



# Scrap the Commission

Anna Pha

For more than 15 months the media has run a regular stream of unproven allegations of union corruption and coercion as if they were fact. Labor and trade union leaders have been subjected to intense interrogation and their reputations sullied. Now the tables have turned; it is Abbott's \$52 million trade union Royal Commission and its Commissioner whose credibility is at stake. On Friday August 21, it was the Commissioner, former High Court judge Dyson Heydon, who was on trial following revelations that he had accepted an invitation to a Liberal Party fund-raiser.

Heydon sat quietly as legal representatives for the ACTU\* (representing the Communications, Electrical, Electronic, Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing and Allied Services Union of Australia; the Health Services Union; the Transport Workers Union of Australia; Maritime Union of Australia; and Unions NSW), the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union and the Australian Workers Union argued their cases for him to stand down from the Commission.

The unions used a well-established test to argue their case: "a judge is disqualified if a fair-minded lay observer *might* reasonably apprehend that the judge *might* not bring an impartial mind to the resolution of the question the judge is required to decide. That principle gives effect to the requirement that justice should both be done and be seen to be done, a requirement which reflects the fundamental importance of the principle that the tribunal be independent and impartial...(emphasis added by ACTU)." (*Ebner v Official Trustee in Bankruptcy* (2000))

They did not accuse Commissioner of bias, but "apprehension of bias".

### Liberal fund-raiser

The correspondence between the organisers of the 2015 Barwick Address to Heydon for the Address this month made it clear that it was a fundraiser for the Liberal Party. There was even a form to fill in to send a donation for anyone unable to attend.

As recently as April this year an agreed date in August was set. But regardless of whether Heydon had forgotten it was a Liberal Party function, had not noticed the large blue Liberal Party logo on the invites or donation form, the fact he took on the role of Commissioner is in itself suggestive of bias.

Further doubts have been raised when revealed this week that Justice Heydon sat on a panel that approved PM Abbott's Rhodes scholarship in the 1980s.

### Stop the TPP

Last Sunday protesters gathered in Sydney's Martin Place to rally against the anti-democratic, job busting Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. It was part of a growing opposition to the TPP, nationally and internationally.

(Photo: Tom Pearson)



### Built-in bias

In a speech to a *Quadrant* magazine dinner in 2004, he was highly critical of "judicial activism", saying it went beyond what was necessary to resolve a dispute to serve some "illegitimate function" which furthered "some political, moral or social program."

What better way to describe the Commission – an "illegitimate function" to further "some political, moral or social program."

A "fair-minded lay observer" might reasonably see the title and terms of reference of the Royal Commission as biased, regardless of who accepted the Commission. The employers and their Liberal Party political representatives are excluded as if they were cleanskins.

Abbott had learnt the lessons of two previous Royal Commissions into unions.

The Cole Commission (2001-2003) looked into alleged misconduct in the building and construction industry. It did what it was asked to do and embarrassingly for the Howard government it turned up criminal and corrupt conduct amongst employers. None-the-less, it was used to justify the establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) to police and hound trade unions.

Former Coalition Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser set up the Costigan Royal Commission into the Painters and Dockers Union (1980-1982). Its inquiries exposed the so-called "bottom of the harbour" tax evasion schemes.

More seriously, the Commission implicated a prominent Australian businessman codenamed the "Goanna" in tax evasion and organised crime, including drug trafficking. Rumours abounded regarding Kerry Packer – again not the outcome desired by the government.

The terms of reference on this occasion were narrowed to ensure the real criminals, the current "Goannas", were protected.

### Witch hunt

The actions of the Commission are unprecedented. Former Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the current parliamentary leader of the ALP Bill Shorten have been hauled before the Commission and interrogated.

Like many of the others who have appeared, no criminal or corrupt activities have been found, but their reputations have suffered. Innocent trade unionists and their families have been put under considerable and needless stress and pain.

The usual rules of fairness associated with the judicial system have been denied. Accusations appear as fact. Unions have been denied the right for a legal representative to cross-examine witnesses making allegations about corruption.

### Royal Commission failed

After more than 15 months the Commission has failed to prove "rampant unlawfulness" in the trade union movement. A few individuals are facing criminal charges which could easily

have been investigated by the police and laid without sully the reputations of others.

As the trade unions have consistently pointed out, there is no shortage of laws to deal with criminal activity by individuals. There is no need for the Commission.

Abbott has had a bad month. The credibility of the Royal Commission is in tatters. The Australian Building and Construction Commission legislation has been blocked for a second time in the Senate. The Productivity Commission's draft report on industrial relations, as anti-union as it is, did not go far enough as far as many employers are concerned.

The Royal Commission was one of Abbott's main weapons against the trade union movement and the ALP. It has failed to do the job he intended. Heydon's comments about opposition leader Bill Shorten's lack of credibility have lost their impact. It's the Royal Commissioner whose credibility is at issue now.

In a strange twist of the law, it is Heydon who is deliberating on the evidence and determining his own fate. His decision had not been delivered at the time of going to press. If he decides to hang in there, the unions could mount a court challenge.

Meanwhile Abbott should cut his losses and save the taxpayers by shutting down the Commission now.

\* To see full ACTU submission: [www.tradeunionroyalcommission.gov.au/Media/Documents/ACTU-submissions.pdf](http://www.tradeunionroyalcommission.gov.au/Media/Documents/ACTU-submissions.pdf) 🇺🇦

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## Guardian

Issue 1699

August 26, 2015

### Corporate vigilantes

Federal Attorney-General George Brandis has threatened to change the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act)* to prevent what is described as “ideologically-motivated”, “third party”, “vigilante litigation” or “lawfare” against mining projects. The PM, Cabinet colleagues and the Murdoch press have chimed in to “save jobs”, help the struggling economy and “restore balance” in the process for approval for resource sector ventures – or so they say.

The reason for the burst of strongly-worded statements from these Coalition heavyweights was the decision of the federal court to set aside approval for the controversial Carmichael coal mine in Queensland backed by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani. The Mackay Conservation Group pointed out that the documentation about the proposed mine’s impact of the endangered yakka skink and ornamental snake was not provided. The federal government has six to eight weeks to provide the conservation advice. That is the action currently being branded “lawfare” by the pro-corporate vigilantes currently occupying the front benches on the government side of parliament.

“There has been a litany of challenges against a mine that in fact is going to power the lives of 100 million impoverished people in India,” Treasurer Joe Hockey said in question time recently. In fact India is aiming to halt the importation of thermal coal within three years. There are currently two challenges to the coal mine – the successfully settled one by the Mackay Conservation Group and a Queensland land court case involving the Coast and Country environment group. There were three challenges to now-abandoned plans to dump dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef and the Caley Valley Wetlands.

In all, there have been 27 challenges to the 5,500 projects referred to the federal Environment Minister in the 15 years since the *EPBC Act* was introduced by the Howard government. That’s fewer than two a year. The Abbott government has failed to point out how any of these challenges have been “ideologically-motivated”, part of a “deliberate campaign of economic sabotage” or contrary to the public interest, especially with regard to the environment.

The Adani mine typifies the cargo cult mentality of the federal government. It turns out the main obstacle to the mine is finance. Coal is on the way out as a fuel due to concerns surrounding galloping global climate change. The export price would need to double to make the project viable. Claims gobbled up by the Murdoch press that it would create 10,000 jobs are contradicted by Adani’s own experts who suggest (perhaps optimistically) 1,464 jobs would be created. There have been claims that the mine could be Queensland’s equivalent of South Australia’s Olympic Dam copper and uranium mine. The comparison is telling. The BHP Billiton mining centre is currently shedding jobs as the world makes its judgement on uranium as a fuel for generating electricity.

The federal government is a cheer squad and management team for capitalists seeking the biggest, quickest returns possible. Talk about wanting to restore “balance” between mining interests and the “environment” is so much deluded hot air. The “environment” is not a party who sits at a table and negotiates the extinction of species or the survivability of the planet. It is an externality that has to be respected by rational people possessed of as many facts as possible. We must face it that capitalism accepts no such rationality. Profits rule and workers and the environment that supports us all must bend to that rule.

The threat to gut the *EPBC Act* is not an isolated outburst. Hostility to environment and other groups resisting the corporate agenda is a theme running through the history of recent Australian governments and big business. There have been SLAPPS (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation), the infiltration of environment groups and the disruption of their legitimate activities. There has been legislation to simply ban opposition to corporate vandalism. The Tasmanian government sought to enact mandatory minimum three-month jail terms for protesters who attempt to “prevent, hinder or obstruct the carrying out of a business activity”. Thankfully, popular resistance thwarted the move but Australians must step up their opposition to increasingly frequent manifestations of corporate dictatorship.

#### PRESS FUND

Last week brought shocking revelations that in Australia’s Nauru immigration detention centre women asylum seekers have been raped (with one now dying in hospital), while some of the men have been subjected to the horrible torture of water boarding. What are we becoming as a nation? If you feel enraged by these reports, as we do, you should consider sending us a Press Fund contribution for the next edition, and preferably on a regular basis, because we’re determined to do everything in our power to reverse the terrible direction of politics in this country under the Abbott government. We offer our thanks to this week’s supporters, as follows:

Iranian Comrades \$30, J Kiek \$25, “Mad Dog” \$25, Mark Mannion \$5, “Round Figure” \$15

This week’s total: \$100 Progressive total: \$4,690

# Solidarity with the CP of Ukraine!

## Joint declaration of the German Socialist Workers Youth (SDAJ) and the German Communist Party (DKP)

The Communist Party of Ukraine has been deprived of its status as a party, and the minister of justice has forbidden its participation in elections. The government of the pro-EU entrepreneur and now President Petro Poroshenko, which came to power by a coup d’etat by fascists, has thus taken a further step towards outlawing the CPU and other communist organisations.

In April the new pro-Western regime banned written and video statements critical of capitalism. The government takes a social-reactionary bearing, hoping to be included in Western free trade agreements. Some oligarchs prefer cooperation with the USA, others hope for membership of the EU.

They – for instance the Kiev mayor Vitaly Klitschko – primarily

seek (and find) contacts in Germany. They have in common that they intend to foster Ukrainian nationalism in order to enforce anti-worker politics of social cuts, arms spending and the dismantling of democracy. At the same time as they blatantly breach the Minsk Protocol, the Kiev government wages a war against the People’s Republics in the Donbass region, which is directed against civilians and civil infrastructure.

The CPU stands for resistance against the Kiev government’s reactionary politics. Therefore, its members are being persecuted, and the party has been put on a black list. Meanwhile, the power of the government is also based on irregular fascist militia groups who attack anti-fascists, Jews, and so-called separatists.

We condemn these anti-democratic practices and demand the

abolition of all limitations on communist organisations in Ukraine! In the regions under full control of the government, fascist organisations are active, nationalism is flourishing, and the number of violent anti-Semitic and homophobic attacks is massively increasing. At the same time, benefits are reduced, wages are cut, state companies privatised and trade union activities hampered. This leads to the people’s poverty. Health care, pensions and welfare are plunging.

This is the prospect revealed which imperialism offers!

We side with all those who struggle against racist separation, anti-Russian warmongering, fascism and dismantling of democracy.

No ban of the CPU and other communist organisations!

Long live international solidarity! ✪

## Fears for health of Nauru rape victim

Fears are growing for the health of the 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker on Nauru who has been held in isolation since being the victim of a savage sexual assault in May.

Nazinan’s physical and mental health has deteriorated badly since the attack. She has not been eating or drinking for the last few weeks and is often unresponsive even to family members.

On August 14, after falling unconscious, Nazinan was admitted to the Nauru hospital and was re-hydrated. It is reported that she is now too weak to walk unaided.

On August 17, doctors told her family that the high potassium levels in her blood indicate kidney failure and that she at risk of permanent kidney damage. On August 18,

doctors again told the family that Nazinan’s kidneys were failing and have warned that already she may require a kidney transplant.

But immigration has done nothing to provide the health care Nazinan needs.

“Since the assault in May, the Immigration Department has done everything to cover up the attack. The family was told that Nazinan would be brought to Australia as other sexual assault victims on Nauru have been,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“But a week ago, the department officials changed their minds. Immigration and IHMS (private health provider International Health and Medical Services) officials sent from Canberra told the family that

they would not be taken to Australia but would be sent back to the family detention camp on Nauru.

“Even as Nazinan’s health has failed so badly in the last few days, immigration have sat on their hands. They have done nothing to provide the medical assistance she urgently needs. She is still isolated at the IHMS clinic.

“Nazinan is a victim of sexual assault. Now she is a victim of wilful neglect by Australian Immigration and IHMS who are responsible for her. Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton is playing politics with her life. Peter Dutton is guilty of attempting to cover up the scale of sexual abuse on Nauru.

“Nazinan must be urgently medi-vacced to Australia.” ✪

### Website and Computers Appeal

The PA has launched a Special Appeal to buy a few computers and develop its website and social media – the latter now being an important way of reaching younger people. As everything, this costs money and our resources are stretched. We still need to raise more to meet our needs. We urge you to dig deep and support our fund-raiser. If you have just received a tax refund, perhaps you could share it with us.

#### Website and Computers Appeal

Name/Organisation \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque/Money Order: make out to “Communist Party of Australia”.

Credit card: sign, give name on card, card number & expiry date:  Visa  Mastercard

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Send to: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010 or phone it through on: 02 9699 8844

**Thank you for your support.**

# Government attempts to muzzle the arts

Peter Mac

Last year the government cut arts funding by \$28 million, as part of a four-year \$100 million funding reduction, and three months ago it transferred \$105 million that had been allocated to the Australia Council to a proposed new National Program for Excellence in the Arts (NPEA).

As a result, in the next financial year the Australia Council will only be able to provide 40 percent of last year's funding resources. However, the government's move on arts funding seeks not just to cut costs, but also to exert political control over the arts.

The Arts Council funding policy involves a peer-reviewed and independent selection process that's intended to ensure arts activities do not simply become the political plaything of the government in office.

But that's exactly what's happening now. Under the new arrangements, NPEA will be controlled by the Arts Ministry. Grant application assessors will be selected by the Ministry, and some may be ministerial staff members.

Conflict of interest guidelines will relate only to applicants, not to assessors. Federal Minister for the Arts George Brandis will have the final approval on applications, which will be granted in secret and only disclosed after the event, as a fait accompli.

Last week Brandis admitted candidly that the government was determined to exert control over the arts. He sneered: "the only people who have anything to fear from this program, frankly, are the mediocre because they're not going to be beneficiaries of it."

The small and medium sized organisations and the individual performers, who will suffer the cuts, are being treated as "the mediocre". In contrast, the 28 major performing arts companies, including Opera Australia, The Australian Ballet, state orchestras and state theatre companies, are quarantined from the latest funding transfer, as they were from last year's arts funding cuts.

They will also receive extra NPEA funding. In short, funds are

to be taken from the smaller companies and individuals and given to the major companies.

The discrimination is significant. Performances by the smaller organisations and individuals, including the radical theatres and satirical one-man comedy shows, are far more likely to contain material critical of the government.

Moreover, by quarantining the larger organisations, the government is attempting to cripple protests by splitting the arts community into opposing factions.

## Patchwork protests

The Greens and Labor have instigated a Senate inquiry into the impact of the arts funding policy. The first hearing was in Melbourne on August 12, and two others are due next month.

The umbrella organisation the Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG) has made a detailed submission to the inquiry. It welcomes certain aspects of the NPEA, but it also calls for an increase in grants for the minor companies and direct funding rather than the transfer of funds from the Australia Council.

According to the National Association for the Visual Arts, there have been more than 2,260 submissions to the inquiry. Circus Oz wrote that the new policy would "deeply destabilise small-to-medium artists" and could threaten their professional survival.

The State Theatre Company of South Australia, the Queensland Theatre Company and Circus Oz have also made individual submissions, but most of the major companies have not.

Some major companies have expressed public opposition to the new policy.

Rob Brookman, chief executive of the State Theatre Company of South Australia, recently declared: "We have already seen the death of regional theatre, the death of community theatre, the steady stripping out of second-tier companies and youth theatre. Further incursions into the small to medium theatre sector will seriously threaten the future health of our art form in toto."



The Australian Ballet's production of Tchaikovsky's Christmas spectacular, *The Nutcracker*.

In an open letter to Brandis the artistic director of the Queensland Theatre Company wrote that the new policy "could jeopardise the ability to sustain an already strained cultural ecology".

And last week at the Helpmann Awards for the performing arts, Andrew Kay, president of umbrella organisation Live Performance Australia, voiced criticism of the government's policy and defended the small to medium companies.

Nevertheless, the number of public statements of protest by the major companies has been very small. Brandis recently crowed triumphantly: "I haven't had a single word of criticism about this proposal from any of [the major performing arts] companies".

Writing in *The Saturday Paper* last week, journalist Steve Dow noted that few of the 28 major companies were prepared to express forthright criticism of the new arts

policy, and many refused to be interviewed.

Speaking at the National Play Festival three weeks ago, playwright Joanna Murray-Smith commented acridly: "Those vocal champions of art ... including those who have always prided themselves on their iconoclasm, are silent in their offices, biting their nails. ... ultimately, they are afraid of getting on the wrong side of the minister."

The Abbott government sees the arts as a potential source of opposition that must be rigidly controlled. But it is likely to back down if it meets united and determined opposition.

Moreover, the Liberals themselves are divided on the issue, because the Australia Council was actually established by the Holt coalition government in 1967. At the Helpmann Awards the NSW Deputy Premier and Arts Minister Troy Grant expressed his pleasure at attending

the event, but added with sharply-pointed humour; "I'm more pleased that I'm here as part of a government that didn't cut arts funding".

The arts community is counting on the possibility of the government drawing back from the cuts because of massed public opposition.

But the public will only act if the arts community sets an example by presenting a united front – and that requires the major companies to openly condemn the discrimination against the smaller performers. Submissions to the Senate inquiry are important, but they are not enough.

If the major companies fail to publicly denounce the government's action and engage in a campaign of public opposition, the entire arts community will find itself trapped in political subservience to the government, with many or most of the minor organisations wiped out.

And such an outcome is unthinkable. ☹

## Pete's Corner



## CPA Port Jackson Branch invites comrades and friends to join us for our Port Jackson Discussion Hour

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Tuesday September 15

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# Long established liberties under threat

Al Wasat Bilal Cleland

**We have recently been confronted in Australia with an attempt to get Cabinet to agree to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection being given the authority to remove the citizenship from Australians with dual nationality, if they are guilty of terrorism, supporting terrorism or are suspected of terrorism. It is also being discussed whether sole nationals, who may have the right to citizenship of another country, can also have their citizenship removed. This is to be done based on security reports. The law courts are to be kept out of the matter except there can be a review of the process of citizenship removal by a judge.**

“Potentially hundreds of Australians could be stripped of their citizenship and then deported, without recourse to the courts as to the merits of their defence, once the Australian Parliament passes tough new counter-terrorism laws with the support of the opposition.

“On the same day that the opposition confirmed it backed extending citizenship cancellation to terrorist fighters, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton revealed security agencies were combing through the case files of Australian dual citizens at home and abroad regarded as sympathetic to terrorist organisations, involved in fighting with them, recruiting for them, and/or financing such organisations and their activities.”

[canberratimes.com.au 04-06-2015]

This appears to be aimed at the Muslim community, which is now being subjected to a level of harassment not experienced before in this country. The strongly maintained silence of the government regarding the Reclaim Australia rallies was noted, as was the clumsy attempt to hide the intent of [Liberal Senator Cory] Bernardi's halal food enquiry by including kosher and organic certification. No one was fooled.

Religious toleration and the rule of law have had a rocky history in the British and Australian past, but

there are major features of our legal and constitutional system worthy of respect and protection. The evolution of a civilisation which involved the rule of law, the exercise of restraint upon the power of the ruler, and acceptance that people have basic rights, took many years to achieve. Varieties of Roman and feudal law, rooted in the pagan past, still dominated Europe, including England, for more than 1,000 years.

## Royal attempts to prevent change

From within this difficult internal climate, two great achievements were realised. These were the Magna Carta of 1215 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

In the 1200s, King John, successor to Richard the Lionheart of crusader fame, was struggling for control with his rebellious barons. Calling on papal authority for support against them, he made England a tribute-paying vassal of the Pope, but still he was not satisfied. Not enough support was forthcoming.

This led to a little-known incident in English history that could have potentially created an upheaval that would have changed the course of history. Gabriel Ronay in *The Tartar Khan's Englishman* gives an account of the secret mission that King John sent to Mohammed al-Nasir, the Emir of Morocco. According to the mediaeval historian Matthew Paris, “The envoys were instructed by John to tell the great king of Africa, Morocco and Spain that he would voluntarily give up to him himself and his kingdom, and if he pleased he would hold it as tributary from him; and that he would abandon the Christian faith ...”. He also offered to help the Emir in his struggle against the King of Aragon in the contest for Spain.

The Emir was not impressed. After closely questioning the delegation, he had a strong response. “Your king,” he told the ambassadors, “was a petty monarch senseless and growing old. He was a man of no consequence quite unworthy of any alliance with a Muslim ruler like himself.” He understood that John was a tyrant and totally rejected him.



British Library reunites Magna Carta copies for 800th anniversary.

## The rise of the rule of law

Foiled in his last attempt to get external aid, King John was forced by his barons to sign the Magna Carta on June 15, 1215 at Runnymede. It included protection for the barons from illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and limitations on feudal payments to the Crown. John immediately tried to back out of it and it was annulled by Pope Innocent III two months later, leading to the First Barons' War. Re-issued several times, the definitive version is from 1225.

Magna Carta has survived down the centuries because it asserted one fundamental principle, that of the rule of law. The sovereign was constrained by law, and the whole community came under its framework. This is exemplified by its provisions.

“The thirty-ninth by sequence ... declares that ‘[no] free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way ... except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land’; the fortieth, ‘To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice ...’”

[Inside Story, 05-06-2015]

The leading early 17th century

jurist and Member of the House of Commons, Edward Coke, put forward the Petition of Right in 1628 which expounded the subjects' rights with respect to the monarchy, including protection against arbitrary imprisonment, freedom from taxation without parliamentary representation, and Due Process of Law.

## Divine right

The divine right of kings claimant, Charles I insisted he had “sovereign power” to rule the country but Coke reminded the members of Magna Carta which protected subjects from arbitrary royal decrees. The Civil Wars of the 1640-50s and the beheading of Charles I, the republic and then the struggle against the divine right claimant James II, were all informed by these ideas. The 1688 Glorious Revolution, which established the system of constitutional monarchy which still prevails, came from these foundations.

The 1689 Bill of Rights which recognised the significance of the Magna Carta, “proclaimed fundamental liberties, including freedom of elections, freedom of debate in Parliament, and freedom from excessive bail and from cruel and unusual punishments.”

It also barred Roman Catholics from the throne, as the threat of a restoration of divine right monarchy, as almost occurred under James II, was a danger to peace.

## Threat to our way of life

The suggestion that a Minister of the Crown, namely Dutton, should be able to impose the punishment of exile upon free citizens of Australia and presumably if they cannot be deported, their incarceration in detention camps like those used for asylum seekers is an assault upon traditional liberties. It is an attempt to remove the basic provisions of the Magna Carta, and by exceeding executive power, the 1689 Bill of Rights.

This has shocked some members of the government itself. One former Howard-era minister made her opposition very plain: The former Howard government immigration minister Amanda Vanstone has said she despaired to learn that people on her side of politics thought it was acceptable for a minister to revoke an Australian citizen's rights “in the blink of an eye”. In a strongly worded intervention in the debate on forthcoming counterterrorism laws, Vanstone accused her former colleague, Prime Minister Tony Abbott, of throwing the Westminster system of cabinet government out the window. She also warned that “cutting down our democratic protections to get at the enemy is profoundly dumb”.

The muted response of the opposition on these matters, so basic to our way of life, suggests there is indeed a profound threat to liberty in Abbott's Australia.

*The Beacon* ✪

## Australian Marxist Review

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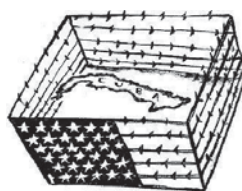
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Sydney

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54 YEARS IS ENOUGH

Thursday September 17 at 5:30 pm  
Outside USA Consulate in Martin Place

Also to stop the subversion funds against Cuba & to return Guantánamo to its rightful owners – the Cuban people.

# A tale of two histories

Peter Mac

Writing in the Murdoch press last week, former ASIO officer Molly Sasson repeated allegations that a Soviet mole operated within ASIO after WW2. She also revived old suggestions that Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon once had a covert working relationship with former Soviet diplomat Vladimir Alexeev, described by Sasson as an agent of the Soviet intelligence organisation, the KGB.

Ms Rhiannon undoubtedly knew members of the Soviet diplomatic corps because of her membership of the Socialist Party of Australia, which had strong and friendly ties with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

However, Sasson and others imply that Rhiannon's relationship with Alexeev necessarily involved betrayal of Australia's national interest. The one piece of evidence upon which that implication rests is that in 1970 ASIO intercepted a phone call from Alexeev to the 19-year old Ms Rhiannon (then Lee Brown), in which he arranged to meet her on the Soviet liner *Shota Rustaveli* just before she sailed for Britain.

Aleyeev himself did not sail on that voyage, and there is no evidence whatsoever that they discussed anything other than the trip before cheerfully saying goodbye. Ms Rhiannon, who has accused ASIO of being both unethical and incompetent, commented: "I spent the whole of that long voyage reading *Lord of the Rings* and socialising".

Nevertheless, Sasson notes proudly that when she told her boss, ASIO head Peter Barbour, about the phone call, he flew "into a panic", contacted his opposite number in Britain, and ordered his staff to compile a file on Ms Rhiannon.

## Memories of the Accord

The *Australian* newspaper also published an article recently in which former Prime Minister John Howard claimed "... many of the economic changes of [the Keating] government were only made possible through the co-operation of the Coalition."

Howard cited privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas, removal of official controls on interest rates, the reduction of tariffs and the floating of the Australian dollar.

He gloated: "In opposition the Coalition parties supported most of Labor's expenditure cutting measures, and did not oppose the introduction of the HECS scheme for university fees, thus ending the Whitlamite fantasy of free education for all."

Nevertheless, he reprimanded Labor for not supporting subsequent Coalition initiatives, including the GST, workplace relations changes, and waterfront reform.

Predictably, Keating erupted, snarling, "From the exchange rate through to the product markets and down to enterprise bargaining ... I didn't need to ask John Howard, and I didn't".

Although the articles by Sasson and Howard were concerned with the past, they have implications for the future course of Australian politics.

## Behind the two histories

The ruling class regards Australia's political-economic system as God-given. It considers anyone who favours radical alteration of that system as a traitor, and bitterly resents the activities of the organised working class or any person or organisation that opposes any aspect of the economic rule of the major corporations in Australia.

All the articles in *The Australian*, including Sasson's, are filled with menacing implications about



Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon

because if a foreign communist government wanted to covertly gain access to another country's state secrets (as every intelligence organisation around the world tries to do) it would certainly not recruit someone who was entirely open about his or her commitment to the communist cause.

Nevertheless, such accusations serve the interests of right-wing governments because they foment discord within working class and pro-

discredit her and persuade the Greens not to adopt a militant position on industrial relations or other policy matters.

For his part, Howard couldn't resist the temptation to take a piece out of the ALP in his article. Old habits die hard! Nevertheless, the article is addressed to the Labor leadership, and argues that the Coalition and Labor should adopt bi-partisan policies on a wide range of issues, regardless of whether they're in gov-

relations in the early 1990s, was that a particularly well-argued case from opposition can shift public opinion. The current opposition may well try that approach. It could be surprised at the dividend."

So will the two major parties cooperate, as they have over citizenship stripping or participation in US-led wars in the Middle East? Howard's argument for a more friendly relationship is more likely to be welcomed by Abbott's possible replacement Malcolm Turnbull than by political attack dogs like Abbott and Scott Morrison, another candidate for the top job.

They're much more likely to favour continuation of character assassination and fear-mongering, characteristics of the Cold War when the Menzies government denounced communists as traitors and attempted to ban the Communist Party.

Or will the two major parties engage in fierce competition to adopt the most reactionary policies, as they have with their brutal treatment of asylum seekers? Or is it possible that Labor will actually adopt a principled, humane and independent stance on immigration, defence and other issues?

In the run-up to the elections the Australian people will have to watch very closely not only what happens within Liberal ranks, but also within the Labor Party. ☺

**The ruling class bitterly resents the activities of the organised working class or any person or organisation that opposes any aspect of the economic rule of the major corporations in Australia.**

Rhiannon's associations with Soviet diplomats. Yet a journalist for *The Australian*, Christian Kerr admits that "There is no evidence that Rhiannon ... ever worked as a Soviet agent".

Quoting former ASIO head Peter Barbour, another journalist for *The Australian*, Cameron Stewart, uses nearly identical words but substitutes "member of the Communist Party" for "Soviet Agent".

The identification of communists with espionage activity is irrational,

gressive organisations, obstruct the work of those who are most active within them, and lay the ground for their repression.

There is no evidence to confirm Sasson's insinuations about Ms Rhiannon, who has acted throughout her parliamentary career with great dedication and integrity to improve the lot of ordinary Australian workers, promote peace and protect the environment.

The never-ending attempts to smear her reputation are intended to

ernment or in opposition.

With the Coalition facing disaster at the next elections under Abbott's leadership, Howard is attempting to ensure that the reactionary Coalition policies continue, whether the Coalition or Labor win the election.

At the end of his article Howard states: "Political parties have a responsibility to advocate sound policy in opposition as well as in government. My own experience in opposition, particularly in industrial

# Privatisation threatens TAFEs

## Australian Education Union statement

**It's hard to understand why governments keep pushing the privatisation of vocational training, when the evidence shows it damages TAFEs and delivers low-quality qualifications to students.**

When Tony Abbott and state Premiers met in July to discuss the future of federal/state relations, one of the nasties in the communiqué from the meeting was a plan to make vocational education a federal government responsibility, while leaving state governments to run TAFEs.

This would be a disaster for TAFEs, and for vocational education and training (VET) because it would accelerate the privatisation agenda around VET, and make

TAFE just another organisation competing for funding.

TAFE's unique role serving disadvantaged Australians, and providing vocational education to millions across Australia, would be at risk.

Rapid privatisation of VET is happening across Australia, and is a fundamental shift away from TAFEs and towards for-profit providers, who are able to compete for government funding.

This has led to private companies generating big profits off the back of taxpayers and students, and growing uncertainty about the quality and usefulness of qualifications in the sector.

Things have moved so fast that in Victoria, South Australia and

Queensland, TAFEs are now minority providers of government funded VET.

But these changes have not led to a rise in the quality or efficiency of vocational training, they have driven a rise in low-quality courses delivered by for-profit companies and a rise in student debt through the VET FEE-HELP system.

Students don't have the information to assess the quality of heavily-marketed private courses or whether they will actually lead to a job.

In Victoria 10,000 qualifications have been recalled due to poor quality training, and the industry regulator, ASQA, found last year that 75

percent of private registered training organisations didn't meet quality standards on a first inspection.

## Taxpayer-funded profits

Lack of regulation is allowing for-profit companies to milk the system at the expense of students and taxpayers.

TAFEs can't compete with private providers who offer a two-year course in a matter of weeks, or who use unscrupulous tactics to sign up students.

As well as costing jobs in TAFEs, this broken system is leaving students the victims: without the skills they need to get secure jobs

and saddled with huge debts they will struggle to pay off.

It is also having huge ramifications for our ability as a nation to provide the high skilled workforce that is required to allow Australia to remain competitive and prosperous.

There needs to be bipartisan support for reforms that would help guarantee the future of TAFE by restricting the amount of government funding available to private providers.

If we lose the experience and capacity of TAFEs we will be unable to rebuild them and students will be left with a sub-standard system. ☺

# Dangerous allies

## US bases and troops in Australia

Shirley Winton

**There's a great deal that could be discussed and analysed about the US Pivot into Asia-Pacific, but I will confine myself to the US-Australia military alliance and its implications for Australia with a threat of war in the region.**

The world today is torn by imperialist wars, wars by proxies of imperialism and threats of war. Behind most major wars of aggression, occupations, regime changes, is the hand of the US empire and its multinational corporations, banks and financial institutions. At the centre of these wars is monopoly capitalism's insatiable drive and need to capture more natural resources, new markets, cheap labour and expanded areas of new investments for capital. Sovereign countries that refuse to be subjugated to imperialist powers' demands are savagely attacked, and in the case of Libya, Syria and Iraq, are crushed. Where there is resistance by governments and the people of sovereign countries, the imperialist powers install their local fascist puppets to suppress the people, divide, conquer and loot the sovereign countries' resources and wealth.

### Fierce competition

The major powers of US and EU collude in waging wars against sovereign countries and people, and at the same time, they are in fierce competition with each other in the re-division and capturing of the world's resources, markets, cheap labour and political and economic spheres of influence.

This is what drives wars of aggression and occupation by imperialist powers and their proxies.

By all indicators the Asia-Pacific region is becoming another major centre of economic rivalries in the 21st century.

The US has more than 1,000 US military bases and intelligence installations in countries around the world and on every continent. And these are the publicly disclosed. There are many more secret or camouflaged US military and intelligence bases around the world. At least 300 of these known US bases are in Asia-Pacific: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Guam, New Zealand, Thailand and Vietnam.

Even before the US announced its US Pivot into Asia-Pacific in 2011, more than 320,000 US troops and marines are already stationed in Asia-Pacific. This number will grow much higher over the next five years with the announcement that 60 percent of the US military, naval, air and ground forces will be shifted to Asia-Pacific by 2020.

In November 2011 President Obama visited Australia to make the first public announcement of US new policy named the US Pivot into Asia-Pacific. The announcement was enthusiastically greeted with a great deal of fanfare by the gushing Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the equally subservient LNP opposition. In October 2012 the then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, also graced Australia's shores to reaffirm and strengthen the US-Australia military alliance. She commended Australia's two main parliamentary parties' subservience and unquestioning support for US preparations for another major war and Australia's integration into the US war machine. Significantly, both Obama's and Clinton's announcements were made in the Australian parliament. There was no need for parliamentary and public discussion or debate as it would only jeopardise and upset US strategic plans in Asia-Pacific and Australia's crucial role as its deputy sheriff.

### Long history

Successive Australian governments have a long history of subservience and submission to US domination economically and militarily since the Second World War, and before that to British imperialism and colonialism.

And what is the US Pivot into Asia-Pacific really about? It's about protecting and expanding the economic domination by the US and its multinational corporations and monopoly

banks in the region. The rapid economic growth and influence of China threatens the US economic and political hegemony in the region.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is the economic side of the US Pivot into Asia-Pacific and is driven by the US and its multinationals and banks. It is being ruthlessly imposed on 40 percent of the world and nearly one billion people. The TPP will open up and create new markets and areas of investments for its corporations, banks and giant financial institutions to intensify and broaden the exploitation of people and the environment to maximise profits.

Thomas Friedman, the famous US economist and *New York Times* columnist said in 1999, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist of the military. McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."

Friedman clearly demonstrates that the US economic power cannot be sustained and enforced without the backing of the US military.

In the past few years the US has shifted more attention to the Asia-Pacific. Kurt Williams, assistant secretary of the US Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs, told the US House of Foreign Affairs Committee in October 2011, "... we are witnessing the re-emergence of the Asia-Pacific as a key theatre of global politics and economics ... as Asia rises, so too must America's role in it."

Hillary Clinton refers to the Pivot as "forward deployed diplomacy", "expanding trade and investment, forging a broad-based military presence and advancing democracy and human rights".

For past 60 years, since the Second World War, the US and its corporations have dominated the Asia-Pacific region economically and militarily. They have been able to maintain that power over countries and people through their client governments in Japan, Australia, South Korea, Philippines, etc. However, whilst militarily it's still a super power, economically it's in decline, due to its own worsening capitalist economic contradictions and crises.

By 2020 the US will relocate 60 percent of its military forces, naval, air and ground forces from around the world to Asia-Pacific. New bases will be built, existing bases upgraded and expanded, and the previously decommissioned bases closed down by the people's movements will be re-opened e.g. the Philippines.

### Australia a US base

The Pivot is turning Australia virtually into a US military base and a launching pad for its imperialist wars. Australia's military and intelligence facilities have now been officially opened to US war ships, nuclear powered submarines, US Air Force, intelligence gathering and spying on other countries and people. The joint US-Australian military facilities are "joint" only in name and in reality operate as American run facilities with the US in command. The upgrading of existing Australian military facilities with high-tech military equipment, the establishment and maintenance of new bases and hosting US marines in preparation for the US launching pre-emptive wars, will be paid for mainly by the Australian people through our taxes, just as the people of Japan have been paying for the gigantic US military base on Okinawa for more than 60 years.

This is one of the demands of the US Pivot, together with the integration and interoperability of Australia's military forces into the US imperialist war machine. The US is insisting on large budget increases in Australia's military spending on the Pivot. This is clearly spelled out in the US Pivot documents, and Australia's two main parliamentary parties oblige.

There are more than 20 highly secretive, so-called joint military and intelligence bases and facilities in Australia, in reality under the US command. They are based mainly in West



Australia and the Northern Territory. I won't list all of them just now. Pine Gap in Central Australia is best known and warrants special attention. It is the most important base of all the US overseas intelligence installations. There are also Australia's air force and naval military facilities that will be virtually operating as US bases.

The two main parliamentary parties enthusiastically welcomed the permanent rotational stationing of 2,500 US marines at Bradshaw Military Base near Darwin. However, it is accepted that the number of US marines stationed in Australia will be significantly higher.

The decades-long mass struggle by the Japanese people to rid Okinawa of US troops and bases is forcing the US to look at relocating some of their military to a more safe and stable country. Guam, a significant US outpost covered with US bases and thousands of troops, has no more room to expand. It is likely Australia's compliant governments will bow and allow the US to move more of its troops here.

There are also military facilities for joint US-Australia military exercises on land, sea and air. Talisman Sabre is a major joint military exercise held every two years, mainly between US and Australia's military forces. Many of these military exercises are now also jointly held with Japan, US, Australia and New Zealand. This year, July 4-12, some of the world's largest military exercises were held in Queensland, primarily on the central coast of Queensland in Shoalwater Bay near Rockhampton, and also in the Northern Territory near Darwin. More than 34,000 troops were involved in these joint exercises – over 20,000 US marines, 10,000 Australian troops, 500 NZ troops and up to 40 Japanese military personnel. Many US war planes, war ships, nuclear submarines, war technologies and intelligence, were brought to our shores and activated during these pre-emptive war preparations.

During the exercises a group of several hundred people held a Peace Convergence in Rockhampton to protest at the rehearsals for pre-emptive wars of aggression, calling on Australia to break from the US-Australia military alliance and for an independent and peaceful foreign policy.

### Deep integration

The deep integration of the Australian military into the US war machine is accelerating. There's been extraordinary growth in Australia of US military intelligence activities. The opening up of Australia's military defence facilities to the US and handing over command to the US military and the permanent stationing of US troops and marines will deepen the integration and interoperability between US, Australia

and Japan's military forces and foreign policies, with the US at the helm.

Behind the moves by the Australian government handing over the lucrative contract to the Japanese to build Australia's submarines is the pressure from the US who want full integration and interoperability of US, Japan and Australian military, with the US in command.

US forces and air force bomber planes regularly use Australia's Bradshaw Military Base near Darwin for exercises and reconnaissance. In early April 2015, US Lieutenant Colonel Dougherty excitedly proclaimed Australia as an empty place: "You guys have opened up your homes to us. We're living in your guesthouse. The outback truly is out back, with vast wide open spaces. There's things we can do here we cannot do back in the States. [In the US] it's very restricted; you have to worry about safety considerations like not shooting other units as you train. Here you don't have those issues. It's a blank slate." – no recognition of local Aboriginal communities, the environment and other local communities. The *terra nullius* of British colonialism in 1788 continues today, but is now replaced by the US.

In May this year, during testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, US Defence Department Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, David Shear, announced that in addition to the movement of US Marines and Army units around the Western Pacific region, "We will be placing additional Air Force assets in Australia as well, including B-1 bombers and surveillance aircraft." It was later claimed that Shear "mis-spoke" – it's more likely that he "let the cat out of the bag" and revealed the US's real intentions for this country.

The US Pivot is defining Australia as a major US military and intelligence base, and a launching pad for its drones, overseas military incursions, targeted assassinations and, eventually, major wars in our region.

The strategic and military importance of Australia's subservience to US military and economic interests was in open view in 1975 when the newly elected progressive Whitlam Labor government of that time dared to question and raise concerns about the US-controlled Pine Gap. He also expressed his leanings towards making Australia more independent of the US, economically and militarily. Recent WikiLeaks documents confirmed the US role in the 1975 coup that overthrew the progressive Whitlam government.

The two main parliamentary parties' subservience to US military plans for Australia as its deputy sheriff in the region, and the erosion of independence and sovereignty to make our own decisions in the interest of Australia's

# Economic aftershocks of Nepal's earthquake

Maya Prabhu

**In downtown Kathmandu, Nepal's capital city, travel agent Sonam Ghale has plenty of time to talk. He spins his computer screen toward me, and scrolls demonstratively through a long Excel spreadsheet of cancelled bookings: business is terrible.**

It's an impact, he says, of the April and May earthquakes which killed over 8,500 in Nepal. The travellers for whom he usually arranges tours and Himalayan treks are steering clear.

We're in Thamel, the capital's backpacker heartland, a usually bustling warren of charmingly shabby alleys touting adventures, hotel rooms and curios to the annual slew of foreign visitors.

Although the earthquake was gentler on buildings here than in the many parts of the city, which are still frozen in scenes of raw devastation, it's hitting the traders hard. Yak wool, felt, cashmere and crewel-work still spill colourfully out of Thamel's shopfronts, but today it doesn't look like anyone is here to buy. More than three months after the quake, Thamel's streets are all but empty of tourists.

Nepal expected quieter monsoon months from June to August, which are the ebb-tide months of the tourism year. But this year's lull, I'm told repeatedly, is extreme. Kshitiz, head waiter at the popular tourist haunt The Yak, expresses the crisis in terms of dinner guests: on a typical late-July evening, he serves at least 25 customers. Tonight, he can expect just four.

Holiday-makers aside, the monsoon is peak season for Hindu pilgrims from India. Most monsoons, Sonam arranges an estimated 1,000 pilgrimages to Mount Kailash in Tibet. How many this year? I ask him. "Zero" he says, and shrugs.

Sonam and Kshitiz number among half a million Nepalis who work directly in tourism, and for whom Thamel's quiet streets are an augury of financial hardship. I spoke to Chandan Sapkota, Economics Officer with the Asian Development Bank in Nepal, who underscored the significance of the tourism sector as a source of livelihoods.

"Revenue generation from tourism is pretty low," he said, "about two percent of GDP. But direct and indirect employment generation is high. A lot of consumable goods for tourism-related industrial and services activities are procured internally, so there's a long value chain."

Sapkota explains that many of the vegetables grown in Nepal are destined for consumption in hotels and restaurants that thrive on tourist dollars. So it isn't only concierges and chambermaids, or trekking guides and porters, who rely on a healthy flow of visitors for their incomes, but farmers and truck drivers and all the many thousands who work economically upstream.

A short walk down the road from the Yak Restaurant, I meet Sheikh Abdul Khaiyum, a signmaker.

He is sifting through the crumbled wreck of his family home, a casualty of the April 25 earthquake. The three-storey house was his grandfather's, then his father's, he tells me. In 1934 the house withstood an 8.0 magnitude quake, needing only minor repairs.

Surveying the brick-and-matchstick rubble heap before us, he shakes his head. Finding an extra US\$140 each month for a small flat to accommodate his family – who



ordinary people, peace and the environment, appals growing numbers of people.

The call for an independent Australia with an independent foreign policy that builds peace with justice, and friendship with the people in our region, is now frequently raised. The late Malcolm Fraser, and former Liberal Prime Minister, had been publicly speaking out and warning of the dangers of US-Australia military alliance to Australia's people. He called for immediate removal of US troops from Darwin and closing down Pine Gap within five years.

In his recent book *Dangerous Allies* (reference to the dangers that the US is posing to the interests of the Australian people) he wrote, "Any political leader who offends, or who is believed to have offended the United States, is unelectable. Keeping the US alliance in good health is taken to be the first and most important aim of foreign policy."

Fraser, as a former Liberal Prime Minister, had direct knowledge and insight into the relationship between the US and Australia. In the last 2-3 years of his life he strongly advocated breaking out of the alliance for an independent foreign policy and an independent Australia. Fraser's stand illustrates the breadth of the growing united front movement for an independent foreign policy and strivings for an independent Australia.

## Independent and Peaceful Australia Network

IPAN was formed in early 2012 in response to the joint US and Australian governments' announcements on the Pivot, expansion of US bases and the stationing of US marines in Australia. It brought together peace, anti-war community groups, faith organisations and unions concerned with the rapidly increasing US military presence in Australia; the government's subservience to US foreign policies, and the distinct possibility that this will lead us into another major war – this time on our doorstep with countries in our region.

We are concerned that Australia does not have its own independent foreign policy that builds peace and friendship with ordinary people in our region and the world. In defence of Australia's security, sovereignty and peace in the region we've put forward a call for Australia to become independent of big powers' dictates and interests, and chart our own foreign policies that uphold and build genuine peace and justice.

Shirley Winton, IPAN (Vic), Spirit of Eureka (Vic)

A talk given at the Melbourne Unitarian Church on June 28, 2014.

The Beacon ✪



Buddhist monks salvage a statue of a Buddhist deity from a monastery around the famous Swayambhunath stupa after it was damaged in the earthquake in Kathmandu.

***"Unless the government manages to assure travellers that Nepal is safe, it will be very difficult to recover."***

"thanks be to God" all escaped via a first-floor window when the structure began to list – isn't easy. It's especially hard after losing the income he used to draw from renting out his home's ground floor to a local butcher.

Khaiyum's plans for reconstruction are accordingly modest. "I want to build a cottage," he says, stepping up onto a chunk of wall and sketching a floorplan with his hands: "with two rooms, here".

But saving up for building materials seems close to impossible when his clients – the hotels, shops and bars of Thamel – have no money to spend. And, with his repeated applications for government assistance generating no response, he hasn't even managed to clear the site yet.

## Trembling ground

The rains are due to let up in the next month; the mist will lift and the crystal peaks of the Himalayas will be visible even from smoggy Kathmandu. The drier air should signal the onset of peak tourism season, but travellers are unlikely to arrive in their usual numbers. "It'll be challenging to go back to previous visitor levels during 2015/16," Sapkota told me.

While a recent, government-commissioned study conducted by structural engineers at Miyamoto International declared the popular Annapurna trekking zone "safe", the quake-hit region remains seismically very active. Locals are growing used to the trembling ground they live on.

Sonam Ghale told me that "in the month after the earthquake, we used to run from our houses when we felt [a tremor]. Now, we don't even get out of bed."

As a new geological report warns that stress levels along a stretch of the Himalayan fault to the west of Nepal continue to build, foreigners might not feel quite as confident. And now, a controversial draft constitution has sparked political protests in pockets across the country.

So, what's next? In July, the Tourism Ministry reset its tourism target for this year, from 1.1 million visitors to 475,000. A post-disaster assessment determined that the sector will need an injection of US\$387 million to rebuild.

Sapkota says that a 2016/17 bounce-back to 800,000 visitors is possible, but warns, "unless the government manages to assure travellers that Nepal is safe, it will be very difficult to recover."

So far, the government's intentions seem promising. A high-level committee to promote tourism has been formed; the Miyamoto report commissioned.

Nepali representatives have made appearances at Indian tourism conventions, declaring the country back on its feet. What is lacking, explains Sapkota, is concrete action and an appropriate sense of urgency.

Government-led recovery initiatives have already faced serious delays. Nepal's reconstruction chief was only appointed to the post on August 14, more than 100 days after the earthquake. Meanwhile, the politics of the new constitution are threatening to overshadow recovery plans.

And Nepal's tourism agencies have a track record of failing to hit targets. Despite a much-promoted goal of 1 million annual arrivals by 2011, the country's busiest year to date has fallen 200,000 travellers short.

The fact that the Nepal Tourism Board is currently embroiled in a hefty corruption scandal, with charges filed against more than 20 employees, is likely to hamstring the body further.

A delayed rebound is a worrying prospect, Sapkota concedes: "A lot of low-skilled and unskilled jobs are dependent on [the sector's recovery]. Nepal is safe, authorities assure prospective visitors. But unless their message is heard, the livelihoods of Nepal's poor remain at risk."

New Internationalist ✪

# Profiting from stolen Palestinian land

Ben Norton

Agents working for the US-headquartered real estate giant RE/MAX are promoting themselves as specialists in property built in Israel's settlements on occupied Palestinian land. The Colorado-based corporation which says it operates in nearly 100 countries was identified as responsible by a 2013 United Nations' probe for how its Israeli franchises sell houses and apartments in the occupied West Bank.

Despite that criticism, many RE/MAX representatives are continuing to handle such property.

Shlomo Benzaquen, a RE/MAX agent, states on a website run by the company that his "area of expertise" includes a number of Israeli settlements.

He particularly recommends Kokhav Yaakov, Tel Zion and Adam (also known as Geva Bin-yamin) as "communities" which "offer tremendous value to young families and investors looking for high returns."

In fact, all of these "communities" are Israeli settlements inside the West Bank and are illegal under international law. Their construction and growth violates the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power from transferring its civilian population into a territory that it occupies.

The *Electronic Intifada* contacted Benzaquen by telephone, asking him why he is selling property built on illegally occupied land in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank.

"I don't know what illegally occupied is," he said. "I deal with Jerusalem. I'm not sure what you mean by East Jerusalem." Asked if he was familiar with the Fourth Geneva

Convention, Benzaquen replied "I'm not getting into politics" before hanging up.

His colleague Hillel Weinschneider, meanwhile, says on a RE/MAX website that his "area of expertise" is Ramat Eshkol and Givat Hamivtar. Both of those settlements are in occupied East Jerusalem, which Israel claims to have annexed in direct violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

## High prices

Scores of properties in the occupied West Bank (including East Jerusalem) are currently listed as for sale on RE/MAX websites. Some of them are on the market for high prices. RE/MAX is trying to sell a three-bedroom house in Jerusalem's Old City for US\$1.7 million. According to RE/MAX, the house was "built over 600 years ago by the Turks."

A video for the same property posted to YouTube by Benzaquen, states that the "light train is just nearby." That is a reference to a tram network which connects Israel's settlements in East Jerusalem to other parts of the city.

The French corporation Veolia has faced years of criticism and activist campaigns for its large-scale involvement in building the Jerusalem light rail, which Palestinians see as a means of tightening Israel's grip on their city. RE/MAX's Colorado headquarters did not reply to requests for comment.

## Illegal

The firm has generally kept silent when its activities have been highlighted by Palestine solidarity activists. It did, however, issue a terse statement last year.

The statement tried to distance the firm's headquarters from its Israeli franchise and noted that RE/MAX



A Boycott RE/MAX demonstration in Houston, Texas.

had reduced the number of its offices in the West Bank.

It failed to acknowledge that many of the agents handling property in East Jerusalem and the wider West Bank are working from offices in West Jerusalem.

But the company seems to be sensitive to activist criticism that it is involved in selling homes in illegal settlements within the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Searches on the RE/MAX Israel website suggest the company may be engaging in deliberate obfuscation of its West Bank settlement listings.

An interactive map of present-day Israel and the occupied West Bank displays red dots showing where RE/MAX-marketed properties are located. This map conveys the impression that it does little or no business in the West Bank.

However, if one searches for

the names of individual West Bank settlements, the true story becomes clear.

For instance, a search for "Ariel" results in a listing of 12 properties in that settlement in the northern occupied West Bank near Nablus. However, switch through to the "map view" of the same search result, and the red dots over Ariel have been removed.

Similar obfuscation is evident while searching for properties in the settlements of Maaleh Adumim, Gilo and French Hill.

The map is a key online marketing tool for RE/MAX Israel. Those who search for a property handled by RE/MAX Israel are immediately taken to this map.

RE/MAX still has agents based in Maaleh Adumim, one of Israel's largest settlements in the West Bank.

The anti-war group Codepink

has set up a campaign targeting RE/MAX over its property sales in Israeli settlements. Jodie Evans, a founder of Codepink, argued that it was dishonest for RE/MAX to claim that its Israeli franchise was unconnected to the Colorado headquarters.

Bernard Raskin, director of RE/MAX Israel, attended the parent company's annual convention in Las Vegas during March.

Raskin was faced by protesters but he "was not backing down and stood his ground the entire time we were in Vegas," said Evans.

"We can also say they lied in trying to distance themselves, because he had a huge presence and major influence in Vegas," Evans added. "He was bossing the hotel security around."

*The Electronic Intifada* ☪

# Giving blood and a lot more

The decision of Polish migrant workers to register en masse to donate blood to our NHS in protest at negative rhetoric directed against them is a fitting rejoinder to xenophobes.

Poles, in common with immigrants from the rest of the world, have had a positive effect on Britain.

They come here to seek work and higher living standards just as working people from these islands have done for centuries across the globe.

It is a gross slur against Polish workers and those from other countries to claim that they are in Britain to live off benefits rather than make their way in life through the fruits of their labour.

Many Poles came to Britain before and after the second world war, either in response to the partition of their country by Germany and the Soviet Union or because they didn't want to remain in Poland following its liberation from Nazi tyranny by the Soviet Red Army.

There was another wave of immigration following the turbulent events of the 1980s that culminated in the restoration of capitalism, giving rise to the media

phenomenon of the ubiquitous Polish plumber.

Many of these people were curious about societies they had not previously experienced and, having spent time here earning money, chose to return home.

Poles are now as entitled as citizens of any European Union member state to settle wherever they wish in any EU country.

Hostility to migrants coming from other EU states is usually framed in terms of excessive pressure on housing, the NHS, local schools or vague references to "foreigners taking our jobs."

Membership of the EU means that the very concept of "our jobs" is outdated. The bloc's free-market dogma is underpinned by the "four freedoms" of unrestricted movement of capital, goods, services and people across all 28 member states.

Britain's economy has been made more attractive for undocumented migrants by neo-liberal deregulation of the labour market that makes employment prospects rosier than in countries that maintain tighter controls, but this does not apply to Poles.

They have an absolute right

to come here, work and settle and should be welcome to do so.

If there are problems over inadequate housing, pressure on the NHS and schools or rising unemployment, these are faults of the economic system.

Long-term residents of Britain who follow employment prospects from one region to another can sometimes present difficulties for social services.

The correct labour movement response to such short-term problems is to demand that government takes steps to provide improvements to services.

The necessary corollary is to ensure that incoming workers are integrated into the organised labour movement, signed up as trade union members in the same way as if they had come from other parts of Wales, Scotland, England or Ireland.

Unorganised workers are a danger to themselves and to fellow workers.

Polish workers who take a day off work today to protest outside Parliament should be met by trade union organisers and encouraged to be part of a unified movement.



All workers should be unionised so that the class is united against right-wing demagogues who misuse working-class slogans to drive a wedge between communities on the basis of when they arrived in Britain or what they look like.

The trade unions must reiterate their basic philosophy of working-class solidarity, reassuring Poles and other national minorities that there is no category of second-class workers in Britain's labour movement.

*Morning Star* ☪



# Greece for sale

Nick Dearden

**I've just had a look at the latest privatisation plan for Greece. It's been issued by the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund – the vehicle supervised by the European institutions, which has been tasked with selling off an eye-watering US\$55 billion of Greece's "valuable assets".**

The fund was a real sticking point because the European institutions wanted to move it to Luxembourg, where they could keep a better eye on it. Anyway, it's still in Athens, and this document, dated July 30, details the goodies on sale to international investors who fancy buying up some of the country.

Fourteen regional airports, flying into top tourist hubs, have already gone to a German company; but don't panic, because stock in Athens airport is still on the table, as well as Athens' old airport, which is up for a 99-year lease for redevelopment as a tourism and business centre.

Piraeus and Thessaloniki ports are up for sale – the former case has caused the chief executive to resign and industrial action has begun. A gas transmission system looks likely to be sold to the government of Azerbaijan but there's still a power and electricity company, the postal service, a transport utility which allows trains and buses to run, the country's main telecommunications company, a 648-kilometre motorway, and a significant holding in the leading oil refinery, which covers approximately two-thirds of the country's refining capacity.

Holdings in Thessaloniki and Athens water are both for sale – though public protest has ensured that a 50 percent plus one share remains in state hands. Nonetheless, the sale will mean that market logic will dictate the future of these water

and sewerage monopolies. Finally, there are pockets of land, including tourist and sports developments, throughout Greece.

A second document details the short-term work program of various government ministers, detailing actions they must take in order to add value to these assets. This includes introducing toll booths on roads to licensing casino rights to declaring sites of archaeological interest. The document begs the question: why government ministers are even needed? It would surely be easier to cut them out of the equation altogether and let European Union (EU) institutions directly administer the country.

Why does this matter? First, because it makes no sense to sell off valuable assets in the middle of Europe's worst depression in 70 years. Those industries could generate revenues to help the Greek government rebuild the economy. In fact, the vast majority of the funds raised will go back to the creditors in debt repayments, and to the recapitalisation of Greek banks.

So the privatisations aren't to do with helping Greece. The beneficiaries are corporations from around the world, though eyebrows are particularly being raised at the number of European companies – from German airport operators and phone companies to French railways – which are getting their hands on Greece's economy. Not to mention the European investment banks and legal firms that are making a fast buck along the way. The self-interest of European governments in forcing these policies on Greece leaves a particularly unpleasant flavour in the mouth.

Most important is the inequality this will entrench in Greek society for decades to come. Of course, the fact that the state currently holds these assets is no guarantee of democracy.



There were major protests in Greece when the closure of public broadcaster EPT was announced.

Clientelism is rife in Greece. But the answer is transparency and democracy, just as German citizens are currently trying to take back energy companies into collective ownership in their own country because they see this as a prerequisite for fair pricing and supporting renewable energy.

What won't help is flogging off monopolies to private corporations that have no interest in Greece's people. Workers will be sacked and their conditions made worse, while the elite of Europe profits. Greece's government will have lost the ability to make its society function in the interests of ordinary people.

But then, I suspect that's the point.  
*New Internationalist* ✪

## Miners' killing marked with call for unity

James Tweedie

**President Jacob Zuma called on South Africans on August 16 to remember the 44 people killed at the Marikana platinum mine on the third anniversary of the tragedy.**

"This day must unite all of us as South Africans. Nobody supports the horrendous loss of life that occurred in Marikana," he said.

"We remember all who lost their lives, including those who were killed before and after August 16. All lives are equal and important."

Attempts by owners Lonmin – formerly British firm Lonhro – and the breakaway Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) to undermine the established National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) saw a spate of murders of NUM members, mine security guards and police in the week leading up to August 16, 2012.

That day, 34 AMCU members were shot dead by police at a rally near the mine in North West province – allegedly after they had attacked the officers with various weapons, though this version of events is hotly disputed.

More NUM members have been burnt out of their homes, assaulted and killed since then.

The day after the shooting, Zuma flew back from a regional summit in neighbouring Mozambique and ordered a public inquiry.

The resulting Farlam Commission took almost three years to report, largely due to AMCU lawyer Dali Mpofu's failed attempts to blame the tragedy on Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Among the recommendations of the Farlam Commission's report, released by the president on June 25, were that the conduct of the police on August 16 should be investigated,

especially at a second shooting site where half the 34 deaths occurred.

National Police Commissioner General Riah Phiyega duly submitted her comments to the president on August 1.

However, Lonmin – now owned by Swiss giant Glencore Xstrata – has yet to acknowledge its responsibility for the tragedy as detailed in the Farlam report.

The African National Congress called on mining companies to "learn lessons" from the tragedy and improve living conditions in mining communities in line with the Mining Charter – one of Lonmin's failings identified by the commission.

AMCU, also indicted by Farlam, marked the day with a commemoration for the 34 who died at its rally, but not for those murdered before or since.

*Morning Star* ✪



## Region Briefs

A Vietnamese delegation, headed by Vu Xuan Hong, President of the Vietnam Friendship Organisation (VUFO), visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), celebrating the DPRK's 70th Liberation Day and attending the 50th anniversary of the founding of bilateral relationships between the two countries' Friendship Associations. Vu's Korean counterpart, Kim Jong Suk, praised the contribution that the VUFO had made to the traditional friendship and cooperation between the two peoples. Both countries agreed to deepen their relations. The delegation also visited a number of cultural and educational facilities in the DPRK.

Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Yu Zhengsheng, and the country's Vice Premier Liu Yandong, attended a meeting on helping ethnic minorities. Yu called on the government to improve educational and environmental qualities for ethnic minorities. Some ethnic minority regions are still facing difficulties in providing better education, despite rapid developments in recent years. He believed that ethnic unity and socialist core values would ensure the continuity of traditional cultures. He added that "attention must be paid to compulsory, bilingual and vocational education in ethnic regions, and talented professionals from all ethnic minority groups should be encouraged to champion regional development". Liu said that communication among all ethnic groups should be increased. She called for teachers' training to be better provided for. She also called for the building of more boarding schools for inland ethnic students, thus improving their educational environment.

A Japanese trade union recently sued Himeji City government for forcibly stopping a union event that was held to fight against the Japanese government's war legislation. The event was held in front of Himeji station, a solidarity event supporting a larger protest at the Prime Minister's office in Tokyo. Soon after the event started, the city government revoked the permit that allowed for union use of the station square and stopped the protest with the excuse that it was disturbing public order. Participants said that "the city authorities are just like the old imperial government that repressed people who are against war aggression".

According to Chinese ambassador to Namibia Xin Shunkang, Chinese state-owned enterprises have created more than 6,000 jobs for local people, while China's Machinery Engineering Corporation has built the Ruacana-Omakange Road for the country. Namibian President Hage Geingob thanked China for building the road and improving the Namibian people's living standards during the country's current struggle for economic development. He stated that China was one of many countries that assisted Namibia during the country's struggle for independence, and he considered China as an all-weather friend. The 85-kilometre road provided a network, connecting with Angola in southern Africa. It also offered an easy access to Etosha National Park, boosting local tourism.

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Letters to the Editor  
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### Cowardice and moral bankruptcy

Seventeen years ago, not impressed by the Catholic Church of dismissive response to my pleas, I appeared in front of the Vatican Embassy in Washington holding a big sign:

“My life was ruined by a Catholic paedophile priest”.

The response of the self-appointed “Supreme Moral Authority of the Universe” conveyed by a ranking Holy See diplomat, an Italian priest, presents the defining evidence of the Catholic Church’s true nature:

1. Statute of Limitation;
2. Could have been my fault;
3. Protesting will be bad for me because I will be crushed by ridicule and shame;
4. American Law is too severe on child molesters and should (or will) change.

Yours sincerely in truth and justice,

John Wojnowski

### Fuel to the fire

Peace activists across the nation are united in their anger at the announcement that Australia will now join the US in bombing targets in Syria. IPAN is a network of peace groups with affiliates in every state and territory. It has consistently opposed the use of military power to solve international problems and believes that Australia has lost its independence through too close an alliance with the USA.

After more than a decade, it should be clear that military intervention in the Middle East has been an utter failure. It has achieved no worthwhile outcome in Iraq, instead reducing that once prosperous

nation to destitution. Many respected observers attribute the growth of fundamentalist militarism to the large scale Western interventions in the Middle East over the past few decades. Intervention hasn’t worked and it isn’t working. It is time for us to admit this and seek new strategies. Why persist in repeating the patterns that we can all see to be failing?

Significantly, once again, our nation’s military commitment has been ramped up without any debate in our Parliament. One back-bencher (Dan Tehan) floats the idea, and the next week the government follows his suggestion.

Increasing our military activity in this way, which will undoubtedly mean the deaths of more civilians as

a result of our government’s actions, is not in Australia’s best interests. Besides, this is blatant “mission creep”, whatever its proponents might say.

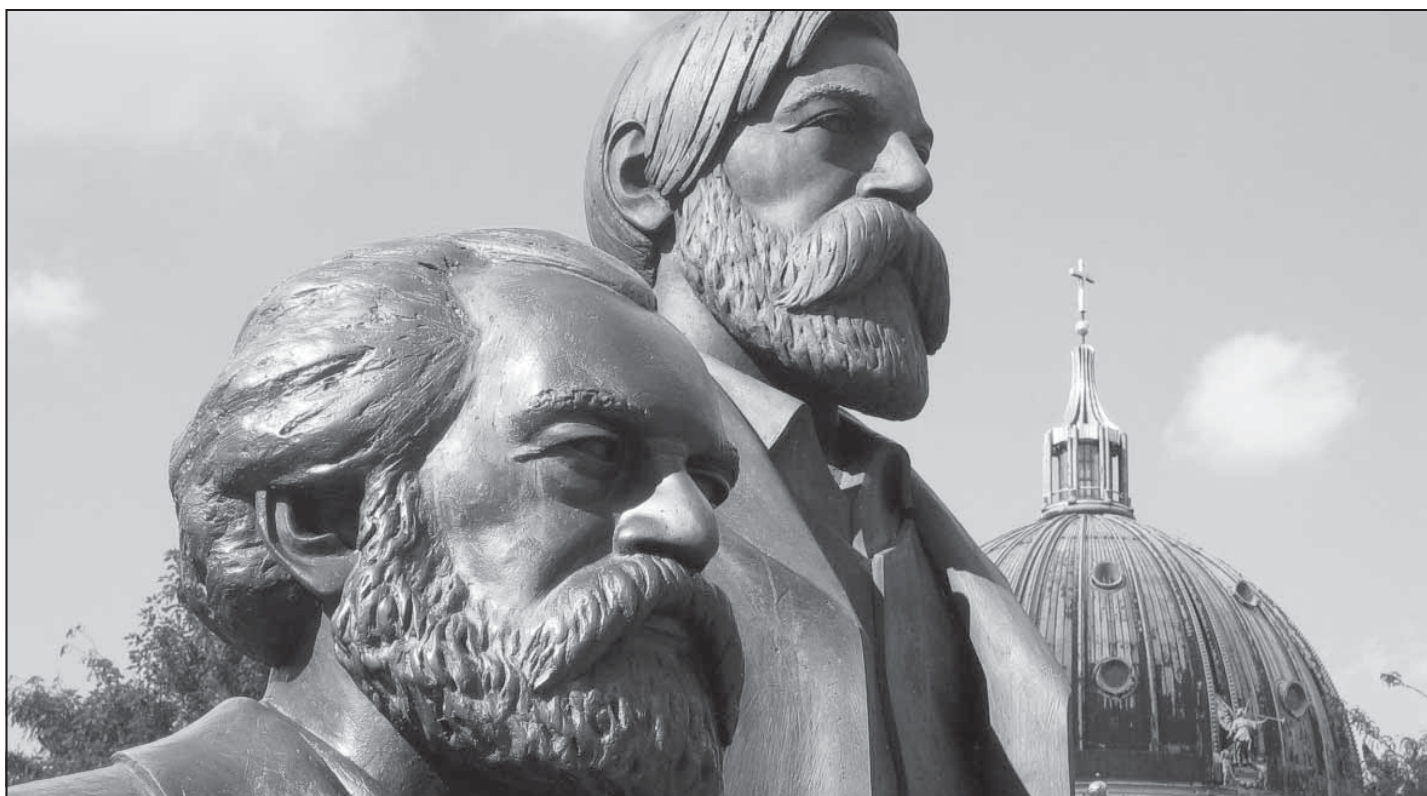
It is time for the Defence Establishment to wake up to the realisation that increased military activity does nothing more than add fuel to the fire that is ISIS.

If we genuinely want to live in a peaceful and independent Australia, we must end our proclivity for engaging in military action whenever it suits the interests of the USA.

Nick Deane  
Independent Peaceful  
Australia Network

## Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland



Karl Marx and Frederick Engels statue in Berlin.

# Marx and Engels and scientific socialism

Marx and Engels were not the first people to advocate a socialist form of society. There were in fact a slew of people in the early 19th century promoting various incarnations of socialism, but until Marx and Engels they were all utopian: visions of the future based on hope, and dreams and wishful thinking.

Marx and Engels, in contrast, based their concept of socialism on a scientific analysis of contemporary capitalist society as well as its historical development and its philosophical underpinnings. Not surprisingly, their version is called scientific socialism. It can be examined and tested with scientific rigour and actions based on it can be undertaken with confidence.

When it was put into practice in Russia after the Revolution of 1917, it enabled a backward agrarian country to be turned into an industrial powerhouse, where unemployment was unknown, health care and education were free and universal, and life got better every year – for all, not just a privileged elite.

Unfortunately, in the decades after the Second World War, understanding of the science of socialism and class relations was allowed to fall into decline in the USSR, replaced by complacency and smugness, by a new form of wishful thinking, which eventually allowed the overthrow of socialism itself in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

This severe setback in no way invalidated the scientific basis of socialist society, however, nor did it mean – as bourgeois pundits tried to assert – that capitalism was invincible. Today,

capitalism is actually fighting for its life. It may not look like it, but by any measure, that is the reality.

Wherever you look, capitalist economies are unable to meet people’s basic needs. Homelessness is rife, and spreading. Household debt is a crushing burden on working class and middle class families alike, resulting in a rate of evictions not seen since the Great Depression.

Leading banks and other major capitalist financial institutions are going belly up or having to be bailed out by governments, using huge amounts of public money. Whereas once, that would have meant the nationalisation of the recipient of this government largesse, today capitalists demand that they be given the money with no strings attached!

This arrogant display of greed by institutions with declining economic clout has naturally resulted in a variety of fight-back measures by the people. In the USA, and later in Australia and other countries, we saw the Occupy movement directly target Wall Street and other financial institutions. They were ultimately unsuccessful, but their movement was a tell-tale precursor to a revolutionary popular movement.

Meanwhile, in Europe, imperialist rivalry has seen Portugal, Spain, Ireland Greece and other member countries of the “European Union” reduced to chronic poverty, their governments at the mercy of German banks. But even as those banks rejoice, the actions of their US and British rivals in promoting a new Cold War against Russia and China has resulted in

trade boycotts and embargoes that have significantly boosted unemployment in Germany and caused divisions within the German capitalist class.

In Australia, unrestricted “market forces” have resulted in a housing bubble in Sydney that has priced first-home buyers out of the market altogether. So unsustainable is this bubble that even the *laissez-faire* Abbott government has been forced to make a pretence of taking action: Treasurer Joe Hockey has threatened foreign (especially Chinese) investors against buying up Australian real estate.

Australian – or other white – capitalists however, can still buy up property without restriction. So that’s all right, then.

The gang of religious cranks that makes up the bulk of Abbott’s government are very ideologically driven: they are determined to organise the redistribution of the wealth in Australia, away from people who work and into the deep pockets of the people who own capital, for that is where Abbott and his cronies believe it belongs.

They have launched a propaganda and legislative war on the trade unions, using their tame court system to give it the appearance of impartiality. While the trade unions have been largely cowed, Abbott’s gang have also launched an all-out attack on wages and conditions, beginning with penalty rates and anything else that in their opinion hinders a boss’s ability to extract the maximum profit.

Abbott is merely enacting the ruling class’ undeclared but clearly obvious intention: to

“roll back” all the gains workers have made over the last 200 years of often bloody struggle. Those gains, whether in wages, conditions of work, job safety, pensions or the rest, have always been viewed by employers as theft, as forcing the boss to pay for things he didn’t want and which did not make him any money.

With capitalism now in crisis, the most reactionary defenders of the system are coming to power in country after country, put there by the ruling class specifically to defend this rotten, outmoded system.

Whether it’s Abbott in Australia, Cameron in the UK, Merkel in Germany or Obama in the US, their role is not to improve or even protect the quality of life of the common people of their respective countries. They are in office not to just defend the large corporations but actually to enhance their ability to invest their capital where it can earn the most, regardless of the impact on workers, farmers or small businesses. They dutifully remove all laws that might inhibit the big corporations’ ability to turn the maximum profit and they make sure that governments do not “interfere” with the business of making money.

All this is in accordance with the laws governing the development of society that Marx and Engels revealed. They also revealed that the working class, when armed with a revolutionary ideology, will be the leading force that not only fights against this ghastly future but ensures that it ultimately does not come to pass.

That is our job. ☛

# Propaganda and rewriting history

Rob Gowland

**There is propaganda that takes the form of a straight-forward lie that masks activity governments want hidden from their populations. Examples abound, but we can mention a few: the German Nazis' claim that the Communists set fire to the Reichstag, or their claim that their invasion of Poland was in response to a Polish attack on German border guards.**

The USA's fabrication of the "Gulf of Tonkin incident" to provide an excuse for bombing North Vietnam is another, as was the British and US claim that the invasion of Iraq was not about oil but about "weapons of mass destruction" that were in fact non-existent.

There is another sort of propaganda, however. More general, it is what Hitler called "the big lie", lying propaganda on such a scale that even if people disbelieve a large part of it, what remains is still very damaging. This kind of propaganda becomes assimilated into popular culture, repeated so much it becomes accepted as "historical fact".

Western capitalist governments, with their cosy relationship with a supportive mass media, have raised this form of propaganda to an art form, incessantly drumming in their message until the people have no option but to believe it.

I watched an episode of British cop show *New Tricks* the other night, which took place in the Bosnian ex-pat community in London. Motivation was provided by detailed, gory descriptions of "Serbian war crimes" in Bosnia, including massacres of whole villages. Not a word was said about the activities of the Croatian fascists or Muslim extremists that targeted Serbian Orthodox churches and civilians.

For the purpose of the plot, that would merely have confused viewers, the "evil Serbians" line was left unchallenged.

Similarly, in a recent episode of the clever British sitcom *Outnumbered*, the young daughter of the family was indulging in a flight of

fancy about how criminals should be punished, involving some particularly sadistic forms of imprisonment. Her mother's response was a bland "I think Stalin already thought of that, dear".

The gratuitous inclusion of Stalin's name is significant. Stalin has become such a popular whipping boy for the propagandists of capitalism, especially since the launching of the Cold War in 1946 – ramped up exponentially since the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1989 – that he can now apparently be credited with any kind of crime without fear of contradiction. "Stalin's crimes" have become part of folk wisdom.

It is actually a triumph of Western propaganda, which facts simply do not support. Facts, of course, are frequently at odds with propaganda. Watching the Warner Brothers' classic *Casablanca* again the other day, I was struck by some dialogue involving Claude Rains' character.

Playing a Vichy French police officer ("I am merely a poor, corrupt official") Rains takes issue with another character who dismisses "blundering Americans", telling him not underestimate them: "I was with them when they 'blundered' into Berlin in 1918". It's a cute line, but it is also bogus: American troops went nowhere near Berlin in 1918. The closest they got was on the Western front in northern France.

Also conveniently buried, and consequently forgotten by much of the public, is the sorry record of the children of Queen Victoria. *Antiques Roadshow* regularly weeps copious tears over the "tragedy" of the Russian royals. I watch that show frequently, but I have never seen them once express concern at the plight of the Tsar's oppressed subjects. The misery that was the lot of the Russian people while they carried the burden of a huge aristocracy living on the best the country could produce was once well known, but today it too is being carefully replaced with sentimental concern for the Tsar's family – the Russian people can go hang.

I mention these television programs only because they are mostly

not overt propaganda outlets. However, so all-pervasive is the propaganda onslaught today, that they cannot escape becoming part of it.

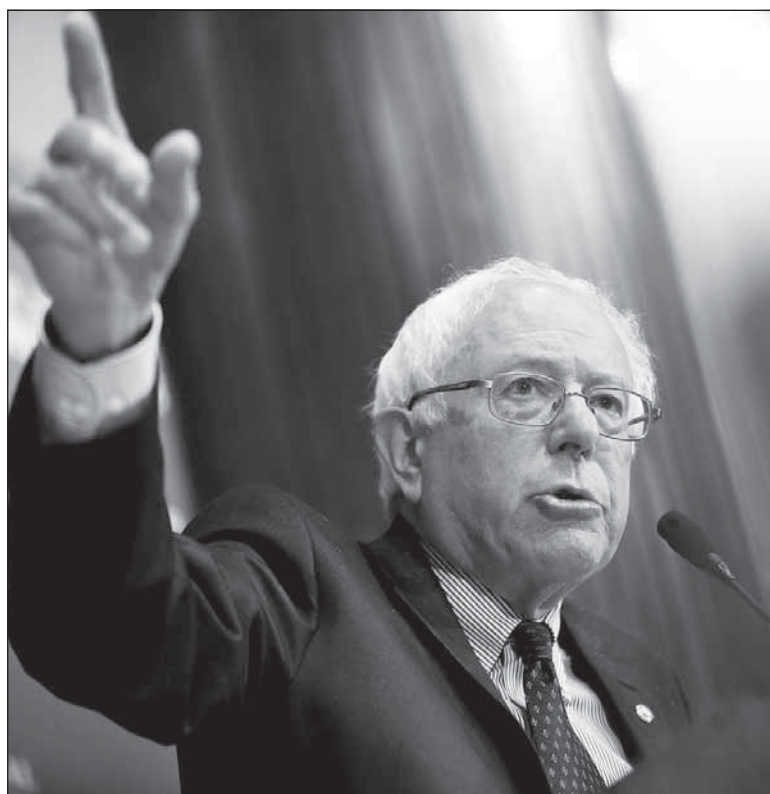
Capitalism is rewriting history – in little things as well as big – to serve its own class interests. Its control of the mass media enables it to mould public opinion and to determine what information people will receive. It is why magnates like Rupert Murdoch are so keen to find a way to dominate the Internet, for that would allow them to close off the most important remaining avenue that at present allows at least some alternative information to be accessed.

Information for example about the groundswell of support for progressive, anti-millionaire candidate Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders hoping to win the Democratic Party's nomination for US President out from under Hillary Clinton. You wouldn't know it from watching our TV news, of course, but Sanders' campaign has been drawing huge crowds. And as Hillary's polls go down, Sanders' polls are going up.

Our Murdoch-dominated media – even the ABC takes its lead from the Murdoch media as to what news is the most important and in particular what line to take on it – gives the impression that Hillary is the only potential Democrat candidate and billionaire Donald Trump the likely Republican candidate. What the American people think of this "choice" is not considered newsworthy.

Speaking at the Iowa State Fair, Sanders said, "I welcome and urge all of you to join me in helping to make a political revolution, which transforms America, which creates a government that works for all of us, and not just a handful."

The Sanders campaign has garnered attention for massive turnouts at events. Popular discontent with the two big business-oriented "mainstream" parties is driving this. Sanders' campaign, however, has to do without the support of the capitalist mass media, whose much-vaunted boasting of a "free press" does not extend to helping a genuine independent voice. *Politico* reporter Ben Schreckinger writes of this "Summer of Sanders", that his campaign "has raced to channel the enthusiasm of a largely self-organising movement into massive, attention-grabbing rallies." For the turnouts – which surpass even those of Barack Obama's in 2007 – Schreckinger writes that it's "left to Sanders' largely self-organised grassroots support to deliver the crowds." \*



Senator Bernie Sanders.

Sydney

*The Committee in Solidarity with the Workers Movement of Iran – Australia*

## Commemorating the Twenty-Seventh Anniversary of Massacres of the Political and Ideological Prisoners in Iran

In solidarity with the remaining family, relatives and friends of those fallen victims involved in the dire massacre in 1988, committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the committee in solidarity with the workers movement of Iran – Australia has conducted and organized the following program:

**Due to the cancellation of Ahmad Mazarei's trip to Australia please note the changes to the programs.**

**Program: (1) 7:00pm September 5  
CANCELLED**

**Program: (2) 7:00pm September 12**

Topic of discussion: 'Iran – Middle East: The development and consequences of the agreements of the nuclear energy.'

**(Now without speaker: Ahmad Mazarei)**

Entry: Free Entry

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Sydney

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### The Guardian

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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

Sydney

## POLITICS IN THE PUB

August 27

**POPE FRANCIS ENCYCLICAL ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL INEQUALITIES – A POWERFUL SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS?**

Paul Collins, Broadcaster and commentator on Catholic issues and author of books;

John Kaye, MLC, NSW Greens;

September 3

**THE TRANSPACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP) – WHAT WILL IT COST US AND CAN IT BE STOPPED?**

Pat Randal, Research Associate, Sydney Uni and Campaigner Australian Fair Trade & Investment Network;

Con Costa, Dr, General Practitioner, Western Suburbs. Former National President, Doctors Reform Society;

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# Fortress Britain

Felicity Arbuthnot

This fortress built by Nature for her self  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This precious stone set in a silver sea  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm,  
this England...

England, bound in with the triumphant  
sea,  
Whose rocky shore beats back the envi-  
ous siege ...

(Richard II, William Shakespeare)

**Britain's top "diplomat", Foreign Office Minister Philip Hammond has accused "marauding" migrants – the desperate, dispossessed, bereaved, orphaned children even, attempting to reach the UK, where many have relatives, contacts or speak the language – of threatening Britain and Europe's "standard of living."**

In a racist rant he told the BBC: "Europe can't protect itself and preserve its standard of living and social structure if it has to absorb millions of migrants from Africa." Ironically, Hammond before becoming an MP was an advisor to the government of Malawi. Since he clearly holds Africa in such contempt, perhaps Malawi should consider asking for a refund.

Hammond spoke just days after Prime Minister David Cameron described those seeking safety and succour not as a humanitarian catastrophe but as "swarms".

"Swarms" of course refer to crop destroying insects, locusts, and flies that buzz over and infect meat in open-air markets, on sunny days in Europe or swarming on dead animals or humans in the open and wild.

PM Cameron, vowing to clamp down on migrants, lashed out at France generally and the port of Calais in particular from where many seeking safety attempt to cross the Channel to the UK. He referred to those trying to "escape North Africa", since Libya – now a failed, lawless state thanks to US, UK and NATO's illegal overthrow of another legitimate government – has become a hub for those who wish to flee their own particular disaster and cross the Mediterranean to Europe.

As David Shariatmadari has pointed out this disgusting, shaming verbal feeding frenzy has been joined by the media with the *Daily Mail* writing that: "This tidal wave of migrants could be the biggest threat to Europe since the war", the *Daily Express* referring to a migrant "flood" and the BBC using "stream" and also "flood" with its implication of poor helpless Brits drowning, crushed under an uncontrollable tidal wave of terrifying "other beings" which have no place anywhere in Europe's ordered perfection, let alone in Britain's "sceptered isle."

Speaking from Vietnam where he was marauding with a large trade delegation, Cameron vowed a fortress Britain. Borders would be protected, the "problem dealt with at source ..." that meant: "trying to stabilise the countries



Britain's Foreign Office Minister Philip Hammond.

from which they come", he said with no sense of irony.

The main countries "from which they come" are Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan where UK insurgents have engaged in swarming and destroying and Syria where they are now doing the same. The majority are fleeing our enjoined destruction of infrastructures, homes, social society and human life on a scale that surely qualifies as genocide.

There are also people from Africa, many who had made livings and lives in Libya, fleeing the now failed state and others indeed looking for a better life. However given Britain and other European countries' historical colonial plundering of Africa and more recent ongoing carpet bagging of oil, minerals, erasing or making untenable homes, villages, there is surely a duty to attempt to make amends by offering safety with grace and humanity.

And the reality of these "overwhelming" and "inundating" numbers? David Shariatmadari has the figures: "The number of first-time asylum claims lodged with the British authorities between January and March 2015 was 7,335, lower than in Austria, Sweden, France, Italy, Hungary and Germany. That figure represents only four percent of asylum claims across the EU and puts us 17th in the league table of claims per million inhabitants.

If we look further afield, we see countries in the Middle East absorbing far higher numbers of refugees: there are 1.8 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon and 629,000 in Jordan.

Prior to Syria's Western backed destabilisation and ongoing nightmare, Syria between

2003 and 2011 took in tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees, countless of whom have now been forced to flee again, as have their Syrian hosts, neighbours and friends.

We have to deal with the problem at source and that is stopping so many people from travelling across the Mediterranean in search of a better life" said Cameron of people so desperate that they risk – and lose – their lives and savings in conditions defying description, the majority escaping what the UK and whichever of the marauding "coalitions" it had joined have wrought.

Greece, incidentally, bent under the weight of a desperate financial crisis with a population of just over eleven million has had an influx of 124,000 souls this year alone.

A furious friend commented: "If Hammond had been in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office during the last war, there would certainly have been no Kindertransport" (the evacuation of Jewish children from Germany) "couldn't have those 'marauding' Jewish people threatening our standard of living. What a monster the man is."

In fact, in spite of the horrendous threat facing the Jewish population of Europe, the UK behaved equally disgracefully then. Having raised the means to send their children to the UK, many of whom never saw their parents again, the UK government of the time demanded that £50 was lodged with them for each child as a guarantee of their ultimate resettlement. Taking 1939 as a starting date, that is the present day equivalent of £3,002.66.

Today, as super comfortable millionaires, Foreign Secretary Hammond and Prime

Minister Cameron spout their racist rants, Leigh Daynes of Doctors of the World writes:

"I've visited the wretched refugee camps in Darfur and I've walked around post-earthquake Haiti. But in all my years of working in aid and development, I've never been as shocked as the day I met a group of 10-year-old Syrian boys, riddled with scabies, huddled together in a rain-sodden ditch under scraps of tarpaulin.

"Alone and afraid, these boys, all orphans, weren't in Lebanon or Jordan but in a remote field 20 minutes' drive from Calais, close to a service station where trucks stop.

"Right now, migrants in Calais continue to live in diabolical conditions, suffering awful health problems as a result. These include serious skin problems, gangrene, breathing difficulties and severe cases of diarrhoea.

"Increasingly we, the charity Doctors of the World, treat patients who have shattered bones after falling from trucks, who have been slashed by razor wire climbing fences or have been beaten up.

"That is after they have trekked cross Europe or escaped drowning in the various crossings. In one boat crossing the Mediterranean two hundred people are believed to have perished: 'Knife-wielding traffickers sealed migrants in the hull of a boat which sank off Libya, condemning them to drown after slashing or thrashing them depending on their ethnicity, according to survivor testimonies.'

Just a microcosm of the unimaginable misery caused by marauding interventions and mass murder of which Britain's successive governments can never resist being part of.

As for Hammond and Cameron's shaming statements, incitement to racial or ethnic hatred is a criminal offence under the 1976 Race Relations Act which includes:

- deliberately provoking hatred of a racial group
- making inflammatory public speeches
- inciting inflammatory rumours about an individual or an ethnic group, for the purpose of spreading racial discontent.

Heil Hammond?

globalresearch.ca ✳

**"But in all my years of working in aid and development, I've never been as shocked as the day I met a group of 10-year-old Syrian boys, riddled with scabies, huddled together in a rain-sodden ditch under scraps of tarpaulin."**



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