



## **Against the settler-colonial state - here and now, everywhere and everywhen.**

January 26 2025

*Brothers and sisters, we have much business to transact so let's get right down to it. We aim at the spiritual, political, industrial, and social. We want to work out our own destiny.*  
(Worimi man Fred Maynard's Inaugural address to the Australian Aborigines' Progressive Association, Sydney, April 1925)



Fred Maynard and his sister, Emma, The Rocks, Sydney 1927

<https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/3986702>

A century of enduring colonial violence has elapsed since thousands of Indigenous Australians rose up in revolt against their then 140-year subjection to British genocide and the brutal theft of their lands and children. In September 1925, seven hundred angry yet hopeful Indigenous men and women walked, drove and rode horses, bicycles and trains to the Kempsey Showground on the mid-north coast of New South Wales to hear Fred Maynard and his Indigenous comrades, Tom Lacey, Sid Ridgeway, Dick Johnson and Ben Rountree, thunder against the depredations of the Australian settler-colonial state. The all-Indigenous speakers included battle-hardened unionists from the Sydney and Newcastle wharves, WWI veterans and card-carrying members of the United Negro Improvement Association, Marcus Garvey's international Black liberation movement. With growing international publicity and support from their discussions with Garvey (and world champion boxer, Jack Johnson), these Indigenous visionaries were both witnesses to, and vital participants in, a wave of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements sweeping across the world in the wake of the devastation of WWI. Their new organisation, the very Garveyite-named "Australian Aborigines' Progressive Association", convened mass meetings in regional and urban venues across south-east Australia, spreading a message of furious rejection of the institutions and agents of colonial state control. While demanding (in the first instance) equal political footing with the settler-colonists in their own land, Maynard and his countrymen also insisted on the immediate recognition of prior indigenous sovereignty over the entire Australian continent. Beyond that initial demand, those fire-brand Indigenous orators and organisers were calling for a root-and-branch transformation of the "spiritual, political, industrial, and social" imperial order. Maynard and his friends' demands held up the bankrupt social-moral universe of the European colony to invidious comparisons with this continent's millennia-deep Indigenous traditions which privilege the values of personal autonomy, egalitarianism and kin-based nurturance of all other life-forms on the planet. In this way, Indigenous Australians were showing not just their own people but also working-class settlers and the entire world, a vision of what a post-colonial, post-capitalist world might look like, welcoming the

*... strenuous efforts of the Trade Union leaders to attain the conditions which existed in our country at the time of invasion by Europeans—the men only worked when necessary—we called no man 'Master' and we had no king. (Maynard's 1927 letter to Premier Lang).*

Indigenous demands for the total renovation of society, economy and the human spirit itself, coincided with a call being made on the other side of the world by another group of enraged war veterans, social revolutionaries and poetic visionaries. While Maynard was uttering his 1925 Kempsey clarion call, the international Surrealist movement had found its feet morally and politically, aligning themselves with Abd-el-Krim and his Moroccan Rif countrymen and women's revolt against European colonisation.

*We profoundly hope that revolutions, wars, colonial insurrections, will annihilate this Western civilization whose vermin you defend even in the Orient. Even more than patriotism—which is a quite commonplace sort of hysteria, though emptier and shorter-lived than most—we are disgusted by the idea of belonging to a country at all, which is the most bestial and least philosophic of the concepts to which we are subjected... Wherever Western civilization is dominant, all human contact has disappeared, except contact from which money can be made... The stereotyped gestures, acts and lies of Europe have gone through their whole disgusting cycle. ('Revolution Now and Forever', 1925)*

In 1931, the Surrealists, proclaiming unequivocal support for global revolution and anti-colonial insurrection, instigated a boycott of the French colonial exhibition in protest against their war crimes in Morocco. A year later, the Paris-based surrealist collective, including comrades from Martinique, declared:

*In a France hideously inflated from having dismembered Europe, made mincemeat of Africa, polluted Oceania and ravaged whole tracts of Asia, we Surrealists pronounced ourselves in favour of changing the imperialist war, in its chronic and colonial form, into a civil war. Thus, we placed our energies at the service of the revolution... ('Murderous Humanitarianism' 1932)*

Of course, it is always in the colonised world that authoritarian state horrors are perpetrated initially, most viciously and most completely but this is only a glimpse of what's to come for those living in the "First World". We recall here that the mid-twentieth century anti-colonial struggles were violently counter-attacked by the European ruling-class deploying military leaders (such as Petain and Franco) based in colonial garrisons from where they quickly seized power back in the metropole, installing enduring fascist regimes at home as well as in their colonies. Aimé Césaire pointed out that the European bourgeoisie had happily tolerated,

*Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack. (Discourse on Colonialism 1950)*

The billionaire class's current phase of imperialist plunder has lurched from a faux "free market" neo-liberal ideology to a naked neo-fascism displaying all of the classical symptoms of morbid ethno-states: xenophobia, intensified patriarchal domination, sexual repression, authoritarianism, militarism and paranoia of "the enemy within", especially of Indigenous-led and working-class organisations. If some of us once allowed ourselves to hope that a shred of shared humanity might hold us back from the precipice of global disaster, that belief has been shattered by the rapid rise to power of fascist regimes aided and abetted by their "liberal-democratic" allies and apologists.

*For centuries the soldiers, priests and civil agents of imperialism, in a welter of looting, outrage and wholesale murder, have with impunity grown fat off the coloured races. Now it is the turn of the demagogues, with their counterfeit liberalism. ('Murderous Humanitarianism' 1932)*

We stare with horror into our screens as the Zionist terror-state and their American partners-in-crime exterminate the Indigenous people of Palestine in front of our eyes in order to guarantee control of the planet-destroying fossil-fuel reserves of Western Asia and to secure new real-estate investments. That massive theft of resources has been achieved by creating the Israeli ethno-state as an American settler-colony – nothing more nor less than a plantation cum military garrison bristling with lethal firepower. The same fate is currently being designed for Greenland, US imperialism's next-in-line fossil-fuel garrison colony. From the moment of the Zionist state's deformed birth in 1948, Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt and hundreds of other Jewish intellectuals declared that Begin and his Herut party (which became Likud with Netanyahu as ideological heir), were "fascists", "racists", "criminals" and "terrorists". "Labor Zionists", like "social-democratic" political parties everywhere, have gladly inherited the fruits of the start-up plantation, thankful that the filthy work of land theft, mass murder and burying the dead has been mostly done for them.

Clinicians recently reported that all of the (remaining) children in Palestine live in a "permanent state of impending doom", while idiotically claiming that 92% of these same children are "not accepting of reality". Belying that

patently absurd diagnosis of a “retreat from reality” is the fact that half of those children expressed an actual “wish to die” *in order to escape from their overwhelming fear of death*. We recoil in disgust as we watch the Arab petro-regime oligarchs signing up to mutual-protection-rackets with such genocidal monsters. We dry-wretch as we listen to the “liberal world’s” political leaders – sleeping dogs lie through jagged teeth - frantically embracing Zionism’s apocalyptic exterminatory vision as their own.

*With his psalms, his speeches, his guarantees of liberty, equality and fraternity, he seeks to drown the noise of his machine guns. (‘Murderous Humanitarianism’ 1932)*

We look to our north where heavily armed French troops are despatched to quash the Kanak people’s rebellion against settler-colonial overlords seeking to retain their control over this major geo-political and mineral-rich resource. Like its neighbouring Australian garrison, New Caledonia was established as a penal colony and as a source of slave labour for settlers there and here in Australia. As a result, both continue to fetishise colonial discipline and punishment as integral to their national psychopathologies.

We look to our east where the Māori people of Aotearoa are rising en masse against the settler-colonial state’s attempts to deprive them of even more land, resources, cultural valuables and economic security. All this while across the Pacific’s deep blue basin, whole archipelagos and their living societies are sinking beneath the waves of global heating.

Across the Australian continent we see Indigenous youth openly and covertly challenging the militarised police of the carceral state who have occupied their townships - assaulting, murdering, imprisoning and impoverishing their residents at astounding rates.

As the year 2025 turned in its shallow grave, Matthew Livelsberger, a 37-year-old US marine detonated himself inside a Tesla mini-tank in front of Trump Hotel, saying he needed to “cleanse my mind” of the “the burden of the lives I took” while on imperial duty in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Congo. The textbook psychiatric diagnosis and treatment for such overt expressions of fear and loathing of imperial war crimes is to “Call the police!” Pentagon officials “declined to say whether the US Army Green Beret may have been suffering from mental health issues but say they have turned over his medical records to police”. Hallelujah! His psychiatric notes are in safe hands because clearly the man, not the mission, was criminally insane.

Livelsberger’s cry that he wanted to “send a wake-up call” was not for a moment suggesting that we stop dreaming, quite the opposite in fact - he was saying it’s “best stay woke” (in the words of the great Blues songster, Huddie

Ledbetter/Leadbelly) to the reality that we are all caught in a shared nightmare.

A year earlier, Aaron Bushnell, haunted by his role in the military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, self-immolated in front of the White House to protest US and IDF war crimes in Palestine, leaving us these last words:

*Many of us like to ask ourselves, "What would I do if I was alive during slavery? Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide?"*

*The answer is, "you're doing it. Right now."*

This war debris swirling around our hollowed-out bodies, minds and souls, rattles with the nihilistic *Clang!* of the Dadaists when faced with the industrialised killing of the capitalist war-machine. Jaques Vaché's letters from the front in 1916 described how his longing to be absolutely Elsewhere haunted his dreams.

*My present dream is to wear a short-sleeved red shirt, a red scarf and high boots—and to be a member of a purposeless Chinese secret society in Australia - I shan't deny that there may be some vampire in all this. (For reasons far from clear, the deserter-from-within who had written "I object to being killed in time of war," took his own life via an overdose of opium on the twelfth day of Christmas, 1919, a few weeks **after** the Armistice, Franklin Rosemont 1988)*

Vaché was writing from the bloody scene of the crime where Surrealism would be born from the hellscape of a global war, initiating a deeply personal exploration of the Unconscious of the "shell shocked", the living dead who had survived the war only to find their minds splayed open on a psychological dissection table with nary a sewing machine nor an umbrella in sight for repair of, or protection from, unending imperial horror. Surrealism's poetic-scientific experiments grew out of those desperate attempts to articulate the extreme fragmentation and precarity of the mind's grip on reason/the real/the rational in the midst of war's psychotic trauma. This led to new understandings of the human imagination's plasticity, its state of constant dreaming feeding a potential for renewal in the face of a terrible compulsion to repeat and replicate mental suffering over and over again under the cursed sign of Thanatos. Surrealism's growth over the last century expands upon that reparative and liberating origin - a negation of the negation that trauma specialist Gabor Mate' calls 'toxic culture - the entire context of social structures, belief systems, assumptions, and values that surround us and necessarily pervade every aspect of our lives'. Echoing the ways in which

Breton, Vaché, Tzara and friends experienced WWI and its aftermath, we inhabit a world of deep anomie where there is no longer even a pretence of shared human values between the ruling class and their subjects. As Antonio Gramsci wrote in his *Prison Notebooks*.

*The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.*

At this critical disjuncture-interregnum-interrectum in world history, we surrealists declare our unequivocal support for the revolutionary project of destroying capitalism, Whiteness and colonial power. As Black surrealist and historian, Robin D.G. Kelley, puts it,

*[t]he revolts of the colonial world and its struggles for cultural autonomy animated surrealists as much as reading Freud or Marx. And they discovered in the cultures of Africa, Oceania, and Native America a road into the Marvellous and confirmation of their most fundamental ideas. (Freedom Dreams 2002)*

Those marvellous anti-colonial, anti-capitalist weapons of the Indigenous imagination alongside those of Surrealism (poetic disruptions, sabotage, humour, dreaming, creative collaborations with colonised and exploited peoples everywhere, celebrations of mad love) have never been so sorely needed - right now, right here, in this dark pit where a murderous capitalism is literally burning the roof of the world down around our heads. Our guiding visions/ideals/principles are anarcho-communist in origin and destination:

- the destruction of capitalism and colonialism by any means necessary including through uprisings of the international proletariat, general strikes, seizing the means of production, permanent revolution/*intifada*, transcendence and rejection of bourgeois national states and all the hierarchical social formations which underpin them - especially and most directly patriarchal domination
- planting the seeds of a utopian future in the ruins of the present and finding earthly delight in tending the green shoots amongst the rubble
- restoration and celebration of genuine enjoyment, pleasure and love mobilised against commodity consumption, alienating work and loneliness
- the subversion by any means possible of bourgeois culture, the great 'disembraining machine', with the aim of liberating it from its capitalist mandated task of numbing and disconnecting us and replacing it with the lived poetry of love and mutual aid for all.

Sustaining Fred Maynard’s vibrant vision of a decolonised world through a century of horror, we celebrate the choice words of advice given to King Charles III during his recent visit to the colony currently known as Australia,

*You are not my king. You are not sovereign. You committed genocide against our people. Give us our land back. Give us what you stole from us, our bones, our skulls, our babies, our people. You destroyed our land. Give us a treaty. We want a treaty in this country. This is not your land. This is not your land. You are not my king. You are not our king. Fuck the colony.*

(Gunnai, Gunditjmara, and Djab Wurrung woman, Independent Senator Lydia Thorpe, October 2024. Thorpe and thousands of her fellow Indigenous Australians have loudly and consistently demonstrated their solidarity with the Palestinian people just as Fred Maynard and friends had done with the other colonised peoples of the earth).



**The Collective “What if... “**

Anthony Redmond, Tim White, Michael Vandelaar [2025whatif@gmail.com](mailto:2025whatif@gmail.com)