



Asylum is a human right

As the Abbott government committed Australia to an extension of the US's endless war – the root cause of the more than 60 million displaced people world wide – the government announced that it will allow just 12,000 people to settle here. Even that tiny number is to be based not on need, but on certain criteria, including priority to Christians.

As the Refugee Action Coalition's Ian Rintoul points out (page 5), "It is shocking that the Prime minister could play to anti-Muslim sentiments by suggesting that Christians would be the first selected from Syria. It is not just racist, and an explicit break from the pretence of non-discriminatory humanitarian policy, it is hypocritical. There are plenty of Christians in Australian detention centres also being persecuted by this government."

Further, the RAC (page 4) says this is compounded by the failure of the government to say over what period of time the 12,000 will be brought to Australia, making it impossible to know how generous the government is being. What we do know is that 12,000 is on the low side; Germany is taking more than this number each day.

On page 3 ("Genesis of the refugee crisis"), Rob Gowland notes: "The vast number of refugees created by imperialism's present multiplicity of wars are a powerful indictment of the capitalist system." The problem is being promoted, says Gowland, that it is not the proliferation of predatory wars, but according to leading capitalist politicians such as Tony Abbott it is "people smugglers".

This provides the likes of Abbott "with a convenient bogey" that can be used to try and frighten the public.

In "Report on Nauru abuse" on page 4, ChilOut (Children out of detention) reports on a Senate Inquiry



Photo: Tom Pearson

into Nauru and its shocking findings about the abuse of the children of asylum seekers on Nauru. A total of 67 cases of physical and sexual abuse against children have been revealed by the inquiry.

In a statement, ChilOut campaign coordinator Claire Hammerton said: "ChilOut believes that there are many more cases of child abuse than what was revealed in the Senate Inquiry." ChilOut has called for all children to be removed from the Nauru detention

centre and brought back to Australia as a matter of urgency. There are currently 118 children in immigration detention in the Australian mainland and 87 children in immigration detention on Nauru.

Their statement includes their objective: "ChilOut will continue advocating for the release of children from detention in Australia and Nauru until every last child is free."

In "Seven key proposals" (page 12) Nick Micinski from the *New*

Internationalist gives a practical guide to action, pointing out firstly that the scale of the problem demands structural responses from governments and emphasising that asylum is a human right, not an act of charity.

"EU governments should take steps to ensure this right is not eroded in the face of austerity, nationalism and xenophobia."

Among his proposals: Immediate humanitarian aid to refugees travelling within the EU or near its borders;

Full funding for the UNHCR; Prima facie refugee status for all Syrian applicants in the EU; Increased resettlement to the US and Canada; EU to appoint a Special Representative for Human Rights in Migration.

As Rob Gowland's article concludes: "The refugee crisis is the most dramatic expression of the crisis of a social system that is no longer compatible with the most basic needs of the vast majority of humanity."

Tom Pearson ✪

3



Genesis of the refugee crisis

4



Report on Nauru abuse

10



Culture & Life Gold tailings ...

12



Refugee crisis: Seven key proposals

Guardian

Issue 1702

September 16, 2015

Canning still
the canary in the coal mine

On July 21 the federal member for the WA seat of Canning, Don Randall, died suddenly of a suspected heart attack. He had been in Boddington, a rural community south east of Perth, on electorate business. The shock waves of his death reverberated in Canberra where the leader of the Coalition government was not keen to face a test of his government and that of his own leadership.

While Don Randall stood for parliament as a member of the Liberal Party he was far more loyal to his electorate than to the party or its leader, which was no more evident when together with a fellow Liberal member from WA he put his name to a leadership spill motion against Abbott in February.

And so the inevitable has come to pass with Malcolm Turnbull replacing Tony Abbott. It essentially changes nothing. This government is carrying out the biggest attack on living and working conditions in the country's history, an attack occasioned by the crisis confronting capitalism across the developed world. Those things won't change.

These current ructions will continue: this was fundamentally not about leadership but was a small eruption in the increasingly dysfunctional process that is held up as a beacon of democracy.

There are deep divisions within government ranks, divisions driven by contradictions in an economy in crisis and exacerbated by a government determined to impose the burden of that crisis onto working people, in particular the most vulnerable.

This, as Abbott had committed the country to another extension of imperialism's endless war, aiming at regime change in Syria.

The Liberal Party's candidate for Canning is – unsurprisingly – a former Special Air Services Regiment captain, Andrew Hastie – a man who hails from NSW and has only lived in Western Australia since 2010. During 2012 and 2013 he was involved in strike missions in the US-led imperialist war in Afghanistan.

The Greens' candidate, Vanessa Rauland, is a sustainability lecturer especially concerned with urban land use and planning.

Both Rauland and the ALP candidate Matt Keogh support progressive stands on a number of issues – including workers' rights and refugee rights and marriage equality.

The government is clearly worried about the possible effect a Liberal defeat in Canning would have in next year's federal election and the negative effect of the government's policies and increasing militarisation of government functions into the wider community (witness the formation of the fascist-like Australian Border Force).

The collective principles of the trade union movement are under intense attack following a series of reactionary anti-union laws by both Labor and Coalition governments. The systematic destruction of the centralised award-based system is part of this process along with the continued push for individual and non-union work contracts aimed at re-establishing the master-servant relationship along the lines that existed in the 19th century. The government's discredited Royal Commission into trade unions has taken this attack to a new level.

War and the domination of markets by the transnational corporations are this government's core class commitments.

The CPA calls for a vote in support of candidates who reject the government's big business agenda, both at state and federal level. The Party has a wide range of policies to lift the living standards of working people that will contribute to the strengthening of the economy, including:

- an immediate 40 percent increase in the minimum wage;
- job security – abolition of contract and body hire labour;
- equal pay for work of equal value;
- young workers paid an adult wage when doing the same work;
- shorter working week without loss of pay.

The defeat of the Liberal candidate in the Canning by-election on September 19 would mark a step forward in the lead-up to the federal election next year. The need for class struggle has taken on more urgency in the face of a reactionary political agenda.

PRESS FUND

After mumbling about helping Christians in particular and not increasing the overall intake of asylum seekers, PM Tony Abbott has reluctantly agreed to accept 12,000 additional Middle Eastern refugees on compassionate grounds. But when interviewed on ABC TV recently he declared: "The last thing we want is to reward people smugglers and their clients". Indeed, the government treats asylum seekers who arrive by boat as criminals, just like people smugglers, and punishes them by dumping them in horrible offshore detention centres. Moreover, it will now discriminate against any who have reached Europe by boat. How "compassionate" is that! But to follow this story we need your Press Fund contributions, so please, if you possibly can, send us something for the next edition. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Anonymous \$2, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$13, Gary Spiers \$50

This week's total: \$70 Progressive total: \$5,000

Hands off
Aussie Post

Hundreds of concerned workers from across the mailing, print and postal industries rallied outside Australia Post Headquarters in Melbourne's CBD last week.

Workers made sure their message was heard with frequent choruses of high-pitched whistling coming from whistles that were handed out to each rally-goer on arrival.

Workers are angry at the proposed changes to slash Australia Post services and double prices. This will see an inevitable cycle of price rises, service cuts and steeper mail volume declines, all of which puts at risk tens of thousands of mailing industry jobs.

The AMWU along with CWU, CPSU, NUW and CFMEU have joined forces and have been fighting hard to get members' message to Canberra.

The campaign has successfully gathered thousands of signatures in a petition against the proposed changes and last Saturday a convoy of posties on their much loved red motorbikes departed Melbourne for Canberra to deliver the petition in person.

AMWU, national print secretary Lorraine Cassin, speaking at the rally said that "it was not up to CEO Ahmed Fahour to destroy an Aussie icon" and that he needed to consult

with Australia Post workers and the wider community.

Ms Cassin also urged the Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull to implement all recommendations from a recent Senate Inquiry, which would see a strategic industry roundtable established with a mandate to work through the opportunities and challenges facing the industry.

"One thing's for sure," Ms Cassin said to the sea of workers and supporters, "we fight to win and we won't stop until we do!" ✪

Two Ships of Shame
in two days

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is concerned about an increase in seafarer exploitation in Australian waters after another ship's crew has claimed they have been denied fresh food, water and wages.

The allegations of mistreatment – from a crew berthed in Esperance, Western Australia – came last week, just one day after it was discovered a crew aboard a bulk carrier in Newcastle, NSW had endured similar abuses.

The ship in question is a grain carrier, the MV *Apellis*, and it is referred to as a Flag-of-Convenience (FOC) – in that it has Greek owners, is registered in Panama and is crewed by a mix of Indonesians and Ukrainians. FOC is a method used to avoid tax, safety and labour regulations, according to the ITF.

ITF assistant national coordinator Matt Purcell said he was calling on the regulatory body, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, to detain the ship under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) – an international treaty Australia has ratified.

Last week a volunteer ITF inspector boarded the ship to meet with the crew and determine whether their complaints were valid.

"The person we sent up the gangway was distressed by what he saw and said the crew were fearful of repercussions," Mr Purcell said.

"Food and water is being rationed, which as well as being an outright contravention of MLC, it's also inhumane.

"We have one crewmember, the steward on \$200-a-month, another, the chief engineer, claims he hasn't received a single cent in eight months. The majority of the crew just want to go home to their families after their ordeal.

"There is also a concern that there is not enough stores to sustain the crew on their scheduled voyage to Indonesia."

ITF president Paddy Crumlin said he was worried there would be an increase in these incidents of exploitation as the Abbott government moved towards further relaxing shipping regulation, through amendments to the Coastal Trading Act.

"In an already shady industry there's a further race-to-the-bottom as international freight rates drop," Mr Crumlin said.

"Therefore we get these greedy ship owners and operators trying to save a buck by withholding pay and in the worst case scenarios, rationing food.

"Abbott has to ask himself whether he is okay with this, because this is what he is recommending for the domestic shipping industry – a complete free-for-all."

Coastal Trading Act

The Abbott government is attempting to dismantle the Coastal Trading Act, which dictates that ships trading between Australian ports must be crewed by Australian workers, or pay Australian award wages.

The amendment to the Act was inserted into May's Budget papers but is yet to be debated in Parliament after it was sent to a Senate Inquiry. ✪

Website and Computers Appeal

The CPA 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

Name on the card _____ Signature: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: ____ / ____

I agree / I disagree to having my name published in *The Guardian*.

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

Thank you for your support.

Genesis of the refugee crisis

Rob Gowland

It was the United States that first enunciated the concept of “failed states” and set out all the dreadful consequences that apparently ensued when a country fell into that position. There was a perceptual problem however: the concept runs counter to the course of human development. Significantly, the examples of supposedly “failed states” most commonly quoted – Iraq and Afghanistan – were regions that were on the receiving end of both CIA subversion and Pentagon invasion.

Since then, the US policy makers have striven hard to create a raft of other “failed states”, from the Balkans to Libya and across sub-Saharan Africa. By a combination of economic sanctions and funding of armed insurrection, programs intended to raise the standard of living in countries across the world have been brought to a shuddering halt. Countries in South and Central America, in S-E Asia, even in Europe, have seen their economies wrecked and in many cases their people forced from their homes, in search of work if not actually fleeing for their lives.

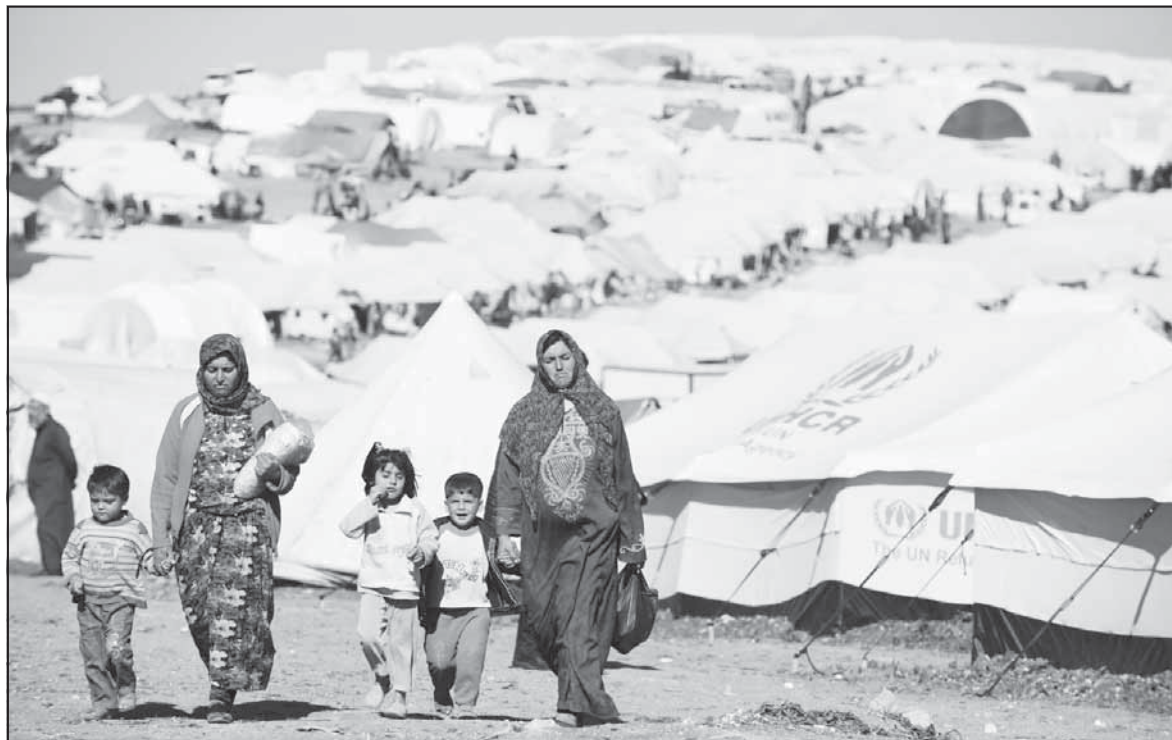
Four million people have been forced to flee the fighting in Syria, formerly a prosperous, stable state whose government preferred being friendly to Russia to kowtowing to the dictates of the USA and NATO. The military adventures in Syria, intended to bring about the overthrow of its anti-imperialist government, are funded by the US and its

in the name of a new entity, the Islamic State (IS). Intolerant and barbaric, the IS fanatics have distinguished themselves by a spate of beheadings, significantly a popular form of punishment in the country that is the chief backer of IS, Saudi Arabia.

The vast number of refugees created by imperialism’s present multiplicity of wars are a powerful indictment of the capitalist system. Capitalist propaganda, however, is not fazed. The problem, it seems, is not the proliferation of predatory wars or the use of economic sanctions and trade boycotts. No, according to the leading capitalist politicians it is “people smugglers”. We don’t need to attempt to fix the problems that cause people to become refugees in the first place: we just need to knobble the small fry providing them with transport.

Our own fearless leader, Tony Abbott, is a prominent exponent of this line. He has no sympathy for people fleeing the impact of capitalism’s disastrous policies. They actually provide him with a convenient bogey that he can use to frighten the more ignorant section of the electorate. Australian military forces are engaged in the fighting in Afghanistan and Syria, and probably elsewhere. The resultant refugees however are of concern only for their propaganda value. Abbott is by no means alone in his opportunistic approach to the refugee crisis.

Most recently, European governments have been in the news because of the horrific treatment of refugees



Four million people have been forced to flee the fighting in Syria

barbed wire and security forces to repel the refugees with force.”

In Vienna, the heads of government and foreign ministers of Austria, Germany, Italy and six Western Balkan countries responded to the gruesome discovery of a truck full of refugees who suffocated en route by tightening measures against those fleeing to Europe. Typically, they assigned blame for the mass deaths to “criminal human traffickers.”

where thousands of refugees live in misery and where 12 have already died this year. Immigrants who work without permission face draconian punishments.

“Hungary, a transit country on the West Balkan route, has built a 3.5-metre-high fence at the EU’s external border with Serbia and is considering measures to punish illegal border crossing with years in prison. Germany and Austria,

Babis, a billionaire entrepreneur, has called for an intervention by NATO to ‘close the Schengen area to the outside’. He referred to the influx of refugees as the ‘greatest danger for Europe,’” continues Schwartz.

“The response of broad layers of the population to the plight of refugees stands in stark contrast to the reaction of the ruling elites. Especially in Germany, refugees have been met with a flood of aid that has surprised and shocked mainstream political circles ...

“The support extended to refugees is not just an expression of basic humanity. Many instinctively understand that the refugees are victims of a social system that threatens their own lives. There has been no popular support for the imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, which have destroyed whole societies and are the root cause of the wave of refugees. And workers throughout Europe have for years experienced falling living standards while a small minority at the top of society has enriched itself enormously. The refugee crisis is the most dramatic expression of the crisis of a social system that is no longer compatible with the most basic needs of the vast majority of humanity.”

The vast number of refugees created by imperialism’s present multiplicity of wars are a powerful indictment of the capitalist system.

client Saudi Arabia, with weapons from the USA, Britain and Israel.

When covert military operations against the Syrian army by US, Turkish, British, Israeli and Saudi undercover units were substantially defeated, imperialism turned to another tried and true weapon in its arsenal: religious fanaticism. Islamists from as far away as Australia and the UK have been recruited to fight against the Syrian government

seeking shelter there. “Every day provides new outrages”, writes Peter Schwarz for *Information Clearing House*, “Corpses drifting in the Mediterranean; refugees without sufficient food and water crammed together in intolerable sanitary conditions; families with small children forced to cross hundreds of kilometres on foot; police deploying batons and tear gas against defenceless migrants; and borders and barriers, secured by

“While governments work closely together to transform Europe into a fortress where thousands die at its borders”, says Schwarz, “they engage in fierce competition over which state can most effectively deter refugees or send them to another country as quickly as possible. ... Britain, which has accepted just 1 percent of the Syrian refugees arriving in Europe, is spending millions to barricade the entry to the Euro tunnel in Calais,

the target countries for many refugees, are seeking to repel them with intolerable conditions in detention centres, accelerated deportation procedures and the slashing of social support.”

Poland refuses to accept any more refugees, its President Andrzej Duda arguing, among other things, that his country expects a fresh wave of refugees from Ukraine. “Czech Deputy Prime Minister Andrej

Pete’s Corner



Sydney

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

Tuesday October 6

Why is there an environmental crisis?

Tuesday October 20

Defending workers rights'

Tuesday November 3

What is happening in Syria?

Tuesday November 17

A new model for public and affordable housing

All classes 5:30 pm
at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills
Enquiries: Hannah 0418 668 098

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

Report on Nauru abuse

ChilOut*

The Senate Inquiry into Nauru has released its report revealing shocking information about the abuses against children in detention in Nauru. A total of 67 cases of physical and sexual abuse against children were revealed by the Inquiry, which included 30 cases of abuse by detention centre staff. There has been a stark lack of accountability in relation to these abuses against children, with not a single person being charged or convicted.

ChilOut released a statement about the report highlighting that all children in detention in Nauru face a high risk of abuse. Our Campaign Coordinator Claire Hammerton said, "ChilOut believes that there are many more cases of child abuse than what was revealed in the Senate Inquiry.

We know of children who have not reported sexual abuse by detention centre staff due to reasons including cultural sensitivities, fear of adverse consequences for reporting and a belief that reporting is useless because no action will be taken. All children deserve to be free and grow up in a safe and healthy environment. Children in immigration detention are no less deserving of this than children living in the Australian community."

ChilOut has called for all children to be removed from the Nauru detention centre and brought back to Australia as a matter of urgency. We have also called for the government to stop the slated transfer of children

to Nauru who are currently in immigration detention in Australia. Our Youth Ambassador, Mohammad Ali Baqiri, spoke to ABC Radio about the horrific experience of being in detention and about his hope that all children are soon released.

Darwin Detention Centre

In August, ChilOut's Campaign Coordinator and Youth Ambassadors travelled to Darwin to visit children at Wickham Point Detention Centre and present a workshop at a Youth Human Rights Summit.

Unfortunately, ChilOut's Youth Ambassadors were not granted access to the detention centre before leaving Darwin. However, ChilOut's Campaign Coordinator was given access (after extending her stay in Darwin) and visited several families who were all temporarily transferred to Wickham Point Detention Centre from Nauru.

She met with children ranging in age from two weeks to 17 years and was deeply concerned by the information provided to her by families and by the overall mental health state of the children and parents she met with. These concerns included:

- Most families had spent more than two years in detention and were feeling increasingly hopeless about ever being released from detention. Many children were depressed, suicidal and some had engaged in self harm;
- Some children who had survived sexual abuse in Nauru knew



All children deserve to be free and grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

of other children who had experienced sexual violence in Nauru and had not reported it;

- All families spoke about the abhorrent conditions in Nauru including: living in tents with up to 12 other families in extreme heat and humidity with no air conditioning; mould growing on tents and tents leaking when it rained;
- Unhygienic toilets and wash facilities including lack of toilet paper and toilets being out of order; long waiting periods to receive medical care and insufficient mental health care, particularly for children;
- Every child expressed fear of being sent back to Nauru. All families had all been told they would eventually be sent back and many children could not sleep at night due to fear of being forcibly transferred in the middle of the night, as other asylum seekers had been;
- Although many families said that detention in Darwin was preferable to detention in Nauru, there were major issues reported with the conditions at Wickham Point Detention Centre such as lack of play, recreational or other appropriate facilities for children under 5 years.

ChilOut will continue advocating for the release of children from detention in Australia and Nauru until every last child is free.

Part of our work involves educating the community and raising awareness and, whilst in Darwin, ChilOut's Youth Ambassadors were grateful to have the opportunity to run an interactive workshop on

children in detention as part of the UN Youth and MyNT Human Rights Summit.

The workshop was presented to high school students based in Darwin who were very engaged on the topic and expressed a strong desire to take action to help children in detention.

Numbers

Despite the government's promise that children would be released from detention in the early months of 2015, there are still over 200 children in Australian-run immigration detention centres. Many of these children have been in detention for years. According to the latest official statistics there are:

- 118 children in immigration detention centres in the Australian mainland; and
- 87 children in immigration detention in Nauru.

Kidz4Kidz Video

The wonderful students from Mount St Benedict High School who started the Kidz4Kidz initiative have produced a powerful video to highlight the plight of children in detention and ensure their voices are not silenced. Their video has received over 60,000 views and is definitely worth checking out! ChilOut supports the fantastic work of Kidz4Kidz and will work with them to fight for the release of children in detention.

Concert

On Saturday September 19, a group of Melbourne-based musicians and musical acts will come together to raise money for children in detention.

To draw attention to the plight of children in detention and the powerlessness of these children, the musicians will perform without any amplification or powered instruments.

The concert will be held at Northcote Uniting Church Hall located at 251 High Street, Northcote Victoria. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children.

All proceeds will be generously donated to ChilOut and we encourage everyone to go along and give their support to this fabulous group of musicians!

Thank You

A big thank you to all the runners and their families who ran the 14kilometres City2Surf race on August 9 to raise money for ChilOut. We are so grateful for your support. A special shout out also goes to Sophie Bray who individually raised \$2,235 for ChilOut! Thank you Sophie for your incredible support and for raising your voice loudly and clearly for children in immigration detention.

*ChilOut is a not-for-profit community group seeking to raise public awareness about the plight of children in immigration detention centres. We do so by providing accurate information showing what is happening to children inside Australia's immigration detention facilities. Our primary concern is the protection of children, that they are afforded their basic rights, freedom, healthcare, education and play. And that Australia does not have a hand in abusing and damaging children seeking our protection. ✪

Free the Syrians in detention

It is a welcome fact that the Abbott government will take 12,000 Syrians on top of the existing humanitarian intake of 13,750, says the Refugee Action Coalition.

But the failure of the government to say over what time period the 12,000 will be brought to Australia, makes it impossible to know how generous the government is being.

What we do know is that 12,000 is on the low side of the suggestions that have been recently made regarding the numbers that Australia could reasonable take. At the moment, Germany is taking more than this number each day.

"The Abbott government cut the refugee intake from 20,000 when it was elected. So we are already taking 18,000 fewer people because of the anti-refugee policies of the government. Abbott wants to look like he is doing something, but is doing as little as possible at the same time," said Action Coalition spokesperson Ian Rintoul. "Even Liberal NSW Premier Mike Baird

said that 10,000 was a minimum. Some Liberal backbenchers were suggesting 50,000, which is more like it."

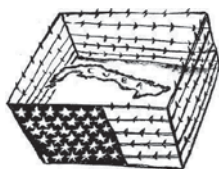
What is also shocking is that the Abbott government is making a fundamental break with the policy of a non-discriminatory humanitarian program.

"The stipulation that Australia's selection would be from minority groups is also transparently anti-Muslim," said Rintoul. "Abbott is continuing to inflame anti-Muslim sentiments which have been on display from the likes of Cory Bernadi and George Christensen.

"By making the announcement of bombing Syria at the same time as announcing the refugee intake, Abbott is trying to hide the reality that it is the US bombing in Syria that creates refugees.

"Lastly, the Abbott government, and the Labor Party, have turned a blind eye to the Syrian asylum seekers that have been left rotting in Australian-run detention centres." ✪

Sydney



Vigil demanding that the USA stop the blockade on Cuba

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.

Taking Issue by John Ross

No, China's economy is not going to crash

A great deal of highly inaccurate material is currently appearing in the Western media about the "crisis" of China's economy – an economy growing three times as fast as the US's or Europe's. This follows a long tradition of similarly inaccurate "crash" material on China symbolised by Gordon Chang's 2002 book "The Coming Collapse of China".

The fundamental error of such analyses is that they do not understand why China has the world's strongest macro-economic structure. This structure means that even if China encounters individual problems, such as the fluctuations in the share market or the current relative slowdown in industrial production, which are inevitable periodically, it possesses far stronger mechanisms to correct these than any Western economy.

This article is adapted from one published in Chinese by the present author in *Global Times* analysing the greater strength of China's macro-economic structure compared to either that of the West or the old 'Soviet' model. The original occasion of the article was the next steps in the development of China's next 13th Five-Year Plan. The analysis, however, equally explains the errors of material currently appear in the Western media.

In October a Plenary Session of China's Communist Party (CPC) Central Committee will discuss China's next five-year-plan. This provides a suitable opportunity to examine the reasons for China's more rapid economic development than both the Western economies and the old Soviet system.

Taking first the facts which must be explained, China's 37 years of "Reform and Opening Up" since 1978 achieved the fastest improvement in living standards in a major country in human history. From 1978 to the latest available data real annual average inflation-adjusted Chinese household consumption rose 7.7%. Annual average total consumption,

including education and health, rose 8.0%. China's average 9.8% economic growth was history's most rapid.

As China's "socialist market economy" achieved this unmatched improvement in human living conditions it is this system which must be analysed. Its difference to both the Western and Soviet models explains why China's economic development is more rapid than either.

China's is a socialist market economy – not a "market economy" as is sometimes imprecisely stated utilising terminology which obscures the structural difference between China's and Western economies.

The word "socialist" derives from "socialised" – large scale and socially interconnected. China's economic structure differs from the Western in state ownership of China's largest companies – those engaged in the most socialised production. But simultaneously the largest part of China's economy, as in every country, is not so large scale, socially interconnected – or state owned. China has billionaires and tens of millions of small and medium companies while China's agriculture is based on small household farms. However the interrelation of China's state and private companies fundamentally differs both from the West's "mixed economy" and the old Soviet system.

In a Western mixed economy the private sector dominates. In contrast in China the CPC's Central Committee in November 2013 explicitly reaffirmed: "We must unwaveringly consolidate and develop the public economy, persist in the dominant position of public ownership, give full play to the leading role of the state-owned sector."

But China's economic structure also differs fundamentally from the Soviet model in which the private sector was tiny – with even agriculture and local shops state run. Even in Marxist theory there was no justification for Soviet state ownership of small scale, that is non-socialised, companies and such ownership



de-motivated those working in them, crippling economic efficiency.

This different economic structure of China and the former USSR necessarily determines the different nature of their five-year plans. As the Soviet economy was essentially entirely state owned the state took even small economic decisions, setting tens of thousands of prices and outputs – it was an "administered" economy.

The majority of China's economy is not state-owned, and China's five-year plan sets only a few key macro-economic targets – overall growth rate, guidance on investment and consumption, industrial priorities etc. Within these parameters market mechanisms operate and are used to guide the economy. This is the precise sense in which Deng Xiaoping could state: "There is no fundamental contradiction between socialism and a market economy" and "if we combine a planned economy with a market economy, we shall ... speed up economic growth."

But China's macro-economic

structure also explains its more rapid economic growth than the West, and avoidance of crises such as the post-2008 "Great Recession".

Western dominance by private companies means no automatic mechanism ensures companies invest even when profitability is high. For example US company operating surpluses rose from 20% of its economy in 1980 to 26% in 2013, while simultaneously private fixed investment fell from 19% to 15%. As Larry Fink, the head of BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager noted: "More and more corporate leaders have responded with actions that can deliver immediate returns to shareholders ... while underinvesting in innovation, skilled workforces or essential capital expenditures necessary to sustain long-term growth." The US government can appeal for greater private investment but it lacks any mechanism to enforce this. Such falling investment culminated in the US Great Recession.

Western economists such as

Keynes foresaw such dangers, noting: "The duty of ordering the current volume of investment cannot safely be left in private hands" and that it was instead necessary to aim at: "a socially controlled rate of investment." But the Western privately dominated economy has no mechanisms to control its investment level.

In contrast, if required, China's state owned sector can be instructed to raise or lower investment. As the Wall Street Journal noted: 'Most economies can pull two levers to bolster growth: fiscal and monetary. China has a third option. The National Development and Reform Commission can accelerate the flow of investment.' China therefore possesses far stronger anti-crisis mechanisms than the West.

China's five-year plans, by setting certain key economic parameters but within these using market mechanisms, explains the superiority of China's economy to both Soviet and Western systems.

Socialist Economic Bulletin ✪

Manus asylum seekers' appeal

An appeal for help from Europeans and European countries has been signed by over 100 asylum seekers in detention on Manus Island. Among other things, the Manus Island appeal says, "We have fled war and persecution just like the asylum seekers in Europe. We need safety and resettlement, and request European countries to urge the Australia government to cease the illegal detention of us ..."

Almost 1,000 refugees and asylum seekers are indefinitely detained on Manus Island. A similar number, including families and children are on Nauru. "It is astonishing that there has among the calls to action over the European crisis, there has been no mention of the asylum seekers that are the victims of the government's mandatory and

offshore detention regime," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"There are Syrian asylum seekers in Villawood, Manus and Nauru, who have been held in detention for over two years while their families were bombed in Syria. It will be darkly ironic if Australia agrees to bring asylum seekers from Syria while Syrian asylum seekers languish in Australian detention centres. The dead boy on the Turkish beach could just as easily have been the child of an asylum seeker in detention in Australia.

"It is shocking that the Prime Minister could play to anti-Muslim sentiments by suggesting that Christians would be the first to be selected from Syria. It is not just racist, and an explicit break from the pretence of a non-discriminatory

humanitarian policy, it is hypocritical. There are plenty of Christians in Australian detention centres also being persecuted by this government.

"The callous indifference being shown by the Abbott government to the asylum seekers in Europe is a product of the brutal, anti-refugee policies it enforces in Australia."

Appeal from asylum seekers on Manus Island:

This is a letter from Australia's asylum seekers to Europeans and European governments:

While your countries have been faced with the critical and difficult crisis due to the constant flow of war-torn people, and all the world is witnessing that Europe is

endeavouring to exercise its humane and moral responsibilities through providing hundreds of thousands of refugees with protection, the Australian government has imprisoned us, 900 asylum seekers, for 26 months on Manus island in the heart of Pacific Ocean.

The situation is utterly inhumane and difficult over this period.

We have been under very heavy mental pressure. We have lost two of our friends – Reza Barati and Hamid Khazaei – due to the locals' attack on the prison and lack of health facilities. The Australian government has done everything to persecute us. We desperately request the Europeans and the European countries to urge the Australia government to cease the illegal detention of us in this hell-hole and to fulfil its international

obligations in relation to the refugee crisis.

We have fled war and persecution just like the asylum seekers in Europe. We need safety and resettlement.

The Australian government has treated us like criminals and calls us boat criminals because we came by boat.

In order to obtain more information about our difficult situation in the prison on Manus island, please refer to the international organisations' reports on this matter such as reports from Amnesty International, UNHCR, Australian Senate Inquiry, Human Rights Watch, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment.

Signed: Manus asylum seekers

The hype on Russia in Syria

Eric Draitser

From Washington to the western media, everyone has been talking about reports of potential Russian “intervention” in Syria. On the one hand, the proliferation of this meme is a case study in the western propaganda system, as one report is then repeated ad nauseam from thousands of sources, then built upon by subsequent reports, thereby manufacturing the irrefutable truth from the perspective of media pundits and western mouthpieces. On the other hand, the new reports also raise some interesting questions about the motives of both the US and Russia, as well as the other interested parties to the conflict in Syria.

In examining this new chapter of the ongoing war in Syria, two critical and interrelated points seem to rise above all others in importance: Why is the western media hyping this narrative of Russian intervention? And why is direct Russian involvement, limited though it may be, seen as such a threat by the US?

Dissecting the propaganda

An Israeli publication reported that Russian air power would be increasing in Syria with “Russian jets in Syrian skies,” as the headline read. While all the information came from unnamed “western diplomatic sources,” and was accompanied by little more than assertions of fact without any tangible evidence, the media outcry began almost immediately, with literally hundreds of news outlets reporting the same information. Within 24 hours however, a Russian military source denied the allegations, saying, “There has been no redeployment of Russian combat aircraft to the Syrian Arab Republic... The Russian Air Force is at its permanent bases and carrying out normal troop training and combat duty.”

Almost as if on cue, the next day *The Daily Beast* published a story claiming that there were Russian boots on the ground in Syria, as well as large shipments of military materiel en route to Syria, including trucks and BTR infantry fighting vehicles. The article cited Turkish navy photos showing a Russian ship purportedly carrying the cargo, quite openly it must be said.

Naturally, the conversation in Washington instantly became about Russian intervention and the danger of Russia “destabilising” the situation in Syria, an assertion that would be laughable if it weren’t so deeply cynical and hypocritical considering four and a half years of US-NATO-GCC-Israel intervention in Syria.

Official denials of escalation from Moscow did nothing to calm tensions on the issue as US Secretary of State Kerry called Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov to voice concerns that Russian involvement could escalate the conflict. After the call, the State Department released a statement explaining that the US had:

“... concerns about reports suggesting an imminent enhanced Russian build-up [in Syria]. The secretary made clear that if such reports were accurate, these actions could further escalate the conflict, lead to greater loss of innocent life, increase refugee flows and risk confrontation with the anti-ISIL coalition operating in Syria ... The two agreed that discussions on the Syrian conflict would continue in New York later this month.”

A careful reading of this short, but important, statement should raise one obvious question: what does the State Department mean by “reports”? Specifically, the initial Israeli report was allegedly based on intelligence from key Western (presumably US) sources that would obviously have access to classified information. Were that true, then surely the State Department would be alarmed by the intelligence, and not the reports.

In other words, the US military and government, with its vast surveillance and intelligence apparatus, knows perfectly well if a true Russian military build-up in Syria is really happening. Instead, the State Department focuses on the media reports, indicating that, rather than responding to intelligence, it is responding to a media story, one which is based entirely on information the US itself supplied.



Tartus Russian Naval Base.

Dramatic reaction

So, the dramatic reaction to the reports is essentially a reaction to a story they themselves planted. Translation: Washington is hyping the story in order to further its political position, and to weaken Russia’s, by framing the debate as one of “Russian interventionism”.

And, in true western corporate propaganda fashion, the reports have been built upon since then. There are now allegations that Russia is building “a huge 1,000 personnel compound,” and even a report from the decidedly dubious *Debkaf* – an outlet notoriously close to Israeli intelligence which has published as much disinformation as credible information – alleging that the Russians have deployed a submarine loaded with 20 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and 200 nuclear warheads to Syria. All of this is an attempt to further bolster the narrative that Russia is the aggressor, attempting to escalate the conflict in Syria for its own purposes.

Returning to the information on the trucks being supplied through the Bosphorus, as reported in international press, there is a painfully obvious question that must be asked; namely why Moscow would choose to initiate a covert military build-up but would transport the equipment openly, in plain sight of any naval intelligence or satellite imagery. Obviously, it is because Russia is not doing this covertly, but is merely continuing to supply the Syrian government as it has done since 2011.

And that is precisely the point that Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova made in a recent interview. She noted that, “We have always supplied equipment to them for their struggle against terrorists ... We are supporting them, we were supporting them and we will be supporting them.” In other words, there is nothing secret about what Russia is providing to the Syrian government under its existing contracts.

This is also in keeping with comments from Russian President Putin who confirmed what all serious analysts following the conflict in Syria already knew, that Russian advisers have been providing training and logistical support to the Syrian military. Of course, based on the hype in western media, one could be forgiven for thinking that Russia’s military had moved in and taken command of the war effort in Syria. In reality, Russia’s participation from a logistical and advisory perspective has been rather limited.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Moscow is stepping up its aid and engagement in Syria, but it obviously has not fundamentally changed its policy. As one source confirmed to Reuters, “The Russians are no longer just advisors ... The Russians have decided to join the war against terrorism.” Indeed, another of the sources noted that, “[The Russians] have started in small numbers, but the bigger force

did not yet take part ... Russians [are] taking part in Syria but they did not yet join the fight against terrorism strongly.”

These statements are particularly interesting if set against the media narrative being portrayed in the West, as well as the language employed by the State Department and White House which was quoted as saying, “We would welcome constructive Russian contributions to the counter-ISIL effort, but we’ve been clear that it would be unconscionable for any party, including the Russians, to provide any support to the Assad regime.”

Analysts with knowledge of the situation seem convinced that Russian participation is geared towards helping the Syrian government in the fight against terror groups such as ISIS/ISIL and Al-Qaeda’s al Nusra Front, and that the increased presence is clear evidence of Moscow’s commitment to anti-terrorism. This presents a complex quandary for Washington which pays lip service to counter-terrorism while simultaneously describing as “unconscionable” any effective counter-terrorism aid in the war.

What is perhaps most interesting about the media coverage and comments from US officials about Russian moves being “destabilising,” is the fact that since 2011 the western media has published literally thousands upon thousands of articles documenting openly the role of US military and intelligence, and its counterparts in NATO (including Turkey), Israel, and the Gulf monarchies, in arming and training fighters to wage war against the Syrian government. Somehow these actions are not considered “meddling” or “destabilising” to the conflict in Syria, while Russia’s alleged involvement is cause for international outcry.

The real agenda

The obvious conclusion is that Russia’s aid to Syria has been critical in stymieing Washington’s regime change agenda, thereby necessitating an active propaganda assault to demonise Moscow’s moves both in regard to supplying and aiding Damascus, and its calls to form a coalition against the Islamic State and international terrorism. In effect, the media is working to caricature Russia as an aggressor in Syria in order to deflect attention from the fact that US efforts in Syria have failed, and that the US has no intention of effectively fighting the terrorism it continues to promote.

The US-NATO-GCC-Israel axis seeks to continue the war on Syria using any means necessary, including continued support for terrorist factions such as the so called “Army of Conquest,” Al-Qaeda linked groups like al Nusra Front, and ISIS/ISIL. The ultimate goal is the collapse of the Syrian state and the breaking of the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah alliance, which would mean the final and permanent ejection of Russian influence from the region.

Russia fully understands this strategic imperative for Washington, just as it knows that terrorism is the principal weapon being employed in the ongoing war. As such, Moscow has moved to bolster the Syrian government (Russia knows that the Syrian Arab Army is the most effective counter-terrorism fighting force) in order to provide it with the necessary aid to continue to destroy terrorist groups. Moreover, any additional Russian support in terms of advisers, increased shipments of materiel, and/or limited numbers of combat troops, provide Damascus with the physical resources necessary to wage the war.

Calling a bluff

At the largest level however, Moscow is moving to call Washington’s bluff regarding the fight against the Islamic State, and terrorism generally. Putin knows that the US does not want to destroy ISIS/ISIL, but rather to manage its development in an attempt to steer it toward US strategic objectives.

This strategy was outlined in the declassified 2012 US Defence Intelligence Agency document obtained by Judicial Watch, which revealed that the US has knowingly promoted the spread of the Islamic State since at least 2012 in order to use it as a weapon against the Assad government. The document noted that, “... there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist Principality in eastern Syria ... and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran).”

So, by proposing an international coalition to defeat ISIS/ISIL, Putin is essentially forcing the US either to admit that it is not serious about destroying the terrorist network, or that it will only do so under its own aegis, thereby exposing Washington’s motives as entirely self-serving, and rooted in the US hegemonic agenda for the region.

But Washington will not simply allow Putin to out manoeuvre it in terms of public relations. Instead, it reverts to the tried and true, and still remarkably effective, meme of Russian aggression. By portraying Russia as the villain bent on arming the “brutal dictator”, the US hopes to transform the discourse on Syria, moving from its own ghastly record of arming terrorists and seeking the destruction of the state, to Russia “meddling” in the conflict.

Keen political observers shouldn’t be fooled by this sort of sleight of hand propaganda. But don’t tell the corporate media. They’re busy working overtime, parroting US-NATO talking points, rather than asking questions and seeking answers.

globalresearch.ca ✳

Opposition mounts to oppressive trade pact

Less well known than the notorious Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is engendering growing opposition because of its similar oppressive provisions.

Chee Yoke Heong

A little-known regional trade pact currently under negotiation has begun to garner attention, especially among civil society campaigners, after leaked documents showed its potentially negative impacts on health, agriculture and socio-economy in prospective member states.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership was initially regarded as an antidote to another proposed trade accord, the hugely controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership, as a number of countries negotiating the TPP and which are also involved in the RCEP talks were opposed to some provisions in the TPP. But evidence has emerged showing that Japan and South Korea are pushing for provisions, particularly those relating to intellectual property, that attempt to harmonise the RCEP with the TPP, making the former practically a carbon copy of the TPP.

Launched in November 2012, the RCEP negotiations are taking place between the 10 member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the bloc's trading partners Australia, New Zealand, China, South Korea, Japan and India. Like the TPP talks, the negotiations on the RCEP – which are expected to be concluded in November – have been conducted in secrecy away from the public eye, with no public consultations being held.

But in recent months, leaks of documents submitted by Japan and South Korea have provided a glimpse into what is being put on the table for the RCEP negotiations. For those opposed to the US-led TPP, there is a sense of déjà vu as they see many similar provisions being pushed in the RCEP talks as well.

In India, farmers' groups, patients' groups, civil societies and trade unions have staged demonstrations and issued calls to the national government to stop negotiations and to hold consultations with the relevant stakeholders in light of the potential dangers of the pact.

They say that RCEP-imposed market liberalisation and adoption of provisions whose reach extends beyond existing trade agreements would jeopardise prospects for the domestic manufacturing sector, harm agriculture and make it difficult for people to access affordable

generic medicines. These concerns are not confined to India but apply to other prospective RCEP members as well.

The intellectual property (IP) provisions in the leaked Japanese text dated October 2014 and made available last February proposed monopoly IP protections beyond both the obligations of existing international IP agreements, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s TRIPS Agreement, and IP laws of many RCEP countries. A group of academics pointed out a

Japan and South Korea are pushing for provisions, particularly those relating to intellectual property, that attempt to harmonise the RCEP with the TPP, making the former practically a carbon copy of the TPP.

number of controversial provisions, including those that would:

- Broaden and lengthen patent monopolies;
- Extend restrictions on the use of clinical trial data to support the marketing approval of generic medicines;
- Enable the seizure of generic medicines in transit, even those only suspected of infringing IP laws in the transit country.

The leaked South Korean document, also dated October 2014 and made available publicly in June, put forward several IP provisions that would give additional privileges to the pharmaceutical industry. These include patent term extensions, the seizure of suspected IP-infringing medicines in "transshipment", and even damages for patent infringements determined according to the value asserted by the patent owner.

Since India and China are major suppliers of generic medicines to the world's poor, these proposals, if agreed, "could delay the market entry of generic medicines in the region – and the impact will be felt around the world", according to academics.

Indian firms have been able to supply generic medicines to many low- and middle-income countries because India's intellectual property law balances private rights with the public interest. For instance, it does not permit the granting of patents for new forms or new uses of a known substance, a common pharmaceutical industry practice known as "evergreening" of patents. These safeguards, however, would be lost if India and other RCEP countries agree to Japan's proposal.

On copyright, the proposals made in the South Korean draft were described by Jeremy Malcolm, an IP lawyer and analyst with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, as even

negative impacts of the RCEP on agriculture and the manufacturing industry.

Farmers' organisations in India have voiced their worry that the RCEP will increase agricultural imports such as dairy products into the country, thus jeopardising the livelihoods of Indian farmers. Drawing on the experience of India, Vijoo Krishnan of All India Kisan Sabha (All India Peasants Union) said the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has seriously affected South Indian farmers and expressed his concern that the larger RCEP will affect all farmers in the country. He pointed out, in particular, that the opening up of the dairy market to imports from Australia and New Zealand could be detrimental to local producers.

The leaked IP negotiating texts from South Korea and Japan also indicate that the proposals made may have serious implications for domestic laws on the protection of plant varieties and farmers' rights.

According to Shalini Bhutani, a legal researcher and policy analyst, the drafts propose that all RCEP members either accede to or ratify over a dozen international IP-related agreements, including the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (better known as UPOV), particularly its 1991 version which gives primacy to corporate plant breeders and sets restrictions on seed-saving by farmers and on access to protected plant varieties by researchers.

Negative impacts

It is clear that South Korea and Japan are asking for IP protection for plant varieties that goes beyond what countries are obligated to under the WTO's IP rules. The RCEP will put additional pressure on countries such as India to join UPOV 1991, from which India has intentionally stayed away till now.

Citing the negative impact that previous FTAs have on the manufacturing sector, Dharmendra Kumar of India FDI Watch said the RCEP is not likely to create the promised jobs or advance the manufacturing sector, just as the India-ASEAN FTA has failed to do.

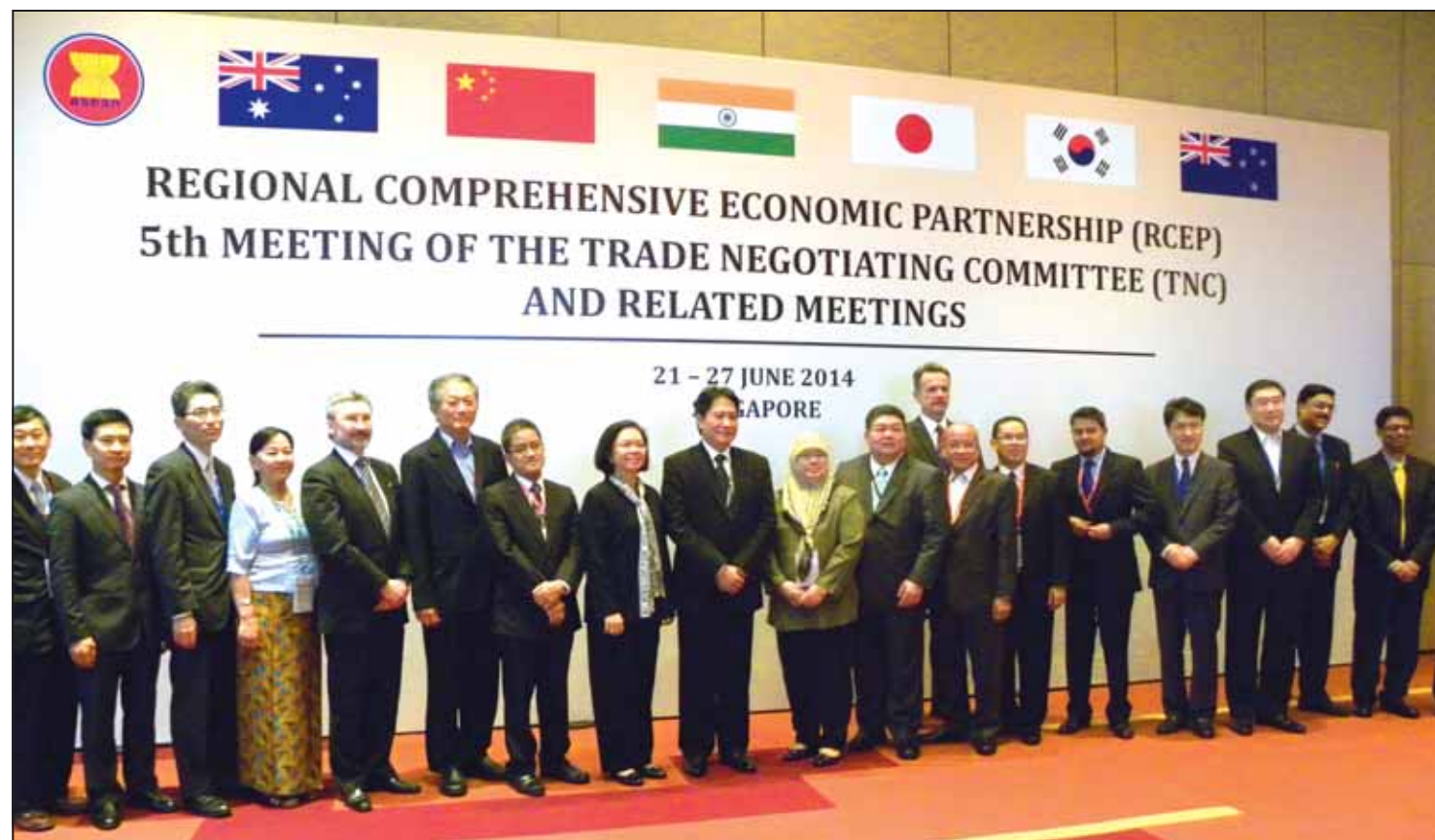
Amitava Guha from the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) told *Business World* that many of the RCEP countries have advanced manufacturing capability and the elimination of import duties on industrial products would intensify the cut-throat competition to reduce production costs. "It will lead to poor quality of employment and downward pressure on wages in the region. This would harm workers' welfare and put them against each other while seriously impairing workers' efforts to achieve 'decent work' and their right to organise and bargain collectively," he said.

Domestic industries in India have also put up stiff resistance to the RCEP, resulting in the Indian government reportedly, during an RCEP ministerial meeting in Malaysia in July, deciding to introduce a two-tier approach to cutting tariffs on goods. Under this plan, India is offering to cut duties on around 75-80 tariff lines for countries with which it has FTAs, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and South Korea, while for countries like China, Australia and New Zealand, among others, it is likely to offer 40-50 tariff lines for duty cuts.

A group of United Nations experts have recently also raised concerns over the detrimental impacts that trade and investment agreements can have on human rights. The experts expressed concern about the secret nature of drawing up and negotiating many of these agreements and their potential adverse impact on human rights.

They recommended that all current negotiations on bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements should be conducted transparently with consultation and participation of all relevant stakeholders including labour unions, consumer unions, environmental protection groups and health professionals. The UN experts also called for safeguards to be embedded to ensure full protection and enjoyment of human rights.

Third World Resurgence ✪



One of many RCEP meetings held in Singapore last year.

Colombia

Unions fight killer Coke

WT Whitney

For decades a corporation currently ranking 32nd in the world for market value and accumulating US\$7.1 billion in profits in a recent year has abused and even killed workers who want better lives. Coca Cola, the Goliath in this Colombian story, has had to contend with the Sinaltrainal food and beverage workers' union that, as David, defends the Coca Cola workers.

On June 25, 2015 thugs killed retired Coca Cola worker Wilmer Enrique Giraldo. Wilmer had been injured at work, was forced from his job, received death threats, and fled in fear to Medellín. Luis Enrique Girado Arango, his father, also worked for Coca Cola and also belonged to Sinaltrainal. Paramilitaries assassinated Luis Enrique Girado in 1994.

The 14 murders of Sinaltrainal's Coca Cola workers since 1990 represent a tiny fraction of the 2,800 murders of Colombian unionists occurring between 1984 and 2011. In addition, during those years, tens of thousands of other social movement activists and protesters have met violent deaths.

The 105 Colombian unionists killed between 2011 and the present are of special significance. During that time the Labour Action Plan of the US – Colombian Free Trade Agreement has been in force. The Plan was a US – inspired effort allegedly intended to stop violence against unionists.

Sinaltrainal defends employees of Nestle Corporation, Nutresa, and other Colombian companies in addition to Coca Cola. But the fight against huge and famous Coca Cola is special, inasmuch as that corporation exemplifies transnational corporations which receive support and protection from Colombia's neoliberal government.

This is a big-league contest. Coca Cola in Colombia teams with the giant Mexican food and beverage distributor FEMSA. Coca Cola claimed almost 50 million consumers there in 2013, 5,000 employees, and "413,200 points of sale". In fact, "Colombia made up 47.1 million (15 percent) of Coca-Cola's 313.7 million drinkers of the soft drink in Latin America and the Philippines."

Unfortunately from the union's point of view, Coca Cola farms out most of its workers to subcontracted "facade companies".

Sinaltrainal has resisted the company's firing of new recruits and its refusal to relocate workers who've received threats of violence. The union defends workers from intimidation at the hands of private security firms and from real danger posed by militarised police attacks against striking workers, in one instance with tanks.

Over the years Coca Cola has used paramilitary forces as its ultimate enforcer, not only as murderer, but once by entering a bottling plant to force workers out of the union. Sinaltrainal has advocated for the environment, notably in early 2015

when it protested Coca Cola's having diverted almost 70 percent of Tocancipá's underground water supplies to its plant there.

Beginning on April 13, 2015, five Sinaltrainal Coca Cola workers carried out a hunger strike for 10 days in Bogotá's Plaza Bolívar. Acting for Coca Cola workers nationwide, they were protesting low wages, Coca Cola's sub-contracting for workers, its firing of 1,500 workers at a closed-down bottling plant, and abuse of water resources.

The hunger strike ended with an agreement on establishing a review board to monitor water use and deal with environmental abuses. News reports indicated that remaining issues, like wages and sub-contracting, would be discussed later.

On May 22, 2015, Coca Cola service workers belonging to Sinaltrainal chained themselves to Coca Cola factory entry ways in Cúcuta, Bucaramanga, Barrancabermeja, Cali, Medellín, and Barranquilla. They were reiterating demands made a month earlier.

In this fight against long odds, Sinaltrainal has gained international solidarity. The United Steelworkers and the International Labour Rights Forum filed lawsuits in the United States in 2001 and 2006. The charge, which did not prevail, was that Coca Cola in Colombia "contracted with or otherwise directed paramilitary security forces that utilised extreme violence and murdered, tortured and unlawfully detained or otherwise silenced trade union leaders."



In a 2012 letter to President Obama, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka expressed his "profound shock" at the murder of a Coca Cola worker and Sinaltrainal leader in Barranquilla. Alleging that Coca Cola is "complicit in violence against union leaders in Latin America, particularly Colombia and Guatemala", the American Federation of Teachers in late 2014 resolved to ban Coca Cola products in schools.

Since 2004, dozens of union locals and state and central labour councils have issued similar

statements. The American Postal Workers Union, Communications Workers of America, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and Service Employees International Union have done likewise.

Yet the struggle continues and the stakes are high. Or in the words of Sinaltrainal leader Juan Carlos Galvis: "If we lose this fight against Coke, first we will lose our union, next we will lose our jobs, and then we will all lose our lives!"

People's World ☸

9/11: Restore workers' rights

Mark Gruenberg

September 11 was the 14th anniversary of the infamous attack on the US. The World Trade Centre was smashed, the Pentagon damaged, and 2,987 people were killed.

Among the victims were 343 New York Fire Fighters and their priest, who were heroically saving other people when the Twin Towers crashed to the ground after two airplanes hit the buildings. The fourth commandeered plane crashed in Pennsylvania after its passengers fought back against the hijackers.

Unionists from many trades – from Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee members working at the Twin Towers' restaurant to NABET technicians tending TV antennae atop the WTC – also died. Unionists were one of every five people killed. The deaths haven't stopped.

The buildings' collapse loosed a toxic cloud of particulates, jet fuel, asbestos, heavy metals, and God-knows-what-else. In the succeeding years, dozens of Fire Fighters exposed to the debris have sickened and died.

But it seems that in the intervening years, the country as a whole – and its political leaders in particular – have moved on, or even forgotten, the attack and its victims.

It took years before Congress set up a compensation program,

named for New York fire fighter James Zadroga, who died after the attack from the effects of the toxic cloud. The program pays for medical exams, treatment and lost wages for workers permanently disabled and eventually dead from the effects of the debris.

That program, established under the Obama – not Bush – administration, is expiring. The Fire Fighters are again lobbying for legislation to extend it and make it permanent.

But the country, by and large, has even greater amnesia than that, and for that we can thank our politicians, of both parties, but led by then-President George W Bush and, especially, then-Vice President Richard Cheney. Business happily "forgot," too.

That's because those forces used the attacks as an excuse to achieve their goals: Trashing the Constitution, enacting right wing programs and extending corporate hegemony.

Cheney and Bush pushed the so-called Patriot Act through a supine Congress. Both sides of the aisle rushed to support it, in the name of fighting the "Global War on Terror". In doing so, they obliterated basic civil rights, and we still feel the effects.

Business wrapped itself in the flag, literally. The head of the US Chamber of Commerce piously proclaimed his members would not use the 9/11 attacks as an excuse

to smash their foes. If they did, the Chamber would crack down. (We asked the question.)

Three weeks later, the chamber – sounding a patriotic horn – ran commercials linking the fight against terrorists to the fight to enact so-called right-to-work legislation in an Oklahoma referendum. That was "for freedom," business said. It won. Its assault continues.

And corporate hegemony mushroomed thanks to Bush's post-9/11 policies and no-bid contracts awarded to business behemoths, such as Cheney's former employer, Halliburton.

Lost in all of this are the victims of 9/11: Workers, especially union workers.

Reversing the disastrous effects of 9/11 will take years, if not decades. Reversing the disastrous effects of post-9/11 policies, from the Patriot Act to the corporate hegemony, will take years, if not decades, too.

We can start by renewing the Zadroga Act. But we can't stop there.

This will be a war, a long war, to restore our country to the standards and values for workers – for all of us – that the fire fighters at the Twin Towers died for.

Winning that war would be a fitting way to remember 9/11.

People's World ☸

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Free community forum featuring

- ◀ Dr Pat Ranald Sydney University, AFTINET ▶
- ◀ Elizabeth Hulm AFTINET ▶
- ◀ Karun Cowper WACA ▶

Monday September 21 | 5:30pm | 6th floor CSA Building 445 Hay St PERTH

UNIONSWA **AFTINET** **SIGTUR**

www.unionswa.com.au

Support *The Guardian*
by donating to Press Fund

"Thank you for making this happen"

Jeremy Corbyn *

Thank you to the *Morning Star* and its readers for the most incredible support throughout this leadership campaign – and for the detailed coverage of the policy proposals that we have made and the debate that these have encouraged.

The campaign began in the aftermath of the Labour election defeat in May, when the party opted for the election of a new leader, rather than an extended policy debate.

After much discussion, supporters of the Socialist Campaign Group in Parliament decided that we should attempt to put up a candidate for leader, and I was duly nominated.

Eleven MPs initially nominated me. This grew as MPs didn't want to stand in the way of a democratic process in the party (despite not agreeing with my policies) and we saw huge activity by party members and supporters via social media to encourage MPs to do just that.

The fundamental political issue of the campaign has been opposition to the politics and economics of austerity. Essentially, the austerity process claims that the 2008 banking crisis was a product of too much government spending and that the deficit came about because of this, and not because of the profligacy of the banks or the government bailout.

This meant that the incoming Tory-Lib Dem coalition in 2010 immediately embarked on a process that brought about £21 billion of cuts in welfare spending alone, and an enormous cut in almost every local authority's budget, as well as wage freezes, and, notably in the private sector, an enormous growth of zero-hours contracts.

Our campaign challenged the notion that the issue of the debt can be dealt with by punishing the poorest. Austerity was essentially a political agenda to roll back the state and individualise public services, rather than ensure their continued collective delivery.

The international issues that Britain faces are huge, and from the very beginning our campaign has reiterated my opposition to the Iraq war, and to future bombing campaigns, but has also called for the Labour Party to oppose the replacement of the Trident nuclear missile system and instead establish a defence diversification agency to ensure those jobs and skills are not lost, but working on products that improve all our lives.

The Tory Health and Social Care Act is designed to destroy the NHS and make it a service of last resort, instead of providing a universal service. The Tory Welfare Reform Bill

hits hardest at the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

We as a labour movement have to be strong enough to stand up and ensure that we have a system that prevents anyone falling into destitution, supports those going through mental health crises and ends the internal market and privatisation of our health service.

Our campaign watchword has been resolutely engaging people in democratic politics, producing 13 different policy suggestions, and absolutely refusing to engage in personal sniping or abuse of any sort.

We've been on the receiving end of an almost unprecedented three months of abuse by some media outlets, but have absolutely refused to engage with or respond to that in order to ensure that the political message is not lost.

I have taken part in 99 different events, ranging from hustings organised by the Labour Party and other groups to events organised by media outlets.

We've also organised public rallies in all of the major towns and cities of Britain and I've been privileged to be invited to speak at some of the most significant labour movement festivals that are held throughout the country.

The very first hustings was organised by the BBC *Newsnight* in Nuneaton, a town that Labour failed to win back. We had lost support there to Ukip and the Tories.

The hustings showed that when the Tories were politically challenged on austerity, there is an audience ready to listen.

To emphasise that point, last Tuesday we organised another rally in Nuneaton which was attended by over 500 people. The annual Tolpuddle weekend in Dorset – to commemorate the bravery of farm labourers standing up for union rights in the 19th century – was a huge affair.

At the end of the festival we held our own event and over 3,000 people stayed to listen to a message of hope rather than despair.

Probably the biggest audience of the whole campaign was the Durham Miners' Gala, which was redolent of all the history of the miners' struggle in Durham, but also highly relevant to today's society.

The festival has grown year on year as the relevance of socialists and an inclusive message becomes clearer and stronger. We held meetings in many cities, including an enormous Friday evening event in Glasgow when more than 2,000 people packed into the Old Fruit Market, concluding the event with the whole audience joining in the singing of *Bandiera Rossa*.



Jeremy Corbyn addressing UCU strikers and supporters. The UCU is the largest trade union and professional association for academics, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in further and higher education throughout the UK.

Camden Town Hall was so full that overflow meetings were held both inside the council chamber, another committee room and out on the street where I stood atop an FBU fire engine to address the crowd.

One of the most poignant rallies was in Tredegar, the home of Aneurin Bevan. We had an NHS rally in the middle of the afternoon with hundreds of people gathering around his memorial stones rededicating themselves to healthcare as a human right and not a privilege.

Leeds Armouries was home to our rally, with over 2,000 people from all walks of life and all over Yorkshire who came to show their support for an alternative.

The 99th event was held on Thursday night in my own constituency in Islington in the biggest church we could find. Over 1,000 people crammed in to hear from Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, my great friend and colleague John McDonnell and newly elected MPs Kate Osamor, Clive Lewis, Richard Burgon, Cat Smith and Rebecca Long-Bailey.

Touching speeches were made by a number of others, including Neil Findlay MSP and long-standing Islington members and supporters including Jan Whelan, George Durack and others. Both Jan and George nominated me when I first stood for selection in 1982.

It has been an amazing experience and campaign, uniting young and old and alike, all cultures and faiths, on the basis of optimism and belief that we can organise society differently and better.

We don't have to accept austerity and even deeper inequality in our society, but we can reach out and unite people on a progressive agenda.

I'm looking forward to all the challenges ahead, however, what can never be taken away is that this has been a summer that changed politics in Britain, and enormous thanks are due to those who have organised our campaign in every part of Britain.

The 16,000 people who signed up as volunteers will never be forgotten. It all started just 100 days ago. *Jeremy Corbyn is Labour MP for Islington North and leader of the Labour Party. *Morning Star* ✪



Region Briefs

Three thousand and eight hundred people recently protested in front of the US military Camp Schwab in Okinawa, demanding that the building of a new US military base in the prefecture cease. The Japanese Communist Party member and parliament representative, Akamine Seiken, said that the protest was set to fight against the Abe government's war-related bills and to stop the building of new US military bases. Other participants said that they cannot stand by while the government decides building a new military base meant to frighten people under the excuse of protecting national security.

The China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF) has built a school (funded by more than AU\$1.3 million) for 600 ethnic San people in Namibia. San people are the oldest settlers in the region of Omaheke, although they are an ethnic minority in the country. One in five San people are literate (2011 population census) due to school shortage. The school is composed of 12 classrooms, sports ground, teacher and princ. The CYDF also has funded another 22 schools in Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Burundi.

The Communist Party of China Central Committee Party School placed statues of Marx, Engels, Mao, Deng and other communist role models on its campus. The Party's school is the highest institute that trains middle-level party members, and in a statement noted the figures guided and reflected the Party's ideology through different development stages.

China's top political advisor, Yu Zhengsheng, hosted a ceremony in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region. Thousands of people wearing ethnic clothing joined the ceremony, marching, singing and dancing. Yu said that the top priorities in Tibet were to strengthen ethnic solidarity, safeguard national unity, promote economic development, improve people's living standards, social stability and harmony. He guaranteed that the government would create more jobs, provide better education, health care, and housing to the local people, as well as protect the natural environment. GDP in Tibet has grown from around AU\$60 million in 1965 to over AU\$100 billion in 2014.

Two hundred and twenty delegates from 18 countries participated in the 7th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of Solidarity with Cuba in Vietnam's capital of Hanoi, sharing experiences and proposing communication initiatives. Vietnam President Truong Tan Sang welcomed the delegation. He affirmed Vietnam's support and solidarity with Cuba. One of the Cuban Five, Antonio Rodriguez, thanked Vietnam for its efforts in lifting the US blockade on his country and the release of the five patriotic soldiers.

BE MORE THAN A TOURIST

JOIN THE

CUBA

BRIGADE

Dec 27 2015 to Jan 16 2016 <http://cubabrigade.org.au>

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Peace to the people of Syria

The human and material cost of the horrific conflict in Syria has been enormous. Since 2011, it is estimated that over 200,000 people have been killed. The UN figure is higher at over 220,000. Of these more than 63,000 were civilians, including about 6,500 women and at least 10,515 children. The remainder have been fighters of the regime and various factions.

The fighting has also forced two and a half million refugees to flee Syria into Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Europe and North Africa. Another 7.6 million refugees have been internally displaced.

Despite this harrowing death toll and the huge exodus of refugees, the world has largely ignored this brutal war and remained silent, refusing to take any meaningful actions to help end the massacres, the immense devastation and the appalling suffering of the people.

I find it heart-wrenchingly sad and beyond belief that after so many atrocities of the recent past, such as the Armenian genocide and the massive slaughter of Greeks and Assyrians by Ottoman Turkey, the large-scale mass murders by Nazi Germany and Japan in WW2, later massacres in Cambodia, Palestine, Rwanda, Argentina, Bosnia and elsewhere and with the international community stating it would never allow such crimes against humanity to happen again, the world has done nothing to end this terrible carnage.

How much longer will the UN, the Arab League and the rest of the international community stand by and do nothing while this vicious war continues unabated. This blatant inaction is immoral and inexcusable. As much pressure as possible needs to be exerted on the world community to act and compel all parties involved to bring about a break in the

fighting and create the conditions for a just resolution to the conflict that brings genuine peace, security and freedom to the people of Syria.

Steven Katsineris
Vic

On the "half pay" scam

Last week a joint Fairfax and Four Corners investigation shone a spotlight on one of Australia's biggest corporate scandals. The convenience store giant 7-Eleven was exposed for being complicit in wage theft worth tens of millions of dollars.

The rort commonly known as the "half pay" scam was first exposed by UNITE, the fighting union for fast food and retail workers in Victoria, back in 2008.

During this time UNITE's campaigning led to the Fair Work Ombudsman auditing dozens of 7-Eleven stores across the country. While they found hundreds of thousands of dollars in underpayments UNITE explained that this was just the tip of the iceberg.

In a face to face meeting UNITE

Sydney

Film series:

Wild in the streets

Portraits of social & political struggle

Various Wednesday, Saturdays, Sundays until September 30

Domain Theatre – Art Gallery NSW

artgallery.nsw.gov.au/calendar/film-series-wild-streets

organisers told Fair Work Ombudsman officials that a simple audit of the books would not show up the full extent of the underpayments taking place.

It was recommended that a comparison be done between the time and wages records and the cash register reconciliation forms. In most stores the employees log in and out of the cash register and a comparison with time sheets would show that people were not being paid for all the hours they worked.

Similar requests for an audit were made in a face to face meeting

with the then 7-Eleven Chief Financial Officer, David Ginsberg. Again, despite knowing full well about the scam, head office refused to act.

The Fair Work Ombudsman in recent weeks has acted as if they did everything possible to stop the rort. Nothing could be further from the truth. They knew what the issues were, and where to look to find the true extent of the rip off. They decided not to intervene and as a result they along with 7-Eleven head office should be held to account.

Anthony Main
UNITE Secretary

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Gold tailings and coal divestment



Water flows into pits of mine wastewater below the Gold King Mine. (Photo: Brent Lewis)

What do you do with a gold mine after you have extracted all the gold? Or a silver mine? Or a lead mine? Or a copper mine? This question is currently exercising the minds of environmental activists in the USA, following the catastrophic failure of that country's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to clean up the Gold King, Red and Bonita mines in Colorado. The EPA managed to breach an old tailings dam and release an estimated three million gallons of mine waste (lead, arsenic and copper) into Colorado's Animas River. The breach sent a yellow-orange, toxic mess that stretched for 100 miles through a spectacularly beautiful area of Colorado.

However, it could have been even worse. As the British *Guardian* reported: "One expert called the mines north of Durango near Silverton and the abandoned mining town of Gladstone 'ticking time bombs'. Another expressed relief that the Gold King spill was not larger – if a slurry of mine waste known as tailings had spilled from the area, he said, there could have been '100 times the volume' of waste."

What worries US environmentalists is that there are around half a million abandoned hard-rock mines around the country, most of them in only 12 states. As Judy Molland notes, "they are the result of the early rush to dig gold and minerals, combined with decades of lax regulations".

Mining companies – like other corporations – are always greedy for profits. Once they have extracted all the profitable ore, they have little interest in spending any of their

profits on cleaning up the toxic mess that is left behind. In the heartland of capitalism, compliant governments – at state and federal levels – have been easily persuaded to let them get away with it.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the US federal government began cracking down on air and water pollution. Even then, as *Popular Science* notes, "In 1996, Sunnyside [mining company] was permitted to shut down its treatment plant – an effective but expensive way to stop pollution from mine discharges – and switch to the less costly method of simply plugging the mine works with concrete."

In 1997, the US Congress adopted a series of policies to reclaim "abandoned mine lands" under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), a federal agency, has so far identified 48,100 abandoned sites within its jurisdiction. Sounds a lot, but it leaves around 80 percent of abandoned mine sites still unidentified and needing further analysis or environmental cleanup efforts.

In Judy Molland's words, "The massive unleashing of pollution from an old, inactive gold mine high in the San Juan Mountains of south-western Colorado is a heartbreaking reminder of how past actions and the failure to deal with them can threaten our wildlife, landscapes and human health for generations.

"We should all take a lesson about conservation from this ugly spill, and remember that it is not acceptable to destroy the land and leave these problems for future generations to fix."

However, to paraphrase Marx, in pursuit of profits, capitalists don't really give a toss about destruction of the land or the difficulties that may be faced by future generations.

Another type of mining is also causing a lot of worry and concern for the environment: coal mining. The burning of fossil fuels like coal is recognised (except by Tony Abbott) as a prime contributor to global warming. So serious is this issue that a world-wide movement has sprung up calling for governments and industry to stop using these fuels that threaten the future of life on Earth. It's called the Divestment Campaign.

Cole Mellino of Ecowatch notes that "To date, 397 institutions have at least partially divested from fossil fuels. ... Students at Swarthmore, Yale, Harvard and University of Washington among many others demanded their institutions put their money where their mouth is and stop investing 'in an industry that is actively destabilising the future that our education is meant to prepare us for', as one student at Swarthmore put it."

One notable case came from the Norwegian Parliament, which took the unprecedented step of mandating that its sovereign wealth fund (the richest in the world) divest from coal burning and coal-producing companies.

Similarly, California's state legislature passed a bill that requires the state's two largest pension plans – California Public Employees' Retirement System and California State Teachers' Retirement System – to divest their holdings from thermal coal.

"The measure to divest these two pension

funds – the largest public pension funds in the US – is part of a legislative push in California to address climate change," says Mellino. Bill McKibben, co-founder of environment organisation *350.org*, commented: "That California – Earth's eighth biggest economy – will begin to pull its money out of fossil fuel stocks is a sign about what technologies are the future, and which are the dirty past."

Closer to home, Newcastle City Council has voted to divest its \$270 million investment portfolio from fossil fuels, including coal. "The importance of this decision cannot be glossed over," says *350.org*. "It is outstanding leadership for a city that is neck-deep in fossil fuels to make the call that it's time to get out of them. Obviously this divestment decision won't stop the coal port from continuing on at this point, but it sets the direction for the city going forward." Newcastle is the world's biggest coal port.

Prime Minister (now former) Tony Abbott predictably came out against the decision. But Newcastle city councillor Declan Clausen justified the decision: "There are an increasing group of start-ups in Newcastle that are looking at a clean-tech future, we are embracing those opportunities. The coal downturn has particularly affected the Hunter Valley. Clean techs are going to be a significant employer moving forward. Council is being on the front foot about that."

Unlike Tony Abbott. ❖

Book Review by Tony Pecinovsky

The End Of American Labour Unions

In March, Wisconsin became the 25th so-called "Right-to-Work" state in our country. Coupled with anti-union Right-to-Work (RTW) victories in Michigan and Indiana in 2012 and in Oklahoma in 2001, it seems as if right-wing, anti-worker interests are on the offensive. It had been over 20 years since RTW had scored a state legislative victory, as in Texas – in 1993.

Raymond L Hogler's *The End Of Labour Unions: The Right-to-Work Movement and the Erosion of Collective Bargaining* is an important contribution to our understanding of the historical roots of so-called "Right-to-Work", its basis in libertarian ideas of individual freedom, and possible strategies organised labour should consider – if it hopes to survive.

Early on Hogler provides political context for differing perspectives on freedom and liberty and how these ideas intersect to shape our understanding of unions. He writes, "Because the problem of right to work rests on the incompatibility of radical individualism and collective security, the skirmishes between supporters and opponents of right to work in the United States are continuing proxy battles in the quest for control over our narrative of freedom, liberty, property, and community."

Further, Hogler tells us that our foundational definitions of freedom and liberty stem from two very different and unique understandings. Freedom was meant to signify community and brotherhood, while liberty – "in contrast" – signified individualism, personal preference and "an absence of servitude." And it is from these foundational definitions that the narratives surrounding "union security," or the closed shop, unfold.

Early in our nation and labour movement's history, judges, politicians and business owners utilised a "conspiracy doctrine [which] governed American labour relations..." and "hamstrung the activities of American trade unions for more than a century."

For example, "In the opening phase of conspiracy prosecutions, prosecutors described trade unionism as an illegitimate form of government that tried to usurp

the authority of the state, and, as a result of labour's collective power, members of the community suffered economic injury from the actions of a narrowly self-interested faction."

According to judges, politicians and business owners, the injury was two-fold. "The first injury was higher prices resulting from the labour monopoly, thereby constituting the 'unlawful end' of a conspiracy to raise wages." The second injury – and here is the ideological basis or today's RTW campaigns – "arose from the harm to a non-conforming employee who was prevented from working on terms other than those acceptable to the group," hence the attack on union security clauses, or the closed shop – whereby as a condition of employment all workers pay dues or a representation fee for the cost of bargaining contracts, handling grievances, etc.

Hogler then highlights a number of so-called conspiracy cases in Philadelphia, New York and Pittsburgh, before transitioning into the emergence of the National Labour Recovery Act, the National Labour Relations Board and changes to national labour law born out of the Taft-Harley.

Interestingly, we learn that unions themselves and Robert Wagner – the primary architect of the NLRA and the NLRB, or Wagner Act – were partially responsible for the ambiguous language regarding closed shop provisions.

For example, Wagner justifiably feared the emergence of company unions with a monopoly on worker representation in certain industries, as employer rushed to form their own, acceptable, internal 'unions', welfare associations or athletic clubs. Additionally, the AFL [American federation of Labour] was known for lily white, segregated unions and many labour leaders feared security clauses, or the closed shop, would force them to represent African Americans, immigrants and women, which they were then loath to do.

Further, Wagner had little reason to expect the emergence of so-called states' rights initiatives whereby right-wing lawmakers and their corporate backers would utilise the state legislative process to undermine federal labour law, as – at this time, 1935 – the law was very explicit

regarding labour and interstate commerce. Including provisions in the Wagner Act precluding states from in-acting RTW laws would have been "redundant, because states at the time lacked the power to legislate against closed shops."

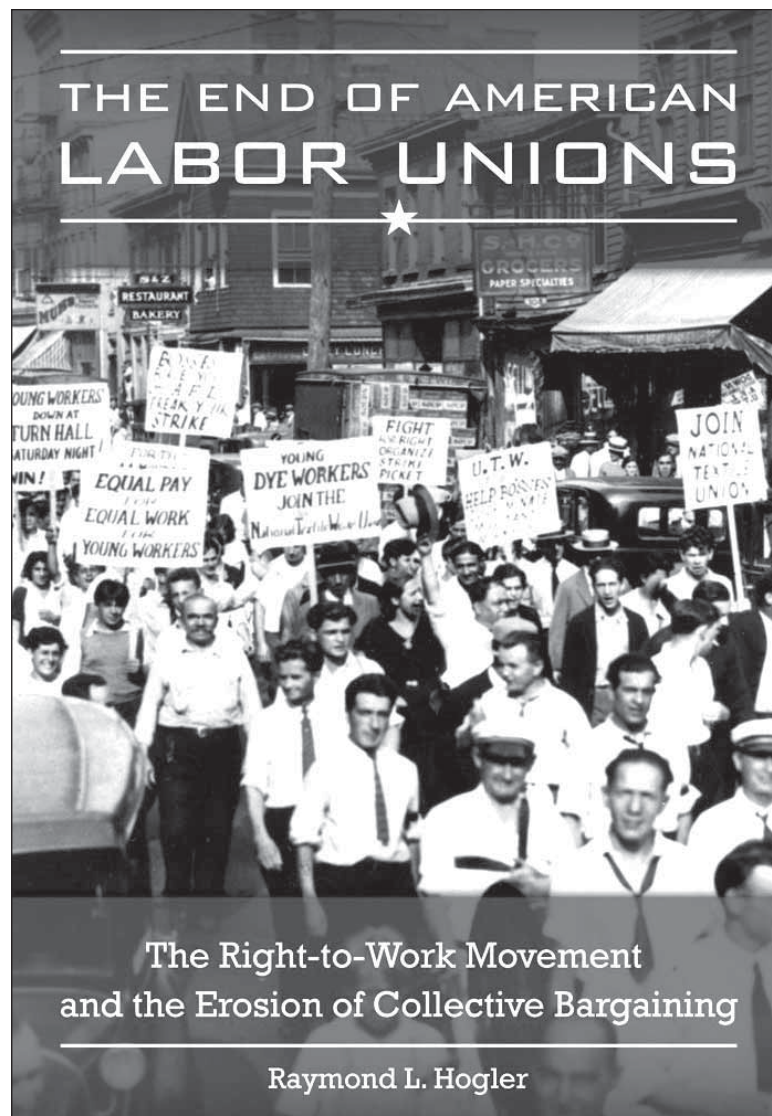
Hogler then shifts gear and talks about the disastrous impact of Taft-Hartley, 1960's and 70's era fight-back within labour and the emergence of Regan and the radical right, as well as more recent court decisions pertaining to mandatory dues deductions.

The final chapter deals with the strategic shortcomings of recent AFL-CIO efforts to pass national labour law reform, like the Employee Free Choice Act and possible strategies for winning local "just cause" laws, which would help unions reclaim the narrative around freedom and liberty.

The End Of American Labour Unions is a good little book, packed with insight and analysis. My only mild criticisms are that Hogler did not provide enough political context for the emergence of 1930's labour law reform and the Wagner Act, a significant victory born of hard struggle, coalition building, grassroots organising and a vibrant left – like the Communist Party. Similarly, he doesn't provide context for the emergence of Taft-Hartley and the rightward drift of our nation, as the "Red Scare" and the "Cold War" unfolded against the domestic champions of workers' rights and democracy.

Minus these mild shortcomings, *The End Of American Labour Unions* is very much worth the read.

Dr Raymond L Hogler is Professor of Labour Law, Labour Relations and Human Resource Management at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. He is active in the Association of American University Professors (AAUP) and has served for a number of years as Vice-President for Legislative Affairs of the Colorado AAUP chapter. Among his accomplishments was drafting a bill passed by the Colorado Legislature in 2012 to allow non-tenure track faculty to enter into binding contracts for a period of years. *People's World* ✪



Sydney

POLITICS IN THE PUB

September 17
AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE END OF CIVIL LIBERTIES: THE ABBOTT COALITION AGENDA
 Peter Manning, Adjunct Professor UTS;
 Davis Shoebridge, Greens Upper House MP NSW State Parliament;

September 24
BIG BROTHER, BLOOD MONEY & THE DEEP STATE
 Nozomi Hayase, Dr, writer on the global corporate state at Common Dreams & Open Democracy, former writer at Wikileaks Central;
 Bernard Keane, Political editor of Crikey, co-author of *A Short History of Stupid*, author *War on the Internet and Surveillance*;

October 1
BREAKING OUT OF AUSTRALIA'S NEO-LIBERAL STRAITJACKET: THE PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVE PROJECT
 Frank Stilwell, Emeritus Professor, University of Sydney
 Tom Skladzien, Dr, Research Officer AMWU;

October 8
FROM THE WIKILEAKS FILES: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE, DIPLOMACY AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 Jake Lynch, Assoc Prof, Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Sydney University;
 Linda Pearson, Contributing author, *The Wikileaks Files: The World According to US Empire*;

Every Thursday 6:30 pm 'til 8:15 pm
Harold Park Hotel
 Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe

Charles Bradley 02 9692 0005
 odl_bradley@pacific.net.au
www.politicsinthepub.org.au

Subscription to **The Guardian**

12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc/\$150 solidarity) 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc/\$80 solidarity)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

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

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844

Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

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

Card# _____

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

Signature: _____

The Guardian

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

Editor: Tom Pearson

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

Printed by Spotpress
 24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

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

Refugee crisis

Seven key proposals

Nick Micinski

The Syrian refugee crisis needs to be met with structural policy responses. Individual Europeans have responded with inspiring solidarity campaigns, like an AirBnB for refugees in Germany and individuals offering their homes in Iceland but – with about 4 million Syrian refugees having fled their country and more than 6.5 million internally displaced – the scale of the problem demands structural responses from governments. Asylum is a human right, not an act of charity. European Union (EU) governments should take steps to ensure this right is not eroded in the face of austerity, nationalism and xenophobia.

British Prime Minister David Cameron suggested that the solution should be to bring “peace and stability to that part of the world”. While long-term solutions must address root causes, Cameron and other EU leaders cannot displace their responsibility for refugees arriving on their own borders. A swimmer at a pool would not let a person drown by reasoning that the “root cause” must first be addressed and that the person should learn to swim.

To address these problems EU leaders scheduled an emergency meeting for September 14 in order to hash out an EU-wide response to the crisis. This will most likely include quotas to resettle up to 100,000 refugees across the EU – a fraction of those displaced – for the purpose of “sharing the burden” outside of Italy, Greece and Hungary.

A co-ordinated inter-governmental response, such as a unified asylum system, will spread the burden of hosting new refugees throughout the EU. This could mean negotiating the proportion of refugees each member state must host or that some states may sponsor refugees to be hosted in other countries. Richer countries – including those outside of the EU – have the capacity to host more refugees than poorer countries on the periphery. Germany is leading by example, by proposing to accept 800,000 Syrians, but Britain, France, the US, and others need to step up and offer much more help to aid the survival of those displaced by war.

There are significant political hurdles standing in the way of a unified asylum system. European diplomats have been negotiating the Common European Asylum System since 1999, with little progress. One of the main challenges is that the Dublin Regulation requires asylum-seekers to be processed in the first European country they enter. In light of the current crisis, this seems impractical and will need to be reconsidered.

While everyone is talking about quotas, these alone will not solve the structural crisis that the EU faces. Thus, EU leaders should not ignore the full spectrum of possible policy

responses. Here are 7 key structural policies that should also be discussed at the emergency meeting on September 14:

1. Immediate humanitarian aid to refugees travelling within the EU or near its borders

European governments should mount a co-ordinated effort to provide humanitarian aid. Refugees who are near or have recently crossed a border into the EU are in desperate need of food, medicine, shelter and clothing. While the questions of where and who will provide asylum are still controversial, providing food to hungry children and families should not be. This co-ordinated humanitarian effort should be led by a central European or UN agency and jointly funded.

2. Full funding for UNHCR emergency budget

If governments are serious about easing the refugee crisis, the quickest route is to fully fund the one agency best equipped to help – the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was created with the mandate to protect refugees and help resolve refugee problems worldwide. When governments do not pay up, the UN is forced to cut food rations for refugees. The World Food Program reported that in May 2015 more than half the Syrian refugees in Lebanon did not have enough food to survive. This year UNHCR projected that a full response to assist Syrian refugees throughout 2015 would cost more than US\$4.5 billion. To date governments have contributed \$1.7 billion (only 37%) to UNHCR’s appeal.

The EU and other governments can and should contribute more to the UNHCR emergency budget.

3. Prima facie refugee status for all Syrian applicants in the EU

Earlier this year, the European Commission published the European Agenda on Migration with the hope of implementing coherent EU-wide policies. One component is to create a common EU list of “safe countries of origin” in order to speed up screening for asylum applications because all member states would apply the same standard. For this to work, border officials must respect individuals’ unique claims of persecution and not assume claims are based only on the situation in their country of origin.

UNHCR recognises that in times of emergency it is impossible to process every person through individual interviews and review – this



more practical concept is called prima facie refugee status. In 2006, Sweden recognised that this temporary provision would be necessary to provide protection for the mass influx of displaced Iraqis. Applying this to Syrians could accelerate processing and unify protection across member states.

4. Overseas asylum-processing centres

Some European diplomats have discussed opening processing centres overseas in order to allow refugees to apply for asylum without making the life-threatening journey by land or sea. This could be implemented through EU member state embassies around the Middle East or North Africa. Once asylum is given, the EU would facilitate safe transportation to the continent and this would be integrated into the overall burden-sharing agreement.

This is controversial on two points. First, the UK is fully against it. Theresa May, Britain’s Home Secretary, said that “the idea of making it easier for legal routes to stop illegal routes is completely the wrong way.” Second, refugee advocates worry that outsourcing applications will undermine or criminalise those asylum-seekers who do not apply abroad. But if legal routes can be made easier, they should be. If we can save lives by processing applications abroad, we should.

5. Make the Mediterranean safe

European countries have a moral responsibility to create safe borders. This summer has shown the Mediterranean to be one of the deadliest borders in the world. In 2014, the EU drastically cut the search-and-rescue mission Mare Nostrum, which is estimated to have saved more than 130,000 lives, and replaced it with Triton, a severely scaled-back naval security mission. The EU increased its budget after harsh criticism but it still remains insufficient.

A reorganised and fully funded search-and-rescue mission would identify and assist all boats in distress. In addition, if boats are in danger and are knowingly not rescued – as has historically been the case – the agency and leadership should be held accountable. Someone must be held responsible for the growing numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean. The

EU should create a unified agency responsible for rescuing any boats in distress, empowered to do the job, and held accountable if it fails.

6. Increased resettlement to the US and Canada

The UNHCR has a well-established resettlement program, which is co-ordinating the resettlement of over 70,000 Syrian refugees. While this is a significant number, more can be done – especially in the United States. The US has a good record for resettling refugees and should respond to this current crisis by creating a new special visa route for Syrians, as was done historically for Iraqis.

7. Appoint a Special Representative for Human Rights in Migration

The EU should appoint a new high-level official to report on human rights within asylum, detention and deportation throughout the continent. The office should research and document human rights violations within all aspects of migration. It should also be a resource for states looking for best practice in migration.

While the UN special representative for migration, Peter Sutherland, should, theoretically, also be covering these issues, an EU-level official will be better placed to hold member states accountable for human rights violations on their own borders and in their own detention centres.

Finally, this special representative should ensure that the traditional rights of asylum are not eroded throughout the negotiation and construction of new institutions. While overseas applications centres would make seeking asylum safer, there will still be individuals who make the perilous journey to apply within the EU. These individuals’ applications must be judged fairly even if they have bypassed the overseas application process.

The current refugee crisis in Europe needs structural policy responses, not individual cases of charity, because asylum is a human right. It is not criminal. It is not cheating the system. As EU leaders meet later this month, the spotlight will be focused on quotas and numbers. But this should not detract from the whole range of other policies that would also ease the refugee crisis in Europe.

New Internationalist ★

This year UNHCR projected that a full response to assist Syrian refugees throughout 2015 would cost more than US\$4.5 billion. To date governments have contributed \$1.7 billion to UNHCR’s appeal.



Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au

cpa@cpa.org.au

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

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

Adelaide Bob Briton postal: PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015

phone: 0418 894 366 email: sa@cpa.org.au web: www.adelaidecommunists.org

Brisbane postal: PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179 phone: 0499 476 540

email: bris@cpa.org.au

Canberra Ruben Duran phone: 0421 049 602 email: act@cpa.org.au

Melbourne Andrew Irving

postal: Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053
phone: 03 9639 1550 email: cpavic@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)

postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Newcastle email: newcastle@cpa.org.au

Perth Vinnie Molina postal: PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906

phone: 0419 812 872 email: perth@cpa.org.au

Riverina Allan Hamilton

postal: 2/57 Cooper St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590 email: riverina@cpa.org.au

Sydney Wayne Sonter

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

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

