriented progressive artists as well as many thousands of individuals.

Through our party, we have been largely working with the trade unions and student and artist movements. Of course, there are some challenges from the regime and the anti-socialist groups such as the mainstream media and some anarchist groups within the protest. Except for the big business and upper-middle class sections, the whole population are joining these protests.

***VC*:** How has the JVP formulated and presented its solutions to the ongoing economic crisis within the country?

BR: From the beginning, our solutions will be to put the country on track, solving the issues blocking the normal function of industries, transportation, education etc. But in the middle and long run, the only remedy will be based on tailor-made socialist policies in the economy, administration, and every sector of the country.

Essentially, the focus must be on three aspects. Structural economic change which emphasises planning the industrialisation of a sustainable, modern farmer friendly agriculture; the end of privatisation of public industries and institutions; structural political changes in the administration; and nation building by unifying all the communities with equal rights and equal participation in state affairs.

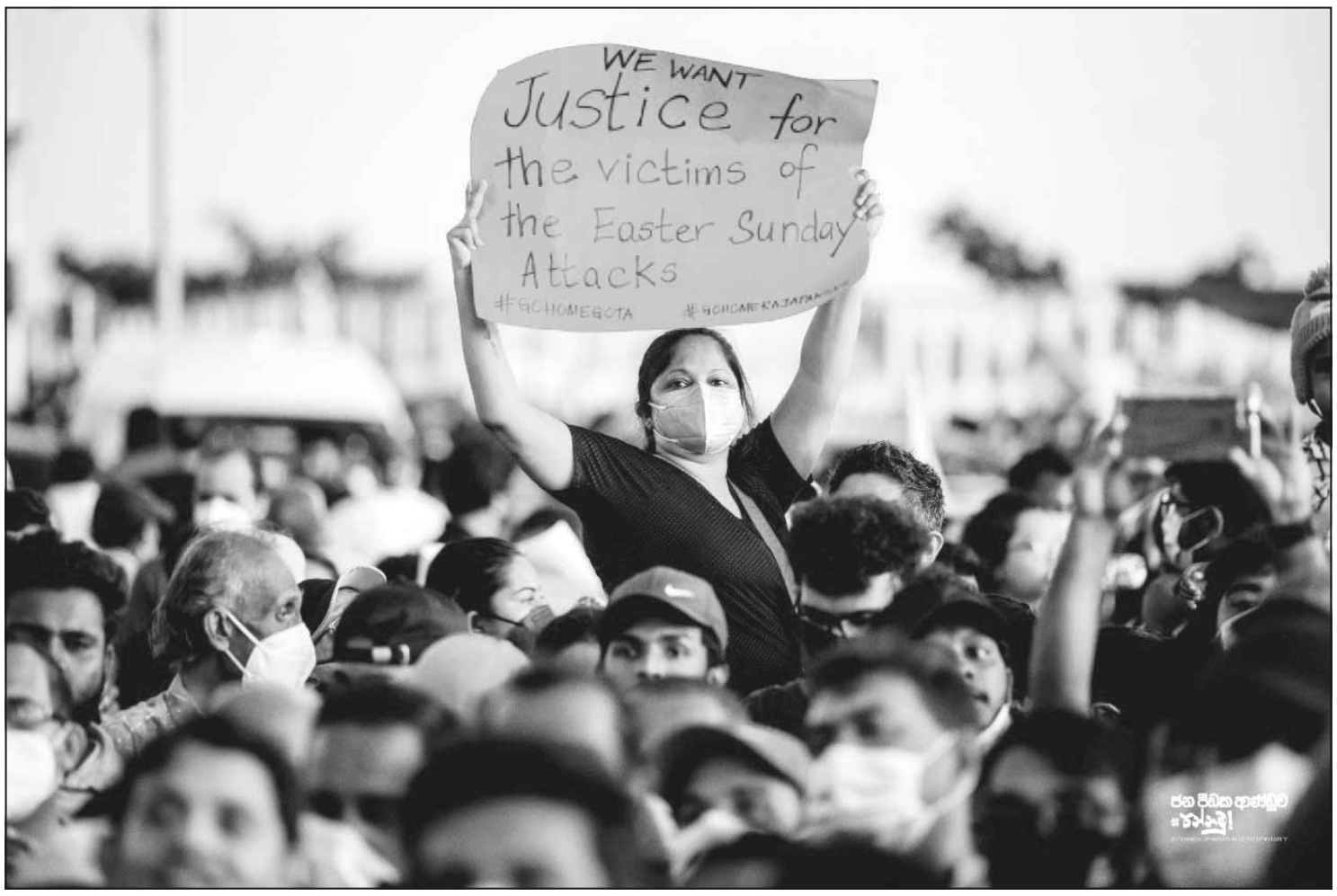
As the JVP, we have created a peoples movement of trade unions, farmer unions, women unions, progressive and intellectual groups such as artists, Sri Lankan Diaspora, called the National People's Power and we have compiled a set of policy publications regarding sectors of education, health, agriculture, environment, transportation, national unity, culture and economy, which extensively explain our plan on building the country.

***VC*:** What are the immediate and long-term tasks for the JVP in building a mass left-wing movement in light of this situation?

As an immediate task, we have a decisive role to play in the protest movement. We, as a Marxist-Leninist party have to orient the protest movement towards the direction favouring working peoples' demands and protect Sri Lanka's sovereignty from the imperialist onslaught.

The other main thing is the rejection of class collaboration. There is huge pressure from the society to us to join with capitalist coalition governments to fix the crises. We won't make any coalition governments with any capitalist party because we know capitalist cries cannot be solve by capitalist policies like old books cannot bring new solutions.

The current situation has given us an opportunity to approach more people in the working class and to get their attention. We use this opportunity to grow our movement by increasing the organised members. We further organise and grow youth, students, women's movements, and the trade union movement. We must continue the struggle in every possible way and means before the elections and after. We will deepen the class struggle using our consolidated base until we reach the socialist victory. ✪



These protests are mainly fought and led by working-class people, the left and progressive parties, trade unions, women's unions, students and youth unions, left-oriented progressive artists as well as many thousands of individuals.

MARX'S VAMPIRE CAPITALISM AND THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CRISIS

Graham Holton

Friedrich Engels in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) refers to "the vampire property-holding class." Twenty years later, Karl Marx uses the vampire image three times in *Capital Vol. 1* (1867): "Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more it sucks." He continues: "The bargain concluded, it is discovered that he was no 'free agent,' that the time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the time for which he is forced to sell it, that in fact the vampire will not lose its hold on him 'so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited.'" Marx's third usage is: "The prolongation of the working-day beyond the limits of the natural day, into the night, only acts as a palliative. It quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst for the living blood of labour."

Engels wrote of the vampire fifty years before, and Marx thirty years before Bram Stoker published his popular novel *Dracula* in 1897. Since then, vampires have become a familiar critical trope of capitalist economics, and there is a valid reason why. The vampire is the unholy living dead that, as Stoker tells us, can only be killed by exposure to sunlight (public scrutiny) or by a stake through the heart (attacking the heart of the capitalist system).

The vampire's image cannot be seen in a mirror, as Jacques Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx* (1993):

"There is a mirror, and the commodity form is also this mirror, but since all of a sudden it no longer plays its role, since it does not reflect back the expected image, those who are looking for themselves can no longer find themselves in it. Men no longer recognise in it the social character of their own labour. It is as if they were becoming ghosts in their turn. The 'proper' feature of spectres, like vampires, is that they are deprived of a specular image, of the true, right specular image (but who is not so deprived?)."

Like the vampire which needs human blood for its survival, the capitalist needs human labour to produce profits for it to thrive. The image of the vampire is central to the ruthless criticism of capitalism, a critique that makes the world of capitalist commodities and wage-slavery understandable in its abject horror.

The image of capitalism = vampirism is commonly used by writers, politicians, economists, and in cinema. The writer Jack London described strike-breakers in US industrial disputes in the following imagery: "After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab." In the US tv show, *The Simpsons*, Charles Montgomery Burns, the owner of the nuclear power plant, is portrayed in one episode as Nosferatu, the German vampire, because of his ruthless treatment of his workers. Pope Francis called those people who take advantage of the poor as "true bloodsuckers," who "live by spilling the blood of the people who they make slaves of labour." The American journalist, Matt Taibbi, referred to Goldman Sachs, the US multinational investment bank, as: "A great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money." In 2019 Senator Elizabeth Warren (D–Mass.) used the image to describe how, "The private equity firms are like vampires – bleeding the company dry and walking away enriched even as the company succumbs."

Humanity is viciously exploited under capitalism. The vampire analogy that Marx employs aptly describes how the capitalist steals the worker's blood, making capitalism vampiric at the core of its existence. Any person who puts the accumulation of capital before the welfare of workers is a vampire. Through the accumulation of capital, the life blood of profits, it acquires immortality at the expense of humanity, a currency which can only be devalued in an economy run by vampiric CEOs. Such an image is used in the US film, *Blade* (1998), in which the banker-vampires come out at night to run the world economy.

Marx saw workers' labour as exploitation, for they are paid less than the value they produce with their labour. The profit from their labour goes not to the worker, but to the owner of the means of production, the factory or office. The capitalist receives more than they put into the business enterprise and are therefore paid, not for working, but for owning the business. Workers are paid only enough to keep them alive for the next day's work, while all the profit flows to the owner.

"Boston Direct Action Project" dressed as vampires impersonate public relations associates of the World Bank, Washington DC. Photo: Justin McIntosh – commons.wikimedia.org (CC BY 2.0)

Capital is the money whose only purpose is to expand itself through this process of profit-extraction from the worker. It drains wealth from those who sell their labour to survive, and then uses this profit to repeat this process endlessly. Capital = Labour and this is how all value is created, such that it becomes vampiric, through this very transformation and thereby grows by finding even more labour to devour and exploit, gorging and enriching itself, never needing to rest. Its existence relies on its extraction from the workers' bodies, while providing nothing in return but an ever-increasing burden on the working class, always demanding more and more. The result is a series of economic booms and busts, in which profits are disgorged during the periodic stock market crashes and the imminent recessions that follow.

The economist John Quiggin in his *Zombie Economics* (2010), argues two years after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), that the neoliberal system relies on a series of assumptions, the most important being the Market Efficiency Model. The problem is that the strict adherence to the Market Efficiency Model of neoliberalism, that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector, has never had any proof that it actually works. "It is a model looking for a reason to exist." Like a vampire it should be dead and buried, but continues to be raised from the dead by economists, business advocates and politicians.

Since the 1968 market crash, booms and busts have been quickening and becoming more aggressive. It climaxed in the 2008 GFC when trillions of dollars were wiped off the international stock markets. What began as a sub-prime real estate problem quickly spread throughout the banking system. As one economist calculated, if you imagine all profits of all US banks, since the end of the Civil War in 1865, that was how much was wiped off the US markets. From the US it quickly spread to Europe and then around the world. The wealth lost was replaced by government bail-outs, such that the world economy had greatly recovered, until the present recession. Yet nothing has been learnt by economists or politicians.

The consequence of this failure to remain dead is apparent in our present economic climate, in which we are entering a period of stagflation, with high interest rates, high rent, fuel and food costs, but having limited economic growth. On 17th June 2022, the *Financial Review* had the headline, "Disastrous Week for ASX, Shares Plunge 6.7pc. Banks Fall", announcing the coming collapse of the share market. Australian shares suffered their worst week since the pandemic-induced meltdown in 2020. The fear spread from Wall Street to the rest of the world. Fearing aggressive policy tightening being induced, such as interest rates increases, the US market implemented a global recession.

The World Bank reported that in 2021, 150 million extra people became extremely poor (living on less than US$1.90 per person per day) owing to the COVID-19 economy shutdowns. The decreased income, job losses and work stoppages during the pandemic severely damaged poor households worldwide. The World Bank's *Global Economic Prospects* report raises the risk of stagflation compounded by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Global growth is expected to fall from 5.7 per cent in 2021 to 4.1 per cent this year. "The war in Ukraine, lockdowns in China, supply-chain disruptions, and the risk of stagflation are hammering growth. For many countries, recession will be hard to avoid."

Even under these conditions the wealth of the world is being concentrated in the hands of the "1%", such that a new word was created to describe the very rich, "Centibillionaires." They are worth more than US$100 billion each, dwarfing the wealth of the other "99%." These are concentrated in the US, whose GDP is worth more than US$25.3 trillion, followed by China with US$19.9 trillion. Australia's economy ranks a mere US$1.7 trillion, coming in behind Brazil with US$1.8 trillion. Of the world's 100 largest corporations, the majority are in the USA. Australia has only one, BHP Pty Ltd.

According to *Forbes World's Billion List*, billionaires have an accumulated wealth of US$12.7 trillion. The top one thousand are richer than they were a year ago, despite the present economic crash. The US has 735 billionaires whose personal wealth is worth a total of US$4.7 trillion. The richest US centibillionaires include: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and Larry Page. This is while the poorest of world's population have been getting increasingly poorer.

Marx was correct in referring to the very rich as vampires, for the population remains dazed by their presence and hypnotic gaze, allowing even more of our life blood to be extracted without government or legal hindrance or intervention. Marx awaits to despatch the vampire, well aware of its true nature, ready with his stake to the heart of capitalism. ✪

Like the vampire which needs human blood for its survival, the capitalist needs human labour to produce profits for it to thrive.

AS MONKEYPOX SPREADS, HAS THE WEST LEARNED ANY LESSONS FROM COVID-19?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the unprecedented monkeypox outbreak that has spread around the world a public health emergency. The classification is the highest alert that the WHO can issue.

More than 16,000 monkeypox cases have now been reported from seventy-five countries so far. Most of them are in Europe, which means Europe is the epicentre of the outbreak. Nearly 3,000 have been reported in the US. Although monkeypox does not transmit as fast as the still ravaging novel coronavirus strain, if it is not effectively controlled, a combination of coronavirus and monkeypox may become a sort of new normal in the West. Worse still, the way the West has dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic hardly makes one feel optimistic.

More than two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the US and Europe, which have laid flat and decided to co-exist with the virus, are seeing the number of positive cases continue to surge. Western countries have adopted various ways of lying flat, but the reason is the same – they couldn't find effective ways to fight the pandemic, so they went for a sour grape mentality toward China's dynamic zero-COVID strategy. What we have seen is absurd: a group of deserters slandering their companions who are still struggling in the fight. This leaves the health and life of the Western public in danger.

Since the West is the epicentre of the monkeypox outbreak, it has attached relative importance to it. Earlier, the UK, Belgium, and Germany, all showing increasing monkeypox numbers, issued 21-day quarantine recommendations for people diagnosed with the disease. However, such quarantines are thought to be inefficient for preventing its spread due to the virus' long incubation period. As for the US, the Biden administration is considering a public health emergency response to the monkeypox outbreak. But what prevention and control measures will the US take? Will it do epidemiological surveys on those infected? Will it impose quarantines to reduce the risk of infection? Biden once said quarantines for monkeypox aren't needed in his country.

Shen Yi, a professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University, told the *Global Times* that the WHO's declaration of the monkeypox outbreak as a public health emergency demonstrates that the West's prevention and control measures were insufficient and ineffective.

"If we consider that the West's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic has been somewhat disturbed by ideology, it is possible to assume that how it will fight a monkeypox that has spread from its own soil will also prove that its pandemic prevention and control ability is indeed inadequate," said Shen.

Song Luzheng, a Paris-based scholar, believes the main reason for the West's inadequate response to monkeypox is politics.

"Leaders in the West are like passers-by. They leave after one or two terms, just like an employee. Their minds are focused only on self-interests. As a result, they are unwilling to make decisions that would cost them votes," Song noted.

Unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no China factor involved in the monkeypox outbreak. Therefore, there is little room for the West to exploit the issue and to pass the buck to others. Xu Liang, an associate professor at the School of International Relations of Beijing International Studies University, told the *Global Times* that if monkeypox becomes uncontrollable in the West, it may change the power structure in certain European countries.

Monkeypox rash. Photo: The Focal Project – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

A month ago, the poliovirus was detected in a number of London sewage samples. Just last week, the first US case of polio in nearly a decade was confirmed there. From monkeypox to polio, a number of dangerous and once-conquered diseases have made their way back into the West. When a public health emergency strikes, it tests the moral bottom line of a country's ruling elite. Evidently the West has not learned any lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, instead it is repeating the same mistakes. The nature of the virus proves that the West is not immune to repetitive life-and-death tragedies.

Shen, from Fudan University, said that it is only a matter of time before the West is defeated by monkeypox – the West is unable to mobilise its public prevention and control abilities because it would rather let its people die instead of giving up their votes.

Global Times ✪

CUBAN PRESIDENT WELCOMES PASTORS FOR PEACE

Ángel Freddy Pérez Cabrera

The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party and President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, welcomed the 32nd Caravan of Pastors for Peace. The Caravan arrived in Cuba in a new embrace of solidarity, despite the blockade imposed by the United States on the island for more than six decades.

Welcome to Cuba, dear brothers and sisters. Thank you for these thirty years of love, solidarity, and accompaniment to our people in their hardest battles, said the President on Twitter.

The group, which departed from Miami International Airport, the city where they arrived after merging there the caravans that travelled, in three different routes, to more than twenty US cities with the message against the unilateral siege applied by the White House. The Caravan is made up of about ninety persons, mostly young people between eighteen and thirty years old who had never visited the Caribbean country before.

The caravanists collected donations, mainly medical material, "but also educating the American people about the history of the Cuban Revolution", said Reverend Dorlymar Lebrón Malave to *Granma*, who pointed out that they managed to collect 1.5 tons of resources for the island.

Reverend Patricia Bonilla Márquez is visiting Cuba for the first time, together with her son Gabriel Silfredo Landaverde, thirteen years old: "I want him to be one of the new generation of revolutionaries, of people with conscience, and to be inspired and continue the struggle for social justice." Under the slogan Love never gives up, the group will carry out an intense program of activities including their participation in the July 26th celebration in Cienfuegos.

They will also visit the Fidel Castro Center, the Latin American School of Medicine and scientific institutes, carry out religious activities and exchanges with the population alongside being updated on the Code of Families' project.

Granma ✪

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Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

Join us in Sydney to demand that the USA stops the blockade on Cuba with the right to self determination. Also stop other blockades like Venezuela and Gaza.

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RUSSIA, TÜRKIYE, IRAN CHANGE GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS

At the end of the meeting held in Tehran on 19th July, Presidents Vladimir Putin (Russia), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Türkiye), and Ebrahim Raisi (Iran) made a joint statement calling for preserving Syria's territorial integrity and strengthening the fight against terrorism.

Their intensive diplomatic interactions were arranged against the backdrop of unfolding international and regional dynamics, and bear significance way beyond the three countries.

COORDINATION ON SYRIAN CRISIS

As guarantor countries of the Astana process, which was initiated in 2017 for peace in Syria, they differ in their positions on the Syrian conflict. Moscow and Tehran have been key allies of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while Ankara has backed the Syrian rebels.

The Tehran Summit followed Türkiye's announcement of its intention to launch a new operation in the neighbouring country against Syria's Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), raising alarm in Russia and Iran.

"Türkiye, Russia, and Iran already have differences on the Syrian issue, and these developments around Syria have further prompted them to communicate and coordinate," said Wang Jin, a Middle East expert at Northwest University of China.

On Tuesday, Erdogan pledged to continue to fight "terrorist organisations," and expected Russia and Iran to "side with Türkiye in this fight," a move widely seen as an effort to press his case for a military offensive against the YPG, which Türkiye regards as the Syrian branch of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Yet, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned against any "military attack on Syria." He told Erdogan that such an operation against Syria "would be harmful to Syria, harmful to Türkiye, and harmful to the region, and it would be to the benefit of the terrorists."

In their joint statement after their summit, the three presidents "rejected all attempts to create new realities on the ground under the pretext of combating terrorism," and expressed their determination to "stand against separatist agendas aimed at undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria as well as threatening the national security of neighbouring countries," appearing to include concerns of different sides.

ENERGY COOPERATION, ANTI-TERROR FIGHT

In his meeting with Putin, Khamenei urged the two countries to "increase mutual cooperation on a daily basis," notably in the oil and gas sectors. Ahead of Putin's visit to Tehran, the National Iranian Oil Company and Russia's gas giant Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding, under which the latter is expected to make an investment worth roughly US$40 billion in Iran's petroleum industry.

Iran is an important energy producer and exporter in the Middle East, and Türkiye is a gas and oil transit connecting the Middle East and Europe. Russia's more interaction and consensus with the two countries could help it wrestle with the US-led West in the geopolitics of energy.

The fight against terrorism has also emerged as a hot topic when leaders charted the future of bilateral ties of their countries. For instance, Raisi told Putin that their "serious cooperation" in anti-terrorism has shown "their sincerity and determination in this field."

The Iranian president also underscored the importance of maintaining security on Iran's common border with Türkiye in his joint press conference with Erdoğan, saying terrorism must be fought against in all of its manifestations. "Cooperation between Tehran, Moscow and Ankara can help bring sustainable peace and lasting security to the region," outlet *Tehran Times* commented.

PURSUIT OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

The visits of Putin and Erdoğan to Tehran came only days after US President Joe Biden's first Middle East trip, during which Washington failed to rally support to counter what it called the "Iranian threat." Both Biden's regional tour which ended on a low note and Iran's subsequent hosting of Russian and Turkish presidents have indicated that more countries tend to make decisions in their own interests, instead of following the agendas dictated by the US.

The United States is "not the big bully anymore, and therefore, cannot decide for the region's future," the *Tehran Times* said, adding that Biden's visit to the region also showed that "the US interventionist policies in the region have backfired."

Presidents Ebrahim Raisi (C), Vladimir Putin (L) & Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 19th July, 2022. Photo: Xinhua

Over the past decades, Iran's strained ties with some regional countries left Washington sufficient room to pressure Tehran through sanctions and isolation policy, analysts said. But things are changing with more intra-regional visits recently. This explains why Anwar Gargash, a senior diplomatic advisor to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) president, said during Biden's visit to the Middle East, that the UAE is working to send an ambassador to Tehran to thaw relations.

"It's abundantly pleasing to witness one of the most vibrant and dynamic episodes of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy in spite of complicated global and regional conditions and the enemies' failed efforts in spreading Iranophobia," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian wrote.

teleSUR

ZELENSKY FIRES INTELLIGENCE CHIEF AND PROSECUTOR GENERAL ON GROUNDS OF TREASON

Steve Sweeney

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has sacked his country's prosecutor general and the head of the intelligence services amid allegations of collusion with Russia.

He issued executive orders late on Sunday firing SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] chief Ivan Bakanov and prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova, citing more than 650 cases of high treason.

Zelensky claimed that there was evidence that more than sixty officials had been spying for Moscow in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine.

"As of today, some 651 criminal cases have been registered of high treason and collaboration activities of employees of the prosecutor's office, pre-trial investigation bodies, and other law enforcement agencies," he said.

"Such an array of crimes against the foundations of the national security of the state ... pose very serious questions to the relevant leaders," Zelensky said, adding that "each of these questions will receive a proper answer."

The SBU's former head responsible for Crimea at the beginning of the conflict in February has also been fired.

"Sufficient evidence has been collected to report this person on suspicion of treason. All his criminal activities are documented," Zelensky said.

Oleksiy Symonenko was named as the new prosecutor general in a separate executive order but Bakanov's replacement has not yet been named.

The sackings mark one of the most significant political developments since the Russian invasion began on 24th February.

Peace negotiator Denis Kireev was shot dead in March, with the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense branding him a spy just days after he had been sitting around the negotiating table.

Last month human rights chief Lyudmila Denisova was sensationally fired by the Ukrainian parliament after she admitted fabricating reports of Russian war crimes and rapes to persuade Western countries to send more arms and aid.

People's World

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Photo: Official portrait – president.gov.ua (CC BY 4.0)

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