



It's Your ABC

Silencing the watchdog

Peter Mac

The former Howard Coalition government attempted to suppress the ABC by stacking its board and senior management with hand-picked government cronies – to try and silence the independent watchdog – but staff resistance defeated that move.

Later, after a heated episode of Q&A, former PM Tony Abbott attempted to bully the ABC into silence with verbal attacks. However, the then ABC director Mark Scott responded with an angry and very sharp public defence of the national broadcaster. Abbott was forced into retreat.

Since then the Turnbull government has persisted with major cuts to ABC funding, forcing the national broadcaster to sack staff and limit its activities in some areas. The government is also relying on current ABC director Michelle Guthrie, appointed 10 months ago, to fulfil its objectives.

Guthrie is a former executive of Google, but for most of her career worked for Rupert Murdoch's broadcasting companies. She has now appointed Jim Rudder, who once ran Channel 9 and was a consultant to Murdoch, with a view to "restructuring the national broadcaster and transforming work cultures".

Another recent appointee is Debra Frances, described as a "business transformation expert". An "adjunct fellow" of the extreme right Institute of Public Affairs also got an ABC broadcasting job. The IPA, a bitter critic of the ABC, has campaigned for its privatisation.

The ABC is also to have a new "chief content officer", to oversee the content of news, TV and radio broadcasts and if necessary override the decisions of the managers of those divisions, answering directly to the board.

In January the ABC's director of television and its chief operating officer resigned in protest over senior management decisions. Four senior members of the ABC's executive have now resigned since Guthrie took over, and she is said to be planning the effective demotion of the remaining ten members.

One of her first actions was to cut science, religion and music programming. Hundreds of musicians signed a letter of protest at Guthrie's decision to axe live music broadcasting on ABC National radio.

She also terminated *Catalyst*, the top-rating science show. Veteran science broadcaster Robyn Williams described the new ABC management team as "morally and spiritually bankrupt".

The *Four Corners* program about asylum seeker children detained on Nauru prompted international protests, but also led to savage



Current readers are unlikely to tune in to a digital version of commercial newspapers when they can tune in to ABC news, which is available free of charge and advertising on ABC iView.

criticism of the ABC by the federal government. Guthrie later declared the national broadcaster should be sympathetic to businesses, and should make programs about successful corporate leaders.

The new ABC management has now ceased transmitting short-wave news broadcasts on the pretext that shortwave is old technology. However, this will leave parts of rural areas, the Northern Territory, Papua New Guinea and some Pacific Islands without news broadcasts, because AM and FM broadcasts are not powerful enough to reach those areas. People in Pacific Islands have in the past relied on ABC short-wave broadcasts for warnings about Tsunamis and other big weather events.

Last week an ABC journalist was the first to reveal that US President Trump was only "considering" an arrangement to resettle in the US 1,250 asylum seekers currently detained offshore by the Turnbull government.

Turnbull dismissed the report as unsubstantiated, but we now know the "agreement" could fall apart on the whim of Trump, the super-brat of US imperialism.

The report demonstrated how Trump and Turnbull cynically manipulate the asylum seeker issue. Both appeal to religious or racial intolerance, and neither will risk losing a perceived political advantage or consider the interests of the asylum seekers themselves, some of whom have now been imprisoned for three years.

But the story also has implications for the ABC, which carries Australia's most detailed and reliable news and current events coverage.

The commercial TV networks ignored the ABC report on Trump's statement until it was verified by other sources. Their programs are superficial, and all too often focus on sensational or salacious reports rather than in-depth coverage. Unlike the ABC, their journalists rarely cover overseas news and current events first hand. One notorious exception was Channel Nine's appalling organisation of an attempted child kidnapping in Beirut last year.

Big business and conservative governments detest the ABC's courageous revelations about corruption and the corporate world's ruthless drive for power and influence.

The commercial press has a particular axe to grind. It has never had a rival in the form of a newspaper version of the ABC. As far as "hard copy" news was concerned, it has had the field to itself.

However, the demand for newspapers has now fallen sharply and sales no longer cover production costs, so the press barons rely on the sale of advertising space to make profits.

They now look to digital broadcasting of news and current events coverage to restore their once-mighty profit levels. However, their current readers are unlikely to tune in to a digital version of their newspapers if they have to pay for the service or put up with the ads when they can tune in to ABC news, which is readily

available free of charge or advertising at any time on ABC iView.

The commercial media would therefore like to see the national broadcaster withdraw from digital broadcasting altogether, or at least charge viewers for their broadcasts, at a price that favours commercial broadcasters.

Suppression

The government's attacks on the ABC continue unabated. Before Christmas federal coalition MP Matt Canavan described as "fake news" an ABC radio report that the Indian mining company Adani is under investigation by the Indian government for siphoning money offshore and inflating power prices.

This week the ABC is broadcasting its top current events program, *Four Corners*, its vital public discussion program *Q&A*, and *Media-watch*, its miniscule but fascinating scrutiny of the mass media. All these programs have been the subject of bitter attack by the government and big business.

It's crucial to watch closely the pressures that will be placed on ABC staff this year to force them to conform to the dictates of the media barons and their parliamentary representatives, the coalition governments.

And it's equally important to protest as loudly as possible at any such move, because the government is now intent on changing this vitally important national institution into a timid servant of the corporate world. ✪

3  One Day in Fremantle

5  Book review: Desert Australia

10  Culture & Life Science and nonsense

12  "Alt-news" and hate speech

Guardian

Issue 1764

February 8, 2017

The "Kill 'em all" doctrine

In 2002, Professor Martin Van Creveld, a Zionist military historian expressed in words the policy that the Israeli army put into practice during its destruction and dispossession of Palestinians. The Professor argued that the Israeli army would have to kill tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians in order "to restore the balance of deterrence between us and them".

Asked if he was in favour of bombarding Palestinian cities and causing thousands of deaths among civilians, Creveld answered: "Yes, as much as is needed in order that there will not be a need to repeat it, so that they won't tail us during the time of the withdrawal. We have to strike so hard that there won't be a need for a second strike. Perhaps 5,000 or 10,000 killed won't be enough and then we will have to kill more."

He said that the mass killing would have to be done so quickly and so strongly that before "the world understood what was happening the matter would be over".

"What is involved is a massive crime, but whoever isn't willing to commit crimes in order to save his country shouldn't engage in statesmanship, it is better that there be one massive crime after which we will exist and lock the gate behind us."

Here we have not just the preferred policy of the government of Benjamin Netanyahu but the policy and ideology of a dying capitalist system.

The leaders and governments of the leading capitalist countries have no answer to the world's problems, except to use force to impose their policy aims and the slaughter of tens of thousands of people who oppose their inhumane policies and refuse to submit.

Capitalism is incapable of finding a solution to poverty and unemployment. It has no policy by which different nations with a variety of social systems, ideologies, national groups and religions can live together in one world.

Refusing to accept the solution embodied in the resolutions of the United Nations, the Israelis opt for war and the mass murder of Palestinians and the imprisonment of thousands more. They bulldoze homes, they destroy the infrastructure required by any modern community – food, water and medical supplies, housing, schools, hospitals.

The situation is pitched as "between us and them" reflecting the racist attitude of the capitalist world. Having carried out the recommended mass killing, the Israelis would "lock the gate behind us". The Israeli army is now overseeing the mass uprooting and dispossession of those Palestinians who remain in occupied territories.

Contradictions abound

Donald Trump's recent provocation – suddenly issuing an order banning the admission into the United States of refugees and immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries – created chaos and fury that had to be expected.

Airports across the world were engulfed with demonstrators. Judges issued emergency orders staying enforcement of parts of the order.

Families found their children studying abroad unable to return home, or their loved ones attending a funeral stranded in an airport.

Translators who had risked their lives for US soldiers in Iraq suddenly found their green cards useless and their lives at great risk. Both intelligence professionals and State Department diplomats have protested against the order.

Trump clearly revels in this chaos. He proves that he will fulfil his campaign promises, despite opposition. He shows that he's getting things done. He postures strong on securing US citizens against foreign terrorists. He defines his opponents as bleeding heart liberals, more concerned about rights than security, more internationalist than nationalist.

He views this all as a "win".

Trump has also mocked his own argument that US allies should bear a fair share of the defence burden: he has made it clear the US will not do its part in offering refuge to the displaced, now more than 65 million, globalisation made flesh – many of them driven from their homes by wars that the US and its allies started or have continued.

PRESS FUND

You can tell that a conservative politician is planning something really nasty when they invent a new expression. This week the Turnbull government used "technology agnostic" to describe the mindset of someone willing to consider construction of new coal-fired power stations in Australia. He also repeated the now-discredited allegation that wind power generators were responsible for the recent catastrophic power failure in South Australia. You can bet that some conservative state government is about to propose construction of a new coal-fired power station rather than relying on renewable energy. We would oppose any such move, and if you agree with our point of view how about sending us a contribution for the next edition. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

B Blackburne \$180, G Dittura \$5, Mark Mannion \$10, "Rough Red" \$5, "Round Figure" \$10, E Seymour \$25

This week's total: \$235 Progressive total: \$935

Bring them here

The White House statement that the US resettlement deal with Australia is still "under consideration" has blown Malcolm Turnbull's re-assurances about the deal out of the water.

Turnbull's report of his phone call with Trump obviously fell short of the truth.

"Not only has Turnbull refused to condemn Trump's ban; he has got no guaranteed deal to show for his sycophancy," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

It is now clear that refugees on Manus and Nauru are potentially caught by Trump's extreme executive order banning Muslims and refugees.

The announcement from the White House created further confusion and anxiety.

There were already doubts about the deal following White House press secretary Sean Spicer's statement that the refugees would be subjected to "extreme vetting" procedures. This seems to put the lie to previous Australian government statements that refugees on Nauru were already subject to such vetting.

Even before the latest "correction", White House

press secretary Sean Spicer had created other doubts. His statement that the deal referred "mostly to PNG" when US officials are on Nauru, could give no confidence that the White House even knew what it was talking about.

"In any case, the number of 1,250 is not enough to ensure all refugees on Manus and Nauru will get a place in the US. There are already around 1,800 refugees on Manus and Nauru. Who is going to miss out? It is obvious that hundreds of people are going to be left behind by the deal, even if it goes through, and even if refugees survive the extreme vetting," said Rintoul.

"Trump's Muslim ban has brought outrage around the world. It is equally outrageous that Turnbull gone along with Trump, boasting that Trump is emulating Australia's policies.

"It is outrageous that Turnbull has been short of the truth about a US deal that gives no certainty to the people that the Australian government has dumped offshore. Turnbull should say no to Trump's ban. All the refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus should be brought to the mainland." ✪

Mine lock-out

The CFMEU Mining and Energy Division last week wrote to Queensland Premier Palaszczuk and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Anthony Lynham seeking government intervention as local Central Queensland coal workers are again locked out of jobs. BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance is seeking to fill vacancies at its Peak Downs and Saraji mines with labour hire fly-in-fly-out workers from Townsville.

Mitch Hughes, CFMEU Queensland District vice-president, said it is disgraceful that mining companies continue to make local Central Queensland workers redundant to replace their positions with insecure, labour hire FIFO workers with less wages, less entitlements and inferior conditions.

"Local workers deserve to be given priority for secure, steady jobs; jobs they can rely on to provide for their families and support their local communities. Regional coal mining communities in Central

Queensland continue to be hard hit by retrenchments, with German Creek the latest example with 80 workers made redundant only last month," said Hughes.

Despite the government's move to prevent 100 percent FIFO in coal mines, BHP's two newest mines in Moranbah, Daunia and Caval Ridge are already 100 percent FIFO, with local Central Queensland residents barred from permanent employment. Government must intervene to stop this.

The union says that while mining industry peak body Queensland Resources Council said there is a lack of skilled workers in the region – this couldn't be further from the truth. There are hundreds of retrenched coal miners in the nearby coal communities of Moranbah and Dysart and hundreds more throughout Central Queensland mining towns.

"Our union is more than happy to assist BHP with a list of local workers able and willing to take

on secure jobs at its mines," said Hughes.

"These positions should put locals first. If all positions then cannot be filled by locals, only then should they be offered to FIFO workers, at the same wages, benefits and entitlements as permanent positions.

"Big mining companies need to stop attacking workers' job security; if they want a social license to operate the first step is to provide the community with secure, local jobs.

"While filling mining jobs with outside labour hire and refusing locals work in their regions is allowed, our Central Queensland communities and local economies will continue to suffer.

"The state government has a responsibility to ensure Central Queensland communities benefit fairly from the region's resources, and make sure mining companies treat those communities fairly," said Hughes. ✪

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



Do you not see that little by little opinions and ideas are spreading in their (working class) midst which are not aimed simply at this or that law or ministry or government, but society itself, shaking it to the very foundations on which it rests ...



Alexis de Tocqueville addressing the Chamber of Deputies, France, January 1848



Sydney

**VIGIL DEMANDING
THAT THE USA
STOP THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA**

Friday February 17
at 5:30 pm Martin Place – Sydney

Also to stop the subversion of funds against Cuba and
return Guantánamo to the Cuban people

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

One Day in Fremantle

Richard Titelius

The marking of Australia Day has in 2017 has taken on a different aura than in recent years with demonstrations to acknowledge the injustices of official government programs of dispossession and assimilation that were imposed upon the original inhabitants and owners of this land: to recognise this invasion and the survival of the people, their culture and way of life.

As reported by Peter Mac (*Guardian* #1763) "protest demonstrations were held in many Australian cities", including Perth which was held at the Supreme Court Gardens and organised by the Black Deaths in Custody Watch Committee. Speakers included Mervyn Eades and Noongar elder Ben Taylor, the former emphasising that Australia was not an "empty land" prior to colonisation, that there had been a vibrant and comprehensive culture and way of life for over 60,000 years up until January 26, 1788. It remains the world's longest continually practised culture to this day.

Another elder, Mr Morrison, spoke about his ordeal of institutionalisation that marked the attempt to "civilise" and break his Noongar people. As a young boy in the south west town of Narrogin, where he was arrested for stealing a cap gun, he remembers the police waiting for him outside the shop and taking him away to the nearby Wandering Mission. The authorities told him his parents didn't want him anymore – but now he knows that it was all lies. He ran away three times including jumping off a train. He has three daughters now; two of them attended the concert with him.

So, Fremantle City Council – Perth's progressive port city – came upon the idea of having a concert on January 28, away from the historical baggage of official Australia Day. When the proposal was first publicised, the conservative monopoly media went beserk with headlines and opinion pieces in the *West Australian* and *Sunday Times* newspapers that suggested blasphemy and treason. How Un-Australian! Political Correctness gone too far!

However, as Fremantle councillor Sam Wainwright, who addressed the rally said, the council had approached the local Noongar elders about the proposal and they were all for it, following which the Fremantle Council – including mayor Dr Brad Pettit – voted by a majority to go ahead with the proposal for a celebration on an alternate day, which they called, One Day in Fremantle.

Following the rally the crowd marched proudly chanting, "Always was, always will be Aboriginal land", to the location of that day's Survival Concert, called Birak Concert (a Noongar word which is the name for the season occurring in the months of December and January). A celebration of Aboriginal song and dance continued into the evening.

On the Saturday morning at 9 am there was a Smoking Ceremony at the Roundhouse in Fremantle attended by 1,000 people, to mark the event when many Aboriginal people had been removed from the far corners of Western Australia and it was the last time they would see the Australian mainland. They were sent to the penal camp of Rottnest Island to an almost certain death in the squalid conditions (now a tourist playground for local and international visitors). From the 1850s to the 1880s it was a place where Aboriginal people were incarcerated for minor offences, from the tribal lands of rich pastoralists from the Murchison to the Pilbara and up to the Kimberley. The mighty Noongar warrior Yagan had spent some time there as well – he was one of the few who escaped.

At 4:30 pm on the Fremantle Esplanade the One Day in Fremantle Concert commenced with a Welcome to Country and a statement of support by the Aboriginal Elders.

There were plenty of Aboriginal flags and camaraderie and cohesiveness among the 10,000 people who came to see the free concert featuring Mamakin, the John Butler Trio and Dan Sultan.

Fremantle Mayor Brad Pettit addressed the concert, saying that the day was chosen as it was "A day we can all come together-people of all cultures which make up Australia. A day that the Black, Red and Yellow flag flies proud ... and although it is not decided what should replace Australia Day, the concert is a fresh conversation taking small and important steps towards reconciliation."

It is a conversation which has now started and from which there can be no turning back. ☺



Photos: Richard Titelius

From the archives

The Socialist, November 1982



A history of US wars of aggression and intervention

United States' foreign policy has never been driven by a devotion to any kind of morality, but by the necessity to:

- make the world safe for investment by American corporations;
- enrich US armaments corporations who contribute generously to Congress members;
- prevent the development of any society which becomes an example of an independent alternative to the capitalist model;
- extend its political and economic control over as much of the globe as possible.



1945-49 – China

USA intervened in civil war, on side of Chiang Kai-shek, against Mao's liberation struggle. US used defeated Japanese soldiers to fight against the Chinese people.

1947-49 – Greece

USA militarily supports Greek neo-fascists, against the major Greek left-wing parties who were fighting for independence. The neo-fascists won and set up a brutal regime, with the help of the American CIA.

1945-53 – Philippines

US fought the left-wing Huks forces, while the Huks were still fighting the Japanese invaders. Huks were defeated and the US installed puppet governments, culminating in the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

1945-53 – South Korea

US military suppresses popular independence movement in favour of a corrupt, reactionary and brutal regime whose leaders had collaborated with the Japanese fascists.

1953 – Iran

Progressive and popular Prime Minister Mossadegh nationalised the British oil company which controlled Iran's oil. A US and British backed coup against him re-installed the brutal Shah of Iran. He privatised Iran's oil, British and American oil companies getting equal shares.

1953 – Guatemala

A CIA-organised coup ousted a progressive, democratically-elected government which had nationalised the US United Fruit Company. So began 40 years of death squads, torture, disappearances and mass executions, killing over 100,000 civilians.

1953-64 – British Guyana

For 11 years the US and Britain orchestrated terrorism, strikes and disinformation to finally oust progressive, popularly-elected Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan. Under Jagan, Guyana became one of the region's better-off countries, but after 1964 it became one of the poorest.

1950-73 – Vietnam

Replacing the defeated French colonialists, the USA poured money, armaments and soldiers into Vietnam to prevent the people winning independence. With more bombs dropped on Indo-China than in WW2 and a million dead, the USA finally withdrew, also defeated. Much of Vietnam was poisoned with Agent Orange. Birth defects still regularly occur. Vietnam was reduced to one of the poorest countries in Asia.

1955-73 – Cambodia

The Nixon/Kissinger infamous 1969-70 "carpet-bombings" of Cambodia finally overthrew independent leader Prince Sihanouk. The bombing continued for 5 years, opening the way for the murderous Khmer Rouge led

by Pol Pot to seize power. Ironically, the USA gave Pol Pot diplomatic and military support after the Khmer Rouge were ousted from power by Cambodian patriots assisted by Vietnamese forces.

1960-65 – Congo

Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first Prime Minister after winning independence from Belgium, was assassinated on US President Eisenhower's request to protect US interests in Congo's mineral wealth. For the next 30 years, the US-friendly corrupt and brutal Mobutu regime ruled the Congo, with Mobutu becoming a multi-billionaire at his poverty-stricken people's expense.

1961-64 – Brazil

Progressive President Goulart limited profits of multi-national companies, nationalised a US communications corporation, adopted an independent foreign policy opposing sanctions on Cuba. A US-backed coup overthrows him in 1964, initiating death squads, disappearances, torture and violent military suppression of civilian demonstrations.

1963-66 – Dominican Republic

In 1963 Juan Bosch became the first democratically elected President on a platform of land reform, low-rent housing, modest nationalisation and restricted foreign investment. Seven months later he was ousted by a coup. A revolt broke out, threatening to return Bosch to power. The US sent in 23,000 troops to help crush it.

1959 to now – Cuba

Since the revolution of 1959, the US has backed terrorist attacks against Cuba, bombings, crop poisonings and assassinations (including attempts against Cuban leader Castro). The US financed the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion by anti-Castro Cubans in 1961. The US trade and travel embargo on Cuba still operates.

1965 – Indonesia

A US-backed coup by General Suharto ousted democratically-elected President Sukarno. Over one million people were hunted down and killed, including thousands of people's leaders, whose names were given to the military by the US Embassy. Decades of repression followed.

1970-73 – Chile

Socialist Salvador Allende was democratically elected as President in 1970. He nationalised the giant US copper company in Chile and a struggle began between the people and government on one hand, and the right-wing backed by the CIA and US foreign policy on the other. In 1973 a US-backed military coup overthrew Allende's government. The military carried out mass executions, and torture. Thousands were murdered or "disappeared". Chile became an economic rationalist experiment.

1967-74 – Greece

A US-backed military coup took place in 1967, to prevent liberal Papandreu being returned as Prime Minister. The colonels declared martial law, implemented torture, beatings, arrests, leaving 8,000 dead in the first month. The coup leaders were fiercely anti-communist and pro-American, working closely with the CIA. The colonels held power until 1974.

1975 – East Timor

Newly-independent East Timor was invaded by Indonesia, the day after US President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger visited Indonesia, giving permission for US arms to be used in the invasion. By 1989, over one-third of the population of 700,000 had been killed. Indonesia had US backing, including armaments, throughout its 25-year occupation.

1978-89 – Nicaragua

Washington saw the Sandinistas' 1978 overthrow of US-backed fascist dictator Somoza, as "another Cuba". US diplomatic & economic sabotage soon took a military form, with the arming and financing of the Contras, who were mainly ex-Somoza soldiers dedicated to overthrowing the progressive and popular Sandinista government. The Contras burned down schools and hospitals, raped, tortured, mined harbours, bombed and strafed villages. These were US President Reagan's "freedom fighters".

1979-84 – Grenada

US destabilisation tactics began soon after Maurice Bishop formed a government in 1979. The US saw this tiny island of 110,000 people as yet "another Cuba". In October 1983, the US invaded Grenada, overthrowing the Bishop government, killing 400 Grenadians and 84 Cubans (mainly construction workers). Grenada's new US-trained police and "counter-insurgency" force gained a reputation for brutality, arbitrary arrest, abuse of authority and erosion of civil rights.

1981-89 – Libya

Libya refused to be a US client state in the Middle East, nationalising US and British oil interests. The US has shot down Libyan planes inside Libyan airspace and bombed the country, killing at least 40 people, including Libyan leader Gaddafi's young daughter. The US has attempted to assassinate Gaddafi a number of times. In 2011 the Libyan government was overthrown by US-funded terrorist forces and Gaddafi was murdered.

1989 – Panama

Under the guise of "getting" Panama's "drug-trafficking" President, Manuel Noriega, the US bombed and invaded Panama City, leaving 15,000 homeless, over 5,000 dead and 3,000 wounded. The real reason: to behead Panama's strong and growing national independence movement and to ensure the Panama Canal Special Zone remained under American control.

1990s – Iraq

Using Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as the excuse, the US carried out the most concentrated aerial bombardment in world history, dropping 177 million pounds of bombs on the Iraqi people. Napalm and cancer-causing depleted uranium weapons were used. Iraq's water, sewerage and electricity infrastructure were devastated, causing massive loss of life. Sanctions have since killed over a million children and even more adults, denying them proper medicines. America's aim: to establish US military bases and gain control over Iraq's vast oil reserves. The United States is still intent on fulfilling these aims.

1979-92 – Afghanistan

In the late 1970s, Afghanistan had an anti-feudal revolution, throwing out the monarchy and establishing a progressive government which carried out land reform, introduced universal education, for both males and females, gave women equal rights, and established friendship with its neighbour, the Soviet Union. The USA gave billions of dollars to opposition forces waging war against the progressive government. With more than a million dead, three million disabled, five million refugees, (in total, half the population), the government fell, opening the way for America's ally, the clerical-fascist Taliban regime, to take charge.

1980-92 – El Salvador

With US support, the right-wing Salvadoran government used electoral fraud and murder as political weapons. In 1980, the left opposition forces took up arms in desperation. The civil war began. US troops, military advisors and CIA operatives played a considerable role, training death squads and advising on strategy. The war ended in 1992, with 75,000 civilian deaths. The US poured \$6 billion into the conflict to ensure the privileged few retained control of the country's wealth.

1987-94 – Haiti

For 30 years, the US supported the dictator Duvalier, the CIA backing the torturers, drug traffickers and death squads. Duvalier was finally ousted, but newly-elected reformist priest Aristide was exiled after a US-backed military coup against him in 1991. The US finally succumbed to popular pressure to reinstate Aristide, but only after he pledged to maintain a private enterprise economy and not help the poor at the expense of the rich.

1999 – Yugoslavia

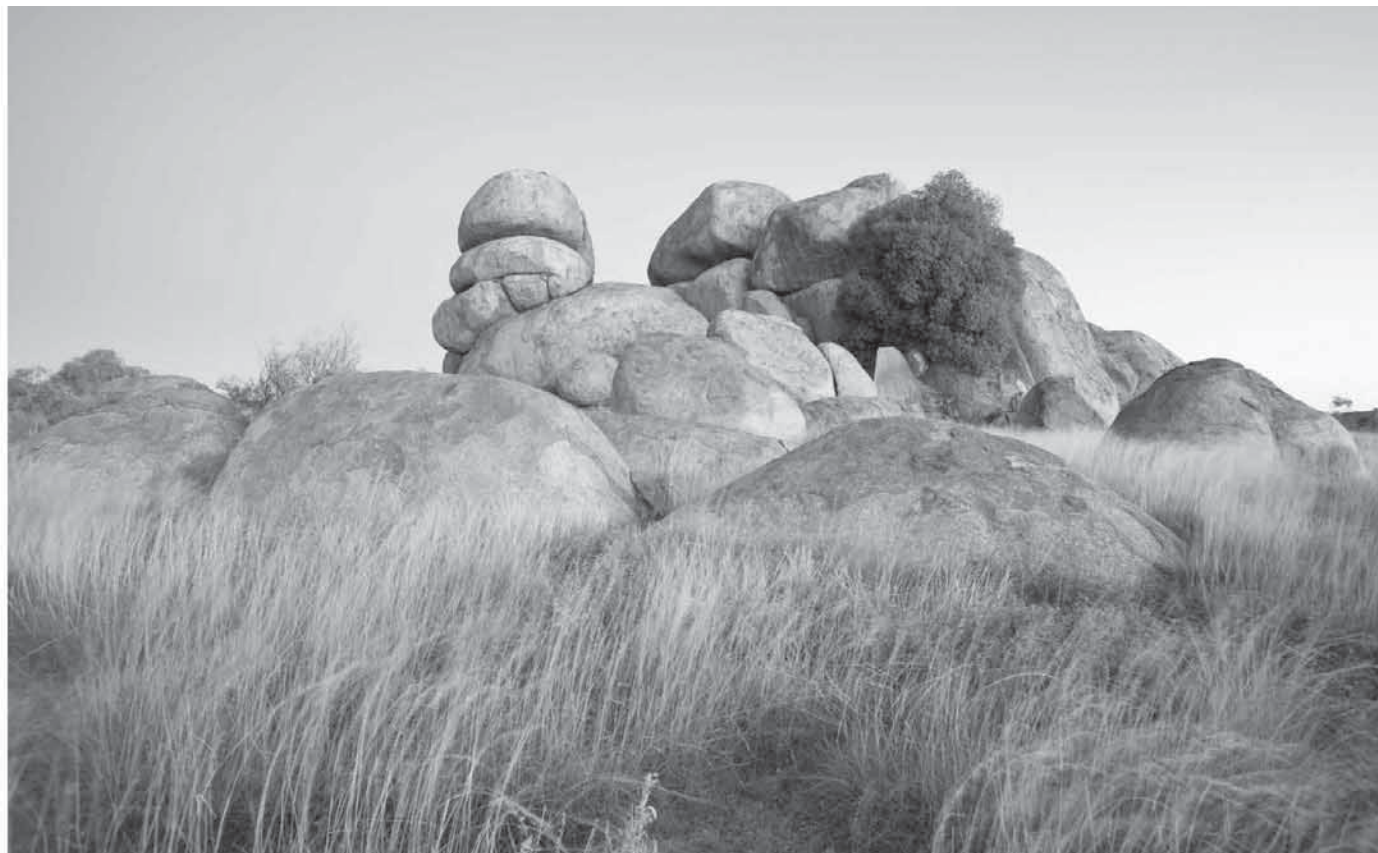
Bombed back to the pre-industrial age by the US, under NATO cover, supposedly for "humanitarian" reasons. The real aim was to further western interests in the region.

Current – Syria

Compiled by the Communist Party of Australia.
For a more extensive history go to:
www.cpa.org.au

Book review by Rob Gowland

Desert Australia



My father was born in Broken Hill in 1907. At that time it was a hot, dusty and extremely isolated community, with none of the electrically-driven modern conveniences we take for granted today. His father, my grandfather, was a blacksmith, and when Dad left school he started work as a timber-getter and boundary rider in the White Cliffs and Wilcannia area. After that he became a stockman and a drover and eventually humped his swag around inland NSW as a shearer.

Many years later, when he heard that my wife and I were planning a trip by car out west, he told us how splendid it would be: "Sunsets – you've never seen sunsets like them!" And he was right: the uninterrupted expanse of sky went rose pink from horizon to horizon, an amazing and beautiful sight.

And then the stars came out. The absence of ambient city light meant the sky was absolutely full of stars. By day, we drove down broad, deserted stock routes that Henry Lawson would have recognised, across red-soil plains. Most of these stock routes (the "long paddock" in traditional bush parlance) are now padlocked and appropriated by the local graziers, after Frank Packer put pressure on the ALP to permit this bout of blatant modern-day "enclosures".

On our next trip we went to South Australia and drove around the Flinders Ranges and out towards (but well short of) Lake Eyre. What struck us most forcibly about this region, apart from the magnificent colours in the rocks and the bush, was the enormous number of ruins, the remains of stone or wattle and daub farmhouses, sad reminders of would-be settlers who were fooled by a good season into thinking they could eke a living out of a farm in what was essentially a desert.

A desert is defined as a region that receives less than 250 millimetres of rain per year. Eighteen percent of the Australian mainland meets that definition. A further 17 percent receives so little rain that it is on the brink of being a desert. Australia is in fact the driest continent on Earth, which foredoomed many of the efforts of early European settlers, like those whose ruins we saw in South Australia, to introduce into this new land the agricultural practices of Europe, the wettest continent on Earth.

But while they may be hostile to life and especially to settlement, Australia's desert regions are full of flora and fauna that have adapted to the arid conditions. Combined with the intense light of inland Australia, the nation's desert regions have striking beauty. Photographer Nick Rains has captured that beauty staggeringly well in his book *Desert Australia*, published by Explore Australia, a division of Hardie Grant Books.

A large format hardcover, *Desert Australia* is informative as well as beautiful. As the author says in his introduction: "To 19th century European eyes, the land was there for the taking, but ... massive areas were needed to support viable populations of livestock. ... Even today, Anna Creek Station, near Lake Eyre, is the world's largest operating cattle station: at over 23,000 square kilometres, it's bigger than Israel and more than seven times the size of the largest ranch in the United States."

Australia's great realist writer, Henry Lawson, knew how harsh the outback could be, especially for rural workers – stockmen, itinerant shearers, station hands, etc – and selectors, small farmers and their hardworking wives, whose holding weren't measured in square kilometres.

As the various reminders photographed by Nick Rains show, the desert areas are doubly harsh. Life

for the poor souls attempting to farm there must have been hell.

Nick Rains has been a professional photographer for 30 years, shooting assignments around Australia and the rest of the world. In 2002 Nick was awarded *Australian Geographic* magazine's Photographer of the Year and continues to shoot assignments for the magazine all around Australia.

Nick writes of the subject of *Desert Australia*: "Having spent many months over many years travelling in these arid regions, I find it hard to imagine what it must have been like to live in the desert even 40 or 50 years ago, let alone in Victorian times. The heat is unrelenting, the remoteness can easily be life threatening and the vast, treeless horizons can wear you down."

The photographs in his book certainly don't wear you down. There is tremendous variety, from a double-page spread of the huge stone woolshed on Cordillo Downs Station in SA, a display of desert flowers in the eastern Simpson Desert, another double-page spread of goanna tracks crossing a sand dune in western Queensland, an aerial shot of an isolated homestead near Broken Hill surrounded by the vast and featureless Mundi Mundi plains, a startled flock of corellas in the Diamantina National Park, and spectacular wildflowers in the Gibson Desert, to the remains of a car that failed to complete the traversing of the Birdsville Track, and many more.

Despite the connotations inherent in the harsh environment, all of the photographs are breathtakingly beautifully presented. The book would make a splendid gift for anyone interested in Australia or photography, or for anyone who enjoys the beauty of the natural world.

Nick Rains has written 12 books over the course of his career, beginning with *Kimberley – Journey Through an Ancient Land* in 1997. *Desert Australia* and its companion *Tropical Australia* are his latest. His next book will be *Aerial Australia*, in production now and due out next August, and frankly I can't wait. ✪



Australian prisons are full to bursting and there is no real plan for rehabilitation programs. More than that – more jobs and cuts to education courses in NSW prisons are being planned, on top of the 130 teachers who have already lost their jobs. It's no secret that many prisoners are inside because of mental health issues. Many are practically illiterate and when released from prison cannot find employment and often finish up back in prison. "Education is recognised as a major element in rehabilitation of prisoners but that hasn't stopped David Elliot (Corrections Minister) from taking the axe to a range of trade courses in a cost-cutting exercise that will make sure our jails are full for years to come," said Maxine Sharkey, NSW Teachers' Federation assistant general secretary. Courses earmarked for closure include: First Aid, Construction Industry White Card, Fork Lift Operator, Electrical Test and restricted licence, Food Safety and Hygiene and others. The Federation will continue to campaign to demand high-quality education and vocational training is accessible to all NSW prisoners.

Fred Nile is a NSW politician whose right-wing fundamentalist rantings are all too familiar. It was encouraging to see so many women (and men) taking part in anti-Trump demonstrations recently – let's hope that the rage will be maintained for the coming International Women's Day marches. According to Nile's beliefs, women should be stay-at-home parents rather than handing their children to "day orphanages" – that is Nile's name for what we call childcare. Further, in his view, a woman's place is firmly in the kitchen, preferably pregnant and barefoot. Nile has a devout follower in Tanya Davis, the person who is a newly-appointed Minister for Women in NSW. Congratulating Fred Nile on his 35 years in parliament on April Fool's Day last year, Davis thanked him for "upholding Judeo-Christian values of our society". Davis evidently shares his views as she is "personally" anti-abortion. Davis was asked about it but said it was her personal belief and it won't be reflected in her policy decisions. But it should be remembered that her personal views were already reflected in the legislation proposed by Fred Nile and supported by her in the so-called Zoe's Law. In that case it was a tragic car accident which led to a miscarriage. The proponents of the law argued that life starts at conception and that a fetus is a separate entity from the mother. Abortion in NSW is still a criminal offence and it's time this situation is resolved. Appointing a person, who is "personally" against a woman's right to make a decision, to a position where her views are against the majority's opinion in NSW is an insult.

Support *The Guardian*
by donating to Press Fund

Israel's shadowy role in Guatemala's dirty war

Gabriel Schivone

Last year was a busy one for Guatemala's criminal justice system.

January 2016 saw the arrests of 18 former military officers for their alleged part in the country's dirty war of the 1980s. In February last year, two ex-soldiers were convicted in an unprecedented wartime sexual slavery case from the same era.

Such legal proceedings represent further openings in the judicial system following the 2013 trial and conviction of former head of state General Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide and crimes against humanity. Although the Guatemalan Constitutional Court very quickly annulled the trial (finally restarted in March after fitful stops and starts, but currently stalled again), a global precedent has been set for holding national leaders accountable in the country where their crimes took place.

And in November, a Guatemalan judge allowed a separate case against Ríos Montt to proceed. The case relates to the 1982 massacre in the village of Dos Erres.

Ríos Montt was president from 1982 to 1983, a period marked by intense state violence against the Indigenous Mayan peoples. The violence included the destruction of entire villages, resulting in mass displacement.

Mayans were repeatedly targeted during the period of repression that lasted from 1954 – when the US engineered a military coup – to 1996. More than 200,000 people were killed in Guatemala during that period, 83 percent of whom were Mayans.

The crimes committed by the Guatemalan state were carried out with foreign – particularly US – assistance. One key party to these crimes has so far eluded any mention inside the courts: Israel.

Proxy for US

From the 1980s to today, Israel's extensive military role in Guatemala remains an open secret that is well-documented but receives scant criticism.

Discussing the military coup which installed him as president in 1982, Ríos Montt told an ABC News reporter that his regime takeover went so smoothly "because many of our soldiers were trained by Israelis." In Israel, the press reported that 300 Israeli advisers were on the ground training Ríos Montt's soldiers.

One Israeli adviser in Guatemala at the time, Lieutenant Colonel Amatzia Shuali, said: "I don't care what the Gentiles do with the arms. The main thing is that the Jews profit," as recounted in *Dangerous Liaison* by Andrew and Leslie Cockburn.

Some years earlier, when Congressional restrictions under the Carter administration limited US military aid to Guatemala due to human rights violations, Israeli economic and military technology leaders saw a golden opportunity to enter the market.

Yaakov Meridor, then an Israeli minister of economy, indicated in the early 1980s that Israel wished to be a proxy for the US in countries where it had decided not to openly sell weapons. Meridor said: "We will say to the Americans: Don't compete with us in Taiwan; don't compete with us in South Africa; don't compete with us in the Caribbean or in other places where you cannot sell arms directly. Let us do it ... Israel will be your intermediary."

The CBS *Evening News with Dan Rather* program attempted to explain the source of Israel's global expertise by noting in 1983 that

the advanced weaponry and methods Israel peddled in Guatemala had been successfully "tried and tested on the West Bank and Gaza, designed simply to beat the guerrilla."

Israel's selling points for its weapons relied not only on their use in the occupied West Bank and Gaza but also in the wider region. Journalist George Black reported that Guatemalan military circles admired the Israeli army's performance during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Their overseas admiration was so unabashed that rightists in Guatemala "spoke openly of the 'Palestinianisation' of the nation's rebellious Mayan Indians," according to Black.

Military cooperation between Israel and Guatemala has been traced back to the 1960s. By the time of Ríos Montt's rule, Israel had become Guatemala's main provider of weapons, military training, surveillance technology and other vital assistance in the state's war on urban leftists and rural Indigenous Mayans.

In turn, many Guatemalans suffered the results of this special relationship and have connected Israel to their national tragedy.

Man of integrity?

One of the most haunting massacres committed during this period was the destruction of the El Petén district village named Dos Erres. Ríos Montt's Israeli-trained soldiers burned Dos Erres to the ground. First, however, its inhabitants were shot. Those who survived the initial attack on the village had their skulls smashed with sledgehammers. The bodies of the dead were stuffed down the village well.

During a court-ordered exhumation in the village, investigators working for the 1999 UN Truth Commission cited the following in their forensics report: "All the ballistic evidence recovered corresponded to bullet fragments from firearms and pods of Galil rifles, made in Israel."

Then US President Ronald Reagan – whose administration would later be implicated in the "Iran-Contra" scandal for running guns to Iran through Israel, in part to fund a paramilitary force aiming to topple Nicaragua's Marxist government – visited Ríos Montt just days before the massacre.

Reagan praised Ríos Montt as "a man of great personal integrity" who "wants to improve the quality of life for all Guatemalans and to promote social justice." Reagan also assured the Guatemalan president that "the United States is committed to support his efforts to restore democracy and to address the root causes of this violent insurgency." At one point in their conversation, Reagan is reported to have embraced Ríos Montt and told the Guatemalan president he was getting "a bum rap" on human rights.

Innovator of torture

In November 2016, however, Judge Claudette Dominguez accepted the Guatemalan attorney general's request to prosecute Ríos Montt as intellectual author of the Dos Erres massacre, pressing him with charges of aggravated homicide, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Among the 18 arrested this year was Benedicto Lucas García, former army chief of staff under his brother Romeo Lucas García's military presidency. Benedicto, who was seen by some of his soldiers as an innovator of torture techniques for use on children, described "the Israeli soldier [as] a model and an example to us."



Mayans were repeatedly targeted during the period of repression that lasted from 1954 – when the US engineered a military coup – to 1996.

In 1981, Benedicto headed the inauguration ceremony of an Israeli-designed and financed electronics school in Guatemala. Its purpose was to train the Guatemalan military on using so-called counterinsurgency technologies. Benedicto lauded the school's establishment as a "positive step" in advancing the Guatemalan regime to world-class military efficiency "thanks to [Israel's] advice and transfer of electronic technology."

In its inaugural year alone, the school enabled the regime's secret police, known as the G-2, to raid some 30 safe houses of the Revolutionary Organisation of People in Arms (ORPA).

The G-2 coordinated the assassination, "disappearance" and torture of opponents to the Guatemalan government.

While Guatemalan governments frequently changed hands – through both coups and elections – during the 1980s, Israel remained Guatemala's main source of weapons and military advice.

Belligerence at the border

The Israeli military-security complex casts a long, intercontinental shadow over Guatemalans who are still fleeing the consequences of the dirty war.

In some areas along the US-Mexico border, such as in Texas, the numbers of migrants hailing today from Central America (but only from the countries combusted by US intervention – Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras) – has begun to outpace the number coming from Mexico.

According to information provided to this author by the Pima County Medical Examiner's office in Arizona, many Guatemalans who have perished while crossing these desert borderlands originated from among the Indigenous Mayan areas hit hardest by the 1980s genocide: El Quiché, Huehuetenango, Chimaltenango.

Southern Arizona has also seen a spike in undocumented Guatemalan migration. US firms and institutions have been collaborating with Israeli security companies to up-armour Southern Arizona's border zone.

The Israeli weapons firm Elbit won a major

government contract to provide 52 surveillance towers in Southern Arizona's desert borderlands, beginning with the pilot program of seven towers currently placed among the hills and valleys surrounding Nogales, a border town split by the wall.

More towers are slated to surround the Tohono O'odham Nation, the second largest Native American reservation in the US. Already the number of federal forces occupying permanent positions on Tohono O'odham lands is the largest in US history.

Alan Bersin, a senior figure in the US Department of Homeland Security, described Guatemala's border with Chiapas, Mexico, as "now our southern border" in 2012. That "southern border" was heavily militarised during Barack Obama's eight years as US president.

We can safely expect that militarisation to continue during Donald Trump's presidency. Trump's anti-migrant rhetoric during the presidential election campaign suggests it is likely to be intensified.

During the dirty war, tens of thousands of Guatemalans fled over this border into Southern Mexico. Today, Israel assists the Mexican authorities in Chiapas with "counterinsurgency" activities largely targeting the indigenous Maya community.

Though media reporting on Guatemala's connection with Israel has dissipated, Israel's enterprising efforts in the country have never diminished. Today, Israel's presence in Guatemala is especially pronounced in the private security industry, which proliferated in the years following the so-called Guatemalan peace process of the mid-1990s.

Ohad Steinhart, an Israeli, relocated to Guatemala at this opportune moment, originally working as a weapons instructor. Roughly two years after his 1994 move to Guatemala, he founded his own security firm, Decision Ejecutiva.

Steinhart's modest 300-employee company is small compared with the colossal Golan Group, Israel's largest and oldest private security conglomerate in Guatemala.

Mayans were repeatedly targeted during the period of repression that lasted from 1954 to 1996. More than 200,000 people were killed in Guatemala during that period, 83 percent of whom were

Guatemalan farmers' legal battle

The British Columbia Court of Appeal last month rejected efforts by Tahoe Resources Inc to dismiss a lawsuit brought by seven Guatemalan men for injuries they suffered during the violent suppression of a peaceful protest at Tahoe's mine in Guatemala.

The ruling represents the first time that a Canadian appellate court has permitted a lawsuit to advance against a Canadian company for alleged human rights violations committed abroad.

In the judgment, the Court of Appeal overturned a lower court decision that had found Guatemala was the more appropriate venue for the case. The Court of Appeal ruled that several factors, including evidence of systemic corruption in the Guatemalan judiciary, pointed away from Guatemala as a preferable forum, thereby keeping the case in British Columbia.

The court concluded that "there is some measurable risk that the appellants will encounter difficulty in receiving a fair trial against a powerful international company whose mining interests in Guatemala align with the political interests of the Guatemalan state."

The plaintiffs are supported in Canada by a legal team comprised of Vancouver law firm Camp Fiorante Matthews Mogeran (CFM) and the Canadian Centre for International Justice (CCIJ). In Guatemala, they are represented by lawyers at the Guatemalan Centre for Legal, Environmental and Social Action (CALAS).

Until recently, the legal doctrine of forum non-conveniens had been an obstacle for foreign victims of corporate abuse seeking redress in Canadian courts. The doctrine gives courts discretion to dismiss a case in favour of a foreign jurisdiction in certain circumstances and had previously shielded Canadian companies, particularly in the

extractive sector, from judicial scrutiny of their overseas operations.

Last October, Eritrean plaintiffs overcame a forum non-conveniens challenge in their slave labour lawsuit against Vancouver-based Nevsun Resources Ltd. That lower court ruling is now on appeal and will also be heard by the BC Court of Appeal, in September 2017.

With the reinstatement of the lawsuit against Tahoe, there are now multiple cases advancing in Canadian jurisdictions against companies accused of responsibility for severe human rights abuses. Three Ontario lawsuits alleging that Hudbay Minerals is liable for killing and gang rapes in Guatemala are also moving toward trial.

"Today's landmark ruling shows that Canadian courts are open to victims of abuses linked to Canadian companies operating abroad," said Matt Eisenbrandt, Legal Director of CCIJ. "Despite a lack of regulation by the Canadian government, we hope these recent developments in the courts signal an end to corporate impunity for human rights violations," Eisenbrandt said.

In their submissions to the Court of Appeal, the plaintiffs had emphasised that their claims against Tahoe were centred in Canada where Tahoe is incorporated and where most of Tahoe's Board of Directors, which the plaintiffs say has ultimate oversight for security and community relations in Guatemala, resided at the time of the shooting. The plaintiffs also submitted extensive evidence showing systemic problems with Guatemala's judicial system.

"We are very satisfied that the court understood the remote chance of the plaintiffs receiving a fair trial in Guatemala due to a lack of judicial independence and widespread impunity," said Rafael Maldonado, Legal Director of CALAS. "This is

especially relevant given recent corruption scandals at all levels of the Guatemalan government, and particularly at the Supreme Court of Justice."

In the Vancouver lawsuit, Tahoe faces claims of battery and negligence for the actions of its Guatemala Security Manager, Alberto Rotondo, and other security personnel in the April 2013 shooting, something the plaintiffs allege was a planned show of force to intimidate the local community and eliminate opposition to the Escobal mine.

Rotondo was criminally charged in Guatemala, based in part on wiretap evidence from his phone. However, less than two months before he was scheduled to go on trial, Rotondo escaped from house arrest and fled to Peru, his home country. The Guatemalan case, in which some of the victims were participating as civil parties, was suspended.

Rotondo's escape from Guatemala was an important factor in the judgment from the BC Court of Appeal.

"The court agreed with our submissions that there are no longer any active legal proceedings in Guatemala, which pointed to British Columbia as the appropriate forum for the case" said Joe Fiorante, QC, a partner with CFM. "We are pleased with the result and look forward to litigating this case in British Columbia."

Responding to the decision, plaintiff Luis Fernando García Monroy, who suffered multiple gunshot wounds, including one to his face, said, "We are very happy to have the opportunity to pursue justice in Canada, something we cannot do successfully in a Guatemalan court. In the face of corruption and repression by Guatemala's government, including a campaign to bring false criminal charges against peaceful protesters in our community, there is no guarantee of accountability here."

Canadian Centre for International Justice ✪



...bered a military coup – to 1996.

Founded by ex-Israeli special forces officers, the Golan Group has also trained Department of Homeland Security immigration agents along the US-Mexico border. The Golan Group has employed thousands of agents in Guatemala, some of whom have been involved in repressing environmental and land rights protests against mining operations by Canadian firms. The company was named in a 2014 lawsuit by six Guatemalan farmers and a student who were all shot at close range by security agents during a protest the previous year.

Guatemala's use of Israeli military trainers and advisers, just as in the 1980s, continues. Israeli advisers have, in recent years, been assisting the current "remilitarisation" of Guatemala. Journalist Dawn Paley has reported that Israeli military trainers have shown up once again at an active military base in Coban, which is the site of mass graves from the 1980s. The remains of several hundred people have so far been uncovered there.

The mass graves at Coban serve as the legal basis for the January arrests of 14 former military officers. This past June a Guatemalan judge ruled that the evidence is sufficient for eight of those arrested to stand trial. Future arrests and trials are likely to follow.

Scholars Milton H. Jamail and Margo Gutierrez documented the Israeli arms trade in Central America, notably in Guatemala, in their 1986 book *It's No Secret: Israel's Military Involvement in Latin America*. They worded the title that way because the bulk of the information in the book came from mainstream media sources.

For now, Israel's well-documented role in Guatemala's dirty wars passes largely without comment. But Guatemalans know better than most that the long road to accountability begins with acknowledgment.

Yet it is unclear how long it will be before we hear of Israeli officials being called to Guatemala to be tried for the shadowy part they played in the country's darkest hours.

The Electronic Intifada ✪



On April 27, 2013, private security guards indiscriminately shot at community members who were peacefully protesting. Seven were injured. Here Luis Fernando Garcia (left) and his father Adolfo Augustin Garcia show their injuries.

pression that
re killed in
Mayans.

A war with China?

Conn Hallinan

In his January 13 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State nominee Rex Tillerson made an extraordinary comment concerning China's activities in the South China Sea. The US, he said, must "send a clear signal that, first, the island-building stops," adding that Beijing's "access to those islands is not going to be allowed."

President Trump's Press Secretary, Sean Spicer, repeated the threat on January 24.

Sometimes it is hard to sift the real from the magical in the Trump administration, and bombast appears to be the default strategy of the day. But people should be clear about what would happen if the US actually tries to blockade China from supplying its forces constructing airfields and radar facilities on the Spratly and Paracel islands.

It would be an act of war.

Last summer, China's commander of the People's Liberation Army Navy, Wu Shengli, told US Admiral John Richardson that "we will never stop our construction on the Nansha Islands halfway." Nansha is China's name for the Spratlys. Two weeks later, Chang Wanquan, China's Defence Minister, said Beijing is preparing for a "people's war at sea."

In fact, the US is in the middle of a major military build-up, the Obama administration's "Asia Pivot" in the Pacific. American bases in Okinawa, Japan, and Guam have been beefed up, and for the first time since World War II, US Marines have been deployed in Australia. Last March, the US sent B-2 nuclear-capable strategic stealth bombers to join them.

Roots of current tensions

The current crisis has its roots in a tense standoff between Beijing

and Taiwan in late 1996. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was angered that Washington had granted a visa to Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, calling it a violation of the 1979 US "One China" policy that recognised the PRC and downgraded relations with Taiwan to "unofficial."

Beijing responded to the visa uproar by firing missiles near a small Taiwan-controlled island and moving some military forces up to the mainland coast facing the island. However, there was never any danger that China would actually attack Taiwan.

The Straits crisis led to a radical remaking of China's military, which had long relied on massive land forces. Instead, China adopted a strategy called "Area Denial" that would allow Beijing to control the waters surrounding its coast, in particular the East and South China seas.

China is particularly vulnerable to a naval blockade. Some 80 percent of its energy supplies traverse the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, moving through narrow choke points like the Malacca Straits between Indonesia and Malaysia, the Bab al Mandab Straits controlling the Red Sea, and the Straits of Hormuz into the Persian Gulf. All of those passages are controlled by the US or countries like India and Indonesia with close ties to Washington.

In 2013, China claimed it had historic rights to the region and issued its now famous "nine-dash line" map that embraced the Paracels and Spratly island chains and 85 percent of the South China Sea. It was this nine-dash line that the Hague tribunal rejected, because it found no historical basis for China's claim, and because there were overlapping assertions by Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines.

There are, of course, economic considerations. The region is rich in oil, gas, and fish, but the primary



China's commander of the People's Liberation Army Navy, Wu Shengli, told US Admiral John Richardson that "we will never stop our construction on the Nansha Islands halfway."

concern for China is security. The Chinese have not interfered with commercial ship traffic, although they have applied on-again, off-again restrictions on fishing and energy explorations. China initially prevented Filipino fishermen from exploiting some reefs, and then allowed it. It has been more aggressive with Vietnam in the Paracels.

The US has some 400 military bases surrounding China and is deploying anti-ballistic missiles in South Korea and Japan, ostensibly to guard against North Korean nuclear weapons. But the interceptors could also down Chinese missiles, posing a threat to Beijing's nuclear deterrence.

Enter Trump

The Trump administration has opened a broad front on China, questioning the "One China" policy, accusing Beijing of being in cahoots with Islamic terrorists, and threatening a trade war. The first would upend more than 30 years of diplomacy, the second is bizarre – if anything, China is overly aggressive in suppressing terrorism in its western Xinjiang

Province – and the third makes no sense.

China is the US's major trading partner and holds US\$1.24 trillion in US Treasury Bonds. While Trump charges that the Chinese have hollowed out the American economy by undermining its industrial base with cheap labour and goods, China did not force Apple or General Motors to pull up stakes and decamp elsewhere. Capital goes where wages are low and unions are weak.

A trade war would hurt China, but it would also hurt the US and the global economy as well.

When President Trump says he wants to Make America Great Again, what he really means is that he wants to go back to that post-World War II period when the US dominated much of the globe with a combination of economic strength and military power. But that era is gone, and dreams of a unipolar world run by Washington are a hallucination.

According to the CIA, "by 2030 Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power based on GDP,

population size, military spending and technological investments." By 2025, two-thirds of the world will live in Asia, 7 percent in Europe and 5 percent in the US. Those are the demographics of eclipse.

If Trump starts a trade war, he will find little support among America's allies. China is the number one trading partner for Japan, Australia, South Korea, Vietnam, and India, and the third largest for Indonesia and the Philippines. Over the past year, a number of countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines have also distanced themselves from Washington and moved closer to China. When President Obama tried to get US allies not to sign on to China's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, they ignored him.

But the decline of US influence has a dangerous side. Washington may not be able to dictate the world's economy, but it has immense military power. Chinese military expert Yang Chengjun says "China does not stir up troubles, but we are not afraid of them when they come."

Information Clearing House

Trumpites' all-out attack on unions

Jerry Rubin

WASHINGTON: Today Republicans in the US House completed the launch of a three-pronged attack on organised labour. They introduced a national right-to-work bill aimed at stripping unions of the resources they need to fight for workers.

Previously, the head of the House Education and Workforce Committee announced her intention to strip workers of union protections and a case to weaken public sector unions is making way to the Supreme Court.

During his campaign, Trump said "I love the right to work."

Now that he's in the White House and his followers control both the House and Senate, those who want to wipe out the union movement probably believe they cannot lose.

They might be in for a big surprise: workers across the country are organising to fight back.

Twenty-seven states already have so called right-to-work laws and several times Republicans have introduced bills to make them nationwide. They have always failed, but Leacy Burke, a spokesperson for Representative Joe Wilson of South Carolina told reporters that "we believe that this

year, the legislation could garner more support than ever before."

Wilson, whose state has the lowest percentage of union workers in the nation is co-sponsor of the right-to-work measure, along with Steve King of Iowa.

"The so-called 'right to work' laws have never fostered employment, but they do bring out the worst kind of divisiveness," said AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka.

By preventing unions from getting dues from workers they represent, these laws weaken the ability of unions to fight for justice on the job.

While Wilson and King introduce their anti-union bill, the new chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee, Republican Virginia Foxx has stated she believes that her committee will work to repeal measures put in place by the Obama Administration to protect the rights of workers to join unions.

These include regulations affecting union election rules and unit determinations, decisions affecting joint-employer standards, and rules regarding whether graduate students are employees under the National Labour Relations Act.

While unions are under attack in Congress and are being targeted by

the Foxx committee, the National Right To Work Foundation is bringing a case to the Supreme Court, a case that started in Illinois. If the case is successful, workers and unions would not be allowed to have "fair share" arrangements.

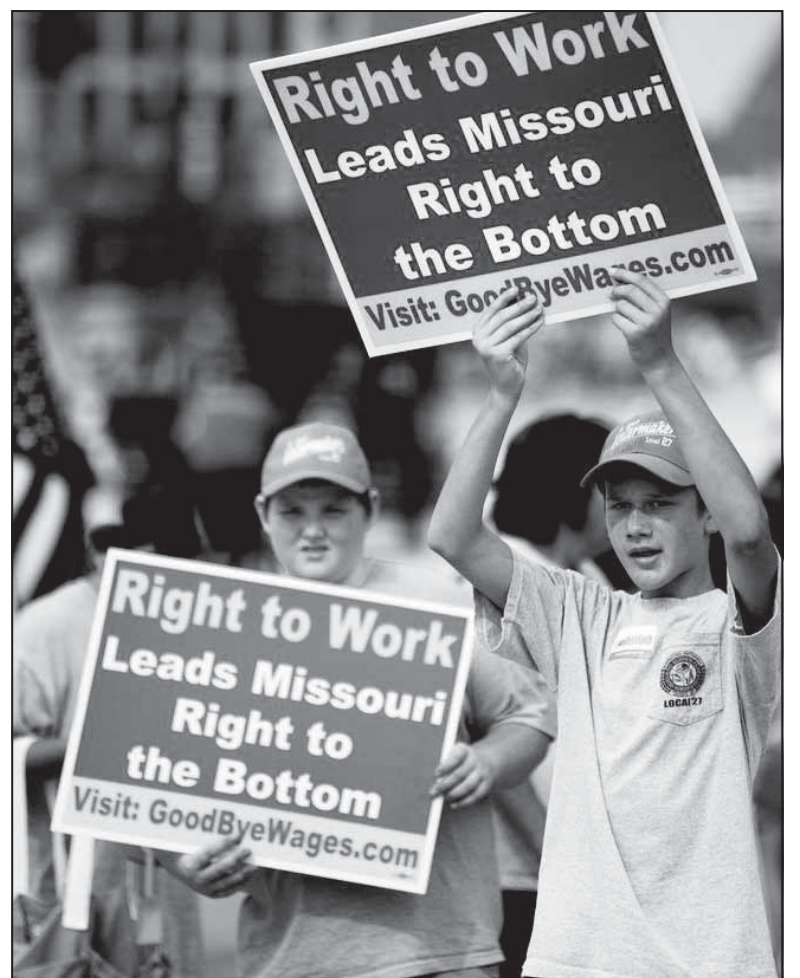
A similar case, *Friedrichs v. California* went to the Supreme Court last year. The Court became deadlocked and so the case went back to lower courts. However, it's expected that by the time the Illinois case reaches the Court, it will have a ninth member and that that member will be Trump's nominee, Neil Gorsuch.

National Right to Work Foundation President Mark Mix said that Gorsuch is almost certain to rule against unions. Even though Republicans are attacking unions from all sides, it might not be easy for them to destroy the labour movement.

A new poll by the Pew Research Centre, shows that 60 percent of American adults now view unions favourably. That's up 12 percentage points since March, 2015.

Moreover, president Trumka says, "Working people are resilient – and just like we've patiently worked together to rebuild after the Great Recession, we will continue to come together to say no to any plan to destroy unions."

People's World



Capitalist greed personified

Tom Griffiths

BRITAIN: Donald Trump's rise to power has struck a nerve. Perhaps it's something to do with the man himself, an outrageous narcissist, sexist, racist and bully, Trump is certainly one of the most vile individuals imaginable.

Even underneath all that bronzer, his broad fleshy face betrays the nauseating smugness and petulant rage of a man born into immense wealth and power. He's easy to hate. Understandably, his openly aggressive misogyny, the so-called "locker room talk" which is not acceptable in any space – locker room or oval office – and his outrageous position on abortion and women generally has triggered a large part of the revulsion and resistance to the man.

The Women's Marches against Trump were global and they were huge. Certainly the largest single moment of protest since the anti-war demonstrations across the world in 2003. And rightly so.

Donald Trump is also a racist. Let's make no bones about that.

The whole narrative around the wall he has been threatening to build along the Mexican border, the proposed Muslim register and many more examples signalled to us in the run up to the election that the anti-racist movement was going to have its work cut out with him should he come to power.

Now he has done so and immediately brought in one of the most controversial executive orders in living memory with his racist Muslim travel ban.

What has also connected with people in such a powerful way and brought so many of them onto the streets is his blatant corruption of the democratic process. Trump is the personification of capitalist greed and he has clearly bought his way to the presidency; in his crass and openly manipulative way, he has successfully become the most powerful and dangerous man on the planet. He does not hide his disdain for US democracy and its institutions, nor indeed does he hide his disdain for the US electorate.

His victory, therefore, is a Damascene moment for lots of people; their treasured institutions are exposed as a fraud. The emperor is not wearing any clothes. This is nothing short of an existential crisis.

Is Western democracy really so cheap, just theatre? For all these reasons and more, a huge



Protesters at the anti-Trump rally in Manchester St Peter's Square. (Photo: Colin Horne)

protest movement, which is bringing in lots of first-timers and young people, is springing up all over the world.

For the People's Assembly Against Austerity, we too stand in opposition to Trump for all these reasons. We have always stood for the rights of women, always stood against scapegoating of migrants and any form of racism.

But we also have a very real responsibility to mobilise on the issues that make us what we are.

Trump is also a president for the super-rich. He is rolling through yet more corporation tax breaks and the *Financial Times* has warned that the first is a cut in the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to perhaps 20 percent. While US workers are facing the highest levels of poverty in a generation, these new measures show how little Trump intends on being "the president for the people."

Unsurprisingly Trump's administration will also be mounting more attacks on trade unions. (see page 8)

The Republicans' so-called "right to work" laws, which in another staggering example of newspeak, claim to protect workers' rights while in reality limiting the rights of workers to organise to such a degree that if followed through, they will all but destroy the trade unions in the United States.

On health, Trump's policies are just as disastrous. His own website declares: "On day one of the Trump administration, we will ask Congress to immediately deliver a full repeal of Obamacare. However it is not enough to simply repeal this terrible legislation.

"We will work with Congress to make sure we have a series of reforms ready for implementation that follow free-market principles and that will restore economic freedom and certainty to everyone in this country."

This is devastating news for not only for the 50 million US citizens Oxfam estimates to be living in poverty but to the entire US working class.

All these things are precisely the sorts of policies we oppose in this country and we must stand in solidarity with those standing against Trump in the US.

But this is not just a matter of principle. Should the most powerful nation on earth be allowed to set the tone for such vicious neoliberalism, it will only serve to embolden those at home to do more of the same. And this is already a very real threat.

Theresa May has begun opening the door for the greater involvement of US businesses in the NHS as part of a trade deal with Trump's administration. This should ring alarm bells of very real dangers on the horizon. We must say

loud and clear why this is utterly unacceptable and has to be resisted at all costs.

This is why we're playing a key role in building the anti-Trump protests.

It is also why we're playing a key role in building the movement to save our NHS. It has been under threat from cuts and closures and sneaking privatisation for years. But with the era of Trump upon us, this process could accelerate and while the NHS is already in the grips of its now annual "winter crisis" and is – as the Red Cross has stated – nothing short of a "humanitarian crisis," this is a critical moment for our greatest achievement.

That is why we are also urging everyone to come on the #OurNHS National Demonstration on Saturday March 4 in London, to make sure these are not the last days of a publicly owned and publicly run NHS.

The rising resistance against Trump represents a huge opportunity for those on the left to make the case for a different kind of world. Let's make sure we're on the streets in our hundreds of thousands saying: "No to Trump," "Shame on May" and "Save Our NHS." See you there.

Tom Griffiths is the national organiser for the People's Assembly Against Austerity.
Morning Star ✪

Call to ban Trump from Britain

Lamiat Sabin & Peter Lazenby

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May was urged last week to cancel Donald Trump's upcoming state visit to the UK in response to the American president's Islamophobic ban on refugees and nationals of several Muslim countries entering the US.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, Liberal Democratic Party leader Tim Farron, and Scottish National Party foreign affairs spokesman Alex Salmond all called on the Prime Minister to scrap the plans to roll out the red carpet for the billionaire later this year.

Thousands of demonstrators protested against the ban, which applies to visitors to the US from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, outside the Prime Minister's residence at 10 Downing Street and across the country.

A march organised by a coalition of groups including Stand Up to Racism and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) took place outside the US embassy.

Corbyn told British television network *ITV Sunday*: "I am not happy with him coming here until that ban is lifted, quite honestly.

"Is it really right," Corbyn asked, "to endorse somebody who has used this awful misogynist language throughout the election campaign, awful attacks on Muslims and then this absurd idea of building a wall with their nearest neighbour? Donald Trump should not be welcomed to Britain while he abuses our shared values with his shameful Muslim ban and attacks on refugees' and women's rights."

The British Parliament could debate the visit after a petition on its website topped one million signatures by yesterday evening. Graham Guest, who started the petition, said that he fears Trump will use the visit and the accompanying photo opportunities with royalty to bolster his image and to "legitimise his presidency."

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, the first Muslim mayor of a major Western city, also demanded that Trump's visit be cancelled over the "cruel and shameful ban."

MCB – the UK's largest Muslim umbrella group – has called on the government to "stand up for British values" and speak out against the ban. It said the barring of Muslims would not help tackle terrorism, but rather was imposed to "placate the most hateful sections of American society."

MCB general secretary Harun Khan said, "This ban on Muslims is not only an inconvenience, it is downright dangerous to our values of equality and non-discrimination.

"Our government should express in no uncertain terms how daft this policy is to its US counterparts and press home how counter-productive it is in its professed fight to confront terrorism.

"As an important ally of the United States, surely we have a duty to remind them of the values they were founded upon."

After initially saying that the ban was simply a matter for the US, the Prime Minister's Office said May does not agree with the policy and would act to help British citizens who would be affected.

Morning Star ✪

Sydney

TRUMP and US



You are invited to a discussion on the impact of US President Trump for peace in the world and for the anti-war movement in Australia

Saturday 25 February

1.30pm — 4.30pm

**Mitchell Theatre
Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts
280 Pitt Street, Sydney**

speakers:

Peace movement

ICAN

Greens

ALP

Dr Vince Scappatura

Gem Romuld

Senator Lee Rhiannon

tbc

Entry by gold coin donation

Folks had better hang on because this is going to be a wild ride... Only by connecting all the dots and working to build a broad and unified movement... can we put the brakes on this fall over the cliff that the new corporate government in Washington is pushing us toward. Bruce Gagnon

Organised by Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition (AABCC) 0418 668 098 and Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN-NSW) 0420 526 929

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Palm oil greed and destruction

Greenpeace has just revealed that HSBC, one of the biggest banks in the world, is funding palm oil companies who are destroying rainforest in Indonesia. We've even caught the catastrophic damage on camera.

Forest destruction is helping

to push orangutans to the brink of extinction. It's causing forest fires which are linked to thousands of premature deaths every year. Yet HSBC is pumping piles of cash into this crisis.

Banks are extremely sensitive to scandal. And to make matters worse, HSBC often tries to trumpet its sustainability credentials. If we stand together right now, we can expose HSBC's hypocrisy to people across the world, including its customers. We can force them to change.

HSBC says on its website, "Considering sustainability when we make decisions helps us to protect our reputation ... and manage the risk profile of the business." Now we've caught a palm oil company which was lent millions of dollars by HSBC, bulldozing rainforest in secretly filmed footage. Oops!

We know just how to call

companies like HSBC out. When thousands of us publicly shamed Santander by linking it to forest destruction, it cut its ties to irresponsible companies just weeks into the campaign. Like Santander, HSBC doesn't want its customers to see burning forests and choking orangutans when they look at their bank card or bank statement.

**Max, Jonathan, Bev, James
Greenpeace Australia Pacific**

Housing not speculation

The housing system should be for housing rather than speculation, and also it is NOT an even playing field. i.e. the system is rigged against first home owners.

Property is increasingly owned by property speculators as opposed

to "normal" home owners who are being pushed out of the market.

And government at state and federal levels is making a motza as it reaps higher income from these investors and property speculators (capital gains tax when investment properties are sold, land tax which is not charged on the family home, and a further river of gold from rezoning and stamp duty etc) than it would from first home owners.

So both government levels have skin in the game when it comes to negative gearing and support for property speculation.

Yet the answer to the housing affordability problem is not that difficult. In the 1950s and 1960s home owners could claim their interest payments on their tax – something that is now only allowed to speculators under negative gearing. The government could reintroduce this

system and instantly put first home owners on an even footing with speculators. Additionally, long term low interest loans for first home buyers, as has been very successful in the UK, could also be introduced – and would have the added kick of putting real competition to the big banks which are benefiting enormously from the current speculative property market.

While the solutions seems fairly obvious, the reluctance of the federal government to even the playing field makes you wonder whether our politicians are more worried about the real estate lobby, the 4 Big Banks and big business lobby, as well as their own rivers of gold from the speculative side of the property market, than they are about fixing the urgent and major issue of housing affordability for first home owners.

**Dr Con Costa
Sydney**

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Science and nonsense



Donald Trump shamelessly uses lying as a tactic.

Marxism-Leninism is not only a political theory (albeit a very significant one), it is also a science. Its alternative name in fact is scientific socialism. Communists are committed to science and the scientific method, which is why we take such a dim view of creationists and other anti-science crackpots.

Religion dominated – and seriously inhibited – intellectual life in Europe for hundreds of years, until the pressure for material development combined with the sudden influx of riches from the newly discovered lands of the East and the Americas brought about a realignment of class forces. The previously all-powerful feudal landowners and their ecclesiastical allies found themselves having to make room for merchants and traders, people who measured their wealth not in land but in capital itself.

This new class, soon to be the ruling class, encouraged innovation and scientific research, for it expanded the possibilities for improving their financial position even further. The doctrines and practices of the Church came under intense scrutiny as inventions and discoveries multiplied and the sum of human knowledge expanded exponentially.

At the same time this new ruling class recognised that religion can be a valuable tool in promoting and defending the principles and values on which capitalism depends and encouraged its continued existence. Ideally, however, capitalism needed a different religion, one that did not (hypocritically) preach against accumulating riches, and Protestantism was born. As Christianity diversified into different

trends, capitalism reached an accommodation with all of them.

Jumping ahead a couple of hundred years and capitalism has become dominant. The workers and peasants on whom it depends for the continued creation of its wealth have become aware of their rights and have launched revolts and full scale revolutions with varying degrees of success in an attempt to remove the capitalist foot from their proletarian neck.

In the leading capitalist country, the USA, religion flourishes despite the country having been founded as a secular state with careful separation of church and state embedded in its Constitution. The class interests of capitalism have overridden the intentions of the USA's founding fathers and their institutions and mass media assiduously promote religious beliefs as an essential part of modern life.

A consequence of this is the formation of bizarre pseudo-scientific establishments like the Institute for Creation Research. "Creationism" is an attempt to dress anti-scientific religion in the clothes of science. So powerful is the religious lobby in the USA that this attack on science is actually taught in schools on par with science itself in some US states!

A favourite target of this "scientific" church lobby is advocates of evolution within the (genuine) scientific community. Evolution is not a theory, as they invariably assert, but a proven, scientific fact. But, incredible as it seems, in the heartland of capitalism evolution is still vigorously attacked. William Rivers Pitt, writing recently in *Truthout*, noted the dishonest tactic used by one of "creationism's" most

ardent defenders, the late Duane Tolbert Gish, "neuroscientist and hardcore creationist." Gish apparently enjoyed engaging in public debates with scientists advocating evolution, but significantly "Mr Gish's chief tactic, known in debate terminology as 'spreading', was to fire off as many points as possible in a short span of time.

"Nearly every point delivered is either partially or completely false, but the opponent faces a daunting task when confronted with so many issues to refute at once. Like as not, they are overwhelmed, and the spreader emerges victorious while seeming to be a master of voluminous data ...

"Nowhere is the tactic more evidently used than within the confines of the corporate 'news' media. ... It is a marvellous way to fill precious air time with the nitrous oxide of nonsense that comes from a bunch of people shouting lies simultaneously at the top of their voices." And why does the corporate "news" media give these people airtime? Because, as Pitt observes, it's "good television."

Pitt raises another, related point: who uses this tactic notably now? US President Donald Trump. "Trump modelled his entire presidential campaign on the tactic – outrageous tweets, bizarre proclamations, an ocean of lies deployed on the hour at all hours of day and night."

Far from relinquishing the tactic after he was elected to the Oval Office, Trump has stepped up its use. Says Pitt: "Consider Trump's recent remarks at CIA headquarters:

"When I was young – and I think we're all sort of young. When I was young, we were

always winning things in this country. We'd win with trade. We'd win with wars. At a certain age, I remember hearing from one of my instructors, 'The United States has never lost a war'. And then, after that, it's like we haven't won anything. We don't win anymore.

"The old expression, 'to the victor belong the spoils' – you remember. I always used to say, keep the oil. I wasn't a fan of Iraq. I didn't want to go into Iraq. But I will tell you, when we were in, we got out wrong. And I always said, in addition to that, keep the oil. Now, I said it for economic reasons. But if you think about it, if we kept the oil you probably wouldn't have ISIS because that's where they made their money in the first place. So we should have kept the oil. But okay. Maybe you'll have another chance. But the fact is, should have kept the oil."

Pitt skewers this farrago for the dishonest nonsense it is: "No, we were not always winning. No, we can't keep the oil. No, he actually was a fan of the Iraq invasion. No, we don't have ISIS because of the oil. No, they shouldn't get another chance. Five dollops of galactic nonsense delivered in an avalanche of jumbled verbiage, all of which is abandoned without correction or refutation as the next avalanche comes sliding down the hill."

Pitt makes the comparison: "That was how he campaigned, and that is how he is governing".

So the next time Trump spews a seeming load of rubbish, remember – he's not a fool, it's deliberate! ☹

Woody Guthrie sings again

Tim Wheeler

SEATTLE: Cheers from a capacity crowd greeted "Woody Sez: The Words, Music and Spirit of Woody Guthrie," during its final matinee at the Seattle Repertory Theatre on January 29.

An ensemble of four singer-musicians from Edinburgh, Scotland brought Woody Guthrie's radical, pro-worker songs and commentary to life singing *This Train is Bound for Glory*, *Jackhammer John*, *So Long It's Been Good to Know Yuh*, *Oklahoma Hills*, *Pastures of Plenty*, *All They Will Call You is Deportee*, and many other immortal songs of the great troubadour. They drew big crowds during their gig here on January 10-29.

David Lutken conceived the production and plays the role of Woody Guthrie. He has even mastered an Oklahoma nasal twang so his singing and speaking is a great impersonation of Woody Guthrie. He told the crowd they have performed "Woody Sez" in 73 countries since it premiered ten years ago at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2007 in Scotland.

It follows the rambling of our nation's greatest folksong composer starting with his childhood and youth in Oklahoma. His affluent family is financially ruined by the Great Depression and the drought that brought on "Dust Bowl days."

The play-musical recounts touchingly Guthrie's affliction with Huntington's disease at the very time Cold War anti-communism was clamped on the nation, which saw an attempt to silence Woody Guthrie, his close friend Pete Seeger, Huddie Ledbetter, and other great folk singers.

Woody's lines in the spoken part of the musical includes a tribute to the role of the Communist Party USA in organising the fightback against outright starvation in the 1930s. He mentions by name famous party leaders William Z Foster, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and "Mother" Bloor.

Darcie Deaville and Helen Russell, with Lutken and Andy Teirstein as backup, brought the house down when they sang Woody's *Union Maid*, a song that more than any other expressed the fighting spirit of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), whose founding ushered in a time when millions of workers flooded into the labour movement. The two women in the cast belted out that song and the crowd erupted in cheers.

The four cast members sang Guthrie's *The Good Reuben James* about a US seaman who died when a

Nazi U-boat torpedoes a Lend-Lease Liberty ship, the *Reuben James*.

Then Lutken opens a newspaper clipping and reads Woody Guthrie's latest "Woody Sez" column against fascist-instigated wars. It was published in the 1930s in the West Coast paper *People's World* and on the East Coast in the *Daily Worker*, both forerunners of today's *PeoplesWorld.org*.

The score is so faithful to the life and spirit of Woody Guthrie that they sing *Riding in My Car*, one of Woody's gentle songs that also included *Don't You Push Me*, and other songs for children.

Many in the crowd had tears in their eyes as they stood and joined in the final song, *This Land is Your Land*.

The crowd was so enthusiastic that the performers sang an encore with *Roll On Columbia*, a song Guthrie composed during a brief stint as an employee of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) in Portland, Oregon. The song celebrates the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam.

Lutken came out to the lobby to greet people after the performance. I introduced myself as a reporter who worked for 50 years on the *People's World*, the newspaper that printed "Woody Sez." He greeted me warmly and signed my compact disc: "For Tim Wheeler and the *People's World*."

(If you want to order the CD, check out the play's website or send an email to woodysezNYC@aol.com)

I asked Lutken where they are headed next assuming that he would answer along the lines of Portland, Oregon, San Francisco, or LA. "We are headed back to Europe," he replied. "We perform widely in the UK and on the continent. Our next show is in Vienna."

What a shame, I thought to myself. Not perform in Portland where Woody composed *Roll on Columbia*, and *Pastures of Plenty* and 24 of his other greatest songs?

I Googled when we got home and found that over the past decade, Lutken and his fellow singers-musicians have performed "Woody Sez" in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as in Oklahoma.

But people all across the US should be hearing "Woody Sez," a musical that celebrates us and our struggles for equality, jobs, and peace.

It is as if the election of the billionaire, Trump, as president, last November, has brought Woody Guthrie back from the grave to lead



An ensemble of four singer-musicians from Edinburgh, Scotland brought Woody Guthrie's radical, pro-worker songs and commentary to life.

us all in songs of mass fightback, like the slogan he had lettered on his well-worn guitar: "This Machine Kills Fascists."

A week before we attended "Woody Sez," a singer-musician, Randy Noojin, was performing *Hard Travelin' With Woody*, to appreciative crowds in Seattle. Last year, a book by Greg Vandy with Daniel Peron titled *22 Songs in 30 Days* recounted Woody Guthrie's outpouring of great songs while employed by the BPA. And Smithsonian Folkways has just released a two CD album "Roll Columbia: Woody Guthrie's 26 Northwest Songs."

Some of the songs have never been heard and now we hear them for the first time sung by Woody Guthrie himself.

This was my first visit to the Seattle Repertory Theatre since 1947 when I went with my second grade class at Queen Anne Elementary School to a performance of "Heidi". Soon after, the Canwell Committee, the local rendition of the House Un-American Activities Committee launched a vile redbaiting attack on the Repertory Theatre branding it a "Communist front." The witch hunters forced that theatre to close in the University of Washington District.

But the Canwell Committee and HUAC are dead and gone. The Seattle Repertory Theatre is alive and well, drawing capacity crowds to cheer Woody Guthrie and other anti-fascists.

People's World ☺

POLITICS IN THE PUB

February 9

SYRIAN CRISIS – ALEPPO, THE LOST CITY?

- Dr **Ahmad Shboul**, former head of Middle East Studies, University of Sydney
- Dr **Rodger Shanahan**, Research Fellow, the Lowy Institute

February 16

LAND CLEARING, SPECIES EXTINCTION & MURDER: THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Dr **Oisin Sweeney**, Snr Ecologist, National Parks & Wildlife NSW
- **Gregory Miller**, Producer at Film Projects, Director *Cultivating Murder*
- **Corinne Fisher**, Co-ordinator for Stand Up for Nature campaign, Total Environment Centre & Nature Conservation Council

February 23

THE CASE FOR PALESTINE

- **Nahed Odeh**, former Head, Women & Child's Unit, Palestinian Legislative Council, Ramallah & Doctoral student in Law, UNSW
- Dr **Peter Slezak**, Professor in Philosophy, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, UNSW

March 2

POLITICAL FUNDING: WHO PAYS THE PIPER CALLS THE TUNE? DOES DEMOCRACY MATTER?

- **David Shoebridge**, NSW Greens MP
- **John Keane**, University of Sydney
- Dr **Lloyd Cox**, Lecturer Macquarie University, Australian and US political history & foreign policy, globalization and nationalism

March 9

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY & THE FUTURE OF WORK

- **Jim Stanford**, Australia Institute Centre for the "Future of Work"
- **Jo Sehofield**, National Secretary of "United Voice"

March 16

PRESIDENT RODRIGO DUTERTE: BANE OR BOON?

- **Joffre Balee**, Spokesperson, April 30 Global Movement for Duterte Member, Migrante Australia
- **Adele Webb**, University of Sydney doctoral researcher

Every Thursday 6:30 pm
Harold Park Hotel
Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe

Charles Bradley 02 9692 0005
odl_bradley@pacific.net.au

www.politicsinthepub.org.au

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

Subscription to **The Guardian**

- 12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc / \$150 solidarity) 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc / \$80 solidarity)
 Special offer: 10 issues for \$10 (new subscriptions only)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order (Payable to "Guardian Publications")

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844 or info@cpa.org.au

Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

or by credit card: Mastercard Visa *\$20 minimum on cards

Card# _____

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

Editorial Office
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Tom Pearson

Published by
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment
is taken by **T Pearson**,
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

"Alt-news" and hate speech

Gouri Sharma

For many people, headlines such as "Birth control makes women unattractive and crazy" and "Political correctness protects Muslim rape culture", would be considered hateful, insidious and factually incorrect. But for millions in the US, it's headlines like these, and the agenda they're pushing, that have kept them coming back to US conservative, "alt-right" website *Breitbart News*.

Established as an aggregating site in 2005, its founder Andrew Breitbart launched the news website shortly after, with the aim of being the "Huffington Post of the right". Breitbart News went on to gain considerable traction for its pro-Israel, anti-establishment and populist agenda, targeting Washington's elite and the US mainstream media.

The site was taken over by one of its board members Stephen Bannon after Breitbart's death in 2012. Under Bannon, the site turned further to the right, embracing white nationalism and the "alt-right" movement – an alternative ideology that rejects mainstream conservatism and media.

During the US election *Breitbart News* was unashamedly pro-Trump and its readership kept growing. Between May and June 2016, it overtook major news outlets like *CNN*, the UK *Guardian* and the *Wall Street Journal* for levels of social media interaction with political content. Bannon was rewarded for his efforts, with Trump later naming him chief strategist in his administration.

But *Breitbart News* may find it difficult to replicate this success when it launches its German language edition later this year. Following the defeat of the Nazis, Germany implemented tough regulations that made hate speech a criminal act. German law includes the concept of Volksverhetzung or "the incitement of popular hatred", capable of disturbing public peace, including racist agitation – exactly the type of content *Breitbart News* is accused of publishing.

Despite its growing popularity, the site has courted much controversy and criticism. The *New York Times* described it as an organisation with "ideologically driven journalists", producing material labelled "misogynist, xenophobic and racist". The site has also been accused of homophobia, with one of its star columnists, a gay man named Milo Yiannopoulos, openly denouncing gay rights and calling for gay people "to go back into the closet".

Yiannopoulos has been permanently banned from Twitter for leading a racist campaign against actor Leslie Jones.

Rejection of hate speech

Recent developments in Germany suggest that *Breitbart News* is entering the German market at a time when the pushback against online hate speech is getting stronger.

Late in 2016, a Munich-based lawyer Chan-jo Jun lodged a complaint against Facebook, accusing it of violating German hate speech laws, supporting terrorist organisations and sedition, in a case that German prosecutors are still considering.

Jun said, "We are pushing for this because Facebook must comply with German law. While it's not clear yet if *Breitbart News* will be based here, in which case they will be subject to German jurisdiction, they may learn from what's currently happening with Facebook."

Two years ago, Justice Minister Heiko Maas set up a task force that included representatives from Google, Facebook and Twitter to address the issue of hate speech and fake news. The government is now looking at specific laws that would force the social media sites to play a bigger role in policing the hateful and illegal content that's shared on their sites.

Towards the end of last year, police in Berlin raided the homes of 10 people suspected of publishing offensive and hateful images and posts, directed towards refugees and immigrants. At the time, Berlin's top security official Frank Henkel said authorities "won't turn away if racism or incitement is being spread on the Internet".

There's also a movement among left-wing activists in Germany, who have been targeting far-right groups online and transforming their activities into donations for their causes.

Tense times

But *Breitbart News*, which also has plans to launch a French site, enters the European market at a tense time. The continent is currently facing a refugee crisis that has been unprecedented in the number of people fleeing war and poverty in search of a better life. Britain is preparing to divorce from the European Union after a referendum campaign dominated by fear and far right parties from France to the Netherlands are gaining in popularity.

One of the leaders of the far right movement in Germany is Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) or AfD. The



party, which has called for tighter controls on immigration and has adopted an anti-Islam policy, missed the five percent mark needed to enter parliament in the last federal elections in 2013, but made gains in regional elections last year and is set to be a big political force in September's elections.

Director of the European Journalism Observatory Stephan Russ-Mohl said, "The right wing populist movement is getting stronger and it could endanger democracies across Europe. And what we are seeing is a market for half-truths and misinformation. *Breitbart News* may be able to get a good market share because of its experience."

The AfD is openly hostile towards the mainstream media, banning journalists from its events – most recently from a conference it hosted for other European far right leaders in Germany. It often accuses journalists of bias and misreporting. It's a sentiment shared by nearly half of the country's population: a recent poll found that 44 percent of Germans distrusted the mainstream media.

Robert Mudge, a planning editor at broadcaster and news website Deutsche Welle, said:

"The timing is obviously no coincidence, with several crucial elections coming up this year in Europe that could see a significant political shift towards the far-right."

"*Breitbart News* is tapping into a sentiment felt very keenly that the mainstream media is out of touch with the problems of ordinary Germans and do not reflect their aspirations and anxieties – hence the term 'Lügenpresse' (lying press) – and are seen as part of a larger conspiracy along with the mainstream political parties."

While the hate speech laws are in place, it doesn't mean they are being implemented to their fullest potential. "The obvious problem is that while we have these wonderful laws, we don't have the police force or the justice system to follow through," said Russ-Mohl. "The challenge will be how to ensure that young people aren't influenced by a site like *Breitbart News*."

As *Breitbart News* prepares to spread its brand of journalism across Europe, all eyes will be on the reaction of Germany, a country so determined not to repeat past mistakes.

New Internationalist ★

The Communist Women's Collective
Invites You To ... **IWD LUNCH**
Sunday 1 pm March 5
Cyprus Community Club 58-76 Stanmore Road Stanmore
\$15 Adult / \$40 Family – includes speakers / lunch / entertainment
RSVP by 02/03/2017 For more info & bookings contact Linda – 9699 8844 / info@cpa.org.au

Equality, Women's Rights, Equal Pay

Australian Marxist Review
Journal of the Communist Party of Australia

4 issues are \$25 including postage within Australia

IDEAS THEORY POLICIES EXPERIENCE DISCUSSION

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
02 9699 8844 shop@cpa.org.au cpa.org.au
Credit cards incl type, name, number & exp date.

Communist Party of Australia
www.cpa.org.au cpa@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Bob Briton
email: gensec@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
email: president@cpa.org.au

Adelaide Bob Briton postal: PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015
phone: 0418 894 366 email: sa@cpa.org.au web: www.adelaidecommunists.org

Brisbane postal: PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179 phone: 0499 476 540
email: bris@cpa.org.au

Canberra email: act@cpa.org.au

Darwin Vinnie Molina phone: 0419 812 872 email: darwin@cpa.org.au

Melbourne Andrew Irving
postal: Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053
phone: 03 9639 1550 email: cpavic@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)

postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Newcastle email: newcastle@cpa.org.au

Perth Vinnie Molina postal: PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906
phone: 0419 812 872 email: perth@cpa.org.au

Western NSW Allan Hamilton
postal: 121 McKay St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590
email: western.nsw@cpa.org.au

Sydney Wayne Sontor
postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 phone: 02 9699 8844

Tasmania Bob Briton phone: 0418 894 366 email: tas@cpa.org.au

