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**Australia-Cuba Friendship Society**  
**Melbourne NEWSLETTER**  
**October 2019**  
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**Next Meeting**  
**Monday 7<sup>th</sup>**  
**October**  
**7.30pm**  
**Unitarian Church**  
**110 Grey St,**  
**East Melbourne**

Melbourne	Sydney	Perth	Brisbane	Canberra	Hobart	Adelaide	Central Coast	NSW/Vic Sthn Border	New Zealand
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Dear Comrades

29 September, 2019

Once upon a time I felt OK in saying I was an Australian. But that was back in the era when Australia was one of the most egalitarian nations in the world, when there was vigorous debate about important issues and when our basic commodities were in public hands and jobs gave security and even some satisfaction. My grandfather worked all his life as a train driver (steam) and my father followed him into the railways, a solid career move back then, which was why I was born in Ballarat. What a different story today. Counted as full-time even if you only work for a few hours a week, with no sick leave, holiday pay, security, or the other basics unions fought so hard for - when bang, you're on the scrap heap and have to fight like buggery to get a lousy payout, leaving you to subsist below the poverty line, with no hope of redress. The corporates love our system because they can screw workers into the ground. The crooks and rorters love it because no-one stops their rorting. Capitalism's terrific if you're rich and crooked and stupid, but it needs growth and growth is killing our world and killing our animals and birds and trees and flowers that make it so special. We should all be shouting from the rooftops like gutsy 16-year old Greta Thunberg who told the UN with passion and integrity. **'People are suffering, people are dying, entire ecosystems are collapsing and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth...I want you to act as if the house is on fire'**. And our house is on fire. But miserable sods like our Pentecostal PM didn't speak at the UN forum because he had nothing to say, preferring to hob-nob with slimy Uncle Sam, a war-mongering dud on the cusp of impeachment. When Morrison spoke at a lesser gathering he made a gig of himself, pushing us even further down the plughole.

In Hong Kong the protests are getting nastier and more violent. A slice of history might help. Hong Kong was part of China since the Qin Dynasty in about 220 BC before morphing into an international financial centre. Trade kicked in with the arrival of the ruthless East India Tea Company in 1711, when the Brits refused to pay for tea in silver, smuggling in opium as a means of exchange. By 1787, the Company was illegally sending in 4,000 chests of opium every year, causing massive addiction and corruption. Back in 1820, China's economy was still the largest in the world - until the Opium Wars - but by the end of the second war, its share of global GDP had halved, and sovereignty over its territory had been seriously compromised. In 1841 a defeated China was forced to cede Hong Kong Island to the Brits as part of the Treaty of Nanjing, to lease the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 in perpetuity and the New Territories in 1898 for 99 years, areas that make up present-day Hong Kong. At the end of Japan's occupation during WW2, HK reverted back to Britain, which was then forced to transfer sovereignty back to China after the lease expired in 1997 when they negotiated a transition period called

the Sino-British Joint Declaration designating HK as a 'special administrative region'. China reluctantly agreed to extend semi-autonomy until 2047. This is the genesis of the 'One Country, Two Systems' rule at the heart of today's conflict, highlighting that China and Hong Kong have been on two distinct and intersecting paths of development.

It's now 22 years since the British left after an agreement stipulating that all interventions and colonial claims would end with full sovereignty returning to China. **Calling for secession from China would be like calling for Manhattan to secede from the US.** Can you imagine Washington ever agreeing to that? Hardly. And times have changed. In 1997, HK's domestic product was 27% of China's GDP. Today it's 3%. Shenzhen and other major cities are now China's financial hub and threaten Western hegemony. China, Russia, India and Pakistan, plus a few others, are members of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) comprising about half the world's population and controlling about one-third of its economic output, **and are moving out of the dollar economy.**

And what do you reckon western reaction would be if it was confronted by marauding gangs of protesters dressed in ninja outfits holding metal bars, with black scarves covering their faces and backpacks churning out the Star Spangled Banner, smashing up Heathrow, JFK or Melbourne Airports? You'd be beaten up and thrown into gaol. The gangs also smashed up HK's MTR, its public Mass Transit Railway and attacked passengers. Fighting for democracy? My foot. Leaderless? Not. There's tycoon Jimmy Lai, who owns a local tabloid and who's met US Vice President Mike Pence at the White House, and politician/barrister Martin Lee, founding chair of the local Democratic Party. 'Protest organiser', politician-in-waiting, Joshua Wong flies around the world, hobnobbing with far-right US Congressmen like Marco Rubio and the head of the notorious White Helmets outfit, Raed Al Saleh. **What, I ask, would a 'grassroots leader' in China have in common with a belligerent Syrian propaganda war mob?** Because both have links to the CIA's **National Endowment for Democracy**, infamous for subverting and manipulating democratically-elected governments, which has admitted funding HK dissidents for more than two decades in the name of 'Freedom'.

**In Washington, Trump and Co. have just announced sanctions against Raul Castro and his four children for 'gross violations of human rights in support of the Venezuelan government'** - for 'freedom', of course. In today's society, tell the truth if you dare, like Julian Assange who, with Edward Snowden (exiled in Russia) and Chelsea Manning (detained indefinitely), exposed massive crimes and corruption by the US government and its allies, and remains locked up in Belmarsh Maximum Security Prison in appalling conditions. **'Wherever America goes, terror follows'**. **Viva Cuba!**

**Joan Coxsedge, Commentator-in-Chief, ACFS Melbourne (03) 9857 9249**

## **[Cuba presents report on impact of U.S. blockade this past year](#)**

Cuba's Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, offers a press conference today to present the country's report to the General Assembly outlining the full impact of the U.S. blockade over this last year

## **[The country has overcome first stage of fuel shortage with minimum impact](#)**

"We are not going to stop dreaming. Our people will continue to be happy, hard-working, creative, and joyful. This is part of the determination we have expressed to never surrender."

## **[Cuba maintains low infant mortality rate due to congenital defects](#)**

Maintaining infant mortality rate due to congenital defects at the historical low of 0.8 per thousand live births, for three consecutive years, is the pride of the National Center for Medical Genetics

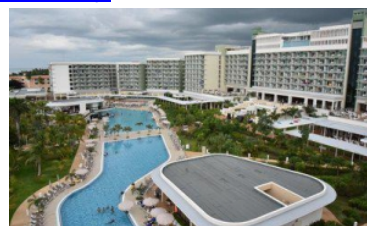
## **[Cuba-U.S. Telecommunications Business Forum](#)**



U.S. telecom companies attend meeting in Havana to discuss projects in Cuba, those currently underway and future prospects

## **[Hotel Internacional inaugurated, confirming vitality of Cuba's tourist industry](#)**

The inauguration of this impressive new luxury hotel in Varadero confirms the country's vitality and that, despite the difficult economic situation caused by the U.S. blockade, we are alive and well, insisted Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz



## **[Our hearts with Venezuela](#)**

Cuban workers reaffirm support for the Bolivarian Revolution and the country's legitimate President, Nicolás Maduro, who has called for peace and seeks to avoid a confrontation with Colombia

## **[Cubans react with solidarity and determination, supporting government measures to mitigate impact of U.S. hostility](#)**

Yesterday, during another appearance on Cuban television, President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez thanked the Cuban people for their support of government measures, contributions, and solidarity amidst the country's tense energy situation



## **[Cuba's response to the blockade: More Revolution!](#)**

Addressed at length on Cuban television, with the participation of President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez and the Council of Ministers, were the tense energy situation the country is experiencing; its causes; and measures taken to minimize the impact



## **[Twitter suspends Granma's account and those of other Cuban media](#)**

Yesterday, just as Granma began special coverage of the Presidents television appearance, for our 16,000 followers, Twitter suspended Granma's account and those of other Cuban media

## **[Comandante Juan Almeida in life \(+Photos\)](#)**

The Cuban people have always considered him the third most important figure in the Cuban Revolution, after Fidel and Raúl. On the 10th anniversary of his death, Granma remembers Comandante Juan Almeida

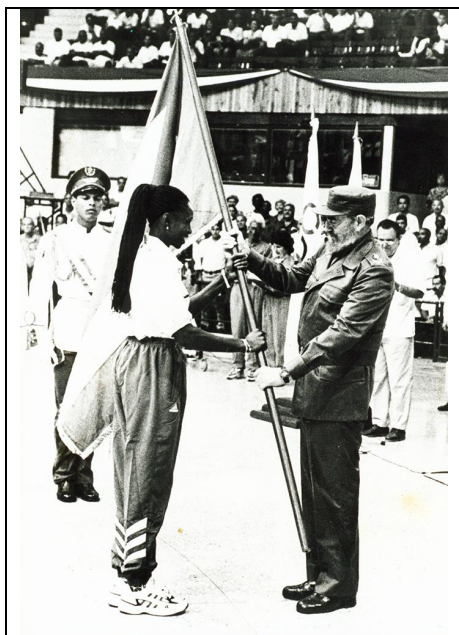




# Behind the medals: Sport is a right in Cuba

*Not everyone wins a medal, but competing with dignity and doing one's best is a way to return the support that the Cuban people and authorities give athletes*

Author: [Pablo E. Díaz Hurtado | informacion@granmai.cu](mailto:Pablo E. Díaz Hurtado | informacion@granmai.cu) - august 6, 2019 15:08:27



*Mireya Luis receives the flag from the Comandante en Jefe, on behalf of the country's delegation to the Winnipeg 1999 Pan American Games. Photo: Ricardo López Hevia*

In the two-seat canoe 500 meters for women, Mayvihanet Borges and Katherin Nuevo triumphed in an unprecedented performance, even more impressive given the fact that Katherin is only 16, highlighting the talent of Cuba's youngest athletes.

Others who climbed the podium included Jorge Félix Álvarez and Leuris Pupo in the quick shot, 25-meter pistol, a specialty in which they took both the gold and silver medals for Cuba.



*On the way to Lima 2019 with a great commitment to the people, the Cuban delegation was honored by President Miguel Díaz-Canel before their departure. Photo: Ricardo López Hevia*

Every victory in Lima is a victory for all Cubans, who share the athletes' joy and effort. Thus President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez emphasized, during the send-off ceremony for the country's delegation to the Lima 2019 Pan American Games, that everyday will be an opportunity to "Go for more."

Following the official opening of the competition, a colorful, well-conceived inauguration ceremony, Cuban sports shooters took the initiative on the medal chart, with Laina Pérez (gold) and Sheyla González (bronze), in the air gun 10meters, winning the country's first medals.

Those who everyone predicted would be our first champions, canoeists Fernando Dayán Jorge and Serguey Torres, met the expectations as favorites and triumphed in the C-2 1000 meters on Lake Albufera Medio Mundo, in Huacho.

Next would be Jorge Grau, a young man who has experienced a rapid ascent in his performances, with an excellent presentation at the Las Palmas air base, headquarters of the event, where he took the gold medal in the air gun 10 meters.

It was precisely Jorge Grau and Laina Pérez, in the mixed gun at 10 meters, who won the gold medal, thus the shooting team surpassed the number of titles won in its previous performance in Toronto 2015.



*Army General Raúl Castro has always supported our athletes, pictured here with Driulys González, champion in the Rio 2007 Pan Americans. Photo: Ricardo López Hevia*

The rest of our medals, were won by a discipline accustomed to leading delegations in multisport events: boxing. This time was not the exception, since their eight gold medals moved the country up on the medal chart.

Lázaro Álvarez in the 60 kg, Roniel Iglesias (69), Julio César La Cruz (81), Dainier Pero (+91), Osvel Caballero (56 kg), Andy Cruz (64 kg), Arlen López (75 kg), and Erislandy Savón (91 kg) have established their names in the sport on the continent.

Not everyone has the opportunity to win a medal, but competing with dignity and making one's best effort is always a way to return the support that the Cuban people and authorities give athletes. We all saw how gymnast Randy Lerú suffered a fall that eliminated his chances for a medal, but he got up and moved on, and with that attitude won the most valuable medal: the people's respect.

<http://en.granma.cu/deportes/2019-08-06/behind-the-medals-sports-is-a-right-in-cuba>

# More than 1,400 new teachers for special education

*All of Cuba's three regions now have a school to serve students with physical and motor disabilities*

Author: [Yenia Silva Correa](#) | [informacion@granma.cu](mailto:informacion@granma.cu) - september 3, 2019 16:09:27

This September, special education schools are opening with 1,400 new young teachers, recent graduates from the country's pedagogical universities. This academic sub-system, in addition to progress achieved in staffing, is advancing in the preparation of students to participate in regular programs and the offering of specialized services, Ministry of Education authorities reported during an online interview with Granma.



*Fulfilling a dream of Fidel's, schools in Santiago de Cuba and Villa Clara were inaugurated to serve students with physical or motor disabilities. Photo: Estudios Revolución*

Dr. Marlen Triana Mederos, general director of Basic Education, explained, "We say special education, referring not only to special schools or institutions, because we offer other specialized orientation services as well, including the Diagnosis and Consultation Centers, with specialists who advise teachers, families, and the population when they have any concern related to attention provided a given child."

She commented on the young teachers in this branch of education and their training, saying, "Attention provided these teachers is important, ensuring that the educational institution is guiding them, so that they can complete their university studies, to earn a Bachelor's degree."

## THE STUDENT BODY

Before the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, the official enrollment in special education barely exceeded 130 students. This figure now exceeds 30,000 in special institutions that exist in all municipalities, and the associated stigma is a thing of the past. A good portion of students finish their training in general education schools.

"We also have an enrollment of more than 11,000 children in regular education schools, that is, from early childhood through adult education, and every academic year teacher coverage is improving," she noted.

In April this year, with the inauguration of the Amistad Cuba-Vietnam School, it was possible to fulfill a dream of Fidel's, who was always sensitive to human needs and proposed the idea of establishing three such schools - one that would meet special educational needs in the western part of the country, which is the current Solidarity with Panama; another with this noble mission in the center of the island, and another for the East, with a view toward providing these services closer to students' residences and families.

With the inauguration of schools in Villa Clara and Santiago de Cuba, it is now possible to redistribute students served in these centers, allowing for more frequent contact with families and more regular visits by students to their homes.

Regarding the improved attention that has been achieved with the opening of these schools, Dr. Mederos commented, "Everyone knows that we had only one school, which was the Solidarity with

Panama in Havana. Today we have one in Santiago de Cuba and another in Villa Clara, which has made it possible to regionalize and expand these specialized services to a group of children who live in more remote settlements and in areas of difficult access."

She continued, "Even though we have a very favorable situation in terms of teacher coverage, given that attention to our children has expanded so much - not only in special education institutions - we are facing the challenge of serving a greater number of students in regular environments."

In her opinion, the priority is not only to train more specialized teachers, but to improve training provided teachers in regular classrooms, to better support these students in reaching their full potential.

The new Cuban Constitution, proclaimed this past April 10, reaffirms the obligatory and inclusive nature of education, supported by the eloquent language of action by the Revolution for 60 years, making clear that in Cuba, education is a right for all, without exception.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION IN CUBA:

- 346 institutions
- More than 33,000 students, including children, adolescents, and youth in special schools
- More than 11,000 students served in regular classrooms

Every municipality has a Diagnosis and Consultation Center, and at least one special education school

- 1,000 specialists at Diagnosis and Consultation Centers

## WHO IS SERVED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Anyone with:

- an intellectual, visual, auditory, or physical-motor disability
- a communicative or learning disability.
- an autism spectrum disorder

## SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL-MOTOR DISABILITIES

The Villa Clara school for children with physical or motor limitations has an enrollment of 120 students (48 boarded) from central provinces between Cienfuegos and Camagüey. The institution opened its doors on April 20, erected and equipped at a cost of more than 6 million pesos.

Another 120 children from the country's eastern provinces attend the Amistad Cuba-Vietnam special school in Santiago de Cuba. The investment in this institution was approximately 3.5 million pesos.

Some 170 children find more than an educational institution in Havana's Solidarity with Panama School: a home, thanks to the love they receive from staff. Founded more than three decades ago by Fidel, every year this institution graduates more young men and women of good will.



*Special education prepares many students to transition to regular programs. Photo: Julio Martínez Molina*

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-09-03/more-than-1400-new-teachers-for-special-education>

# Aggressive U.S. escalation brings new sanctions on Cuba

*In a new effort to tighten the blockade, the U.S. Treasury has modified its Foreign Assets Control Regulations for Cuba, placing further restrictions on remissions and bank transactions*

Author: [International news staff](#) | [informacion@granma.cu](mailto:informacion@granma.cu) - september 13, 2019 10:09:10



Photo: Prensa Latina

In a new effort to tighten the commercial, economic and financial blockade, on September 6, the U.S. Treasury Department modified Assets Control Regulations regarding Cuba, to impose new sanctions on our country.

“Through these regulatory amendments, Treasury is denying Cuba access to hard currency, and we are curbing the Cuban government’s bad behavior while continuing to support the long-suffering people of Cuba,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin cynically stated.

The new sanctions basically involved further restricting remissions and bank transactions.

The U.S. government will impose a limit of 1,000 USD per quarter on family remittances. The sending of remittances to close relatives of Cuban government officials and members of the Communist Party of Cuba are also prohibited. In its 60-year effort to asphyxiate the Cuban people, Washington has eliminated the authorization of donations, while adding a clause allowing such remittances if they involve supporting the growth of the private sector in Cuba, independent of government control.

The Treasury Department is removing the authorization for banking institutions subject to U.S. jurisdiction to process certain funds transfers originating and terminating outside the United States, commonly known as “U-turn” transactions. With this new rule, the government puts an end to previous authorization of such transactions, which now must be rejected by U.S. banks.

In recent months, U.S. sanctions on Cuba have been expanded, while pressure on Venezuela intensifies. In early June, the Trump administration approved new bans to prohibit educational group trips and canceling authorizations for pleasure and passenger boats, including cruise ships and yachts, as well as private planes.

On May 2 this year, Trump activated Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, and, in accordance with its stipulations, authorized the filing of lawsuits in U.S. courts against Cuban companies included in the list of Restricted Cuban Entities, created in November 2017 and updated a year later.

This arbitrary and illegitimate listing, aimed at intensifying the blockade and extending its extraterritorial effects, prohibits U.S. citizens from conducting direct financial transactions with the entities included. Given their illegitimate claims and violation of international law, the Helms-Burton Act and the blockade have aroused universal rejection, repeated for almost three decades by the most important regional and international organizations.

The most recent decision by the Treasury Department reinforces obstacles Cuba must face, but the United States will continue to fail in its central objective of denying the sovereign will of the Cuban people and our firm, unwavering solidarity with Venezuela’s constitutional President, Nicolás Maduro Moros, the Bolivarian Chavista Revolution, and the civic-military union of its people.

<http://en.granma.cu/mundo/2019-09-13/aggressive-us-escalation-brings-new-sanctions-on-cuba>



# Reforestation: Cuba leads the way

Posted in [Climate & Environment](#), [Cuba](#), [Indigenous](#), [Latin America & The Caribbean](#) - By **Stephanie Hedgecoke**, September 18, 2019

Before 1492, what is today the United States had about 1 billion acres of forests. From 1600 on, at least 286 million acres were destroyed. In a 1763 letter, Benjamin Franklin wrote, “Cleared land absorbs more heat and melts snow quicker.”

Because of colonialism and the growth of capitalist extractive corporations, forests that formerly drew carbon back down were decimated. This deforestation is a part of the crisis of global warming — in addition to the massive increase of carbon in the atmosphere. The world needs reforestation.

## **Cuba is doing it!**

Cuban reforestation began in the Sierra del Rosario region in 1968; with support from the revolutionary government, local villagers decided on a plan.

The area had been denuded during Spanish colonization, over 400 years from 1492 to 1898. The invaders cut down the original forest to raise livestock and set up plantations. The indigenous trees — cedar, ebony, mahogany, majagua and others — no longer grew there. By the mid-1800s, the soil was degraded; deforestation continued into the early 1900s for cattle grazing and hog raising. Impoverished rural people worked for ranchers or burned trees to make charcoal. By the time of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, nothing was left except isolated palm trees.

Socialist Cuba saw the need to implement social and economic projects in rural areas. The Sierra del Rosario Plan was one of those projects. The reforestation plan, launched along with establishment of community services, would improve soil quality and provide important work for people in the area.

Founded in 1971, Las Terrazas was named for the terrace planting system, and included an initial 5,000 hectares (12,355 acres) in the eastern part of the mountain range. Scientists assisted in determining which Indigenous trees to plant, and the villagers initially planted 3,000 mahogany, hibiscus and teak trees. Within eight years, people in the valley had planted 6 million trees.

The Cuban government stated that fruit trees should be planted among the other species to feed the people. Some 80 percent of the food eaten in Las Terrazas is locally grown. All of it is organic, including bananas, pumpkins, grapefruit, avocados, oranges, mandarins, mamey — and all is grown between the forest trees.

Las Terrazas was built to provide electricity and piped water, with day care centers, schools, family doctors, dentists, a clinic lab and a pharmacy. The project improved conditions for local families, who were joined by scientific personnel, public service providers and artists.

People raise livestock for meat, and a lake was constructed to farm fish, including trout,

tilapia and other species. The village later added an ecomuseum, a cinema and a discotheque.

## **Indigenous ecosystems restored**

Indigenous mammals, plants, birds and insects, many of which had become endangered under centuries of environmental exploitation during colonialism, began to return — and Indigenous ecosystems began to be restored. Today Cuba has 131 species of birds, 26 of which are indigenous to Cuba; the rest pass through on migratory routes to their nesting areas. There are 33 reptilian species, including 17 snakes and 11 lizards. Some of the world’s smallest mammal species live in Cuba — the endangered Cuban solenodon, the jutía conga and jutía carabalí — have returned to the forest.

In 1985, UNESCO recognized the reforestation project as the Biosphere Reserve, and added 25,000 hectares (61,776 acres) of Sierra del Rosario to the original 5,000. Since then, UNESCO has recognized five more biospheres in Cuba.

During the Special Period, after the loss of trade with the USSR and Cuba’s other former socialist trading partners, combined with the U.S. tightening its blockade, the revolutionary government supported ecological and cultural tourism and doubled the focus on sustainability. Tourism profits in Las Terrazas were used to build a library. Also in the Special Period, growing organic became mandatory.

The Buenavista Coffee Plantation was restored from the ruins of one of the colonial coffee plantations. Locals planted coffee trees and began to harvest shade-grown Arabica Las Terrazas coffee. Honey is also locally produced.

Las Terrazas was the first model for reforestation in Cuba; it has inspired another 11 reforestation projects. The other 11 communities meet periodically at Las Terrazas to exchange indigenous seeds to promote biodiversity and trade food produce. UNESCO has recognized Cuba’s reforestation programs for their principles of incorporating scientific knowledge and traditional practices to strengthen community involvement in strategic planning. To date more than 7 million indigenous trees have been planted, and a great amount of biodiversity has been recovered.

## **U.S. Solidarity delegation visits Las Terrazas**

The 50th Venceremos Brigade visited Las Terrazas July 28. We met Ida, our local guide, at the village, and then she took us to the Rio San Juan. The biosphere is a popular vacation site for workers in Havana. The river San Juan is fed by sulfur springs and is regarded as a mineral treatment. We joined many Cubans swimming in the river and enjoying the forests on their national holidays.

The three green gardens of Las Terrazas support the schools and community as the primary food source. Villagers grow fruits, flowers and plants with medicinal uses in herbal infusions and vitamin supplements.

Kindergarten children have their own garden where they learn to grow food, which they eat at lunch and snack times. The children even learn to make herbal infusions with various flowers, such as chamomile, and guava. The Ecological Research Center belongs to Cuba’s Academy of Science. Specialists search for species of flora and fauna in the forest; twice a week they also work with local students to teach them to recognize the plants as part of the scientific work. Even small children know how to recognize six or seven of the local Indigenous plants.

Ida told the Brigadistas, “When I tell you it was mandatory to grow everything we needed, it was not because someone came and told us to do it. We need to do it.” And, she added, “We grow organic all the time.” Las Terrazas uses some solar power and plans to acquire more when possible. The biosphere has regulations for conservation; the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution makes all decisions regarding sustainability, such as how much housing is sustainable for the project.

Our guide spoke of the impact of global warming on growing seasons and local flora. Some varieties of plants have now disappeared from the forest due to the heat; others, such as mangoes, are in season earlier and longer. This July was the warmest ever recorded in the world. Ida told us the past average year-round temperature in Cuba was 24° to 25° Celsius (75° to 77°F); this year they had a new high of 39.8°C (103.6°F).

Ida said when she was a child, the rains were so intense that children were forced to stay home from school sometimes for a week or two. Now there are seasonal rains that might last only three days. She stressed that from the beginning, the reforestation plan was focused on the environment.

In the last couple of years, the villagers began to organize work to clean plastic and trash out of the river where tourists and Cubans have littered. Children are invited to join the cleanup; in this way, their environmental consciousness is developed from a young age. The community is currently discussing the need to limit the number of tourists in order to protect the environment.

Stopping global warming requires a rapid transition away from the use of fossil fuels. It also requires reforestation. Socialist Cuba — revolutionary Cuba — is a model for fighting global warming.

*Hedgecoke was a member of the 50th Venceremos Brigade to Cuba.*

<https://iacenter.org/2019/09/19/reforestation-cuba-leads-the-way/>

# Climate crisis cries out for social change

Posted in [Asia](#), [China](#), [Climate & Environment](#), [World](#)

By Joshua Hanks - September 10, 2019

The climate crisis has surged to the forefront of many discussions recently, from mainstream news networks to everyday conversations between individuals concerned about the alarming state of the climate and environment.

Massive wildfires are raging in Africa and the Amazon. The latter were likely started by wealthy landowners, backed by Brazil's far-right, fascistic Bolsonaro administration, to clear more land for ranching and development. Iceland's Okjökull glacier has disappeared. Municipal water sources are running dry in Chennai, the capital of India's Tamil Nadu state. Hurricane Dorian has just ravaged the Bahamas. These are just a few recent examples of a growing and compounding climate crisis.

Despite the severity of the crisis, developed capitalist nations — which are overwhelmingly responsible for creating the climate crisis — are either not moving fast enough to decarbonize or, in the case of the U.S., are actually moving backward.



© 视觉中国

China begins creating "forest cities" that "eat pollution"

## U.S. and Germany spew out emissions

Under the Trump administration, the U.S. has abandoned its climate commitments made as part of the 2015 Paris Accords. In 2018, carbon emissions surged 3.4 percent, the largest increase in eight years, after having fallen slightly since 2005.

Germany, often touted as the gold standard for "green" capitalist countries, has seen its carbon emissions stall at 2009 levels, barely budging in the past decade. It remains Europe's largest producer and user of coal, which still accounts for over a third of German electricity production, despite it having built more than 30,000 wind turbines over the past two decades. Just 10 nuclear reactors could produce the same amount of carbon-free energy as all the wind turbines in Germany, yet the country decided to shutter its existing reactors as fast as possible after the Fukushima multiple-reactor meltdown, while keeping its heavily polluting coal power plants and mines open.

New coal mines have even been opened in this allegedly "green" country, and emissions from the transport sector have shot up 20 percent since 1995, despite over 20 years of pushing the so-called Energiewende, or energy transition ([tinyurl.com/ya23wv6d](https://tinyurl.com/ya23wv6d)). German leaders have resigned themselves to the fact that they will not meet their carbon reduction goals in the timeframe originally set out. The path forward for capitalist countries like Germany is murkier than ever.

Yet not all countries are stuck in neutral or reverse when it comes to addressing the climate crisis. Socialist countries with economies that

incorporate significant degrees of public ownership and economic planning, like Cuba and China, have proven capable of making rapid, drastic changes, the kinds of changes necessary to keep the environment from facing total catastrophe.

## Cuba, China restore forests

According to a report by the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture printed in the newspaper Granma, the nation has nearly tripled its forested area in the socialist period that began in 1959, from 13 percent to over 30 percent today. ([tinyurl.com/y6qgbmkw](https://tinyurl.com/y6qgbmkw))

The World Economic Forum reported last year that China deployed 60,000 troops to plant millions of new trees, targeting heavily industrialized Hebei province, which has been the source of much of nearby Beijing's air pollution woes. The government plans to increase the forested area of Hebei province to 35 percent by the end of 2020. It also seeks to increase forest cover to 26 percent nationwide by 2035. From 1990 to 2015, it added half a million square kilometers of forest area, with a goal of adding 4.5 million square kilometers by 2030. This amounts to new forested areas the size of Ireland — part of a "Great Green Wall" to hold back desertification and clean up the country's air. ([tinyurl.com/y4rdavoo](https://tinyurl.com/y4rdavoo))

The early results are not going unnoticed. Since the mid-1990s, NASA satellites have observed an overall increase in global foliage, with China being largely responsible. "China's outsized contribution to the global greening trend comes in large part (42%) from programs to conserve and expand forests. These were developed in an effort to reduce the effects of soil erosion, air pollution and climate change." ([nasa.gov](https://nasa.gov), Feb 11)

Meanwhile Canada, which like Germany is often held up by the corporate media as an example of a "green" capitalist country, contributes more to the deforestation of primary, untouched woodland than any other country. A 2014 study by the University of Maryland, Greenpeace, the World Resources Institute and other groups found Canada responsible for 21.4 percent of the world's total forest degradation. "There is no political will at federal or provincial levels for conserving primary forests," Peter Lee of Forest Watch Canada told [Canada.com](https://Canada.com). "Most logging done in Canada is still to this day done in virgin forests." ([tinyurl.com/y375ovp6](https://tinyurl.com/y375ovp6))

## China's 'war on pollution'

Political will (or lack thereof) forms the underlying cause of both the capitalist West's inability to address the climate crisis and socialist nations' ability to act in a big way on environmental issues. After announcing a "war on pollution"



in 2014, major Chinese cities have achieved an average 32 percent reduction in air pollution. While the Western media pumped out sensationalized story after story on Beijing's infamously smoggy skies, they're almost silent now that blue skies are the norm in the Chinese capital. Yet the remarkable, rapid cleanup of Beijing's air (and the air in virtually every other Chinese city) should be headline news in all the world's papers, because it presents a real environmental success story that other countries can learn from, especially developing countries.



In a scholarly article titled “China: Reform and Revolution in the People’s Republic,” Ajit Singh of the University of Manitoba quotes Michael Greenstone, director of the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago: “We don’t have a historical example of a country achieving such rapid reductions in air pollution. It’s remarkable. What these last four years have demonstrated quite loudly is that things can change and they can change rapidly — it just requires political will.” Singh adds, “China is quickly becoming the world leader in environmental protection. In 2017, China led the world in renewable energy investment — accounting for 45 percent of the global total — and produced over half of new global solar capacity.” (United Nations Environment Programme, 2018)

Another more controversial part of China’s overall strategy to combat global warming is its growing use of nuclear energy. This sets it apart from Germany and many other Western capitalist countries, which have chosen to move away from nuclear power. Yet the evidence is clear: China has made rapid progress on the environment while capitalist states have not, and nuclear energy plays a key role in this.

Nuclear reactors produce massive amounts of carbon-free energy, and can be built much faster and with far fewer resources than relying solely on wind and solar, which require huge amounts of land, steel, concrete, silicon and rare earth metals. The waste products from installing wind and solar contain toxic heavy metals that are often dumped in poor countries like Bangladesh. (tinyurl.com/yxsf5dsq)

Chinese cities like Shenzhen are moving to all-electric transportation systems. For example, all the buses in Shenzhen, some 16,000, are now totally electric, along with its 21,000 taxis, making the city quieter and cleaner. (tinyurl.com/ybyjgd4y) But electric vehicles are only as clean as the energy they’re charged with; charging an electric vehicle with electricity produced by coal actually produces more pollution than a conventional vehicle with a gas- or diesel-powered combustion engine.

### Electric vehicles and nuclear power

Surrounding Shenzhen, however, are four nuclear power plants, which supply the massive amounts of electricity necessary to charge the city’s electric buses and taxis and provide a modern standard of living for its people, all without producing any carbon emissions or particulate air pollution.

With 800 million Chinese people lifted out of poverty in the past several decades, the country’s energy needs are increasing, requiring rapid and massive increases in electricity production to keep up with demand, which nuclear power plays an increasing role in meeting.

After the 2011 Fukushima incident in Japan, China paused all nuclear construction and conducted a thorough safety review. Earlier this month, China’s State Council Information Office issued a white paper on nuclear safety, highlighting the measures the country has undertaken to guarantee a safe supply of carbon-free nuclear power and reflecting on the areas that still need addressing.

“China chooses to continue the development of nuclear power in order to better protect the environment,” reported China Global Television Network on Sept. 3. “In the wake of the Fukushima nuclear accident, the Chinese government organized a nine-month safety inspection of the country’s operating nuclear power plants, those under construction, research reactors, and other key nuclear facilities. China has also been ensuring nuclear safety through round-the-clock radiation environment monitoring. The country has established a three-tier radiation environment-monitoring system at state, provincial and municipal levels. Safety levels at China’s nuclear power

plants are now the highest in the world, Xue Xiaogang, president of the China Institute of Atomic Energy, told CGTN in an exclusive interview.” (tinyurl.com/yyrrcnfsf)

### New reactors improve safety

Engineered and built domestically by China’s publicly owned industries, the new reactor types move away from the reactors designed by for-profit private Western companies, like the GE-built reactors at Fukushima. Last year the Shidao Bay nuclear power plant in Shandong province, a joint venture by China Huaneng Group, China Nuclear Engineering & Construction Group (both publicly owned industries) and Tsinghua University, completed the world’s first fourth-generation reactor, a high-temperature, gas-cooled reactor (HTGR) that cannot suffer a meltdown and does not create a radioactive coolant. (tinyurl.com/bnkqks7) This is because it uses helium as the coolant, which does not become radioactive, unlike the water coolant used in other reactor types.

The plant will ultimately feature 10 reactors of this type and the technology is expected to be exported. As part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, up to 30 reactors will be built around the world, opening up huge amounts of carbon-free nuclear energy to many developing countries that face acute electricity shortages and rely on heavily polluting coal for their electricity needs.

On Hainan island, China is planning a small modular reactor (SMR), which can be inexpensively mass-produced in factories to exacting standards and can provide reliable, carbon-free electricity to remote areas or localities with limited resources. China is also exploring the development of molten-salt reactors (MSR) and reactors that use thorium instead of uranium as fuel, which could offer many benefits in terms of safety and fuel efficiency. MSRs cannot melt down, plus thorium is less radioactive than uranium, with a much shorter half-life, and is about three times more abundant. (tinyurl.com/y5c2kvcj)

China’s medium-term strategy is to create a “closed loop” fuel cycle, building reprocessing facilities with French expertise that recycle spent nuclear fuel into new fuel, both effectively dealing with the waste issue and largely eliminating the need for new uranium inputs from mining.

Nuclear power isn’t a silver bullet and the country’s nuclear regulators freely admit that there are issues which remain to be addressed and improvements to be made. Nuclear power forms just a part of the energy mix which China plans to use to overcome the climate crisis.

The climate crisis presents a key test by which we can compare the effectiveness of capitalism versus socialism. The results are there for anyone to look at. Given that countries like China and Cuba are far less developed in general than countries like Germany, which have enriched themselves by centuries of imperialism and colonialism, the progress they have made is truly remarkable. Poorer capitalist countries in the global south, like Brazil and India, have not made the same progress and today deal with rampant air pollution and massive deforestation.



The facts are clear: The only path out of the climate crisis lies with socialism.

(Credit: China Daily)

<https://iacenter.org/2019/09/11/climate-crisis-cries-out-for-social-change/>



# Brexit

## *Section of a speech by Giorgos Marinos of the Greek Communist Party in London – 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2019*

Dear comrades and friends,

Britain is a strong imperialist power; the wealth produced by its workers and recorded in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is more than 2.2 trillion Euros.

Britain joined the EEC in January 1973 and was its 7th member. This occurred in the context of intense confrontations especially with France that used its veto in 1961 and 1967 against British entry, in the period of De Gaulle's presidency, who called Britain "the Trojan Horse of the USA inside Europe".

**Historically, powerful sections of the British bourgeoisie have expressed their opposition to basic axes of 'European unification'.**

**While it has ratified the Maastricht Treaty and the other treaties, it does not participate in the Eurozone, it has not signed the Schengen Agreement and has (for want of a better word) a special status with exemptions, like its non-participation in the European system of bank supervision and consolidation, rejecting in this way the monitoring of its banking and financial system i.e. the City of London, which is also the headquarters of major shipping companies belonging to Greek ship-owners.**

The special agreement between the EU and Britain signed in February 2016 does not only concern the restriction of social benefits for immigrants and their children, but provides Britain with the ability to monitor its own financial institutions, putting a brake on the unification process.

The referendum of the 23rd of June that the Conservative government decided to call is a step beyond the usual referenda that took place in previous years regarding the approval of a treaty, like those held in France and Denmark in the 1990s, or the approval of the EU constitution, as carried out in France and Ireland in 2005.

In order to examine the conditions in which powerful sections of British capital support the BREXIT, we must note that the impact of the law of uneven development led to a change in the correlation of forces inside the EU and this was intensely expressed during the crisis which clearly demonstrated that Germany was in a stronger competitive position than Britain, France and Italy.

At the same time, we witnessed changes at an international level in the positions of strong capitalist states at the expense of the USA and in China's favour, which is playing a special role in the capitalist BRICS alliance together with Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa.

New sizeable markets are being formed; China's transactions with Britain are worth more than 70 billion pounds.

Sections of the British bourgeoisie are worried about the direction and conditions of the large liberalized market being created by the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership at the initiative of the USA and EU.

The recent intervention of Obama in favour of Britain remaining in the EU underscores the USA's desire to have a loyal ally inside this predatory alliance and to jointly handle the developments regarding the TTIP. This demonstrates that in this phase the USA is taking the developments inside the EU very seriously and does not want disturbances that could negatively impact on the fragile international economic situation and the US economy itself.

**In these conditions:**

**One section of the British bourgeoisie that supports the REMAIN vote assesses that it has the strength and robustness to meet the requirements of the competition inside the EU and identifies its interests with remaining in the EU, utilizing its historic exemptions and choosing to struggle in alliance with the USA for a better position in its competition with Germany.**

**The other section of the bourgeoisie that supports the LEAVE vote assesses that is at a disadvantage due to the strong presence of Germany and is impeded by the EU's legal framework of restrictions and controls. It aims to form new conditions to maintain the markets it has already acquired and to win positions in new markets in the BRICS countries and elsewhere. It even looks to the formation of a centre in the framework of the British Commonwealth, which includes India, Australia, South Africa and other states that are former British colonies.**

**In any case, whether with a vote for REMAIN or LEAVE, the British bourgeoisie will continue to negotiate with the EU to serve its own interests.**

An expected and characteristic feature of the developments is the provision of millions of pounds worth of donations to the LEAVE and REMAIN campaigns by many businesses.

**Amongst the powerful economic groups that support the campaign to remain in the EU are:**

The Confederation of British Industries (CBI) and the majority of the members of the Institute of Directors.

Large property companies, like the media giant Bloomberg, banks like Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Citibank and other businesses.

**At a political level REMAIN is supported by:**

The Conservative Party and other bourgeois parties rallied in the official cross-party campaign "**Britain Stronger in Europe**".

The **Labour Party** and its leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has been promoted as a people-friendly reformist, but has turned out to be a supporter of the EU and attempts to conceal the anti-people character of this predatory alliance. He claims that it brings jobs, protection for the workers, consumers and environment, advertising the benefits of investments and capitalist growth, regurgitating all the utopian positions of social-democracy that in reality is a pillar of support for the system of exploitation.

The **Trades Union Congress of Britain (TUC)** is in favour of remaining and is trying to turn reality on its head by presenting the EU as the champion of workers' rights, demonstrating in a tangible way how dangerous reformist views and employer and government-led trade unionism are for the workers in every country. We can also see Mr. Varoufakis involving himself in the REMAIN campaign, a ridiculous sight if we remember his role in Greece. Of course, we will not comment further on this but restrict ourselves to noting that it is not new for the system to use such figures to deceive the people in a contemptible way.

**BREXIT is supported by:** the organization "Business for Britain" comprised of businessmen and leading executives.

Large private insurance, financial, software companies etc also participate in the LEAVE campaign.

The **former Mayor of London**, Boris Johnson participates in a block of MPs and ministers from the Conservative party in favour of LEAVE. Certain MPs from the Labour party also support a LEAVE vote.

The "**Left Leave-Lexit campaign**" has also been formed to campaign for a LEAVE vote, with the participation of the CP of Britain, other parties and trade unions from the transport, food, bakery sectors etc.

**The CPB correctly characterizes the EU as a union of the monopolies and focuses on its anti-people character, arguing as a central conclusion of its analysis that the EU cannot be reformed.**

**We warmly salute the communist men and women in Britain and Ireland and we assess that a large section of the working class, popular strata and youth support a vote to leave the EU.**

**The communist movement must utilize the contradictions in the imperialist camp, reinforcing its independent ideological and political struggle that will draw strength from and be nourished by the struggle to overthrow monopoly power.**

This is of particular importance because if we think about what the next day will be like in Britain, we can note that whatever block of bourgeois forces prevails, power will remain in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the working class and popular strata will remain victims of the anti-people political line and capitalist exploitation. Britain will fulfill its obligations to NATO and participate in the imperialist war plans.

Unemployment and under-employment will continue in capitalist Britain, **zero-hour contracts** that already torment 800,000 workers will increase, the cuts in salaries and social services will continue to cover the primary surplus of 3.5 billion pounds until 2020.

**Compulsory unpaid leave, the threats of dismissals, the actual layoffs** will continue as they do in the Ford car company and the energy giant Npower.

Thousands of workers will pay a high price for the system's contradictions, monopoly competition, the crisis in important sectors as is being demonstrated by the example of the steel industry and the developments in the Indian company Tata Steel that is facing fierce competition from Chinese monopolies.

And all this in conditions when Britain is in a phase of economic growth, with an increase in wealth and the sharpening of the contradiction between capital and labour that is preparing the ground for the next capitalist crisis.

**Many states are not members of the EU, many bourgeois governments of various shades have tried out different forms of management, but their common denominator in every continent is the accumulation of wealth on the one side and poverty on the other, the maintenance of the exploitation of man by man.**

**When we have such rich experience, including the experience provided by the referendum in Britain and the division of the monopoly groups into the REMAIN and LEAVE camps, in the service of their own interests, we can more decisively confront the illusion that withdrawal from the EU and the Euro on its own can be a step or stepping stone to radical changes and ruptures without posing the conditions that connect the necessary condemnation of the EU and disengagement from it with the struggle for capitalism's overthrow, for socialism.**

**Because this is the absolutely necessary precondition for the socialization and the taking into people's ownership of the means of productions, the instruments of economic development, mineral wealth, energy,**

telecommunications, transport, land, retail. It is the necessary precondition for the development of scientific central planning and for the satisfaction of the contemporary needs of the people, abolishing the base that gives rise to capitalist profit and exploitation.

We should think about the value building socialism in a powerful capitalist country like Britain, where

the material preconditions for the construction of the new society are overly ripe and show the way forwards. We should think about the major impact such an enormous development would have and what serious responsibilities the working classes in countries that are at the summit of the imperialist pyramid have to fight against their co-option by the system and to stand tall and defiant.

## U.S., Britain: Hands off Iran

Posted in [Iran](#), [North Africa & West Asia](#), [Top](#) - July 25, 2019

Britain's aggressive maneuvers against Iran have put the possibility of a major war in West Asia on the front burner for the second time this year.

In a conflict between the world's imperialist powers and an independent capitalist country — in this case between U.S. and British imperialism on one side and Iran on the other — workers' and liberation movements must be against the imperialists. We can then examine the facts. However, facts do nothing to change that basic position.

The current confrontation between imperialism and Iran is a continuation of the conflict Washington began in 2018 by pulling out of the 2015 agreement on nuclear research in Iran. The U.S. government has insisted that all countries, and especially its European imperialist allies, enforce the sanctions it imposed on Iranian shipping, whether they want to or not. In effect, these sanctions amount to a blockade aimed at starving the 80 million Iranian people and provoking regime change in Iran.

On July 4, the British Navy, from its base in Gibraltar, seized and is currently holding an Iranian supertanker, under the pretext that the ship was carrying fuel to be delivered to Syria and that European Union's rules don't allow such deliveries. The EU's sanctions were aimed at crushing the Damascus government, a policy that failed although it did impose a war and horrible suffering on the Syrians.

Units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard seized a British-flagged tanker in the Gulf of Hormuz on July 19, and is still holding that ship as of July 22. A July 21 Associated Press article reports that Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif "characterized the seizure of Iran's tanker July 4 as 'piracy.'" The article added that Iranian "politician and former Guard commander, Maj. Gen. Mohsen Rezaei, wrote that Iran was not seeking conflict, 'but we are not going to come up short in reciprocating.'"

Readers should note that Britain seized the Gibraltar base from Spain in the 18th century, when it was on its way to becoming the British Empire and the ruler of the seas. Its sailors were the pre-eminent pirates for a couple of centuries, with the full backing of the London government. Now British piracy takes place in London's role as a junior partner to Washington, making full use of the remnants of that empire.

Underlining its own role in the aggression against Iran, Washington just sent 500 U.S. troops to a base in Saudi Arabia, the reactionary feudal kingdom that, along with Israel, is a U.S. ally against Iran. Saudi Arabia has been carrying out a brutal war against its neighbor in Yemen, creating untold human suffering but failing to win against a popular movement, despite its possession of far superior Western weapons.

The Iranian military is much better armed than the Yemeni guerrillas. And Tehran knows it has the support of the vast majority of its people against imperialist aggression. Iran has offered to negotiate with the U.S. However, it's apparent that Iran will refuse to submit to threats. Iran can respond throughout the region to any aerial attack, and the whole Iranian population will combat any attack by land.

Knowledge of Iranian strengths, and not U.S. President Donald Trump's reluctance to kill civilians, is what stopped the earlier missile attack that Trump said he ordered June 21 and then rescinded with minutes to spare.

If reason could eliminate the danger of imperialist war, it would seem impossible that the U.S. and its allies would dare to start another conflagration that would make the disastrous invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq seem small in comparison. A look at history, however, shows that reason takes second place to the imperialists' drive to impose their rule by force. Thus it is vital that resistance to any war with Iran come from the U.S. population, and that this resistance be mobilized.

U.S., Britain, hands off Iran!

<https://iacenter.org/2019/07/26/u-s-britain-hands-off-iran/>



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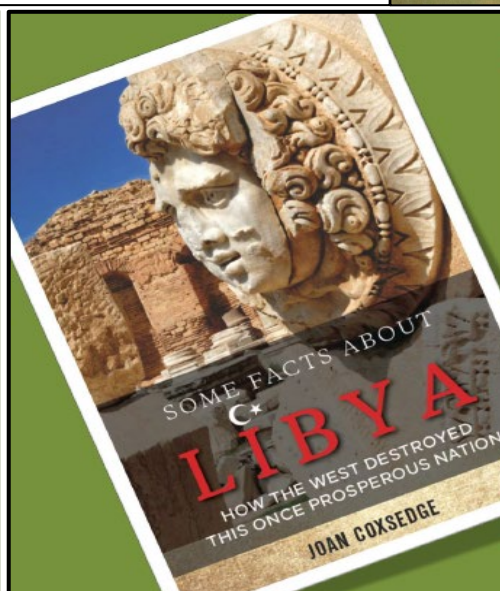
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