CPA
The Workers' Weekly
Guardian
#2084 29 January 2024
$3
COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA
We acknowledge the sovereignty of the First Peoples of Australia.
www.cpa.org.au
ISSN 1325-295X

Stop Israel's genocidal assault!

Anna Pha

Millions of people around the world continue to mobilise with marches and rallies calling for a permanent ceasefire and an independent Palestinian state. Australia is no exception, with thousands turning out every week in support of the Palestinian people.

In the Zionist state of Israel there have been protests across the country against the Netanyahu government, calling for an end to the war on Gaza, and the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas.

There is no let-up in Israel's bombardments of Gaza and brutal treatment of its citizens. According to the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 32,246 people had been killed in Gaza between 7 October and last week with 62,234 people injured. A staggering 1.95 million people are displaced, traumatised, and living in fear while attempting to survive in the most appalling conditions.

UN official, Martin Griffiths, told CNN 400,000 Gazans are at risk of starving and most of these are "actually in famine, not just at risk of famine." Starvation is being used as a weapon of war as Israel continues to restrict the amount of aid entering the besieged territory.

"With each passing day, there is growing evidence that Israeli troops are functioning as mobile mass execution parties in Gaza," *Al Jazeera* reports. The media outlet posted interviews with residents who described how Israeli troops systematically torture and execute men.

"After they tortured my husband in front of us and they broke his jaw, and beat up his face, they beat him until his arms were bleeding. They stripped all the men, tortured them, and humiliated them, then executed them. That all happened while we watched," one woman said.

Rally for Palestine, Sydney, 21 January.

ICJ

South Africa presented evidence of the state of Israel's acts of genocide against Palestinians to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague on 11 January. Member groups of the International Coalition to Stop Genocide in Palestine (ICSGP) organised activities around the world, including press conferences at The Hague.

Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla, who was at The Hague representing Progressive International, one of the ICSGP's founding organisations, stated:

"Every single person who witnessed the hearing was left in no doubt that we were reading the most frightening document of our time and hearing evidence of the most gruesome, illegal, and genocidal assault.

"In bringing this case to The Hague, South Africa has issued a resounding call to the Global South to break with the Zionist project and its inextricable links to the history of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.

"This is not only Israel on trial. It is the ICJ on trial. It is a test of the humanity of the world and whether the institutions we've built to protect it – today, this court in The Hague – withstand the test of Western impunity."

At present, 27 countries have publicly supported South Africa's case as well as the Organization of Islamic Countries, which represents 57 nations.

Australia refuses to. Only three nations have publicly denied that Israel is committing genocide – the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, despite the crime being committed before the eyes of the world.

Mexico and Chile requested the International Criminal Court investigate potential crimes against civilians in Gaza.

GREATER ISRAEL

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is adamant that Israel will continue its onslaught on Gaza in defiance of international law. "Nobody will stop us – not The Hague, not the axis of evil and not anybody else," Netanyahu said. (The "axis of evil" refers to China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis.)

Netanyahu stated that he would pursue "the war against Hamas" until "total victory" to ensure Israel's security and achieve the release of hostages. Once again, he argued that a ceasefire would only send "a message of weakness."

Defence Minister Galliant said, "We will eliminate everything."

"We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba," said Minister for Agriculture Avi Dichter in a reference to the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestinians to create the state of Israel.

AUSTRALIA

Foreign Minister Penny Wong visited Jordan, Israel, and the occupied West Bank earlier this month. In Jordan she announced $21.5 million in new humanitarian aid "directed to conflict-affected populations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to address the ongoing regional refugee crisis, with a focus on women and children." That brings the total pledged to $46 million – a token gesture compared to the hundreds of billions the Australian government is prepared to spend on warfare.

In reference to the occupied West Bank, Wong said, "We have said as a government we believe settlements are contrary to international law. We've also consistently said that they are an impediment to peace. The settlements are also inconsistent with a pathway to a two-state solution. But supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza and turning a blind eye to the settlers' actions, is in effect support for a one-state solution – a Zionist state without Palestinians.

More than 500,000 Israeli settlers now live in the occupied West Bank, and another 200,000 in East Jerusalem.

RISING TENSIONS

There is an increase in tensions in the Middle East with the US making daily attacks on Yemen.

"These continuous, daily attacks on Yemen make clear that the United States has launched yet another endless war in the Middle East, centrally targeting Iran, as part of its global military offensive aimed at Russia and China," notes *Al Jazeera*.

Israel has not let up in its attacks on southern Lebanon. Israel extended the scope of fighting with a 'surgical strike' on Damascus, Syria, killing five members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The Houthi continue to attack shipping in the Red Sea.

The conflict has widened bringing in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Iran.

Australian and British military forces are also involved.

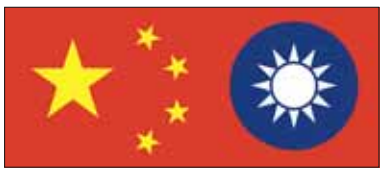
TAKE ACTION

- Contact Prime Minister Albanese to demand a permanent ceasefire NOW.
- Demand the government expel Israeli diplomats from Australia.
- Demand the government pull Australian troops out of the Middle East.
- Join the actions in your area.
- Demand the government support South Africa in the Hague.
- Write letters to the editor.
- Use social media to call for a permanent ceasefire and two-state solution.

2 CPA Organising Conference

3 Vale Joan Coxsedge

6 Fossil fuel hijack at COP28


10 Taiwan elections: butter before guns

Guardian

Issue 2084 29 January 2024

How's work?

It's the great Australian question. For a lot of Australians the answer is "Not too crash-hot." Employment is down. Full-time employment is down and part-time employment has risen. Thanks to cost of living increases roaring past wages, wages are – in real terms – down. How's work? It could be a lot better – that's the answer of people who are doing as much work as they were a year ago, but earning a lot less when it comes to how much food they can put on the table, and whether or not they can afford the latest rent increase.

For others the answer to this question is "What work?" A lot of Australians have given up looking for work, always good news for a government that doesn't have to count them as unemployed. Another response to the question is "there isn't enough of it". A sizable chunk of the workforce is underemployed. Work's okay but because of the cost-of-living crisis a lot of people need more money and hence more work and higher wages.

Not everything is going down. Part-time work is up. Food prices, bills and rent are up, which means that for a lot of people real wages are down. Overall, it *looks* as though employment is steady, since the unemployment rate remained at 3.9 per cent in December. However, the hours worked in all jobs decreased, as has full-time employment. There has been a net loss of jobs.

Labor knows that people are hurting, so they've leapt into action – sort of. What the ALP has done is tinker with a system they are never really going to change. They've criminalised *some* wage theft. They've moved to cut down on blatant attacks on wages by labour hire companies. As usual with Labor, these moves, good as far as they go, will not end casualisation or wage theft. There are exemptions that employers could drive a truck through. Employer lobbying groups scream like stuck pigs at any restriction of their power, but the truth is workers are still being routinely ripped off.

Labor remains determined to implement the stage 3 tax cuts, again possibly with some tinkering and the promise that all low- and middle-income workers will receive a cut in income tax. But the cuts still remain regressive, and those on incomes below the tax threshold will miss out.

What Labor won't do is give workers the real power, such as the unfettered right to strike, that could change the situation. That's not going to happen. The ALP strives to keep the big corporations, the people who own the economy, on side. They'll never give workers real power. We'll have to take it.

Join your union! Support the Communist Party of Australia. For communists the answer to "How's work?" is that there's a lot of it that needs doing! Our work is aimed at winning a society which is controlled by the workers who create the wealth. Frankly, we could do with a hand. So join us.

Support the *Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

CPA Organising Conference
UNITY IN ACTION

Oliver Neu

On the weekend of 19-21 January, the CPA hosted an organising conference that brought together comrades from across the country in Sydney on Gadigal Country. The central theme of the conference was 'unity in action.'

The conference kicked off with a public event commemorating the 100th anniversary of Lenin's death, delving into the enduring legacy of his works and their contemporary relevance. During the initial day of the conference, party cadre participated in workshops covering a diverse array of party work. The conference also heard an inspiring speech from, and a tribute to comrade Jimmy Donovan, a 68-year Party veteran, as well as contributions from the Unified Communist Party of Georgia delegate and a visiting comrade from the Danish Communist Party.

One discussion group focused on party organisation, exploring topics such as the role of finance, experiences in establishing new party centres, and the pivotal role of education. The discussions were productive and insightful, touching upon successes and challenges encountered in building the party. A need to find funding streams outside the party, to broaden the recruitment net (including recruiting more actively within unions and universities), and the utility of public-facing events for new branches were covered.

Another session centred on peace and environmental movements. Comrades engaged in criticism and self-criticism, scrutinising the party's actions in this space. Emphasis was placed on elevating party work in these areas to organise movements along anti-imperialist and climate justice lines.

The Peace and Environment panel looked squarely at the world and local situation. Remembering that the US has been at war for 93 per cent of its history, comrades looked at campaigns for Peace and Social Justice, and how these issues relate to environmental concerns as well as the campaign for Indigenous Treaty and Land rights, and Palestinian self-determination and peace. 2023 and years before that were challenging years, 2024 is not going to be any better, when it comes to wars and destruction.

Comrades committed to being involved and active with the Anti-AUKUS campaign and were reminded to support the effort by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to put pressure on the Labour government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

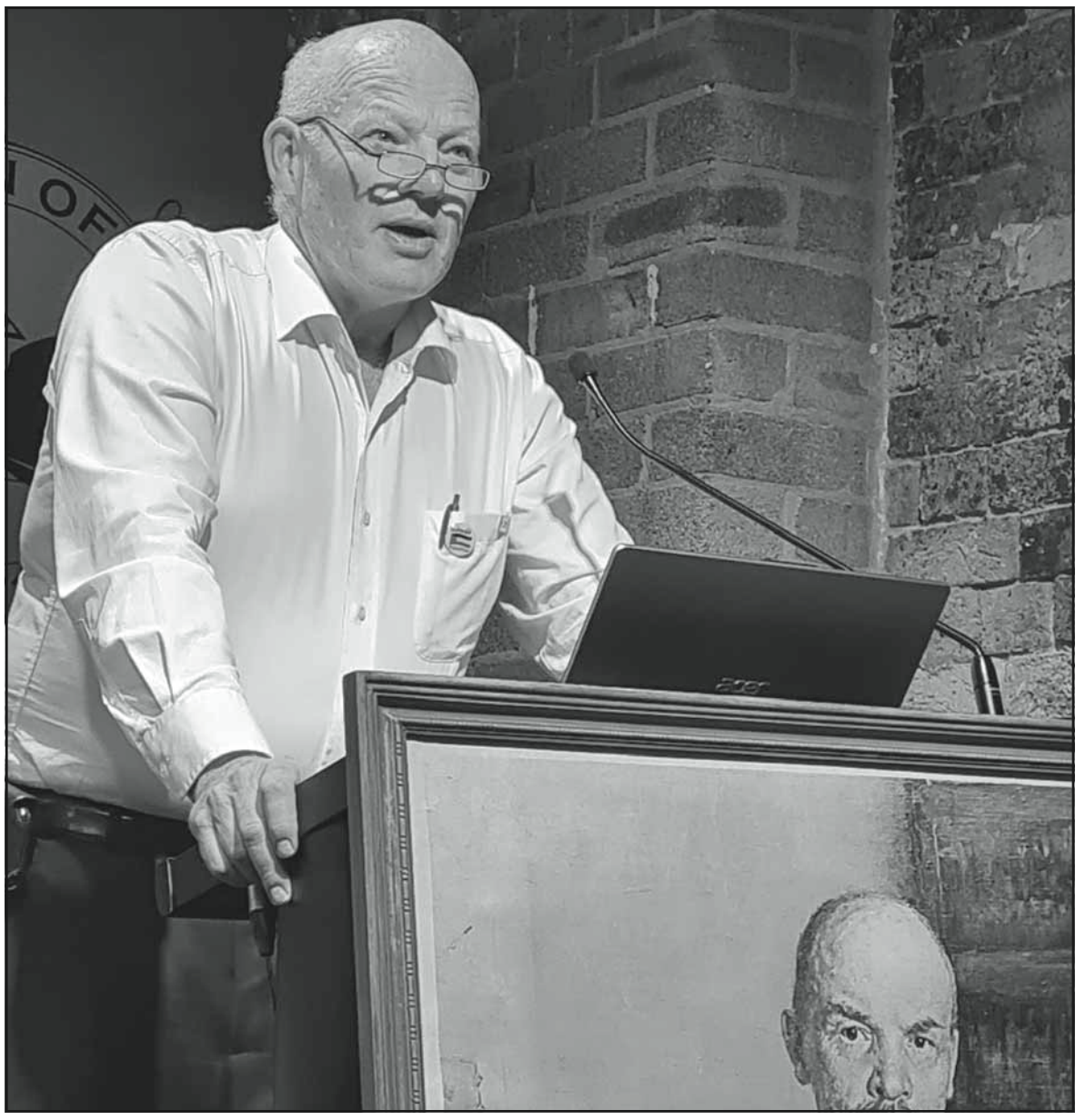
We need to campaign for reductions in military spending. The more our government spends on the military and is involved with US wars the less funding there will be for other important social spending and our environment.

There was also a session addressing the role of party workers in the trade union movement. The discussion highlighted recent campaign activities, and outlined general principles for organising within trade unions. The panel underscored the importance of ground-up, rank-and-file organising, emphasising that respect is earned through exceptional work and effective organising, insulating party members from attacks based on their party affiliation. A long-term goal identified was the need to re-politicise unions to engage in militant struggle and break class collaboration.

The comrades reconvened to discuss the party press and media more broadly. The conversation was constructive, encouraging all comrades to contribute content, from suggested topics to complete articles and everything in between (including rough drafts).

A dedicated workshop on recruitment and retention identified the need for 'active recruitment' and the importance of building the party amongst demographics who might hesitate to contact the party directly.

Following the conference, comrades participated in a Palestinian rally in solidarity. The overall consensus was that the conference served as a successful forum where cadre came together to share experiences and foster unity for the year ahead. ✪



CPA General Secretary, Andrew Irving, addressing the Organising Conference.

Vale Joan Marjorie Coxsedge 1931 - 2024

Joan Coxsedge was born in Ballarat, Victoria.

She was a driving force in the Save Our Sons Movement which opposed conscription for the Vietnam War, and went to goal in 1971 for anti-conscription activities. Joan campaigned against the fascist Ustashe in 1972, opposed secret service organisations, and was founding Chair of the Committee for the Abolition of Political Police in 1973.

A member of the Australian Labor Party from 1967, she was the first Labor woman to be elected to the Victorian legislative Council as the Member for Melbourne West Province in July 1979. She served until 1992.

While in office she wrote and produced the newsletter, *Hard Facts For Hard Times*, from her Footscray office, in which she offered a left view of current local, national and international events. She wrote and distributed this from the 1980s to the mid-1990s.

Joan was a professional artist. She held four exhibitions of pen and wash drawings of historic buildings, and undertook a commission for the Builders Labourers Federation, drawing Green Bans buildings around Australia in 1975.

Joan campaigned for social justice most of her life. She was a gifted writer and inspiring public speaker in defense of the people in Palestine, against dictatorship in Chile against brutal attacks in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan, in defense of human rights in El Salvador, defending the people's movement in Nicaragua, in Cuba and huge range of other parts of the world.

In the 1980s Joan participated in an important Union delegation to Central America and that delegation went to try to help expose terrible civil war in Salvador that killed over 700,000 people. Joan also went to Central America to see the Socialist Revolution which was going on in Nicaragua.

She was a witness to devastating human right abuses in El Salvador and in Nicaragua – she saw a different political scene where the Socialist Zapatista government inspired by Cuba was organising a literacy campaign and working to provide health care and housing for ordinary Nicaraguans. As a result of this visit Joan wrote a fascinating book, *Thank God for the Revolution*, still worth reading.

Joan was a long-time member and a supporter of the Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD), and, at 88, spoke at the CICD's 60th Anniversary which was held on 10 November 2019. She described Donald Trump as "an unhinged crook who should be frog-marched into a padded cell, along with his equally unhinged advisers," and of Australia's " grovelling relationship with the US, regardless of which individual inhabits the White House."

In Joan's words, "we must keep fighting for an independent socialist Australia."

Feminist, peace activist

Tanya Plibersek Environment Minister in the Albanese ALP government has her office close to the Communist Party office in Sydney. Plibersek's electorate have been waiting for her to speak up for the people of Gaza but have been very disappointed by her silence, as with the silence of all bar two MPs in the Albanese government. The CPA City of Sydney Branch acted and organised a picket outside her office on Thursday 18 January. Hundreds of cars passed our picket, and the response was very positive. Branch members also collected signatures on a letter to Plibersek, calling on her to join the chorus condemning Israel and to join South Africa in its quest to see Israel convicted of genocide.

This is a good start to our campaign for the Albanese government to speak up for peace in Gaza. Until Israel starts to retreat from Gaza, we want the Australian government to expel Israeli diplomats.

Denis Doherty
Sydney Branch member

CPA-organised picket outside Tanya Plibersek's office in Redfern, Sydney, 18 January. Speak up Tanya for Gaza!

Stop Elbit – stop crimes against Palestinians

Elbit Systems is Israel's largest privately-owned arms and security company. It produces 85 per cent of the drones and land-based equipment used by the Israeli military.

Elbit markets its weapons as 'field tested' and 'battle-proven' which refers to the Israeli Defence Force's extensive use of Elbit weaponry on Palestinians in Gaza and other Palestinian land.

Elbit has manufactured weapons which are illegal under the laws of war, such as white phosphorus munitions and cluster bombs.

Maintaining military contracts or partnerships with Elbit Systems of Australia is incompatible with Australia's commitment to key human rights conventions. It also makes Australia complicit with Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Australia has been building a national campaign to call for the immediate cessation of all military trade and all technical or other partnerships with Elbit Systems Australia.

In October BDS and Students for Palestine (Victoria) activists marched on the RMIT campus denouncing the university for its complicity in Israeli atrocities in Gaza.

RMIT then publicly stated that their planned partnership with Elbit Systems was terminated, and that they had no relationship with the company or any of its subsidiaries.

UK ACTIVISTS ACQUITTED

The co-founder of Palestine Action, Huda Ammori, was acquitted by a UK court for attempting to close down Elbit's operations in Britain.

She told *Declassified UK* that: "For over a decade, the UK has been a safe haven for Israel's largest weapons manufacturer, Elbit Systems ...

"Elbit's CEO Bezhalel Machlis boasted that the company is crucial to the ongoing genocide and has been thanked by the Israeli military for its services ...

"Those services involve Elbit providing its new 'Iron Sting' missiles, which leave chemical burns on killed and injured Palestinians unlike anything that doctors have seen before ...

"We knew that no matter what the final result was, we'd already succeeded: Palestine Action was now a global movement posing a genuine threat to Elbit's global expansion and manufacture of weapons for Israel ...

"This trial was an opportunity to continue the fight within the courtroom and make it clear that we plead not guilty because Elbit is guilty, not those who act to stop them."

Elbit has major offices and facilities in Melbourne and Brisbane, with training staff also located at Commonwealth facilities in Townsville and Canungra (Qld); Duntroon (ACT); Puckapunyal and Wondonga (Vic).

Contact your local MP

Elbit Out!

Comrade "Jimmy" Donovan

Comrade Jim "Jimmy" Donovan is a lifelong member of the Communist Party of Australia where he is a member of the Maritime branch in Sydney and is also the President of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Veterans Organisation. He is a retired wharfie and leader of workers in what was the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) but is now amalgamated with other unions covering workers in the Maritime industry to form the Maritime Union of Australia. Readers are recommended to check out a substantial interview with Jimmy in the *Australian Marxist Review* (#75 September 2023) – just look up '*AMR* Jimmy Donovan' online.

Jimmy spoke at the Party's Organising conference and received several standing ovations for his speech and his lifetime contribution to the Party and to workers. The following is the response of Comrade Andrew Irving, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia.

Thank you comrade, greetings from this conference of communists!

Jim's contribution comes directly from the heart. A long and rich experience of party life. The essence of what it is to be a communist activist, and an essential part of what we are talking about at this conference. He has been an activist and leader in the community for 68 years. Jim continues to be highly regarded, recognised, supported, revered, and cherished.

This recognition and support is based on his genuine commitment and concrete application of party policy and practice that reflects our people-centred polices: the goal of building unity, activity and militant movements including application and recognition of the leading role of the Working Class and the need to stand up for these principles to organise, politicise, generate participation, and empower the workers. Importantly this was done without being distracted by the lumpen caricature and misunderstanding of issues expressed by workers, or the error of the ultra-left, General strike strategy – both disruptive lies promoted in society, and used by the capitalist state and the bosses.

Jimmy shows his long history of commitment to a deep understanding of the need for unity, organisation and discipline, based on a respect for the contributions of the Party, his comrades and the community. A contribution that strengthens the party and its comrades by bringing knowledge and experience back into the party organisation to educate and enhance our policies in practice. Party decisions, campaigning and activity that are discussed and supported by branches cannot happen or advance if members aren't active in the branch.

If you listen to Jim's words they are peppered with humorous reminiscences of people and events that are part of the story of the maritime workers, a spoken history building on a common understanding of the strength of worker unity and collective leadership which has resulted in a long history of successful action, solidarity, and many victories.

These are not stories in isolation, but give us a rich picture of the characters and issues involved in the many struggles and campaigns, representing the influence and respect Jimmy has in the community and many areas of activity.

I have seen Jimmy in action at a number of forums and on the ground as a speaker, and how he draws in listeners that are absorbed by the colour, politics and experiences. Now he is providing a deep appreciation of what working comrades have been able and can, practically, organisationally, and politically achieve. He has given valuable examples of the practice, of the failures, the strategies, need for discipline, an active collective strategy, the many lessons learnt, and the victories.

Jim with every contribution presents generations of struggle showing the collective contributions of so many dedicated party comrades and supporter activists, over the years.

Jim has not come here to accept recognition but to continue his lifelong dedication and commitment to party comrades, workers, internationalism, and the future.

Read Jim's reminiscences in the last two issues of *The Australian Marxist Review* (*AMR*). The editors were overwhelmed by the character, clarity and accessibility of the political, cultural and organisation message in these articles, presenting the history and essence of the communist spirit. It is not a story of clichés or academic props it is a direct expression that reveals our party, and what its reality must be.

It's a reality and example of how we capture an understanding and apply it to the current struggles and movement that confronts us.

We are the communists, we know that all reality of life and society is political, we know unity is power. Solidarity and Internationalism for workers, and society is essential to building a movement for change amongst our sisters and brothers here and around the world.

Jim presents us with the principle of political understanding and analysis in practice in a way that we can access and must take forward. To empower, challenge us, our method and thinking, the perspectives, and motivations of worker and through them into mass of society.

Jim brings us a greeting and a challenge; how to work, to achieve respect and be successful in a why that empowers so many.

Comrades, I call on you now to show our respect and appreciation to for our Comrade Jim Donovan! ✪

Dingo bytes

The current attack on ABC radio presenter Antoinette Lattouf – for referencing the Palestinians – is being conducted by bullying lawyers for the Israel lobby.

The tactics have plenty of precedents. One such occurred in the US when on 28 March 1982, the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) announced that it had managed to engage the services of acclaimed actor Vanessa Redgrave for its 100th birthday festivities. The British star was to narrate Stravinsky's opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* as part of a series of centenary concerts planned for Carnegie Hall in New York City and Symphony Hall in Boston. The young theatrical wizard Peter Sellars would stage and produce the events and the renowned Seiji Ozawa would conduct. The performances sold out in advance. Before the month was out, the Boston Symphony Orchestra had cancelled Redgrave's contract in response to protests from some BSO supporters and a member of the Board of Trustees accusing the organisers of "insensitivity to the Jewish community" because of Redgrave's support of the Palestinian people, including her endorsement of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Never before had a cultural institution acquiesced so quickly and publicly to the bullying of the Israel lobby. In this case it was the Jewish Defence League, a gang of lawyers specialising in intimidation and litigation and who threatened the BSO management with "bloodshed and violence" should Redgrave appear at Symphony Hall. Without Redgrave, the entire program was cancelled. Sellars accused the orchestra of blacklisting and refused to go forward without her.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: The Albanese government, which plans to cut $70 million from the provision of services to the homeless. Homelessness service providers are under immense strain from the toughest year on record in 2023, as a new survey reveals unrelenting demand due to the housing and cost of living crises.

According to a survey of 252 workers across frontline and support functions: more than 35 per cent of respondents gave a maximum score of ten when asked how often they had to turn away individuals seeking help due to the housing crisis. More than half rated the government's current policies and measures to address homelessness amid the housing crisis at between one and three out of ten. An overwhelming majority (84 per cent) gave the cuts ten when asked about the impact of $70 million worth of potential cuts to the sector. "Homelessness providers are expected to work miracles. But the strain is simply unrelenting," said Kate Colvin, chief executive of Homelessness Australia. "Funding, which is already uncertain, is plateauing while demand surges. The status quo is just unsustainable. Homelessness providers are being forced to make extremely difficult choices. If they're approached by a mother and child fleeing violence and a teenager escaping abuse, they need to decide whose predicament is worse. Often if someone has a car they can sleep in then they won't get accommodation. The government must also end the immediate uncertainty around $73 million in funding to cover the wages of the workforce. This funding expires in June 2024. The last thing anyone needs in a housing crisis is a cut to homelessness support."

www.cpa.org.au

Messy year for Public Service union

Photo via @DonnellyMel

In December, Melissa Donnelly, National Secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), celebrated "strong support for the Melissa Donnelly Team across all positions" in the union's internal elections, with her incumbent Executive Committee ticket receiving approximately two-thirds of the vote. This declaration masked the reality of a strange year for the public sector and its union.

Late 2023 brought with it a flurry of activity. A union not known for significant actions or ruptures (particularly in recent years), the CPSU became caught between attempting to finalise an unpopular pay and conditions package for its workers and fighting an internal executive election. Neither a Labor-led negotiation nor a contested election had been seen for a decade and two, respectively.

Labor continued to offer real pay cuts for public service workers, following up the convoluted and unpopular ACT Public Service (ACTPS) agreement (ACTPS workers undertook industrial action for the first time in over 20 years during negotiations) with a service-wide APS proposal that didn't guarantee real pay rises, and didn't undo the significant wage deterioration experienced under Liberal governments. Since 2005, the median base salary for a worker at the APS6 level has declined $5,414 in real terms. Senior executive pay has increased by $81,847 in real terms over the same period. The union has been formally affiliated to Labor since 2007. The union executive are close to the ALP executive and advocate for Labor governments. It's hard to see how that has helped a membership whose pay continues to worsen in real terms.

All in all, 2023 was a year of negotiating failure for the CPSU. Both the employer and the dwindling number of public service workers retaining union membership appear to have recognised the union as a paper tiger; not even affiliation is guaranteeing results.

The Members United election campaign sprang from this mess. Beginning as a discussion group amongst disgruntled ACT Government members, the Democracy4CPSU caucus organised the Members United election ticket in August 2023 (see *Guardian* issue #2074), arranging candidates for all Executive Committee positions and a range of Governing Council (worker representative) positions across the union. The ticket – and especially caucus writ large – represented a broad church of activists from within the membership, including CPA members, and campaigned on reinvigorating internal union democracy, significantly increasing workplace density, relevance and industrial muscle, putting more power in the hands of the rank-and-file, and undertaking a plebiscite on Labor affiliation. All of this was to be done – and funded – by rank-and-file members and supporters.

The national elections, not fully contested between 2005 and 2023, continue to be dominated by candidates from Progressive Caucus, the opaque group from which the union leadership, and the funding of their campaigns, have emanated for approximately thirty years. Progressive Caucus campaigns tend to be fought via the letterbox, with tens of thousands of dollars spent on mailouts to the relevant membership. In 2023, the Progressive Caucus ticket (under the Melissa Donnelly Team banner) sent around 40,000 letters to all members, with more to members in priority areas. All this cost around $100,000. On top of this, current executives, paid organisers and a smattering of supporters conducted points-of-entry – visiting workplaces throughout the voting period. The Progressive Caucus did their best B A Santamaria impressions, asking some voters if they'd be comfortable with a union run by Gen-Z "communists and Greens."

Members United, meanwhile, mustered up enough funding for a mailout of approximately 16,000 members only, combined with hundreds, if not thousands, of door knocks. In Canberra especially, candidates and supporters conducted direct voter contact for well over six weeks of evenings, weekends and sporadic leave. There is no doubt that this had a positive impact on turnout. The concept that union election candidates can visit your home to discuss union matters definitely spooked some members used to a passive 'membership experience,' but the ability to voice concerns to potential leaders is a positive step for the future of internal democracy. Media interest in the campaign, both local and national, was significant. Turnout improved considerably over the previous election, but only one-fifth of the total membership returned their mail ballot.

In the end, limited preparation time and the resource gap could not be overcome. Organising an effective opposition ticket in the space of sixteen or so weeks – with no funds, limited experience and, in one case, the sack – is no mean feat. Candidates and supporters are rightfully proud of what was achieved.

Democracy4CPSU has grand plans for 2024 and beyond, with hopes to make uncontested elections a thing of the past. Members need to celebrate achievements, but also reflect on the challenges of reorganising a dormant union. Democracy4CPSU activists have a lot to learn. Workplace organising – building a reputation for effectiveness as cadre and organisers – is crucial in not only redirecting the course of the union, but in successfully turning out the vote for future reform tickets. The 2023 election campaign was a wild ride, an attempt at positively reforming our union through shock and awe. The hard and fulfilling work of making a longer-term impact starts now.

CPA Canberra Branch ✪

The *Guardian* now has a podcast

Search for "Communist *Guardian* Podcast" or use the QR code

GREEN NOTES

Good news, hard-won

Anna Pha

Thanks to concerted organising and campaigning by environmentalists, Traditional Owners, farmers, communities and individuals there were some wins in 2023. Progress is far too slow, but shows that gains can be made through united, sustained and multi-faceted methods of campaigning. Campaigning included blockades, petitions, emails and postcards to MPs, disruption of company AGMs, lobbying shareholders, court action, social media, and meeting with MPs.

New and expanded projects require funding. Coal, gas and oil companies look to the major banks and insurance companies to finance their dirty projects. After a long and sustained campaign, Australia's biggest bank, the Commonwealth Bank, has at last agreed not to fund new fossil fuel projects or the expansion of existing ones. This includes not funding disastrous new projects like fracking in the Northern Territory. It has set an important precedent and signals the need to maintain pressure on the other big financial institutions.

Check if your bank or superannuation fund provides loans or invests in toxic fossil fuel companies such as Santos and BHP by visiting **marketforces.org.au**. If they do, then support the planet and Traditional Owners by demanding they ditch fossil fuels and then change to another super fund or bank.

After years of campaigning by Traditional Owners, the Greens and other environmentalists, the Greens gained agreement with the government for a 'Water Trigger' to be introduced into the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC). This would force fracking projects to undergo environmental assessment and give the Environment Minister the power to halt new gas mines, including the Beetaloo and Burrup Hub climate bombs. Risks to water sources from all fracking projects must be taken into account. Fracking poses a serious environmental risk to water sources. What "taking into account" means in practice remains to be seen.

The ACT has committed to new homes being built gas-free. The Victorian Government announced that from 1 January 2024, all new planning permits for residential housing including subdivision licences for housing estates will be banned from connecting to gas. Four NSW councils have taken this step and another five have started the process. If every Australian household that uses gas went all-electric, it would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 30 million tonnes over the next 10 years, be cheaper, and have health benefits.

In September, Torres Strait 8 claimants Yessie Mosby and Kabay Tamu met with Climate and Energy Minister Chris Bowen and Assistant Minister Jenny McAllister to discuss an increase in funding for adaptation measures in the Torres Strait. Advancing seas are already threatening homes, and damaging fresh water supplies, crops, burial grounds, and sacred cultural sites in the Torres Strait. The $40 million allocated to fund seawalls is not nearly enough to address the scale of the problem and will need to be split across 18 islands already experiencing major impacts from rising sea levels, flooding and erosion.

Masig, a small low-lying coral island in the Torres Strait about 160km northeast of Thursday Island, has a plan to transition from diesel to renewable energy. It was created at a gathering on Masig in conjunction with representatives from 350 Australia, Indigenous Clean Energy (Canada), and First Nations Clean Energy Network.

These success stories are relatively small considering the climate crisis, but they are steps forward and illustrate how united action on the ground can achieve change. They serve as motivation to intensify the struggle towards saving humanity in a world where extreme weather events are increasing at an alarming rate.

Acknowledgements: 350 Australia, **marketforces.org.au**

Fossil fuel hijack at COP28

Anna Pha

Floods in Uganda. Photo: Jameswasswa – Creative Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Climate change is here, now, with catastrophic weather events impacting every continent and ocean. Time is running out to save humanity, yet the climate change conference held in Dubai in December 2023 is noteworthy for its failure to adopt the necessary concrete measures and commitments to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100 as dictated by science.

2023 was the warmest year on record with impacts from climate change rapidly accelerating.

"We reference the science throughout the [final] text ... but then we refrain from an agreement to take the relevant action in order to act in line with what the science says we have to do," the Alliance of Small Island States (Aosis) statement said in its closing statement to the 28th annual conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28).

Incredibly, since the first climate talks in 1992, COP28 is the first time the contribution of fossil fuels to climate change has been acknowledged. Even then, the final text made no reference to phasing out fossil fuels.

Government representatives from nearly 200 countries participated. More than 100,000 registered delegates including youth, Indigenous people, and environmentalists took part, as did a record number of more than 2000 representatives of fossil fuel companies.

A reading of the decisions reveals how deeply these powerful fossil fuel companies have succeeded in exerting pressure on the governments of major fossil fuel producing and consuming countries.

The final text is riddled with contradictions that render it almost ineffective. For example, parties to the Convention pledged to triple renewable energy capacity globally and double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. At the same time the text permits the expansion of fossil fuel production.

URGENCY

The key document is a 'global stocktake' of progress so far in reducing greenhouse gas emissions since the Paris Agreement in 2015, and of what needs to be done.

The world is not on track to limiting the temperature rise to 1.5°C by the end of this century. It is currently headed towards a catastrophic warming of 2.9°C.

The stocktake emphasises the need for urgent action to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach and to address the climate crisis in this critical decade.

STOCKTAKE

Some progress has been made with the previous expected global temperature increase of 4°C, now around 2.8°C – if countries fulfil their commitments. At present they are NOT on track to do so.

Emission levels in 2030 are projected to be 5.3 per cent lower than in 2019. That figure needs to be 43 per cent.

The stocktake recognises the need for deep, rapid and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions of 43 per cent by 2030 and 60 per cent by 2035 relative to the 2019 level while reaching net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. The rest of the text does not support these targets.

It calls for: "Phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that do not address energy poverty ..."

What would an efficient fossil fuel subsidy look like? This licences governments to continue subsidising fossil fuels. Globally, fossil fuel subsidies were US$7 trillion in 2022 –a $2 trillion increase since 2020.

The text also calls for: "Accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power."

Phase-down is NOT the same as phasing out. It implies only a reduction, not elimination.

The reference to "unabated coal power" is essentially a licence for business as usual and new projects, with the use of as-yet unproven, undefined abatement methods such as carbon capture and storage technology to remove CO_2 emissions before they hit the atmosphere.

The stocktake recognises "that transitional fuels can play a role in facilitating the energy transition while ensuring energy security."

The text doesn't name the 'transitional' fossil fuels, leaving it wide open to abuse. It legitimises the role of climate-damaging gas in the transition without providing a timeline or limits on expansion of the sector.

No wonder the fossil fuel companies were happy with the outcomes!

"Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science."

The question of transitioning in an "equitable manner" refers to the protection of workers in fossil fuel industries and the needs of developing and least developed countries.

FINANCE

A new Loss and Damage Fund was established to address immediate climate impacts on vulnerable communities. Wealthy nations that are responsible for most of the emissions have pledged US$700 million (AU$1 billion) so far. The US's contribution, a paltry **US$24.5 million, is a slap in the face of the world community, considering** its historical role as the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter and its immense wealth.

The US$700 million pledged so far by wealthy, high-emitting nations to compensate the poorest and least culpable countries for climate impacts amounts to 0.2 per cent of the annual cost of climate destruction.

"Loss and damage is not charity, it is a matter of justice," Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu said.

Despite opposition from developing countries, the World Bank will administer the fund, reportedly at a fee of 24 per cent – meaning one in four dollars will never make it to the countries in need! These countries are already saddled with huge World Bank and IMF debts.

Wealthy countries have also made new pledges to other funds for adaptation and mitigation, technology for transition to renewables, and other needs of developing countries, which fall far short of what is required. The use of private capital is promoted.

BOUGHT OFF

The amounts pledged are peanuts compared with the needs.

The adaptation finance needs of developing countries are estimated at US$215–387 billion annually up until 2030. Only US$188 million was pledged.

Adaptation is critical and urgent. It involves making changes to accommodate the hotter climate and lessen its effects. COP28 emphasised the importance of adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability.

Around US$4.3 trillion per annum needs to be invested in clean energy up until 2030 but so far only $6.8 billion has been pledged.

There is no sign of that huge shortfall being closed, which demonstrates the lack of serious commitment by wealthy countries bought off by fossil fuel corporations.

In total $85.1 billion has been committed to the various funds. Historically not all countries have delivered on their commitments.

Compare this to the **US$2.2 trillion** gifted in 2022 to the largest global polluters – the military industrial complex – to be used in environmentally polluting and destructive wars.

COP28 will not deliver the deep and urgent emission reductions required, leaving humanity on an accelerating path to self-destruction. Increased feet-on-the-ground grass-roots action is crucial.

See "Drowning states" *Guardian* issue #2083, 22 January 2024, for a report on COP28 and small-island nations.

Scott Morrison: good bye and good riddance

Joe Nushi

Scott Morrison, the man who even conservative commentators have assessed as the the single worst PM in Australian history, has finally found another gig and is leaving Parliament.

After an apparently mediocre career in public relations, Morrison made his name as a performatively cruel Immigration Minister, characteristically inventing an excuse to avoid scrutiny in the form of 'on-water matters,' which in practice meant him not having to answer inconvenient questions. He also objected to paying for an asylum seeker to attend their parent's funeral.

As social services minister, he was told that the cruel robodebt scheme would be illegal unless it was drastically changed, but pushed on with it anyway.

As Prime Minister, Morrison was missing in (in)action during the worse bushfires in this country's history. When he finally and grudgingly came back to Australia, he talked about volunteer firefighters trying to save homes and communities as though they were hobbyists, saying that the firefighters enjoyed what they did when brushing off calls for more support.

During the COVID pandemic, Morrison made a disaster of everything he was responsible for; aged care, vaccine sourcing and the COVIDSafe app all made things much worse.

Chronic lying which shocked even his fellow Liberals, and a use of pork barrelling and almost blatant corruption leaves us in no doubt that the much-vaunted Australian parliamentary democracy has nothing to teach the world about standards of governance. After Morrison's tenure, this country really doesn't get to lecture the rest of the world on corruption any more.

A lot of people will be tempted to write Morrison off as an awful and pathologically dishonest person, and have a chuckle about the 'secret ministries' scandal (gags are circulating on the internet about Morrison having a lot of other electorates to resign from), but what's not funny is that we are living in the system he so easily rorted and mismanaged, a system that serves the interests of corporations, where any level of shonkiness is fine as long as you don't annoy the owners of capital.

Book Review by Denis Doherty

The East is still Red

Carlos Martinez

This is a book that appeals to all people in Australia to look at China with eyes that are open, fair, and modest. For too long we have stood by and witnessed anti-China rhetoric which is piled on us each day from the media, and we have been somewhat powerless to step in and correct the misinformation.

So let's pay tribute, as this book does, to China's achievements, rather than looking for tiny cracks in some idealised model of socialism that may inhabit some Australian heads.

Before liberation, China was one of the poorest countries in the world, wracked by famine, starvation and poverty. Yet under the Communist Party of China (CPC) government, it may well be the richest country in the world by 2028. China has doubled life expectancy since liberation, and literacy is almost 100 per cent. Everybody has access to healthcare and education. The UN Development Programme describes China as having achieved "the most rapid decline in absolute poverty ever witnessed."

We need some humility here, because as we know Australia is one of the richest countries in the world, but is content to allow around 13 per cent to live below the poverty line. China's achievements are many and varied, and when it comes to suffering sanctions or restrictions it manages to overcome obstacles with its ability to concentrate its peoples' skills and resources to solve a problem. When the US barred Chinese scientists from the orbiting Space Station, China built its own. When the US stopped the supply of chips to its mobile phone and other networks, China built a superior chip. China leads the world on fighting climate change. The author goes on to say "China's extraordinary achievements are built on specifically socialist foundations."

Of course, as Martinez freely acknowledges, there are billionaires and inequalities in China. China's socialism is socialism with 'Chinese characteristics,' a socialism that has been honed by the task of feeding its people after the deprivations of imperialism. The Chinese government and people still command the heights of the economy, and there is no chance that these billionaires can run the country as in Australia or other western nations.

The book covers a lot of the issues that are thrown up to denigrate China. Is China imperialist? What about Xinjiang and the Uyghurs? These issues and more are dealt with in a calm relaxed manner with plenty of facts and quotes to back up the case for China. The expansion of China's interest in Africa, South America are treated thoroughly, as is the Belt and Road initiative. These and many more issues are all treated with candour and in a readable and easy style.

The book devotes a chapter to the Chinese study of the fall of Soviet Union and explains why what happened there would not happen to China. It is impossible to summarise the fall of the Soviet Union in this space, but this quote from a high-ranking Soviet official gives a clue:

> What happened in our country is primarily the result of debilitation and eventual elimination of the Communist Party's leading role in society, the ejection of the party from major policymaking, its ideological and organisational unravelling.

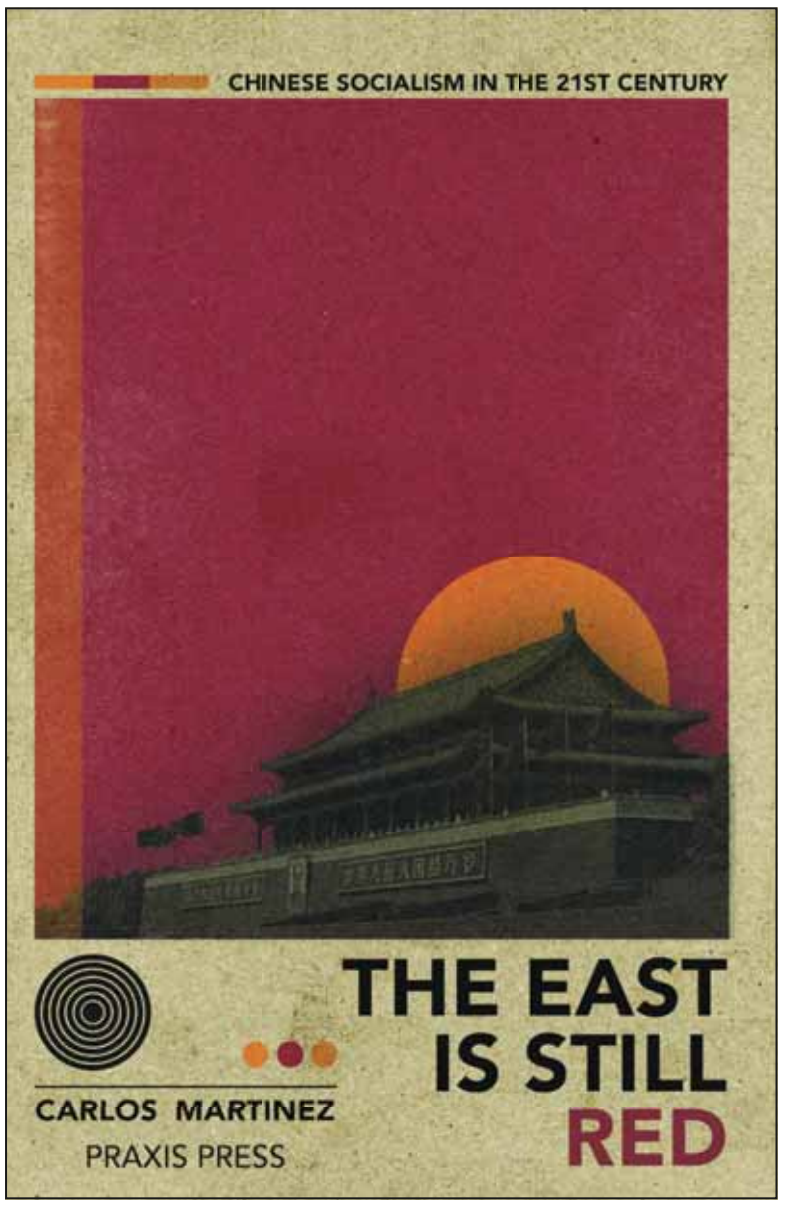
The Chinese have very firmly kept the party's leading role paramount and honoured past leaders for their contribution to making China a more equitable society. China has never had a Krushchev and his denigration of Stalin. The Chinese believe if they follow Deng Xiaoping's four principles: 1) Defend the socialist road, 2) Maintain the people's democratic dictatorship, 3) Maintain the leadership of the party, they won't fall into the faults that the Soviet Union did.

China's ecological record is dealt with as well, and again it is a revelation. It's easy to believe that China in its haste to catch up with the west threw caution to wind and industrialised without restraint, and to blame 'China' for environmental problems. The reality is very different. John Kerry, the US special envoy for the climate observed "China is becoming an energy superpower" and "China is has surpassed us for the lead in renewable technology." This book outlines steps regarding reafforestation, renewable energy, China will not finance any overseas coal mines. Martinez outlines how China has become the leading nation in fighting climate change.

Martinez describes the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) as a generating hub for anti-Chinese rhetoric, which was clearly illustrated recently when this institute funded by the Australian government and elements of the US arms industry assisted the publication of the Channel 9 newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne with its cover story of 'Red Alert.'

The book campaigns to fight the denigration of China and the new cold war which is being waged against it every day by elements in the west alarmed at China's success. We know from the last cold war that the cold war is class war. It is war waged against progressive elements in all nations so that the US and the West can keep their hegemony. This book is a call to arms to defend this socialist and very successful country from all sorts of attack.

The East is still Red by Carlos Martinez
Praxis Press 2023.



France: Lenin honoured on centennial of death

This 20 January 2024, communists from Parties from several countries, including the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) participated in a political event in Paris, organised by the French party Pole of Communist Renaissance (PRCF).

The Pole highlights the initiative in its newsletter Communiste.Fr

"Thanks to the PRCF and the JRCF, French communists will not have failed to hold a very political commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's disappearance. With the participation of several representatives and leaders of communist parties from around the world, the event was held in front of the Parisian home of the Bolshevik revolutionary.

The meeting was opened by a speech by the young communists of the JRCF (Jeunes pour la Renaissance Communiste, or Youth for the Communist Renaissance), given by Gilliat de Staerck. Speeches by Sofia Manzano, candidate of the Brazilian Communist Party in the last presidential elections, by Victor Luca international secretary of the PCPE (Spain), by Jef Bossuyt international secretary of the Communist Party of Belgium, a message from the Italian comrades of the Partito Comunista, as well as V Bessonov, member of the central committee of the PCFR (Russia), were delivered before an audience of around a hundred activists, including a very strong delegation from the central committee of the PRCF.

Georges Gastaud, a philosopher specialising in Lenin, and author of the New Leninist Challenge, as well as political director of the Communist Initiative, recalled the issues of our time, demonstrating the vivacity, currentness and need of the workers' camps, for peace and against fascism, for Marxism-Leninism.

Fadi Kassem, national secretary of the PRCF, concluded meeting with a call for action and communist reconstruction."

COMRADE LENIN, ALWAYS PRESENT!

Solidnet

Colombia: On the path to peace with Cuban help

On Monday, the sixth cycle of peace negotiations between the Colombian State and the National Liberation Army (ELN) began in Havana, Cuba.

"We hope the talks will foster new advances on the path of the Colombian people towards peace," Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said, adding that his country supports the efforts of the sister nation.

Expected to last until 6 February, this cycle has as its main objective the renewal of the bilateral ceasefire. On 29 January, the current ceasefire, which began on 3 August and has been the longest agreed upon so far, will come to an end.

Delegations started a series of preparatory meetings to address some preliminary issues. Some decisions about the format of the negotiations might be delayed, so that the negotiations can get started.

The Colombian States aims to extend the ceasefire and broaden the types of prohibited actions. Meanwhile, the ELN seeks guarantees that the ceasefire will contribute to improving the living conditions of the population in the regions most affected by the conflict.

While the current debate will focus on kidnappings as a method used by the ELN to finance its activities, Colombian President Gustavo Petro aims for the peace talks to lead to the ELN definitively abandoning armed struggle.

For this guerrilla organisation, however, the end of the conflict is linked to the democratisation of the country and other transformations agreed upon in the initial negotiation agenda.

The current peace negotiation process began in 2022, when the 4-year presidential term of far-right politician Ivan Duque ended. In May 2023, Cuba hosted the third cycle of talks following the cycles held in Venezuela and Mexico in 2022.

Telesur

UK: Postmasters ‘dying while waiting for justice’

Persecuted postmasters are dying while waiting for compensation, the leader of their fight for justice said.

Campaigning postmaster Alan Bates told a committee of MPs looking at the Post Office scandal that “it is frustrating – to put it mildly.

“There is no reason at all why full financial redress shouldn’t have been delivered by now. It’s gone on for far too long.

“People are suffering, they’re dying … And it just seems to be tied up in bureaucracy.”

He detailed his own struggle to get compensation and referenced a victimised 91-year-old still waiting.

Another wrongly convicted postmaster, Jo Hamilton, described the bleak process, “They want you to justify every item, then there are forensic account reports, then you have to put everything into the machine, then – months later – it comes back and it just goes on and on.

“It’s like being retried.”

Post Office minister Kevin Hollinrake told the committee, “These things take longer than we expect.

“It’s more complex than we probably initially anticipated but is there ambition to get that money out the door as quickly as possible? That’s our number one priority.”

Ministers are scrambling to rush emergency laws through Parliament to expedite exoneration and payments for the hundreds of wrongly convicted.

Paul Patterson, European boss of Fujitsu, purveyors of the dodgy Horizon system which led to so many false prosecutions, told MPs that the company was prepared to contribute to the compensation fund.

He told MPs that the company had a “moral obligation” to help out, an obligation big corporations usually discover only under commercial pressure.

Fujitsu has made more than [AU$4.6 billion] from the contract, which is scheduled to run until 2025.

The Post Office will then “get off Horizon,” according to its current boss Nick Read.

Patterson was less helpful on the subject of Fujitsu’s role in the whole scandal. While acknowledging that the company had identified problems with Horizon as long ago as 1999, he could not explain why it did not intervene to halt false prosecutions by its client, the Post Office.

“Who knew what, and when – I just don’t know,” Patterson lamented, adding that it was for the separate public inquiry to investigate.

Morning Star

Guardian View: The Fujitsu/Post Office scandal in the UK has not received much attention in Australia. It has lessons for us. Fujitsu makes just under AU$200 million from government work in the UK. Outsourcing and privatisation are supposed to bring about efficiency and accountability, but in the UK, as with the outsourcing that was uncovered in the PWC scandal here, it has lead to the opposite; inefficiency and coverups, aided by the mythical protection of ‘commercial-in-confidence’. Around 900 post office managers were charged with stealing funds, an overwhelming number incorrectly, due to faulty software. This led to suicides, poverty, and in many cases imprisonment. A Fujitsu software developer has said that it would be “too expensive” to fix it.

Public services should be in public hands. ✪

Photo: JThomas – Creative Commons (2.0 Generic)

First strike in 143 years at *LA Times*

USA: *Los Angeles Times* workers have walked out in the first strike in the paper’s 143-year history. The one-day unfair labour practice strike took place six years to the day after *Times* workers formed a union.

Los Angeles Times management announced that it intends to imminently lay off a significant number of journalists and asked the Guild to gut seniority protections in the union contract so they have vastly more freedom to pick whom to lay off.

In response, the News Guild has held a one-day walkout – Save Local Journalism.

Staff also joined the strike in Sacramento and Washington.

“The changes to our contract that management is trying to pressure us into accepting are obscene and unsustainable,” said Brian Contreras, chair of the Guild’s Unit Council. “If this newsroom will ever be a place where reporters can have a reliable, steady job and put down roots in Los Angeles, that will only happen through the preservation of our seniority protections. If management thinks our financial situation is untenable, they need to come to the bargaining table in good faith and work out a buyout plan with us that would first articulate a clear headcount or cost saving they’re aiming for, and then seek to hit that number with as many buyouts — and as few layoffs — as possible.”

Readers and supporters have been asked to not engage with *Los Angeles Times* journalism.

Because management has insisted on negotiating in meetings that are off the record, the union cannot say how many of its members the company wants to lay off. But it is a substantial number in a year in which journalism will play a critical role in the future of democracy.

Times management has asked the Guild to make an impossible decision. Agreeing to their request means almost anyone could be laid off. It is union-busting at its core.

The Guild is pushing for less destructive cost-cutting measures. “We built a union to safeguard the future of the *Los Angeles Times* and its journalists and that mission hasn’t changed,” said Jon Schleuss, international president of The NewsGuild-CWA and former journalist at the *Times*. “The owner can do the right thing by working with journalists to find a solution that’s both humane and does the right thing for an international community that depends on *LA Times* reporting.

NewsGuild-CWA (edited for reasons of space) ✪

Cuba moves for international protection mission to Gaza

Cuba has proposed that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) support the urgent dispatch to the Gaza Strip of an international protection mission, authorised by the United Nations General Assembly, with a mandate to guarantee the security and protection of the civilian population and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and food.

Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Cuba’s Minister of Foreign Affairs speaking for the Cuban delegation at the Meeting of the NAM Ministerial Committee on Palestine, in Kampala, Uganda, also supported the convening of an International Peace Conference.

Its purpose, said Parrilla, would be to contribute to the protection of the rights of the Palestinian people, establishing the sovereign State of Palestine and the early entry of that State as a member of the United Nations.

He also reiterated support for South Africa’s lawsuit against Israel in the International Court of Justice, in relation to its violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; reiterated the rejection of the application of unilateral coercive measures such as those imposed by the US against several member states of the NAM, and stressed his support for the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Parrilla also took part in the Ministerial Preparatory Meeting of theNAM XIX Summit, in which he reiterated his unchanging solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and thanked the valuable support of the Movement for the just demand for the end of the illegal US blockade of Cuba, as well as the united position against the disgraceful inclusion of the Island in the USA’s spurious unilateral list of State sponsors of terrorism, a fallacy that has had a suffocating impact on the Cuban economy.

Granma (edited for reasons of space) ✪

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

‘Stooges’: DPRK responds to provocation

The United States, South Korea and Japan conducted combined naval exercises today in their latest provocation against North Korea, raising regional tensions even further.

This came as the three countries’ senior diplomats were to meet in Seoul to discuss the growing confrontation with Pyongyang.

Described by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as an exercise being carried out by the US and its “top-class stooges,” the war games in waters off South Korea’s Jeju island came as North Korea pressed on with its programme of weapons testing.

Addressing his country’s parliament on Monday, Mr Kim declared that Pyongyang would abandon its long-standing commitment to peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of the North’s constitution to eliminate the idea of shared statehood.

He spoke the day after the North had conducted its first ballistic test of this year.

The right-wing government of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has been expanding military co-operation and training with the US and Japan, which Mr Kim has described as invasion rehearsals.

During his speech to the Supreme People’s Assembly, Mr Kim accused the US and its allies of being obsessed with confrontation and repeated a warning that the North would fight back if provoked.

Morning Star ✪

US: Call centre workers press on with unionisation drive

Washington: Small pay increases Maximus management recently doled out – including 19 cents an hour to one worker and a dollar to the other – aren't stopping the hundreds of workers at that top federal contractor from continuing their union organising drive, according to call centre workers honoured for the union organising drive at the Martin Luther King Conference of the US peak union body, the AFL-CIO.

The Biden administration wants all federal contractors to pay their workers at least $15 an hour.

Maximus, a top contractor for the Department of Health and Human Services, is defying that mandate.

"We are essential workers who work for a federal contractor and should be treated like federal employees – and get paid like federal employees," two of the workers responded.

Maximus workers, aided by the Communications Workers, have been campaigning for union recognition for months. Maximus employs approximately 10,000 workers, most of them women of colour, at call centres to handle and direct callers seeking to enrol in the Affordable Care Act's state exchanges, Medicare or Medicaid. It has a multi-year, multi-million dollar contract.

Many of its workers make the minimum wage, in low-wage states such as Louisiana, Florida, and Mississippi. One bilingual worker, from Orlando, Florida, can't even afford to pay public school fees for her teenager who wants to participate in basketball, let alone buy him one. "We're asking for a livable wage and health care," she adds.

The MLK conference award helps their fight for recognition, says Katherine Charles. "It means people are listening to us and our concerns," she says. "And it means the other [Maximus] workers will see us and how we're looking for better wages for our families, better health insurance, and decent lives for our children.

"We're also sending a message to Maximus that we will continue to fight."

The call centre workers' struggle has featured several signature moves: A one-day strike that forced the firm to close two of its centres, the journey by one worker to D.C. to personally hand a critical CWA report about Maximus's exploitation of workers to Biden administration Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, publicity the union has posted for them, and filing labour lawbreaking charges "over wrongful terminations" of pro-union workers, adds Charles.

The company's pressure hasn't stopped, Charles says. She was a top-rated call centre worker who loved her job helping people. She still does, but the top rating is gone.

"They also tell people 'You will be fired by this date, and if you don't want to work till then, you won't get overtime pay," said another worker, who declined to give her name because of potential company retaliation. "Working on the phone" dealing with people seeking medical signups "and having your own issues" trying to find another job at the same time "is tough."

That prospect, plus the lack of opportunities to grow on the job and move up in pay and prestige at Maximus for herself and her coworkers, doesn't stop the nine-year veteran from organising her colleagues. "I'm going back to Florida to continue to talk to my co-workers. The more people we have, the louder our voices will be."

There's another type of pressure not to unionise, too, one of the two adds: layoffs. The "high season" at the call centres ran through mid-January, a deadline of sorts for people to switch health care plans by signing up for the Affordable Care Act's exchanges, Medicare or Medicaid.

After that, the volume drops, and the layoff threat looms. "You encourage them" – fellow workers – "to be active in organising, and they can't. They're scared," she mused.

"We are essential" to people getting affordable health care, the Floridian says. Maximus CEO Bruce Caswell, who makes millions of dollars yearly from the HHS contract with his company, "can't sit on the phone and work those calls" like the workers can.

Peoples World (edited for reasons of space)

Sympathy with the Sorrows and Mourning of the Gazan People

Oh infant,
Oh hungry Palestinian child ,
I have seen your thin body in pieces,
your pacifier and your doll,
your school bag and books
in the bloody ditch,
In the ruined buildings!
And I have seen your school burnt and destroyed
because it existed.

Excerpt from a poem by Ibrahim Shiri
Translated by: Amador Navidi
Edited by: Peter McLaren

Global Briefs

NAURU: Nauru switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China, leaving Taiwan with only 12 diplomatic allies that recognise it as a sovereign state. Nauru's decision came only two days after Taiwan's presidential and parliamentary elections. The Nauruan government considered the move to be "in the best interests" of the country and its people to seek full resumption of diplomatic relations with China. "This change is in no way intended to affect our existing warm relationship with other countries," the Nauru government stated.

RUSSIA: Russia is preparing legislation to ban British fishermen from the Barents Sea. It's one of the biggest and richest fisheries for cod and haddock in the world. The move to end the 1956 Fisheries Agreement with the UK comes in response to the termination of Russia's most favoured nation trade status by the UK in March 2023. The 1956 Fisheries Agreement, originally between the USSR and the UK, granted British fishing boats the right to operate in the waters of the Barents Sea along the coast of the Kola Peninsula and other areas.

PAKISTAN: The recent flare-up in Pakistan-Iran relations seems to have been resolved without becoming a full-scale military confrontation. The British partition of India in 1947 resulted in dividing that particular part of the territory between Pakistan and Iran. The region on both sides of the border is home to some separatist and terrorist groups. A series of terrorists' attacks in Iran provoked a retaliatory action against the perpetrators on Pakistani territory. Pakistan's response was to launch a similar attack against Iran. High-profile US publications were very quick to report on these events and gave full support to Pakistan. It's an open secret that the west is trying very hard to push Iran into military confrontation in the region. An additional reason for creating another problem in the region is the disruption of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that runs through Iran and Pakistan. The geopolitical chaos benefits the US and its allies' interests as it disrupts China's project. However, Pakistan and Iran have managed to avoid further escalation by diplomatic means.

NATO: Around 90,000 NATO military personnel will take part in the largest war exercises in Europe, 'Steadfast Defender 24' from February to the end of May. Under NATO new defence plans, its chief adversaries are Russia and terrorist organisations. US General Christopher Cavoli, NATO's supreme allied commander said that "the alliance will demonstrate its ability to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic area via transatlantic movement of forces from North America" and it would demonstrate "our unity, our strength and our determination to protect each other."

LITHUANIA: The Lithuanian Economy Minister, Aušrinė Armonaitė has appealed to citizens to invest in the defence industry, telling them to "invest in tanks" rather than keeping their savings to themselves. She insisted that the government should be more active in telling the people what's expected of them. "There are ways, for example to borrow money from residents [for military spending]," Armonaitė said, while pointing out that citizens should not expect substantial returns on any investments. "I have heard criticism of the idea of such bonds, but there is a lot of money that people still have. Maybe it's better to stop keeping it in a sock, but to invest in a tank," she stressed. That's what is called a true NATO spirit!

Something to say?
Write to the Editor!
editor@cpa.org.au

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

email: editor@cpa.org.au

Zionist propaganda: a thing of wonder

Dear Comrade Editor,
The genocidal assault against Gaza has taught us just how far the Israeli regime has shifted to the right, and how closely it resembles a fascist state is there for all to see. Israel, its sponsor state, the USA, and their allies are not fazed by the outrage of the world. The global crisis of capitalism means that imperialism bares its teeth. We knew this in theory. We now see it in practice.

How Zionist propagandists operate outside Israel is a thing of wonder. We have seen the freedom of journalists to report threatened. We have seen cold, hard evidence of a Zionist lobby at work, be it through the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Zionist Federation or the more activist Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council. The groups are well-connected, cashed up and wield considerable clout.

Actors have been sidelined for wearing keffiyehs. An ABC presenter was sacked for posting opinions on social media that Lawyers for Israel deemed inappropriate.

When the media repeat statements from the UN about the killing of journalists or of children in Gaza, it is waved away as a 'blood libel.' This reference to ancient antisemitic literature becomes, for the propagandists, the ultimate rejection of debate.

Any act that criticises the regime is dismissed as 'antisemitic.' Yes, there is antisemitism. But to conflate antisemitism with criticism of a regime that is justifiably accused of genocide, is a bridge too far.

The Israeli Communist Party, would be branded as antisemitic when it stands against racism and for a unity of the people, Jewish and Palestinian, as would every concerned person who stands for the Palestinians and who calls for a ceasefire.

Our politicians vacillate, or hold fast to the Zionist line. There is massive anger against Israel and Zionism. The opportunism that normally captivates the dark hearts and souls of these politicians ought to be motivated by the anger of the people. But no. They have the USA in one ear and the same lobby that silences journalists and artists in the other.

As the economic crisis of capitalism worsens, the forces of reaction become ever more desperate. Zionism, separatism, extreme nationalism, exceptionalism all converge into one vicious and dangerous coalition. Each of these factors represent the past. History is moving. The people are moving. There is no room for haters, for those who would see wholescale destruction of a people.

Daniele Hume

Taiwan elections: butter before guns

William Briggs

The level of excitement from the USA, Australia and the shrinking clutch of anti-China states about the Taiwanese election is perturbing but hardly surprising. The pro-separatist ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) polled just 40 per cent of the vote. This was described as a victory for 'democracy' and a rebuff to China.

Immediately following the election, the leadership of Taiwan resumed its rhetoric about the threat from China and being ready to repel any invasion. The economy is in crisis but it seems a policy of 'guns before butter' is to remain the order of the day.

The fact that two rival parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP), who both campaigned around improving dialogue with China, received 60 per cent was conveniently overlooked. What the bourgeois media focused on was how the result was viewed in Beijing.

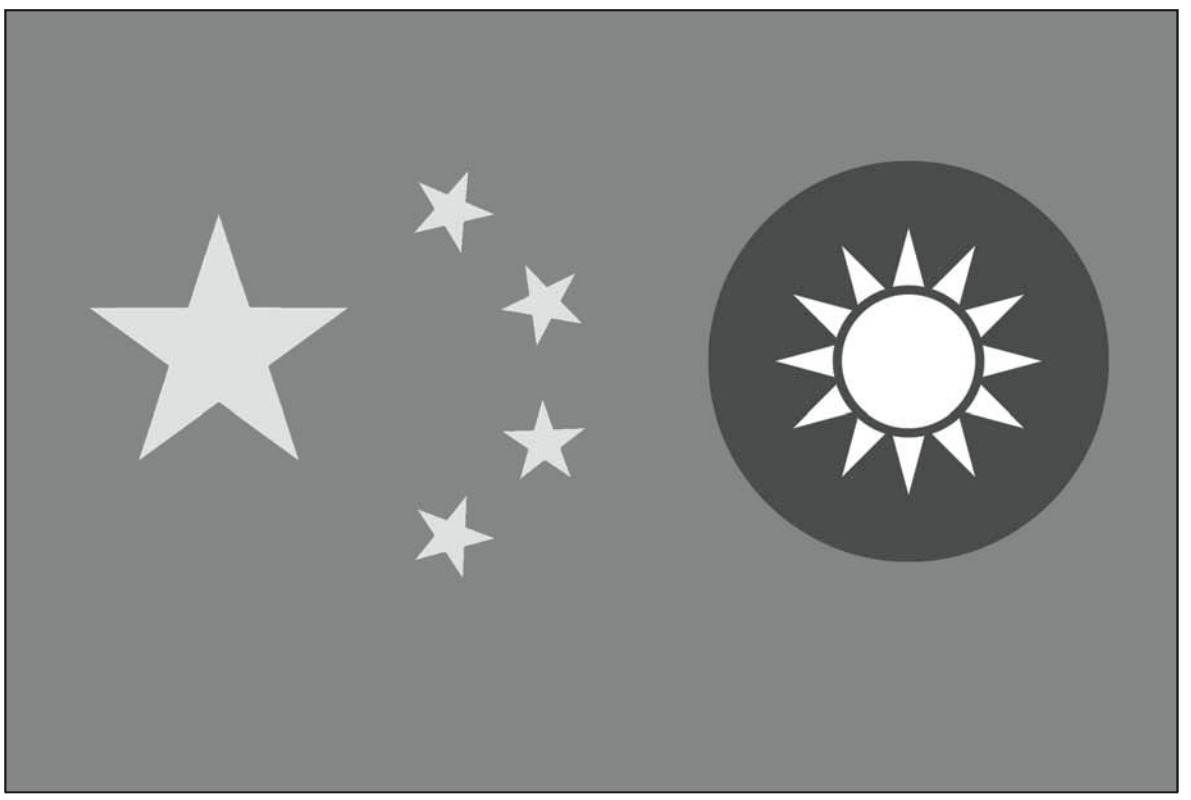
The West feigned outrage at what they saw as veiled threats from China. What the Chinese actually said, and have consistently said, is that the election was of little concern as it was a 'regional' election. Taiwan is a province of China. Beijing criticised Washington for its hypocritical stance and cautioned the West and Taiwan about secessionist movements.

The hypocrisy was clear. The USA, and Australia are among 180 United Nations member states that recognise China as the sole legitimate voice of China and accept the 'one-China' reality. To support any separatist position for Taiwan is to deny the very position that the USA adopted in 1979 when it withdrew recognition of Taiwan in favour of China. This recognition, as far as the US is concerned, acknowledges China's legitimate claims to sovereignty while 'not endorsing' such claims. It is a deliberately obscure position that permits the arming of the island, and allows US presidents to make claims that it would use its military force to 'protect' Taiwan from aggression. It is no surprise that China regards this as a threatening posture.

The 180 member states of the UN that recognise China's sovereignty were joined by Nauru, just days after the election. Nauru's acceptance of the undeniable fact that Beijing is the legitimate capital of one China leaves just 12 states that remain blind to that simple reality. The 12 are, Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Paraguay, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tuvalu and the Vatican. This does not suggest that Taiwan does not enjoy much patronage from more powerful states and especially from the imperialist powers.

The anti-China pressure that has been relentlessly applied by the USA and its allies has increasingly revolved around Taiwan. It is a campaign that has economic as well as military features. It has been a campaign that seeks to confuse the people of the world. It seeks to present China as a coercive, expansionist, aggressive force. China makes the repeated statement that Taiwan is a province of China. The West manipulates this historical and legal fact to 'prove' China's aggressive intent.

Taiwan has recently acquired US armaments worth billions of dollars. The US is keen to see nuclear-capable missiles deployed to Taiwan as part of its encirclement of China. NATO is seeking to expand into the region. Provocations from US and Australian naval vessels and aircraft are becoming a regular feature. There is also the economic war.



Graphic: Garoth Ursuul – creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

Recently a 'Taiwan Non-Discrimination Act' was introduced to the United States House of Representatives. Its stated purpose is to advocate for Taiwan's membership of the International Monetary Fund, thereby further seeking to legitimise the regime and to elevate it to something more than a quasi-state.

The people of Taiwan might be wise to be wary of IMF membership. Support packages for troubled economies from the IMF inevitably come with strings attached. Those strings are linked to slashing of social spending, austerity measures and a reduction of any economic or social independence. How it would play out in a 'state that is not a state' would remain to be seen. Taiwan's economic health is not good, despite its wealthy patron in the USA.

The economy is in recession. Growth is set to be slow. Wealth inequality is high and rising. The rate of profit on capital outlay was 13 per cent in 1960. Today it is just 6 per cent.

Its economy has become all but completely dependent on semiconductors and electronics. These exports account for 40 per cent of the island's total GDP and 70 per cent of its total exports. The problem with a 'one-crop' economy is obvious. This is made even more problematic when considered against the backdrop of continual threat of conflict.

Taiwan's position at the top of the chip-chain is under serious threat. The US has decreed that those exports be restricted. This has meant shifting production offshore to Japan, Germany, and the USA itself. This will further weaken an already struggling domestic economy. Trade and investment between China and Taiwan have taken a hit, as a direct result of the manipulation by the United States.

The election in Taiwan reflects all of this. There are the realities of geopolitics and there are the day-to-day economic issues that affect the people.

Fully 60 per cent of the population voted to find a way to enjoy better relations with Beijing. This does not, of itself mean that 60 per cent want reunification, although many do. It means that the majority want to avoid the calamity of secessionist, separation-talk and the sabre rattling that is being encouraged by the right in Taiwan and their backers in Washington.

The figures for the legislature are even more revealing. The DPP went to the polls with a majority. They had 61 seats to the KMT's 38. Today the DPP has 52 seats and the KMT 51. The allies of the KMT in the TPP have a further eight seats. The motivations for the change in legislative voting was clearly based on economic realities. American missiles and the talking up of potential threats might make good headlines and offer good photo-ops, but more and more Taiwanese are recognising that butter should come before guns. ✪

Vale Gonzales Lira

Gonzalo Lira, an American citizen, war commentator and blogger, has died in Kharkiv, Ukraine, after a prolonged period of medical neglect in prison.

Lira died on 11 January after an eight-month imprisonment by local authorities for making "pro-Russian" statements. He was arrested last year for "production and dissemination of materials justifying Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine." Virtually all his predictions about the war have been proved right.

His passing was announced by his father who wrote: "The responsibility of this tragedy is [with] the dictator Zelensky with the concurrence of a senile American president, Joe Biden."

For the US, some journalists are feted because they serve a political agenda. Others such as Lira and Julian Assange are so dangerous they need to be silenced, jailed or killed. Others, such as the more than 110 journalists killed by the Israeli military in Gaza, have dared to challenge US-Israeli propaganda by reporting about the inhuman conditions on the ground. ✪

Fully 60 per cent voted to find a way to enjoy better relations with Beijing.

The terror returns

Cuba discloses latest attacks by the US

WT Whitney Jr.

When the US government launched its so-called "Global War on Terror" after the al Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001, US-led terror attacks against Cuba had been ongoing for over 40 years.

They included: military invasion, CIA-sponsored counter-revolutionary paramilitaries in the countryside, a fully loaded Cuban airliner brought down by US agents, attacks on coastal towns and fishing boats, biowarfare, hundreds of killings in Cuba and abroad, sabotage, and bombings of hotels and tourist facilities .

With the new century, violence and terror seemed to be on vacation. The Cuban media and sympathetic international media were reporting little or nothing about US-based terror attacks that had been their stock in trade.

On 17 December 2023, Cuban Chancellor Bruno Rodríguez released a statement harking back to the violent past. He insisted that the "US government is very aware of the official, public, and repeated denunciations by the Cuban government of the assistance, protection, and tolerance that promotors and perpetrators of terrorist acts against Cuba enjoy in the United States."

He added, "Recently Cuba's Interior Ministry has reported on the dismantling of destabilisation plans developed in the United States by terrorists of Cuban origin in a security operation that led to the detention of several persons tied to this conspiracy."

Rodríguez's statement followed a report appearing in the Communist Party's *Granma* newspaper. A Florida resident, traveling on a jet ski, came ashore near Matanzas on Cuba's northern coast in late 2023. Carrying pistols, ammunition, and loading clips, the individual headed for Cienfuegos, his province of origin, and was arrested.

The unnamed man "contacted several people in order to recruit them." He allegedly had ties in South Florida with "terrorists who publicly promote violent actions against Cuba ... [and who] have received military training with weapons, have the physical equipment ... and other resources to carry out their plans."

Granma stated that "the terrorists, with their plans for actions aimed at undermining internal order, go beyond a virtual setting; they concentrated on promoting violence so as to cause pain, suffering, and death at the year's end."

These "instigators of hate and death ... appear on [Cuba's] National List ... [Cuban security officials] have investigated actions they've taken in the national territory or in other countries."

A report on 4 January from Mexican journalist Beto Rodríguez discusses the Interior Ministry's "National List of persons and entities ... associated with terrorism against Cuba." Since 1999, they "have planned, carried out, and plotted acts of extreme violence in Cuban territory."

The National List names 61 individuals and 19 terrorist organisations, all based in the United States, presumably most of them in South Florida.

According to Beto Rodríguez, criminal investigations in Cuba revealed that some of the listed persons targeted "governmental and tourist installations and carrying out sabotage, illegal incursions, human trafficking, and preparations for war." They "made plans for assassinating leaders of the revolution."

He also reported that the arrested jet skier "intended to recruit Cubans for burning sugarcane plantations, provoke disturbances, disturb tourist centres, and hand out propaganda." "[C]itizen denunciation" led to his arrest.

Appearing on the List is Alexander Alazo Baró, who shot at Cuba's embassy in Washington with a semiautomatic weapon in 2020. He is still "under investigation." Two Molotov cocktails exploded at the embassy on Sept. 24, 2023. The perpetrator is unknown.

Beto Rodríguez notes that in 2023, the US State Department, warning prospective travellers to Cuba of "potential terrorist actions ... against the United States," advised them to avoid "sites commonly used for demonstrations."

A day earlier, a large pro-Palestinian march headed by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel passed by the U.S. embassy in Havana. Journalist Rodríguez surmises that "Washington already knew beforehand that anti-Cuban groups were planning to enter the island to commit acts of terrorism."

Hernando Calvo Ospina, veteran analyst of US terror against Cuba, reported on 10 January that Cuba's government referred the National List to the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), which deals with crime extending across borders.

Describing the activities of the listed persons, Ospina highlights their use of social media to communicate propaganda and to "incite internal violence, the assassination of State personalities, the destruction of common goods and all kinds of sabotage."

Ospina states that "the objectives now being pursued are similar to those of the so-called 'historical exile group.' Only the method has changed. Both have one thing in common: they use terrorist methods." Some of those whose names appear were carrying out terrorist activities in the 1990s.

He indicates that "Many received direct funding from the US State Department, and also from the CIA, which uses various entities and NGOs to deliver it."

According to the Congressional Research Service, the government's so-called "democracy and human rights funding" for Cuba, a reference to support provided for interventionist programming, amounted to $20 million annually from 2014 to 2022. In July 2023, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee, sought "to boost funding by 50 per cent for democracy promotion efforts in Cuba."

What looks like a revival of the US government's former anti-Cuba terror campaign may point to one or more of several possibilities:

- Terror attacks had actually continued during the past two decades, but Cuba's government opted not to publicise them.
- Terror attacks did continue, but at a low ebb, and now the Cuban government, at a difficult time, seeks to inform world opinion of illegal and dangerous US actions, the object being to promote multinational mobilisation against prolonged US all-but-war against Cuba.
- The US government, taking advantage of Cubans' discouragement aggravated by a terrible economic crisis, has successfully recruited dissidents and once more is capable of mounting terror attacks.
- The US government, true to its imperialist ideological core, stops at nothing while dominating or beating up on less powerful peoples.

Peoples World
(edited for reasons of space) ✪

Half the Sky

Cutesy power?

Elle Bee

As our society moves further into late-stage capitalism, we continue to see liberal ideologies adapt to serve the capitalist mode of production. This trend has existed in liberal feminism for many decades and is continually being repurposed to seem new. One of the ways this is currently manifesting is in media that drives women to consume more and more, with a particular focus on beauty, while simultaneously presenting this consumption as empowering.

For many young women, confidence is something that's manufactured and sold to them in the form of a never-ending cycle of beauty products, cosmetic procedures, accessories, and expensive clothes. Viral trends, often made by grown women, describing the idea of 'girlhood' show clips of cutesy makeup products, fashionable clothes, and overpriced coffee. Many women make a living off social media content creation that reproduces these trends. While this may seem harmless in some ways, in reality it is creating an environment where presentations of womanhood are both trivialised and inherently linked to consumerism.

To most of the women these trends are aimed at, they would be considered normal. Any criticism of this behaviour and the overall conceptualisation of womanhood being presented can be rebuffed by the particular type of liberal feminism known as 'choice feminism.' In choice feminism, the focus is moved away from what is empowering for women collectively, in real material terms like wage equality or freedom from sexual violence. Instead, the spotlight is on what feels empowering for an isolated individual woman, regardless of the broader effects of their choices or behaviour on other women.

In some ways, these trends feel like old propaganda recycled to feel new again. This über-consumerism targeted specifically at women, in a way that's meant to seem empowering, isn't essentially different to magazine ads in the 1950's and 1960's that told women all their problems could be solved with a new washing machine. The messaging now is more subtle, but what it boils down to is the idea that purchasing new makeup or clothes or undergoing a new cosmetic procedure will make us happy.

We would never look back at the ads from the 1950's and consider that the underlying message that women only belonged in the home is empowering for women collectively. When will we realise that the message that woman must be beautiful and must have the newest products in order to be happy is equally disempowering?

Despite what the beauty conglomerates, plastic surgeons, and influencers would like the average woman to think, empowerment and confidence cannot be bought with the newest trending product. Our real empowerment can only come with the end of capitalism.

Subscription to **The Guardian**
❑ 12 months: $100 ($80 conc / $150 solidarity) ❑ 6 months: $55 ($40 conc / $80 solidarity)
❑ Special offer: 10 issues for $10 (new subscriptions only)
NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____POSTCODE:_____
Pay by ❑ Cheque ❑ Money order (Payable to "*Guardian* Publications")
Phone in details on 02 9699 8844 or info@cpa.org.au Or send to:
Guardian Subscriptions
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
or by credit card: ❑ Mastercard ❑ Visa *$20 minimum on cards
Card# _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____ Date: _____
Signature: _____

The Guardian
Editorial Office
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au
Editor:
Floyd Kermode
Published by
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, 2010
Printed by
Spotpress
24-26 Lilian Fowler Pl
Marrickville 2204
Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by **T Pearson,**
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, 2010

Calling all readers

Give us a laugh

The *Guardian – the Workers Weekly* is in need of cartoonists, or humourists

If you can draw a cartoon, tell a joke, or write up a quick parody, send it to us at editor@cpa.org.au

International cameraderie

Mikhail Tzimis, from the Unified Communist Party of Georgia spoke at the CPA's Organising Conference on 19 January. He touched on the history and struggle of the Communist Party of Australia and its contribution to the world communist movement and congratulated Australian comrades for taking a difficult but correct stand.

Tzimis noted that Lenin took humanity from the circular petty-bourgeois narrow-mindedness and gave it a high meaning and at the same time a very simple meaning. He called Lenin a brilliant materialist and dialectician, an excellent statesman, endowed with almost supernatural insight, capable under any circumstances of accurately and comprehensively synthesizing revolutionary theory and practice, always acting on the basis of Marxism and creatively developing it.

Tzimis said "This is why today we must support and defend the titanic figure of Lenin, since it was he who connected revolutionary theory with the social practice of the workers' struggle for their rights, a struggle that marked universality. and historical achievements of eternal significance and value, such as the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Mikhail Tzimis was kind enough to give a quick interview to the *Guardian*.

***Guardian*:** So what led you to join the CPG?

Mikhail: I grew up in the UK. My mum is ethnic Georgian. As a teen in a capitalist society, I had no clear class identity. When I grew up, I went back to Georgia, and saw abandoned factories and so much poverty in a country which should be rich. The factories had been abandoned since the collapse of the USSR. That made me start thinking about things. After 30 years of capitalism, a lot of Georgian people are convinced of the futility of a market economy.

Georgia was one of the key states of the USSR. Of course it was also the birthplace of Josef Stalin.

***G*:** How do people in Georgia feel about Stalin now?

Mikhail: A lot of people realised what Stalin contributed; a real socialist society, the gigantic victory of Soviet workers' power over fascism, and the leading role of people led by the working class.

***G*:** You've been a guest speaker at the Communist Party of Australia's Organising Conference this year. Any thoughts on the conference?

Mikhail: It gave me a lot of hope. I saw an enthusiasm for the ideals of socialism. This gave me a lot of hope because Australia is a highly advantaged society, so it's good to see comrades working hard for socialism here.

***G*:** Can you tell us any more about the Communist Party in Georgia?

Mikhail: International solidarity is very important. The CPG is a member of the International Society of Communist Parties, also of Solidnet, and the union of Communist and Workers Parties. We're also a full member of Communist Parties of the Soviet Union, led by Zuganov of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

***G*:** What sort of challenges does the Georgian Party face?

Mikhail: We face a number of challenges. The so-called 'Freedom Charter' passed by the Georgian government, with a lot of pressure from the USA, was a cynical attempt to inhibit freedom by prohibiting communist ideology and symbols. In 2012, our Party Secretary was detained just for bringing some medals from Moscow to give to military veterans. That law is not enforced now, but is still on the books.

Mikhail Tzimis with Vinnie Molina at the Organising Conference.

The country was manipulated into a war with Russia. More recently the Kiev regime has been planning a coup in Georgia in an attempt to open up a second front.

A lot of our members are old, so the party created a youth platform to involve younger people in socialism.

***G*:** Any comments on the CPA?

Mikhail: I would describe the CPA as orthodox Marxist party. I'm happy to say it has a very, very good ideological position. You have a good approach to education – as Lenin said we need to study, study, and study again! You need to make more people know about the CPA! ✪

Gaza's health/aid agencies face impossible choices

Health workers are at grave risk while trying to provide care to the tens of thousands who are injured due to Israel's brutal attacks. Both they and aid agencies are also faced with extremely tough choices on how to distribute the scarce medical supplies that are remaining

Ana Vračar

Triage is the term that most accurately summarizes what is happening to health services in Gaza. Every hour, health workers have to determine who among the dozens of patients lying on the hospital floors should be treated first.

Doctors and nurses also have to decide who gets paracetamol or ibuprofen for procedures that would usually be performed while patients are under anesthesia, and who goes without even that.

There is also a third form of triage going on in the proximity of Gaza these days, and that one falls upon the people trying to get supplies into the Strip. Despite reassurances that they would allow aid to be distributed more easily, Israeli authorities are still obstructing deliveries. Knowing that only a fraction of what is needed will eventually be allowed in, international and humanitarian organisations are choosing – very, very carefully – what they will load onto their trucks.

It's a difficult choice, explained Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health Emergencies Program, during the organisation's beginning-of-the-year press conference. "Do you replace a truck of food with a truck of lab supplies? Which truck has more priority?"

There is no good answer to Ryan's question. Almost everyone in Gaza is facing food insecurity. All children below the age of 5 – 335,000 of them – are hungry and facing a lifetime of struggle with the consequences of stunting. Due to the food shortage, more than half of pregnant and breastfeeding women only have access to limited types of food, which impacts theirs and their children's health, according to a testimony by Rohan Talbot from Medical Aid for Palestinians, heard by the International Development Committee of the British Parliament.

On the other hand, the lack of medical supplies, combined with relentless bombardments, has brought about the total collapse of the public health system in Gaza. For decades, the Central Public Health Laboratory in Gaza ensured high-quality public health services. Located north of the Wadi Gaza line, the laboratory is no longer functional. The lack of laboratory capacities means that it is only possible to evaluate the spread of infectious diseases from what is obvious at first glance. There is no way to confirm what are the specific causes leading to e.g. respiratory problems

"We don't have the means to verify why specific communicable diseases are appearing. We don't have a way to see what particular pathogen is causing them," said Teresa Zakaria from WHO's Health Emergency Program. Because of that, it is impossible to know which measures should be put in place to mitigate the increase in morbidity.

Even if the WHO were able to pinpoint which measures are needed right now, it is extremely unlikely they would be permitted to implement them. Like all other organisations trying to maintain a lifeline to Gaza, the UN's health agency is not really allowed in. "We have the supplies, the teams, and the plans in place. What we don't have is access," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army continues to target hospitals and other medical infrastructure in Gaza. Four members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society staff were killed on 10 January when Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) hit their vehicle. Days before, the 5-year-old daughter of a staff member of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) died from the consequences of an IOF attack on the shelter where MSF workers and their families were seeking refuge.

Those who are still alive share the faith of their patients. Ghada Al Jadba, United Nations Relief and Works Agency Health Officer, stressed to the UK International Development Committee that health workers are themselves displaced, having no safe space to sleep or water to drink. Tents, said Al Jadba, are a luxury. She also said that people were increasingly feeling dehumanised and alienated as a result of Israel's attacks and, presumably, the unwillingness of the international community to act to stop the genocide immediately.

For those on the ground, safeguarding the remnants of the health system in Gaza is looking more and more like "mission impossible," as Al Jadba put it.

People's Health Dispatch (edited for reasons of space). ✪

Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au cpa@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, NSW 2010
phone: 02 9699 8844
email: info@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Andrew Irving
andrew@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
president@cpa.org.au

Media guardian@cpa.org.au
amr@cpa.org.au

Canberra	act@cpa.org.au PO Box 35 Dickson ACT 2602
Darwin	Vinnie Molina darwin@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872
Melbourne	Andrew Irving cpavic@cpa.org.au Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth, Vic 3053
NSW State Comm	Christian Goopy nsw@cpa.org.au 02 9699 8844 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Perth	Elly Hulm perth@cpa.org.au 0421 113 343 PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906
Qld State Comm	0499 476 540 qld@cpa.org.au
SA State Comm	sa@cpa.org.au 0411 805 356 PO Box 56, Royal Park, SA 5014
Tasmania	Andrew Irving tas@cpa.org.au 03 9639 1550