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UN votes for Palestine, genocide continues

William Briggs

The United Nations has voted on whether to grant Palestine's right to recognition as a member-state. The votes have been counted. The killing goes on. There are now just nine states that refuse to recognise Palestine. Australia has joined the majority of 143 nations that are prepared to accept the fact that Palestine is here and is not going away.

The vote is little more than a symbolic gesture as the USA holds the power of veto in the Security Council and has already indicated that it will be used again.

Robert Wood, US Ambassador to the United Nations, in the face of near-total opposition, claimed that the USA "has worked vigorously and with determination to support Palestinian statehood in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement that would permanently resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

That's simply untrue. The United States, regardless of the colour of the administration, has worked assiduously on Israel's behalf. No crime has been too big. The USA has always seen things Israel's way. Wood had the sheer, unabashed gall to say that his country has been working for Palestinian statehood, while consistently through its power in the UN Security Council, ensuring that formal recognition would be denied.

Biden's White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, was no better. In an awkward performance, she said, in a White House press conference, that the president believes that Israel has "every right to defend itself." She also said that the argument was "straightforward": Biden "will continue to provide Israel with all capabilities it needs to defend itself, but he does not want certain categories of American weapons used in a particular type of operation in a particular place ... the president has directed his team with continuing to work with Israel to refine their strategy to inflict an enduring defeat on Hamas."

In other words, carry on killing, but we want to look like the good guys.

A Scottish protester displaying his "Freedom For Palestine" scarf at the start of London's Al Quds Rally in solidarity with Palestinians. Photo: Alisdare Hickson – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

STATEHOOD

It's good to know that the USA supports statehood and is working towards that goal. Just how that fits with shipment after shipment of bombs, used to kill Palestinians in their homes, hospitals and schools, simply defies all logic. Since 7 October, more than 100 shipments of bombs have arrived. That's not how you build a state.

An average arms shipment from the USA to Israel is made up of 1,800 2,000-kilo bombs and 500 500-kilo bombs. Biden is now making noises about how some munitions will not be shipped to Israel if the planned assault on Rafah goes ahead. The US has said that Israel might have breached international law by using the weapons that have been provided by the United States! Biden has been playing to a deeply hostile domestic audience. His complicity and direct support for Israel, his "iron-clad" pledge of support is turning large numbers of Democrat voters toward independent candidates in the coming election. The quiet disclaimer, that *some* weapons would not reach Israel and that this would be dependent on Israel not launching a full-scale invasion of Rafah, has a hollow ring.

The White House also stated that "it remains the US view that the most expeditious path toward statehood for the Palestinian people is through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority with the support of the United States and other partners." Netanyahu has been unequivocal in his refusal to consider statehood for Palestine. For him, a two-state solution is not worth discussing.

Earlier this year, Netanyahu made it clear to the world that "my insistence is what has prevented – over the years – the establishment of a Palestinian state that would have constituted an existential danger to Israel." Netanyahu exploits the deep animosity that has been deliberately fostered by his regime. "As long as I am prime minister, I will continue to strongly insist on this." The fact remains that the crisis in the region was and will remain and will intensify while a homeland is denied.

Netanyahu's statement followed his infamous remark on social media that Israel "will not compromise on full Israeli security control of the entire area west of the Jordan River – and that is irreconcilable with a Palestinian state." In his own words, there will be no Palestinian state. No homeland, but there will be crisis, deaths and misery.

Israel stands condemned as a racist and genocidal regime. America stands condemned as armourer-in-chief and quartermaster to the genocide. Biden's latest confected hand-wringing is elevating hypocrisy to new heights.

OBSCENE LOGIC

Less hypocritical but deeply disturbing is the recent speech delivered in Washington by General Mark Milley. Milley was, until recently, the Chief of Staff of the US Army. He sought to rationalise the slaughter. The general said that he feels "horrible" about innocent people dying "before we all get self-righteous about what Israel is doing, and I feel horrible for the innocent people in Gaza dying, but we shouldn't forget that we United States killed a lot of innocent people in Mosul, in Raqqa, that we the United States killed 12,000 innocent French civilians. And here we are on the 80th anniversary of Normandy, on the prep fires for Normandy. We destroyed 69 Japanese cities, not including Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We slaughtered people in massive numbers, innocent people who had nothing to do with their government, men, women, and children. War is a terrible thing. But if it's going to have meaning, if it's going to have any sense of morality, there has to be a political purpose."

Continued on page 2

4

David McBride: 5 years for whistleblowing

8

Cuban healthcare – struggles and victories

FULL COVERAGE OF BUDGET NEXT WEEK

Guardian

Issue 2099 20 May 2024

Support students – and beyond!

Students have a bad name in Australian politics. A lot of politicians cut their teeth in student politics – you've got to start somewhere – but 'student politics' is a bit of an insult in Australia. It implies that the politics in question aren't real. "They'll be different once they grow up and get a job" is a common response to student protests. Right now a lot of students are protesting in support of Palestine, by setting up encampments on university campuses. Are the encampments worth supporting?

Yes they are. Remember, the cause is really important. At the time of writing, 15 thousand children have been killed by the Israeli Defence Force in Palestine. Including bodies not found yet, the number of dead is over 40 thousand. That's not just a faraway tragedy. Our government helps by relationships with Israeli military companies, and by keeping diplomatic relations with the Israeli government responsible for the genocide. This situation is beyond urgent.

The stereotype of student protests is that the students eventually go back to class, finish their courses, grow up and get jobs; so nothing changes, except that older people get to sneer at students for youthful idealism. Any such sneering is misplaced for two reasons. Firstly, at least the students are doing *something*. They're trying to stop an ongoing genocide that Australia is implicated in. Anyone who isn't also trying to stop it doesn't get to criticise that.

Also, it's not just students who protest a bit and then stop. The anti-Iraq war protests were some of the largest in history, but life went back to normal and the Iraq war went on. Occupy Wall St got a lot of attention, and lasted for 59 days, but capitalism in the US is just as horrible now as it was then.

It's easy to conclude from this that protests don't work, and we could stay home. That would be a mistake. The lesson to take from these examples is not that protest doesn't work, it's that protest often needs to be the beginning of continued action.

Every act of protest is important in the fight for a Free Palestine, every call, email, every body at a rally. To be effective, protest needs to be ongoing and sustainable. In the case of apartheid, the campaign was long-term, and ongoing. Crucially, the long-fought and successful campaign to end apartheid involved workers and their unions, as well as students.

When Nelson Mandela was newly released from prison and on a tour of Australia, he made a point of scheduling a unions-only event in order to thank union members for never giving up in the long struggle against apartheid.

Students at the encampments are engaged in a long-term campaign against genocide. We salute and support their efforts. The struggle is ongoing. It needs workers. Workers need unions.

To be effective, unions need active union members. The Communist Party of Australia supports active union membership – it's one of the duties of Party members. Party members are active in Unions for Palestine.

Key demands:

1. **Unilateral recognition of the Palestinian state**
2. **Boycott Israel**
3. **Support the student encampments**

Federal Budget has 'a hole in its heart'

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) has described the Federal Budget as having a hole in its heart. On one hand, the budget will give "eyewatering tax cuts" to the wealthiest people in the country, but at the same time it denies increases in income support to more than one million people on JobSeeker or Youth Allowance, both well below the poverty line.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance will be increased by $9.40 a week, leaving private renters receiving JobSeeker in "deep housing stress." ACOSS said that the government had failed to take the bold action required to address the housing crisis.

Housing NGO *Everybody's Home*, would agree, saying that the Budget "will keep pushing up housing costs for Australians who are already battling a brutal housing market," adding that if the Budget were to seriously tackle the housing crisis, the government would "stop using unfair tax handouts to prop up landlords and investors."

Next week, the *Guardian* will have a complete analysis of the Federal Budget ✪

Geelong Debs join anti-Marles, anti-genocide protest

In Geelong, feelings are rising against local member Richard Marles, his warmongering policies and his support for the Israeli genocide.

IPAN members in Geelong have been staging weekly actions. A small but active group attract attention from passing cars on their way home from work. Hundreds of cars have tooted their support each Friday. Last week the group were joined by a group of 'debs' who were having some photos taken at the waterfront. They saw the demonstration and immediately left to join the protest.

Delighted and buoyed, by such support the protests will continue.

UN votes for Palestine, genocide continues

Continued from page 1

It is an obscene logic. Mass murder, the slaughter of the innocents, genocide, can have a sense of morality, provided there is political purpose! Milley didn't have to add that anything is permissible if there is an economic purpose. That is how capital, how imperialism thinks.

Regardless of how many arms shipments Biden delays, it needs to be borne in mind that Israel has a mountain of unused bombs and missiles at its disposal.

Israel's chief military spokesman, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari let the world know that the IDF has more than enough hardware to destroy Rafah and anywhere else they see as a problem: "the IDF has armaments for the missions it is planning, including missions in Rafah. We have what we need." He didn't say it and he didn't have to, but the weaponry being used against the Palestinian people is stamped 'made in the USA.' The same trademark is on the bombs and missiles that regularly strike Lebanon and Syria.

BOMBS STILL FALL

The United Nations vote was a step in the right direction, but nobody will be fooled into thinking that the vast majority of elected governments in the world can sway the US from its commitment to Israel. Israel remains a stronghold for imperialism in the region. The potential for peace, security and economic development within the region remain stunted by the geopolitical manoeuvres of these reactionary states.

Even as the vote was being taken, the bombs were still falling on Rafah. Aid, medicine and food, was being restricted. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled Rafah, ahead of the coming assault, but to where? Gaza is a ruin. The UN estimates that it will take 14 years to clear the rubble, remove the unexploded bombs and to rebuild.

Netanyahu stands condemned by all decent people. His American backers are reviled. Those regimes, Australia included, that turn away while allowing the genocide, that sell the parts for the planes that drop the bombs, stand condemned. ✪

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A global community of shared future

Vinnie Molina

Humanity refuses to die at the hands of war-mongers and profiteers. The planet and its people are at a cross roads. Capitalism and its blindness are pursuing a no-through road. It is destroying the environment, and is putting billions of people in an unprecedented situation.

It is imperative that a different perspective is found for the survival of the planet and human life as we know it.

War seems normal. The televised genocide of the Palestinian people is a testing ground for humanity. The world is watching, incapable of stopping the daily killings of women, and children at the hands of Israel with the open support of the US and other western countries.

Surely human beings are capable of finding alternative ways to solve economic, political, and military challenges. The unipolar world has failed the people, and it is heading to a catastrophe.

The proposal for a "global community of shared future" makes sense and has become a necessity.

The initiative put forward by President Xi Jinping and the People's Republic of China is becoming the only option for the survival of humanity, and a way out from the law of the jungle.

It is unthinkable that our children and their children will not be able to enjoy this beautiful planet or live fulfilling lives.

The irresponsible leadership of the most developed western countries are in contradiction with the will of the people. Workers and their families want to be able to enjoy life with the ability to have a job, a roof over their heads, universal access to health, and education and – why not – the right to rest and recreation.

Basic rights like the 8-hour day were won by Australian stonemasons in the state of Victoria in 1856. Other rights were achieved by other workers and people in general across the world.

Why is it that we are allowing life to vanish out of people's hands?

Another way of life is not only possible but necessary. War and political conflicts can be resolved by negotiation and putting the interest of the community ahead of hegemonic views that prey on the people and the environment.

In reality we all depend on each other. There is enough produced to satisfy every one's needs in a globalised economy. We must be able to walk away from the interests of the powerful few and embrace a more sustainable world that prioritises the interests of the majority of the people.

China's initiatives and thoughts for a new era need to be urgently supported. People around the world, Australians included can benefit from more rational and friendly economic and diplomatic relations.

Australia, for example, should take full advantage of the Belt and Road initiative and build fast rail to connect all the cities in this vast continent. Advantageous and mutually beneficial relations for the peoples of both countries are possible.

Australia should put the interest of its people first and develop mutually respectful relations in the Asia-Pacific region, which would in return bring about peaceful relations with no need for nuclear submarines or other offensive weapons.

In a community of shared future, security comes from mutually beneficial relations from the collective. The world we aspire to in this continent and in the region is an inclusive world in which there is no need for billions to be wasted on a military that makes us more insecure rather than delivering a secure future for the people.

We commend the thoughts and proposals for a global community of shared future as presented by the People's Republic of China. ✪

President Xi Jinping. Photo: UN Photo/Pierre Albouy – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

CFMEU Construction and General Division for peace

The CFMEU Construction and General Division has a long track record in the peace movement in Australia. From fighting against conscription in WW1, WW2, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, championing the anti-Apartheid struggle, supporting independence for Indonesia and Timor Leste, as well as strong advocacy for peace throughout the generations, we believe that war unfairly targets the lives and dignity of the working class.

We have watched in horror at the unspeakable slaughter of innocent people in Palestine and Israel. The Union reiterates its call for an immediate permanent ceasefire, the release of all hostages and of all Palestinians illegally held as political prisoners in Israel, and an end to the blockade of Gaza.

The Union recognises that the Australian Government now supports an immediate ceasefire and access to humanitarian aid. It must do more.

The Union calls on the Australian Government to immediately ban any military cooperation with Israel. This includes the export of both military specific goods and dual-use devices. Although Australia's arms exports are secret, there is evidence that Australia both supplies and receives critical weapon parts from Israel. Australia must not supply parts that enable lethal force against the civilians of Gaza, or purchase systems that have been tested on civilians in Palestine and where the profits from these sales fund the genocide of Palestinians.

One harrowing example is that Israel's F-35 fighter jets depend on parts supplied by Australian companies including 'weapon adaptors' that hold and release bombs. The Israel Defence Forces has confirmed it has used F-35 fighter jets to drop bombs on Gaza.

Australia has committed to deny arms exports that violate international law or are used to commit war crimes, and must employ all possible means to prevent genocide in another state. This must include taking active steps to change the economic circumstances that facilitate genocide by sanctioning trade and banning investment in companies which are profiting from war crimes and other breaches of international law in Palestine.

We further call on industry super funds to ensure that the $1.3 trillion worth of assets belonging to ordinary working Australians are not invested in businesses that are enabling or profiting from genocide.

Signed by:

Zach Smith
C&G Division
National & ACT, Branch Secretary

Jade Ingham
National President, C&G Division

Mick Buchan
Branch Secretary, WA

John Setka
Branch Secretary, Vic/Tas/SA

Darren Greenfield
Branch Secretary, NSW

Michael Ravbar
Branch Secretary, Qld/NT

Gaza solidarity encampment continues

Communist Party of Australia Canberra Branch comrades were part of the large group of ANU students and activists camping out in the rain overnight as part of the Gaza solidarity encampment on the Kambri Lawns.

Thousands of students from campuses across the world are calling for an end to university support for genocide in Gaza and the military-industrial complex writ large. The ANU, a recipient of millions of dollars worth of funding from weapons manufacturers and the war industry, is complicit.

Just as those activists and revolutionaries who fought to end apartheid in South Africa, these students today will continue their fight against apartheid in Israel.

Canberra comrades are doing all they can to keep the encampment going, and, like students at universities around the world, keeping up the pressure on universities that have relationships with weapons manufacturers. ✪

William Briggs, one of the speakers, was introduced to a Free Palestine rally in Geelong as a Communist Party of Australia member. His speech to an audience of a hundred plus went down well with enthusiastic clapping. He ended his ten minute speech by encouraging the crowd to read the *Guardian* online if they want to be fully informed about the Palestine issue.

David McBride: five-year sentence for whistleblowing

David McBride with *Guardian* journalist Richard Titelius.

Floyd Kermode

Five years and eight months in jail. That's how long David McBride has been sentenced to for the crime of trying to protect the innocent, and revealing war crimes. This is a tragedy for a man whose motives were to reveal the truth. It's also a black day for Australia. As Associate Professor of News and Political Communication Emma Briant has said, this decision will create an over-cautious press at a time when strong journalism matters.

When Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Attorney General Mark Dreyfus talk of transparency, the response should be a hollow laugh. Dreyfus always had the power to intervene, but didn't. Under the Judiciary act, Dreyfus could have discontinued the case. Dreyfus refused to do this because, in his words, only "exceptional circumstances" would justify using his powers. It seems that for our Attorney-General, there's nothing exceptional about uncovering murder by Australian forces. Now a man whose actions have lead to the discovery of war crimes has been jailed before any of the actual war criminals have. In McBride's own words:

"Afghan civilians were being murdered, and Australian military leaders were at the very least turning the other way and at worst tacitly approving this behaviour ... At the same time, soldiers were being improperly prosecuted as a smokescreen to cover [leadership's] inaction and failure to hold reprehensible conduct to account."

Dreyfus has talked about the prosecution being independent of the government, trying to slate home the blame to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. That's just wrong. Dreyfus could have stopped the case, but instead let a truth teller go to jail to discourage other truth tellers.

During the trial the court was told about an Australian Federal Police interview in which McBride said that he thought it was his duty to expose illegal activity. In this country, that's naive. It turns out that his duty, according to the judge, could be summed up as the Nuremberg Defence: just obey orders. The judge, Justice Mossop, went on to say that deterrence was important.

We'll get deterrence alright. Anyone uncovering evidence of crimes, including murder, by Australian soldiers, will know what waits for them if they blow the whistle. ✪

Tully Mill Workers to take industrial action

In a resounding blow to Tully Sugar, Australian Workers' Union (AWU) members at its mill in Queensland have conclusively voted in favour of taking industrial action to further their campaign for a fair pay rise.

100 per cent of AWU members who participated in the ballot voted in favour of the industrial action, which includes strikes for up to 48 hours at a time.

Because this ballot was successful, union members will now have the option to take legally protected strike action at the sugar mill.

AWU Queensland Branch Secretary Stacey Schinnerl said that this is a warning sign to Tully that their workers are not going to back down until they get a fair deal.

"Our members are tired of waiting – Tully's current offer is unacceptable and workers are drawing a line in the sand," Schinnerl said.

"This vote shows that we are serious about a fair pay rise."

This successful ballot means that Tully can anticipate being hit with industrial action during the crush season this year, which is the period where sugar cane is transported to mills to be crushed into sugar.

It will also mean that workers can take industrial action during the pre-crushing season steam trials, which are integral to preparing the Mill for its peak earning season.

Schinnerl said that workers are frustrated with the progress of negotiations.

"Workers in Far North Queensland aren't going to be shortchanged by a multinational corporation," Schinnerl said.

"Industrial action was not our preferred way of resolving this dispute, but we are ready and willing to do so if Tully doesn't come back to the bargaining table with an offer that reflects our members' worth to the company."

News of this successful ballot emerged just two weeks after another multinational sugar company operating out of North Queensland, Wilmar Sugar, saw a protected action ballot being returned with similarly damning results.

Since then, hundreds of Wilmar workers have gone on strike, significantly disrupting the multinational corporation's operations.

Schinnerl said that this is the future that awaits Tully if they continue down this path.

"Sugar communities know that these corporations are making record profits. They know that Tully can give its workers the pay rise they deserve."

Other potential industrial action includes bans on performing overtime, call outs, and use of keys and computer equipment.

AWU ✪

Dingo bytes

The engine of US foreign policy has been fuelled not by a devotion to any kind of morality, but by the necessity to serve other imperatives: to make the world safe for US corporations; to enhance the financial statements of defence contractors at home who have contributed generously to members of Congress; to prevent the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model; to extend political and economic hegemony over as wide an area as possible, as befits a "great power."

The United States has carried out serious interventions into more than 70 nations since World War II. In the coming weeks Dingo will begin each Bytes with one of these targets of US imperialism.

First up **China 1945-49:** The US intervened in the civil war between the revolutionaries and counter revolutionary forces, taking the side of Chiang Kai-shek against the Communists, even though the latter had been an ally of the US in the recently concluded WW2. The US used defeated Japanese soldiers to fight for its side. The revolutionary forces prevailed and Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan in 1949.

Who rules Australia? In 2014 mining magnate Andrew Forrest's "Creating Parity" report, a recipe for wiping out Native Title, clearing outback Indigenous communities off their land, private sector control of their lives and assimilation, was handed to the then Abbott Coalition government. It is a simplistic, paternalistic, racist strategy for the dispossession and further disempowerment of Indigenous Australians, produced by a mining magnate and his head office team for the sole benefit of mining corporations.

Prior to Forrest there was mining magnate Lang Hancock – father of billionaire Gina Reinhart – who, when asked about Indigenous affairs, proposed a sterilisation program so that, in his words "they die out." That's who rules.

PARASITE(S) OF THE WEEK: are the various warmongering think-tanks painting China as the enemy. Their strategic buzz at various forums this month all focused on what they call the "frightening discussion": how civilians and industry will be mobilised when the big one starts. Here's former Home Affairs head Michael Pezzullo: "In war the most important question is whether the nation at large has the structures, capabilities, and above all, the mindset and national will that are required to fight and keep fighting, and to absorb, recover, endure, and prevail." This comes out of the scenario of China attacking and invading Australia. Pezzullo called for the government to prepare a "war book" in preparation for invasion, a plan covering crucial infrastructure and key industries such as transport, energy, communications, and construction; the allocation and rationing and stockpiling of food, water, fuel, and pharmaceuticals; evacuating and sheltering population centres.

One think-tank, the US Studies Centre, said the government "should begin speaking openly about how civil society could be mobilised in time of conflict." Former Defence Department deputy secretary Peter Jennings called for more involvement of the private sector to "contribute to military requirements," saying there should be talks between the government and private sector to "start a public debate about mobilisation."

Gas Strategy: path to oblivion

Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

Anna Pha

Humanity faces two major existential threats: climate change and nuclear war. The Albanese Labor government has already fuelled the threat of nuclear war with AUKUS and other war preparations. Now it's pressing on the accelerator towards climate annihilation.

On 9 May Resources Minister Madeleine King released the government's Future Gas Strategy.

"... gas will remain an important source of energy *through to 2050 and beyond*, and its uses will change as we improve industrial energy efficiency, firm renewables, and reduce emissions," King said launching the Strategy. (Emphasis added)

She goes on: "But it is clear we will need continued exploration, investment and development in the sector to support the path to net zero for Australia and for our export partners, and to avoid a shortfall in gas supplies."

The Minister would have us believe the path to reducing emissions is by increasing them. The government is taking the Australian people for fools.

Fossil fuels are the path to oblivion.

There is only one path to net zero and keeping climate warming within 1.5°C – to transition to renewables as quickly as possible.

The Strategy promotes carbon capture and storage (CCS) of emissions as a means of transitioning to net zero. CCS has proved an abject failure on a commercial scale. (See Green Notes *Guardian* #2060)

Over 60,000 clean energy jobs could be created in Australia by 2025 according to the government's own figures. This is three times the number employed in the gas industry.

CLIMATE CRISIS

2023 was the hottest year on record, and records continue to be broken in 2024. For the past 11 months, every month has set a record temperature for that month.

The consequences of climate change are already being felt, with climate warming of an average 1.2°C over the past 4 years. Records are being broken on every continent, whether it be heat waves, drought, crop losses, famine, wildfires, flooding, storms, rising sea levels, melting of polar ice, bleaching of coral reefs, and other extreme weather events.

We are experiencing climate change now. Thousands of lives have been lost and vast amounts of infrastructure destroyed. Governments are not coping now with the devastation. Yet this is nothing like what humanity faces in the future.

URGENCY

Ironically on the same day as the Strategy was released, the UK *Guardian* weekly published the results of a survey page 383 leading world climate scientists, all senior authors of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.

Their responses emphasise urgency. 77 per cent predicted warming of at least 2.5°C by the end of the century, and nearly half predicted 3°C or more! Only 6 per cent thought the world would succeed in limiting global heating to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Despite these forecasts the scientists were not prepared to give up on tackling climate change and still expressed hope for the future. We should not give up the struggle either.

Nearly three-quarters of the scientists blamed world leaders' lack of political will for their insufficient action, while 60 per cent said that corporate interests such as fossil fuel companies were interfering with progress.

Ruth Cerezo-Mota, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, said "We know what we're talking about. They can say they don't care, but they can't say they didn't know."

"All of humanity needs to come together and cooperate – this is a monumental opportunity to put differences aside and work together," Louis Verchot, based at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture in Colombia, told the UK *Guardian*. "Unfortunately, climate change has become a political wedge issue ... I wonder how deep the crisis needs to become before we all start rowing in the same direction."

LABOR DIVIDED

Labor MPs were blind-sided by the release of the Strategy – there was no consultation let alone advance notice. The Strategy has raised concerns amongst some metropolitan MPs who face serious challenges from the Greens or teals.

Five inner city Labor backbenchers have spoken out against the Strategy – Jerome Laxale, Sally Sitou, Josh Burns, Josh Wilson, and Carina Garland. MP Josh Burns said he did not get into politics to "be a support mechanism" for fossil fuels or to be a "rubber stamp."

Ged Kearney, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, made a more cautious statement saying Australia could "not draw out our reliance on fossil fuels any longer than is necessary."

The major parties are owned by the fossil fuel sector, bought off with large political donations and the prospect of lucrative, six-figure post-parliamentary jobs. The system is corrupt and in need of urgent change.

The gas Strategy is no different to the Coalition's "gas-fired recovery." Neither Labor nor the Coalition wrote the Strategy. It was written by and for the gas industry to protect and increase its profits. The drive for ever larger profits is so short-sighted that these powerful corporations cannot see they are heading towards self-destruction and the obliteration of humanity.

The world must stop developing new oil and gas projects and phase out existing ones as a matter of urgency. That includes Australia.

The 2020s are make-or-break years for humanity.

The government must cease subsidising and nationalise the fossil fuel sector.

The 2025 general elections provide an important opportunity to elect a government of a new type that puts people and the planet before profits. In the meantime, flood the Prime Minister, Resources Minister, your local MP and Senators with letters opposing the Strategy. ✪

PEACE NOTES

Hannah Middleton

BIDEN MANOEUVRES TO SAVE VOTES

Facing fast growing opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza, US President Biden is manoeuvring to save votes in the upcoming election by making a concession – one which is unlikely to prevent massive civilian casualties in the threatened Rafah ground assault.

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin says shipments of bombs to Israel have been paused. The weapons could still find their way to the IDF in the future.

The shipment of two Boeing-made weapons – 1,800 2,000-pound Joint Direct Attack Munitions, and 1,700 500-pound ground-launched Small Diameter Bombs – is being held up.

However, Austin added "We have not made any final decisions on this yet .... We certainly would like to see no major combat take place in Rafah, but certainly our focus is on making sure we protect the civilians."

Better late than never, perhaps. However, it seems unlikely that Israel will take any notice of such a minor gesture.

PREPARING FOR WAR WITH CHINA

In other news, the Australian government has announced a "historic" shift for the Australian military to a focus on fighting in the Indo-Pacific, spin for rearming to follow the US into war with China.

The recently announced National Defence Strategy (NDS) commits the government to spending an additional $50.3 billion over the next decade. This will result in the military budget growing to more than $100 billion by 2033-34.

The government plans to buy new long-range strike missiles, and spend $28 - $35 billion over the next decade.

In the short term, the government will splurge an additional $5.7 billion over the next four years, with $1 billion of that being for long-range strike, targeting, and autonomous systems.

Cameron Leckie, who served 24 years in the Australian Army retiring with the rank of Major, points out that Australia has progressively locked itself into a 'defence' strategy based on the shaky assumption of the ongoing global military dominance of the United States.

By the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, it was acknowledged that the United States is no longer "the unipolar leader of the Indo-Pacific". The United States imperial system is now in free fall.

However, it is clear that the NDS seeks some form of restoration of the US as the unchallenged superpower. The NDS demonstrates this, Leckie argues, in two ways. The first is the sell-out of Australian sovereignty to the United States. The second is the commitment to 'upholding' the global rules-based order (RBO).

The RBO is repeated like a mantra throughout the NDS. Yet there is not a single mention of the United Nations or the UN Charter and only three mentions of international law.

An international order founded on the UN Charter and international law "is a sounder recipe for peace than the amorphous and discriminatory rules-based international order," Leckie stresses.

If the stated purpose of the NDS is to achieve regional peace and prosperity, enforcement of the RBO actually undermines this purpose.

The dichotomy between maintaining our prosperity via Australia's crucial trade relationship with China, and aiming to maintain our security by excluding China as a key partner could not be starker.

Leckie says that the primary value that Australia shares with the US is an insatiable and amoral appetite for power.

Cameron Leckie describes the NDS as an ideology centred upon restoring the primacy of the United States, at a point in time when it is clear that the US imperial system is in a terminal and accelerating collapse.

He suggests that the RBO must be abandoned as it is the primary source of global and regional instability. It must be replaced by the global order as defined by the United Nations Charter and international law.

He says that there must be recognition that security is indivisible. Australia can only be secure if all nations of the region, including China, are also secure.

The most complex and challenging strategic challenge that Australia faces is disentangling from a corrupted alliance. Abandoning AUKUS should be the first step.

Finally, he stresses that it is imperative for Australia to actually deal with the fundamental issues, related to environment, energy, and inequality, that are the drivers for future insecurity and conflict.

Boycott Israel · End the Occupation · Ceasefire Now

Unilateral recognition of a Palestinian State

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR PALESTINE

SATURDAY, 25 MAY 2024 @ 12PM

NATIONWIDE RALLIES AT THE PORTS

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Cuban healthcare Struggles and victories

Caiden Bartholomew

First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez met with Winnie Byanyima, executive director of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) earlier this May. Part of a campaign to end AIDS by 2030, the meeting saw Cuba express a continued will to cooperate as leaders of the fight against HIV worldwide.

Díaz-Canel emphasised the importance of combining community and multidisciplinary approaches to HIV programs, while also stressing the challenges facing Cuba's healthcare system. Cuba began work with UNAIDS in the 1990s. In 2015, Cuba became the first country to receive recognition from WHO for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. Cuba's healthcare successes have been noted in other areas, such as their leading role in fighting COVID-19 around the world.

Cuba's healthcare system faces significant struggles, however, particularly with supplies of equipment and medicines. The US blockade of Cuba, a unilateral policy frequently condemned by the majority of countries at the UN, is the largest obstacle to Cuba's acquisition of healthcare resources. Eduardo Martínez, president of BioCubaFarma, has noted that while funds are available for raw materials, the refusal from banks to cooperate due to the blockade prevents payments from being made to suppliers. In 2021, when Cuba was fighting against the Delta variant of COVID-19, the US blockade denied the Cuban people access to medical oxygen. Even spare parts to repair Cuba's sole oxygen plant were blocked. Díaz-Canel labelled the denial of oxygen a "genocidal act of the US government."

Despite these challenges, the Cuban people have displayed remarkable fortitude and resourcefulness in maintaining their healthcare system. Cuba developed five of its own vaccines for COVID-19, and has attempted to supplement its medical equipment with whatever resources are available, such as repurposing diving equipment to produce medical oxygen.

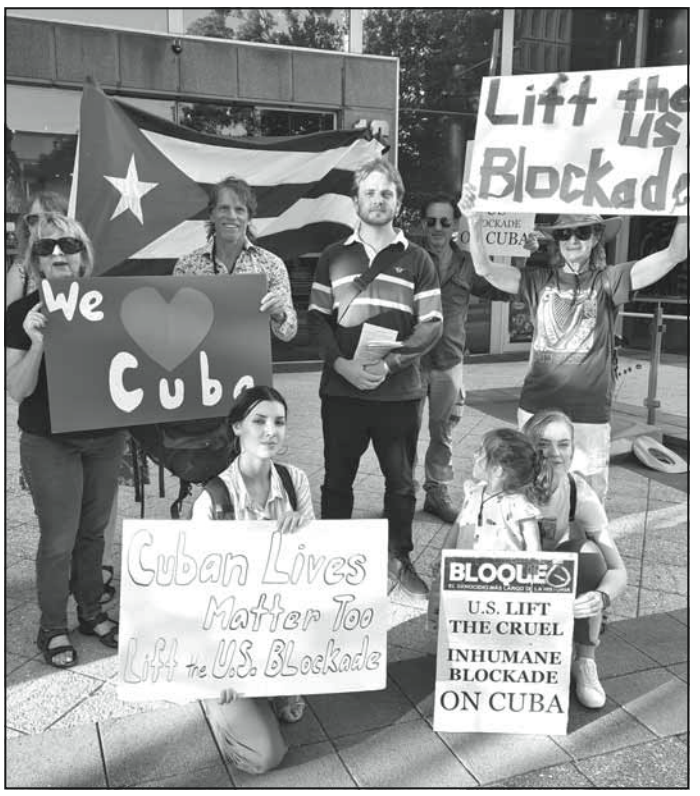
Cubans have used repurposed soft-drink bottles to make medical equipment, and have found ways of making spare parts denied to them by the blockade.

Cooperation with allies is also essential. Earlier this month, members of the Communist Party of Australia, the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU), and over one thousand people from around the world met in Havana to express solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban people. Events like this present opportunities to address struggles, such as the fight against the criminal blockade, but also to celebrate the achievements of the working peoples of Cuba.

Viva Cuba!

End the blockade!

Readers can contribute against the blockade of Cuba by: Contacting your local Australia-Cuba Friendship Society Branch, and donating or joining in their next action, and/or contacting your Federal MP and Senators, letting them know you want Australia to oppose the blockade. ✪



Gaza pier: US at its most cynical

Denis Doherty

"The United States has been leading international efforts to get more humanitarian assistance into Gaza. Tonight, I'm directing the US military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the coast of Gaza that can receive large shipments carrying food, water, medicine, and temporary shelters," said President Biden in his 14 March State of the Union address.

US military newsletters praised the work of their supply departments.

Few of the plan's critics have pointed out that the pier on the Mediterranean coast of Gaza is a classic piece of 'disaster militarism.'

Militarism inflicts environmental destruction and impoverishment of the attacked people. In addition, there is destruction of housing and infrastructure for populations leading to death and injury. The survivors also face starvation and disease.

In Gaza the humanitarian crisis has been brought on by the military's systematic use of weapons from many different platforms. For the military to then offer relief from their cataclysmic handiwork by feeding and hydrating the victims so they can be bombed and strafed again is plainly barbaric.

The US government has both rushed through extra funding for the Israeli military and extended its ban on funding UNWRA, the major aid agency in Gaza.

Claiming to be "leading international efforts to get humanitarian assistance into Gaza," while funding the military and cutting funding to the organisation that feeds the Gazans is beyond cynicism.

The pier is a part of what is called Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS). JLOTS boasted it will deliver a pier to Gaza in the short time of 60 days. That's a long time for Gazans dying of starvation now.

The US military practised just this scenario at the biannual US-Australian Talisman Sabre war games off the Queensland coast last year.

Army Col. Samuel S Miller boasted: "When it may seem, at times, we have the weight of the world on our shoulders, we will forge across the water to deliver humanitarian assistance."

The plan to build a floating pier off a beach in Gaza is borrowing a page from the logistics playbook the army is developing for potential future conflicts in the Pacific.

JLOTS operations are a staple of planning and training exercises in the region, where logistics is a major sticking point for conflict with China. The crews now headed to Gaza will be well prepared by the Australian exercise, in which the wind, waves, and swells were higher than those in the Mediterranean near Gaza.

In reality the pier project is a cynical pose to cover the unforgivable military to military co-operation between the US and the Israeli military and to divert the growing fury about US government support for Israeli genocide. ✪

Communist Party of Ireland Statement

8 May 2024

Victory for Trinity College Dublin students. A significant advance for BDS

Students of Trinity College ended their encampment on the college grounds on 8 May, the mass, radical, direct action in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. This encampment, which started last Friday, had clear demands for the College to take institutional responsibility, divest from Israeli companies, end academic ties with Israeli institutions, and support Palestinian students and scholars. Trinity accepted all demands.

The action of Trinity students was well organised, well targeted, and showed good understanding of the operations of capitalist university institutions. It built upon continuous organising work of the student union and the BDS Society, as well as strong support and solidarity from other groups in Dublin and across Ireland. The students were supported by all trade unions organising College staff, an important milestone in Student Union organisers hard work in establishing solidarity between students and staff. In the light of potential industrial action coming later this year, acts of solidarity and victories in collective bargaining like this one become even more important.

The success of Trinity College students action reflects mature understanding of institutional complicity with imperialism and colonialism, capitalist interests, and the power of institutions. Furthermore, it reflects the power of collectives, Broad fronts united by joint struggle and clear understanding of it. The victory of the encampment is giving inspiration and practical ideas to organisations and institutions in Ireland and the world on the path towards full boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). It is a part of the global struggle against imperialism, militarism and war, for a free world and a free Palestine in it. ✪

Xi slams NATO on anniversary of US embassy attack

Chinese President Xi Jinping condemned Nato as he began his visit to Serbia, 25 years to the day after the Western military alliance carried out a deadly bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

In a letter published in the Serbian media outlet Politika, Xi said China would never forget how "Nato brazenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia, killing three Chinese journalists.

"The China-Serbia friendship, forged with the blood of our compatriots, will stay in the shared memory of the Chinese and Serbian peoples."

He added: "We are willing to work with our Serbian friends to stay true to our original aspirations, join hands in progress, write a new chapter in national development and revitalisation, and build a China-Serbia community with a shared future for mankind in the new era."

US jets dropped five bombs on the embassy compound in the Serbian capital on 7 May 1999, killing three Chinese journalists and wounding 20 other people.

Nato launched the air war in March that year, officially to halt the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians by Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic.

The US apologised at the time, saying the embassy bombing was a mistake that happened due to faulty intelligence. The intended target, Washington said, was the headquarters of a Serbian state arms exporter located on the same street, a few blocks away.

There is still speculation that the attack was intentional rather than accidental.

While straining Beijing's relations with the US, the embassy bombing brought China and Serbia closer together.

China has emerged as Serbia's largest provider of foreign direct investment and its second-largest trading partner after the European Union.

Beijing opposed the Nato bombing campaign and like Serbia has never recognised Kosovo, which was split from Serbia after the war, as a sovereign state.

The Chinese president was expected to visit the site of the former embassy and pay his respects to the bombing victims. A Chinese cultural centre now stands at the spot. It includes a Confucius Institute, workshops, exhibitions, offices, residential space, and a hotel.

Xi will travel to Budapest, where he will meet Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban on the final leg of his European tour.

Morning Star ✪

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Indian Elections: statement from the All-India Trade Union Council

9th May – Victory over fascism: fight against fascist ideology must continue

It was on 9th May 1945, when Hitler's Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Red Army of the Soviet Union and the Allied Forces. The Second World War came to an end. Fascism was defeated at tremendous human cost. Those against Fascism the world over, have observed 9th May as anti-Fascism Day since then.

What is Fascism? We need not look too far. It is taking root right around us in India.

Fascism is the negation of freedom of expression, belief, and thought. It thrives on supremacist ideology. It turns ordinary people into accepting such slavish mentality, taking pride in following the Dictator. It thrives on ordinary people, believing in some perceived threat from 'the other.' It thrives on ordinary people, believing and accepting with pride, that they are sacrificing their freedom for the Nation, the Fatherland, the Motherland, the Rashtra (nation).

9th May should actually be a reminder that one should be on guard against fascism. It was defeated once. We have to remain vigilant that it does not descend on us again.

The proponents of Fascism in India are the RSS and its myriad off-shoots, the Sangh Parivar. Their founders had actually been in contact with Mussolini of Italy and Hitler of Germany and were impressed with their "disciplined" followers. They – Dr Munje, Hegdewar, Golwalkar, Savarkar – propagated Hindutva and Hindu Rastra in India. They hold and propagate a skewed view of history that Hindus were being oppressed and suppressed by rulers of other religious faiths – mainly Muslims (They do not accept the fact that invaders were Mughals and had not come here to propagate Islam, but got assimilated in the ethos). They revere Manusmriti (Hindu 'law of Manu') though it openly advocates discrimination against women, and the so-called lower castes, and exalts Brahmins as the "highest" caste. Today they have entrenched themselves in all walks of life – education, bureaucracy, the judiciary, police, military, with tacit support from finance capital.

Rally against fascism in India, London, 2020.
Photo: Steve Eason – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Today, we are in the midst of parliamentary elections, a right given to us by the Indian Constitution, bequeathed to us by our forefathers on 26th November,1949. The BJP, the political arm of the RSS, takes part in these elections, though they had rejected the Constitution right at the beginning as "foreign thought," and advocated acceptance of Manusmriti as our constitution. They grab power by splitting parties with such tactics. They are the seed of Fascism in India.

The election results are awaited. Anti-Fascist forces have extensively appealed to the people to defeat the BJP-RSS. No one can predict the outcome of the elections. But whichever way it goes, let us remind ourselves this May, that the fight against fascism can never stop. We have to be vigilant all the time.

Come forward – Vote BJP out of power!

AITUC Secretariat

Labortoday.international

Russia has 'right to strike' UK

Russia has the right to strike British facilities in Ukraine and elsewhere, if London's assurance that Kiev can attack Russian territory with British weapons becomes reality, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has told Russian news agency *TASS*.

"If such a scenario is implemented, our country, Russia, reserves the right to respond accordingly, that is, to regard as targets British facilities located both in Ukraine, and outside its borders: military facilities, weapons and so on," Zakharova said.

She described British Foreign Secretary David Cameron's remark that London considered it legitimate for the Kiev regime to use British weapons for strikes on Russian territory as "absolutely insane."

"This statement is not only illegitimate, but also illogical, because Britain itself stated literally the opposite not so long ago," Zakharova said.

"You remember how the controversy evolved. This statement first appeared in the news feed of a British news agency. Then, after staying there for two hours it was removed. The whole article with Cameron's statements was removed," Zakharova noted. "And a few hours later, apparently after some verbal battles that were going on, I'm sure, in Downing Street, at the Foreign Office, and at headquarters of Reuters itself, it was decided not to sacrifice the reputation of the British news agency and to publish the phrase that was actually used."

"We reacted immediately. The appropriate reaction was presented to the world through diplomatic channels. The ambassador was summoned. In fact, Russia did not just summon him for a reprimand, but absolutely unambiguously responded to the British ambassador over the statements in question the way we did," Zakharova said.

Britain's ambassador to Russia, Nigel Casey, was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry. A strong protest was expressed to him over Cameron's recent statement in an interview with Reuters about Ukraine's right to strike Russian territory with British weapons. Casey was warned that the response to Ukrainian strikes carried out with British weapons on Russian territory might be directed against any British military facilities and equipment in Ukraine and elsewhere.

Tass

Global Briefs

UK: Communist Party general secretary Robert Griffiths has welcomed the results of local elections which "landed a red card to the Tories and a warning to Labour." "Anybody who cares about local communities, public services, jobs, and integrity looks forward to the end of Tory rule at Westminster too," he said. Griffiths pointed out that "Labour cannot afford to gamble everything on a Tory collapse at the next General Election in order to win an overall majority in the Westminster parliament." Labour's leadership failure to embrace bolder progressive policies, and refusal to condemn Israel's genocide in Gaza has alienated thousands of voters. "We now intend to run the biggest Communist General Election campaign in 40 years, holding high the banner for socialism and preparing for the post-election battles to come against a 'status quo' Labour government," said Griffiths.

GERMANY: Members and friends of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) defied the ban on USSR banners and symbols and met at the Soviet Monument in Treptower Park in Berlin to jointly lay a wreath at the foot of the monument to the Soviet Soldier-Liberator in commemoration of the 79th anniversary of the great anti-fascist victory. They were among many others who came to remember and honour the fallen. The bronze sculpture of a Soviet soldier holding a rescued child in his arm and a lowered sword over a shattered swastika symbolizes the overthrow of Nazism.

PALESTINE: At least 143 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza. The Palestinian Journalists Union stated that journalists in Gaza are doing their job exposing Israeli crimes. They seem to be specifically targeted for that. The latest victim was a photojournalist who died with his wife and child when his house was bombed in the Jabalia refugee camp. Israel has also killed 191 UN workers since October 2023.

MEXICO: The Mexican government will hire 1,200 Cuban doctors in addition to the hundreds already working in Mexico. The Cuban President Diaz-Canel said "Serving the Mexican people through a government project between our two nations is also a growth for our doctors, because there is much that undoubtedly contributes to their training as professionals, as humans and as revolutionaries, experience with the people."

POLAND: Once again Polish farmers marched in protest against the EU climate policies and in opposition to the pro-EU government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The march was organised by Solidarity, a farmers' trade union which is highly critical of the EU's farming policies. They particularly oppose a policy known as the Green Deal. The Polish farmers claim it interferes with their work and imposes high costs.

SAO TOME and PRINCIPE: The African island nation of Sao Tome and Principe has signed a defence agreement with Russia. The two countries have agreed to jointly fight terrorism and promote peace and stability. So far Russia has signed agreements for military cooperation with over 40 African countries.

Letters to the Editor
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Domestic violence – addressing causes as well as symptoms

As the government pauses to consider shelling up over $1 billion to address domestic violence, Australians should question if that sum of money will only address the symptoms while the causes are not ascertained and addressed.

In Australia we are seeing an increase in domestic violence which is incontrovertible, but what is causing it? We are also seeing a cost of living crisis, a homelessness crisis and a climate crisis. What is the solution suggested by many sectors of Australian society? Throw some money at it but leave the existing system and its structures firmly in place. I would argue that the root cause of the three crises listed above is the operation of capitalism. I would also argue that the root cause of the domestic violence crisis is the almost unfettered operation of capitalism. Governments and business say we should leave it to the market, not interfere in the operation of the market and the market is good.

I suggest before the government shells out such a large amount of money on domestic violence, it should be very clear about what the causes of domestic violence are so that it is not just putting a very expensive band aid on the problem, but addressing the causes so that the incidences of domestic violence decrease and are eventually eliminated.

For a fraction of the cost of what Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is offering, we could get together a team of social scientists from each state and territory. These would be sociologists, social workers, anthropologists, psychologists and philosophers, and they can start gathering empirical data, administer questionnaires and we can find out, "How long have you had this problem?; "what do you suggest we should do?" and, "is there anything we need to change?" amongst other questions.

If capitalism is the cause of the domestic violence crisis, then the answer of throwing a lot of money at the problem, the more the better, will not be challenged. But if the government is serious about addressing the problem, then they should be more certain about the causes.

Thank you.

Yours truly.

Richard Titelius

Children Never Forget Domestic Violence

Dear editor

In 1960s Queensland, if the neighbours called the police to a house for domestic violence, the police waited outside until the noise stopped, and then told the neighbours: "No one is dead here. We are going now." Only if the husband killed his wife would they intervene and arrest him for murder. Women rarely pressed charges against spouses, as it was considered an internal family affair.

My mother had seven children (I am the eldest of 5 girls and 2 boys) and suffered years of abuse, as did all the children. We were poor. My sister was taken away as a child as she was suffering from malnutrition. My father was violent, abusive, and controlling, regarding everyone in the household as under his absolute control. Conflict was settled with violence. Children were tolerated, but never loved. His children were a financial burden and when they left school to work, they were expected to pay board, as he said: "To repay all the money I had spent on raising you since birth."

It took very little to upset him. A child's smile or laughter would set him into a violent rage. As a child I would come home and the house would be smashed up in his rage, with cupboards and dressers thrown around. Animals were thrown against the wall, their limp bodies collapsing to the floor. For years we came home in dread that we would be murdered. These memories stick with you.

There was no assistance for women and children to flee to safety. When my mother fled to her parents, he came with his work mates to take his family back, threatening my grandparents with violence.

His father tried to strangle his wife with the ironing cord when she requested a divorce. From the youngest age he would beat up his sister, and he hated his mother. His father raised him after they divorced.

Up to the day he died, my father never apologised for his violent behaviour, nor saw anything wrong in what he did. His children still bear the psychological scars of growing up under the threat of extreme violence. My mother always supported him, brushing off his violence with the explanation that he was a good provider. She never understood why her children suffered from mental health issues and were on medication.

We grew up lacking in self-confidence and social skills, which led us wanting to prove ourselves academically. Children never forget the domestic violence they are forced to endure, and they suffer this for the rest of their lives, often in silence, suffering from depression and self-doubt.

Graham Holton

Streaming review: *Fallout*

Floyd Kermode

Tram stops and bus shelters all around Australian cities are decorated with giant cog-door designs to promote a TV show called *Fallout*. Is this new series from Amazon escapist fun, politically interesting, or both?

On the fun side, this adaption of a much-loved computer game has violence, sexual tension, and some black comedy. On the politically interesting front, the background theme is US decline, corporate takeover of the state, and paranoia. There's something for everyone, although it's an uneasy mix at times: do I laugh at this person being eaten by a giant fish-monster, or do I get involved with their emotional journey? People who've played and loved the game seem to divide into two groups; ecstatic to see the game made into a story, and upset because the story is too different to the source. That's adaptions for you.

The show takes place in two different times; on the brink of a catastrophic nuclear war, and about two hundred years after that war. The brink-of-war part takes place in an alternative USA: the consumer items are all sort of 1950s; lovely curved fridges and cars, old-fashioned black-and-white tv sets and toasters. There are times when *Fallout* feels like one of those hipster cafes that strive to look like a 1964-era kitchen. The prewar mindset is somewhat Cold War 1950s too – anyone who's not gung-ho about the war gets called a "commies," and people are nervous about being seen to rock the boat. It's not your grandparents/great-grandparents' 1950s. There are robots, people are working on cold fusion, and little wrist computers are a thing. Also there's a large evil company called 'Vaultec' selling vaults – enormous bomb shelters where people can live safe from the impending apocalypse.

The other timezone is some two hundred years later. Life in the vaults is safe, still very retro and somewhat creepily cheerful, but with dark secrets in the background. Life up on the surface is desperate and nasty as per every post-apocalypse movie ever.

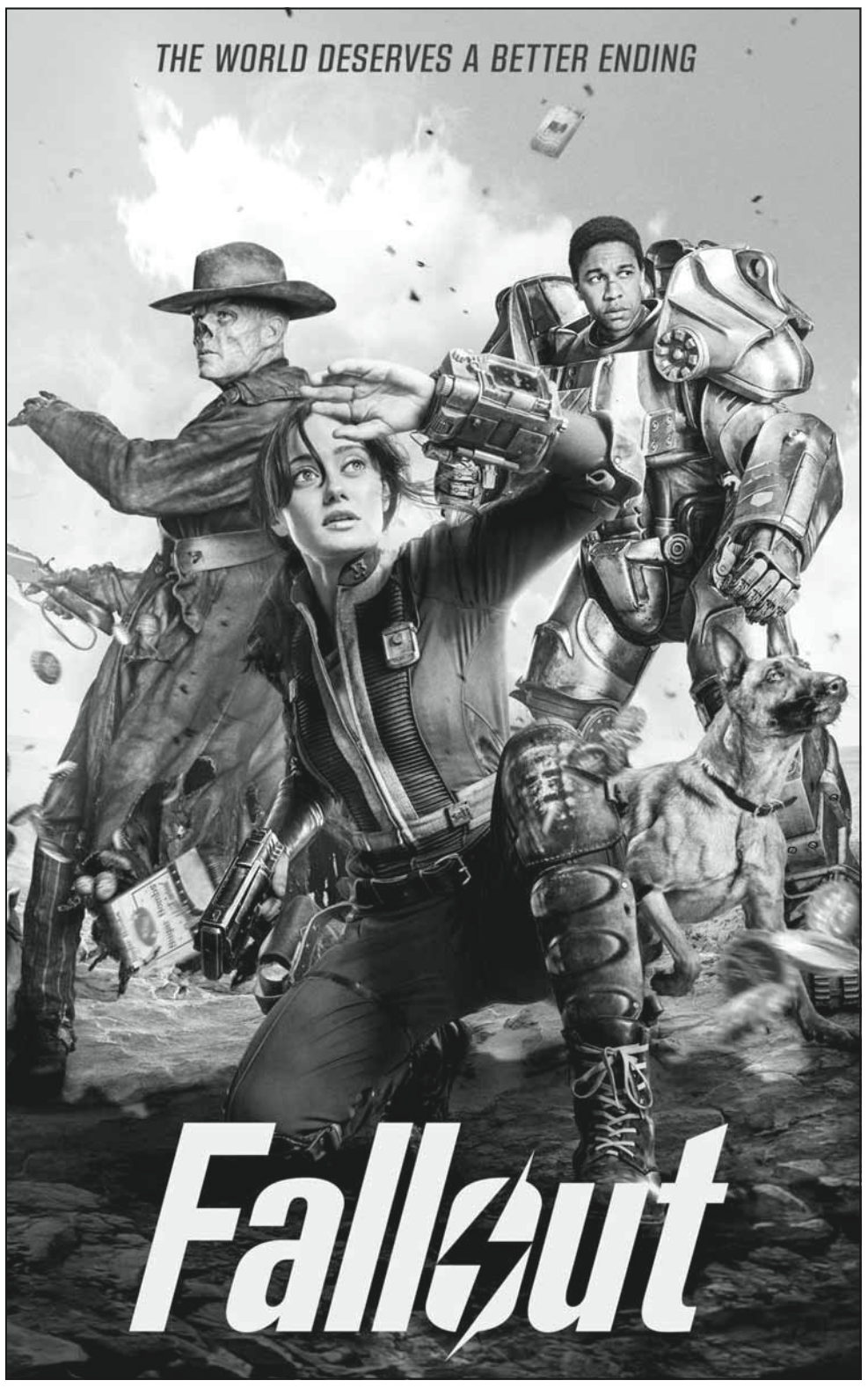
Lucy (Ella Purnell) is a naive vault-dweller on a quest to find her father who has been kidnapped by raiders from the surface. She meets up with Maximus (Aaron Moten) a squire from an order of 'knights' who have cornered the market on giant suits of fusion-powered armour which makes them practically invulnerable.

Lucy also comes across a 'ghoul,' played by Walton Goggins in an absolutely killer part. Goggins gets to be in both timezones – pre-war he's a Cooper Howard, a cowboy actor who's going along with the establishment and Vaultec's evil plans, but has a troubled conscience. In the future, he's been transformed into a ghoul, a kind of skeletal creature, like an intelligent zombie. Goggins, who some people will remember from the superb African-American left-wing superhero series *I'm a Virgo* where he was an evil Iron Man-resembling superhero (see *Guardian* July 24 2023), and does very well as both the troubled actor and as the ghoul, who's kind like a chattier version of Clint Eastwood's spaghetti western characters with a hole where his nose should be.

So is there much in for communists? Well, there's a background fear of US decline, and, as is often the case, a fear of the underclass. It was noticeable during the Clinton years that the Democrats talked about "saving the middle class," more or less admitting that any classes under that had to fend for themselves. In *Fallout* the rich are desperate to get into the vaults – the better vaults that is (*of course* there's a class system during a nuclear apocalypse). The rich are also terrified of the poor, which sounds about right.

While pre-war Cooper Howard is working out what's really going on, a friend tells him about fiduciary duty explaining that companies are legally obliged to make more money for shareholders, and if that conflicts with things the government is paying those companies to do, fiduciary duty has to win out. As someone explains, 'fiduciary responsibility' means that Vaultec have an interest in making sure that the apocalypse arrives on time. The friend tells Cooper that you don't save the world with "the system that's ready to set the world on fire." Back in reality, that's just what capitalist governments are trying to do; the Australian government seems set on trusting gas companies to save us from the consequences of burning fossil fuels.

Fallout isn't perfect. At times it feels like the makers of this very expensive adaption couldn't make their mind up as to whether they were making a black comedy or a serious end-of-the-world drama. There's no reason why you can't make a series that's both, but it's an uneasy mix. ✪



Victory Day

Cause for celebration

In the month of Victory Day, the Guardian is proud to reprint this important piece by the late Rob Gowland, first published in 2000.

8 May is the anniversary of VE (Victory Europe) Day. On that day in 1945, Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies. The war in Europe was over.

Russian WW2 veterans watching Victory Day celebrations, 2022.
Photo: kremlin.ru – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 4.0)

Well, not quite. The remaining Nazi forces in Eastern Europe did not officially surrender until the following day, 9 May. On that day the leader of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin announced that "the historic day of the final defeat of Germany, the day of our people's great victory over German imperialism has arrived."

But whether one recognises Victory Day as 8 May or 9 May, neither was given much recognition in the Australian media or by Australian public figures this year.

This is no small thing. WW2 was the most titanic struggle that the human race ever experienced.

It cost tens of millions of lives and consumed enormous resources. It deformed the economy of the world and brought tremendous suffering to a generation.

Equally, the victory over fascism was one of the most momentous events in human history.

Had the fascist powers won, as indeed they would have – without the Soviet Union's colossal contribution, Churchill's prediction of "a new dark age" would have become a hideous reality.

Bourgeois propagandists downplay the fact that the Soviet Union played the leading part in defeating the Axis. In fact, they try to dismiss it altogether.

But it's the truth. At one point in the War, when Churchill in correspondence with Stalin referred to the British campaign in North Africa on equal terms with the war on the Eastern front, Stalin tartly pointed out that "Hitler has 25 divisions in North Africa. He has 250 in the Soviet Union."

The United States lost 800,000 in the War. The Soviet Union lost 26 *million*. Of the young men born in the USSR in 1921, only four per cent survived the War.

China lost a further 20 million or more fighting Hitler's ally, Japanese imperialism, which like its German counterpart had an equally racist and dehumanising approach to the people it was intent on conquering.

The Chinese had to fight not only the Japanese but also the treacherous US-backed Kuo-min Tang, whose leaders were more interested in fighting the communists than the invader.

The United States military's principal theatre of operations was against the Japanese.

US losses however would have been inestimably greater if the USSR had not kept the Japanese Kwantung Army pinned down along the Soviet border for the duration of the War.

Despite the ferocity of the fighting in the west, the Soviet military kept the Special Red Banner Army of the Far East along their Siberian border facing the Japanese, who had tried repeatedly to invade Soviet territory ever since the Revolution.

In fact, invading Soviet territory was what the Second World War was really all about.

The imperialist powers actually encouraged Germany, and Japan to develop their war aims because the leaders of both countries were aggressively anti-communist and indicated that their territorial ambitions lay in the dismemberment of the Soviet Union.

Germany would seize the "lebensraum" it wanted in the west of the USSR, Japan would seize Siberia.

So keen were the most reactionary capitalist corporations and their politicians to see the end of the USSR, that they turned a blind eye to the threat posed to themselves by the imperialist ambitions of Germany and Japan.

The appeasement of Hitler by Britain and France is well known, but together with the USA they pursued the same policy towards Japan's seizure of first Manchuria and then the rest of China because they believed that an invasion of the Soviet Union would follow.

But the Japanese army got its nose bloodied by the Soviet military at Lake Hasan in 1938 and again in 1939 at Khalkhin-gol when they invaded the Soviet protectorate of Mongolia.

So, the Japanese militarists took a leaf out of Hitler's book and signed a non-aggression pact with the USSR to protect their backs while they set about double-crossing their former imperialist "friends."

For the pro-fascist elements of imperialism, it was the wrong war against the wrong enemy. But the threat had become so apparent that even some of the imperialists could see it. The anti-fascist alliance was born.

Such was the strength of the anti-fascist alliance and the popular movement against war, and fascism that underpinned it, that it was able to withstand the constant attempts by imperialist leaders to sabotage and disrupt it, and turn it to *their* advantage.

Under the influence of the anti-fascist alliance, tens if not hundreds of millions of people consciously considered the question, "What kind of world do we want after the War?" The answer was not to imperialism's taste.

Capitalist governments and capitalist media would like to bury forever any reference to the anti-fascist alliance or the central role of the socialist Soviet Union (and the communist led resistance movements) in the defeat of fascism. They would like us to forget that fascism – not just Germany – *was* defeated.

But we have no right to forget and every reason to remember – and to celebrate Victory Day. ✪

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Half the Sky

Domestic Violence: Labor doesn't care

Anthony Albanese recently announced a five thousand dollar "leaving violence payment," showing that Labor is completely unwilling to provide the services that domestic violence survivors sorely need. The payment is a total of $925 million that could be invested in frontline services which would provide real support in enabling domestic violence survivors to escape violence, and set them up to be able to live independently. Labor would rather give survivors a couple of months rent, bond, and some groceries, and have them fend for themselves, often with children.

How is a parent, usually a mother who relies at least partially on her partners' income, supposed to be able to take the time to find an affordable rental, and then move out and support one or more children with only an extra five thousand dollars to make up for what her partner contributes financially? This is compounded by the fact that domestic violence often occurs when the victim is reliant on the abuser, and that disabled people who have extra needs and expenses are abused at far higher rates than the rest of the population.

The stipulations on the payment are equally absurd. The payment is only available for people escaping a romantic partner, so if a person is being abused by any other family member or by a carer, the Labor government is unwilling to give them any meagre payment. Victims can only access the payment once, so if the payment doesn't go far enough and the survivor is forced by circumstance to return, they no longer have this assistance.

The worst thing about the payment is that the Labor government knows full well that frontline services, such as refuges and social workers, which can help survivors become independent are atrociously understaffed. Last year, Labor announced $169 m of funding over four years for 500 front line gendered violence jobs. However by the admission of Katy Gallagher, the Federal Minister for Women, only 30 roles have been filled. She places the blame on the States and Territories for not being able to find people to fill the roles. However the salaries are towards the bottom end for social workers. How does Labor expect to attract people with an uncompetitive salary, and why aren't they putting the money for the payment into attracting desperately needed frontline workers? There would even be money left over to put into preventative measures, such as interventions into the sexist attitudes of men and boys that perpetuate violence and education on gendered issues, along with cost-of-living relief, which has been demonstrated to lower all forms of violent crime, domestic violence included.

Labor's refusal to act on domestic violence proves that only under socialism will we be able to fight domestic violence. Under capitalism, working class women have no input into the policies that can be life or death for them, and Labor has shown that supposedly social democratic parties will not even try to act in their interests, or even the interests of the working class in general. Women's emancipation can only come from the working class.

‘Squad’ of nations formed to confront and provoke China

William Briggs

A new US-dominated bloc aimed at ‘challenging’ China is now almost complete. The grouping unites the USA, Japan, the Philippines, and Australia in what is being dubbed a new Quad group or alliance. The Pentagon likes to call it a ‘Squad’ of nations. It received some media coverage but the bigger story for the bourgeois press was the incident in the Yellow Sea involving a Chinese jet fighter and an Australian military helicopter. Each event tells a tale. The common denominator is the ceaseless demand to confront and provoke China.

The need to ‘challenge,’ and ‘confront’ China is at the very core of US foreign policy in the region. China’s growth, economically as a global power is central to imperialism’s venom. China’s prestige in the world is growing, and that infuriates the USA. Washington reacts as it always does. It flexes its muscles and seeks to intimidate and bully. It uses subservient states to help out and claims it is just after peace and a ‘rules-based order.’

The USA expects that this ‘emerging’ regional bloc will develop into a permanent grouping. The Philippines is being seen by America as an important element in its encirclement of China. Already US bases and missiles ring China. The Philippines simply draws the noose that much tighter. While preparing for this formal bloc arrangement, Western analysts describe a situation that allows for Manila to ‘borrow the strength’ of the other three nations. This is concerning.

Japan is a key part of the new arrangement. Gone is any reference to Japan’s ‘peace constitution.’ Japan is playing an increasingly muscular role in promoting America’s policies in the region.

US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin met with representatives of the new Quad group ahead of the announcement of this new military alignment. Its unofficial ‘nickname,’ Squad, has a layer of menace about it. It has decidedly military connotations, but that is not by chance.

Austin sought to portray this overtly threatening grouping in a benign, positive light. The need for such a bloc is, in his estimation, meant to make it clear that Beijing’s behaviour has been ‘irresponsible.’ It was a reference to disputes between China and the Philippines that have been played up in our media.

The central figure in the original Quad and the emerging Squad is the USA. While the roles of the other countries remain subsidiary, the power of the US in the region is enhanced. Washington is effectively making use of Australian territory, its military budget and its armed forces to serve the US purpose. By incorporating the Philippines into the bloc, the USA’s military presence, through military bases in the Philippines, is further extended.

All of this, in the words of the US and its client states, supposedly ensuring free and stable waters. It’s all about maintaining international law and always about ensuring that the rules-based-order is observed. Any provocation, any arms build-up, any threat against China and by implication any threat to the peace and stability of the region is legitimate. If China responds to threats, then this becomes ‘proof’ of its belligerence and aggression. This was shown in the recent confrontation between the Australian Navy and a People’s Liberation Army jet in the Yellow Sea.

The dangerous game that the US and in this case, its staunch and unquestioning ally, Australia is playing was on show. The area is closely bordered by China, the DPRK and South Korea. The incident took place in ‘international’ waters, but the proximity to territorial waters of each of the three states remains a factor. The Australian ship and its helicopter were in the area in order to assist in enforcing a blockade on the DPRK. The ‘rules-based-order’ has declared that many goods must not be shipped into or out of the DPRK. The population of the DPRK are offered a choice; either rebel against their government or starve to death. Well done Australia for maintaining international norms of humanity and decency!

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The diplomatic row over the Chinese fighter plane releasing flares to warn the helicopter away from entering Chinese airspace has been widely, if one-sidedly reported. Both Australia and China registered official protests about the incident. While it is never a simple matter to determine just what is what in such cases, it is worth remembering that the Australian naval presence is a long way from home. By contrast the Chinese plane was only moments of flying time from its territorial airspace.

Australian military doctrine has shifted in recent years. Any semblance of ‘defence’ in the Australian military is a long fading memory. The recently published Defence Strategic Review calls for the biggest shift in military policy since the end of WW2. In line with American anti-China thinking, the Review calls for an ‘impactful projection’ of force across the Indo-Pacific region.

Is maintaining blockades on the DPRK a legitimate use of Australian naval assets? Is it an example of our navy defending our shores? Is it an act of subservience to US dictates, regardless of the fact that the blockade is notionally a UN action?

Where do we find our navy, and our air force? They are operating often thousands of kilometres away from territorial Australia. Where do we find 60 per cent of the total US military? Not in the USA but in the Pacific region close to China.

Where do we find the Chinese army, navy and air force? Are they poised off mainland Australia or the USA? No, they are close to home. Do they have a ring of bases threatening anyone? No, they do not. Do we need any new alignments of belligerent states? No, we don’t. Do we need AUKUS, the Quad or now the Squad? Like a hole in the head.

What we do need is to give peace a budget, and protect our country from the real threat of Climate Change. We’re not going to get that under a government that operates as a working part of the US military. ✪

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