



Kunduz Trauma Centre bombing

"Investigate US military atrocity"

The following is what Dr Kathleen (Kass) Thomas wrote on facebook upon her return to Australia after working the last five months in Kunduz Centre, Afghanistan, as the Director of Emergency and ICU.

October 3, 2015 was the worst day of my life. The very foundations on which Medicines Sans Frontieres' (MSF) Kunduz Trauma Centre stood were physically and metaphorically destroyed as a shower of heartless, relentless bombs landed with precision on their intended target – our hospital. As the hospital burnt to the ground, it took with it the lives of many of my friends, colleagues and patients and injured countless others.

These were colleagues who I had worked side by side with continuously since the beginning of the heavy fighting in Kunduz early in the week. They had decided to stay in the hospital, working around the clock, to treat injured patients from both sides of the conflict, many of them innocent civilians.

As the war raged around us, we huddled together, taking comfort in the fact that both warring parties respected our hospital's neutrality and impartiality, understood our rules which aligned with those of international humanitarian law, and knew our GPS coordinates. We all believed the hospital was the safest place to be.

The events that unfolded that early morning can only be described as a nightmare. The staff that had tirelessly looked after victims of war trauma for the past six days, had now sustained the same injuries as their patients – limbs blown off, shrapnel rocketed through their bodies, burns, pressure wave injuries of the eyes and ears, etc. Suddenly we were treating our own staff with minimal supplies and no facilities while merciless bombs fell around us.

Our colleagues did not die peacefully like in the movies. They died painfully, slowly, some of them screaming out for help that never came, many alone and terrified knowing the



Surgery activities in one of the remaining parts of MSF's hospital in Kunduz, in the aftermath of the bombings.

extent of their own injuries and aware of their impending death.

Trapped, fully conscious patients were engulfed in flames and burned to death in their beds. Young, dedicated, eager doctors, nurses, cleaners, watchmen, pharmacists and medical records staff, with their whole life in front of them, were ripped viciously from this life. Those who didn't die sustained major injuries which will render them severely disabled for the rest of their lives.

The remaining staff that remain in Kunduz, many of whom support big families, have lost their employment. Kunduz city has lost its only functional health care facility leaving wounded

civilians with nowhere to get medical treatment.

And for what reason? Why? I simply cannot comprehend how or why this happened. But I do know that it is completely inexcusable. The US military cannot show such utter disregard for International Humanitarian Law and get away with it.

For the sake of my lost and injured friends, colleagues, and patients, and for the future of innocent civilians caught up in warfare around the world, we must demand an independent investigation into the attack on MSF's Kunduz Trauma Centre. There must be accountability for this brutal event.

Please, I ask you to show your solidarity

with MSF and Kunduz and share this with as many people as possible, or post your own photo of yourself on social media with the sign: #independentinvestigation and #Kunduz.

I know that the horror of what I witnessed on October 3, 2015 will never leave my mind, and the grief of losing friends, colleagues and patients will never leave my heart, but if we can bring worldwide attention to this issue, and demand the US military be held accountable so that it cannot happen again, then at least there will be something positive to come from such a heart wrenching atrocity.

Thank you.

Kass ✳

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Shades of an aspirational fascist

The political shades of the federal government have made themselves clearer; ironically they are standing out in sharper relief now that the snarling, attack dog approach taken by Tony Abbott has been replaced by the mealy mouthed style of Malcolm Turnbull. From former Attorney General George Brandis ("I want the right to be a bigot") to the abuse of children, women and men in offshore detention centres (most recently a pregnant rape victim returned to Nauru) to Queensland Liberal MP George Christenson speaking at rallies organised by fascist group Reclaim Australia.

Now there is newly appointed Employment Minister Michaelia Cash trumpeting her anti-union credentials and extolling the virtues of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "They are militants," she is quoted in the *Australian* newspaper (October 1) in reference to the CFMEU. "They don't play by the rules and they should be held accountable."

She praised Thatcher as someone who "found her way in a man's world". In a speech to her former high school in 2011 Cash gave forth: "She was a great stateswoman and an icon of our times."

So a reminder is in order as to just who and what Margaret Thatcher was. Thatcher's funeral took place in London with full military honours in 2013. Not since Sir Winston Churchill had the British state bestowed such an honour on a deceased prime minister.

The forced mourning and the military trappings were an ideological, propaganda stunt by the British state in the face of public opposition to the stately honouring of Thatcher. The occasion – paid for by the austerity-clobbered British taxpayer – was also seen as an indulgence in British jingoism and imperialism.

As in life, so too in death, Margaret Thatcher continued to incite controversy and public outrage. Britain's only female premier, she was elected three consecutive times between 1979-1990 before she was ousted from Downing Street by her own rat-like Conservative Party to appease growing public anger over her destructive policies.

Despite successive elections, her victories in the polls never commanded an outright majority among the British electorate, and her success was more to do with political weakness among Britain's other main parties, Labour and the Liberals. Even members among her own party referred to her rule as "elected dictatorships."

More than 20 years after her ouster, millions of Britons detested her memory for the mass unemployment and poverty that she inflicted with her apocryphal ideology of unfettered capitalism. Millions, too, detested her militarism, which cynically used war over the remote British colonial possession in the South Atlantic – Las Malvinas Islands – as a re-election stunt. Her covert war in Ireland in which she sanctioned the use of death squads and shoot-to-kill policing to terrorise Irish citizens also remains a source of ignominy.

The South Atlantic connection is rather appropriate. During Thatcher's war with Argentina over Las Malvinas, also known as the Falklands, Britain received crucial military assistance from Chile's fascist dictator, Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet's regime afforded Britain surveillance and territorial cover to defeat neighbouring Argentine sea and air forces.

Thatcher remained life-long friends with the Chilean dictator and ensured that his junta received British military contracts despite its appalling human rights record. (Pinochet came to power in a bloody US-backed coup against the elected Salvadore Allende government in 1973.)

When Pinochet died in 2006, he was facing hundreds of indictments for human rights violations, murder and embezzlement of millions of dollars. During his 17-year reign of terror more than 3,000 Chileans were murdered, thousands were disappeared, 30,000 were imprisoned and tortured, and some 200,000 political opponents were forced into exile. If fittingly, among the hundreds of foreign dignitaries at Thatcher's funeral was FW de Klerk, the last white leader of the apartheid South African state. Thatcher was an ardent supporter of the racist regime that for decades brutally suppressed democratic majority black rule. In her support, Thatcher defied international sanctions imposed on the regime and she denounced Nelson Mandela as a "terrorist."

Like her close friend Augusto Pinochet, Thatcher's bodily remains were cremated. Pinochet's family said that procedure was taken in 2006 to avoid vandalism of his burial site – such was the hatred of the fascist dictator. To paraphrase Thatcher's own summation of herself, the lady was not for turning, but the lady was for burning.

Cash's role model was an aspirational fascist.

PRESS FUND

To answer the question we posed four weeks ago, the coalition leopard cannot change its spots! Last week the Turnbull government approved development of the gargantuan Adani coal mine in Queensland. It also decided to return a female asylum seeker to Nauru after she'd been taken to Sydney for termination of a pregnancy that resulted from her having been raped on the island. The Turnbull government is much better than its predecessor at selling the coalition's reactionary policies, so it's terribly important to expose the government's real intentions. The *Guardian* is committed to playing its role in that respect, but we largely depend on Press Fund contributions, so please send us something for the next edition if you possibly can. Many thanks to the following contributors this week:

Charlie Maarbani \$50, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$70 Progressive total: \$5,425

MUA-CFMEU merger considered

Maritime Union of Australia and Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union Joint Statement

In an historic moment for trade unionism, the Maritime Union of Australia and Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, have commenced discussions on a possible merger.

CFMEU national officials Michael O'Connor, Dave Noonan, and Tony Maher met today in Sydney with the MUA's National Council to begin formalising a merger, which will be taken to the membership of the MUA at the union's National Conference in February 2016.

MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin said the potential merger would create Australia's most powerful union, which would better serve the membership of both unions.

"We have been presented with a monumental opportunity to represent

working men and women in the Australian workplace without losing the long and proud history of our union," Mr Crumlin said.

"The MUA is no stranger to mergers and since the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Seaman's Union of Australia amalgamated in 1993 the MUA today is here to stay and can only grow in strength in this new union.

"This is a huge decision that hasn't been taken lightly, but discussions to merge with the like-minded CFMEU will help us fight the ever-pervasive anti-worker and anti-union attacks on workers and their entitlements and job security.

"We will continue to work through the issues with our members to ensure any merger is in their absolute best interest and have their total support. CFMEU national secretary Michael O'Connor said his union

would welcome a merger with the MUA.

"The opportunity we've been presented with will bring great strength to the national and international union movement," Mr O'Connor said.

"The MUA offers us a chance to strengthen our politics within the CFMEU, because the struggle isn't just about increasing wages, or creating a safe work site, there is also a bigger and important political struggle.

"We're very conscious of the MUA's identity and we want to make it clear that this is a merger of equals.

"This move will be hugely beneficial to not just the members of the MUA and CFMEU but will lead the way for all working men and women." ✪



The Common Tern

Turnbull's elite private school threatens litigation if penalty rates go

The Principal of Sydney Grammar, the elite private school attended by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, has threatened litigation and "to swiftly remove the old boy's etching from our honours roll", if Sunday penalty rates are cut, according to an article in *Privilege*, their weekly magazine.

Speaking on behalf of current students and the college's long list of famous old scholars, which includes former battlers such as Sir James Oswald Fairfax, Headmaster, Dr Charles Snodgrass III told *Common Tern* that any move to cut penalty rates will lead to a massive drop in enrolments.

"I can cite a perfect example without even stopping to think," said Snodgrass. "We have a family who just returned from holidaying in the Swiss Alps and they've returned I'm told to find the

husband will have his Sunday dawn shift cut at the local Caltex if these cuts proceed. One wonders if their Paris trip next year will be downgraded to economy after news like this," he said.

It's rumoured another parent, who has worked weekend shifts in Lay-by at K-mart since high school in order to give her kids a decent private education has attempted self-harm after hearing of the cuts. Principal Snodgrass confirmed the story's accuracy.

"Yes, it's a terrible state of affairs," said Snodgrass. "Sharon (Shaz) Arrowsmith is a long-term supporter of the school; she worked her way up from the gutter really. She's put five children through Sydney Grammar in the hope they don't have the misfortune of working in customer service and exposed to the underclasses. She's also sold

her holiday home at Lane Cove and we haven't seen her at the Polo Club for weeks. To make matters worse we believe she has had to cut back to two personal training sessions a week. It's quite tragic and terrible for her health," he said.

Opposition leader Bill Shorten has also warned the government about the impact on private school enrolments if the penalty rate cuts go ahead.

"Labor's position is clear. A cut to Sunday penalty rates will have disastrous effects on private schools, and their rowing clubs. We'll do everything possible to block any legislation that forces parents and their children into the run down public system."

Common Tern flies over the heads of some but beware not to take him too seriously ... ✪

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Water changes spark concerns

Aboriginal groups in the Murray Darling Basin are concerned about water. As one of his first acts as Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull transferred responsibility for water from the Environment portfolio to Agriculture, meaning it comes under auspices of National Party minister Barnaby Joyce.

The peak traditional owner group in the southern Murray Darling basin, the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), has called for a comprehensive assessment of the affect of water allowances to irrigators on cultural impacts.

And Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) chair Fred Hooper said he was concerned Aboriginal water interests would be overlooked. "It also needs to be noted that Aboriginal native title rights and interests have not yet been determined on water and a legal challenge to determine this issue has not been ruled out," he said.

Mr Hooper said the Commonwealth Water Act requires federal and state authorities to consider Aboriginal native title rights and interests on water when developing and implementing the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

He said the Aboriginal people of the Northern Basin feel that this has not really happened and that the Commonwealth and states need to

have a close look at the Native Title Act and how it relates to water.

"We have been working very closely with the Murray Darling Basin Authority during the development of the plan and now during the implementation of it," Mr Hooper said.

"We have had some gains but we feel these gains will be eroded away under the decision of the Turnbull government and their deal with the National Party to move the water portfolio to the very people who destroyed the rivers in the first place.

"Is this about the protection of the environment of where we all live, or is it about winning votes?"

"In this case Aboriginal people feel it is about winning votes and not about the protection of the environment and the protection of Aboriginal rights to water.

"Aboriginal people of the basin have every right to feel that irrigators and big business will control the roll out of the basin plan to suit their own needs and not the needs of the environment or the protection of Aboriginal values and uses within the Murray Darling Basin, given what we have seen over the past 227 years."

MLDRIN chair Darren Perry, a Ngintait (SA) man, said that according to an independent stock take, state governments have submitted



"Aboriginal people of the basin have every right to feel that irrigators and big business will control the roll out of the basin plan to suit their own needs and not the needs of the environment or the protection of Aboriginal values".

36 projects that will include the construction of infrastructure at key points along the river, to reduce water recovery targets under the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

"These supply projects involve serious direct impacts on culturally significant landscapes and changes to the way water will be managed in the Southern Basin," he said.

"The stock-take report is a valuable document, but it provides no further clarity on the way these supply projects, and the resulting reductions

in real environmental flows, will affect traditional owners' rights and cultural values.

"Already, we have seen major disturbance of cultural heritage. As these projects are rolled out across the basin, we need to know how they are going to affect our rights and obligations to care for country and sustain our traditions and knowledge.

"Assessing cultural heritage impacts on a site-by-site basis is important, but we also need to

understand the collective impact of these projects, and cutting the water recovery target, across the scale of the Basin.

"The Commonwealth has invested in the National Cultural Flows Research Project, to document Aboriginal water-related cultural values in the Basin. We are concerned that these supply measure projects could jeopardise those values, before this important research is completed."

Koori Mail

That's capitalism ...

Big Pharma

There is one area of cost-cutting where the Australian and US governments could save millions of dollars if it had the political will, and that is the amount it pays for items on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Big Pharma is taking it to the cleaners.

Consumers are now taking things into their own hands by legally importing medications at a fraction of the cost. The FixHepC website publicised by Fairfax media

(September 26-27 and October 3-4) has helped thousands of Hepatitis C patients import the new drugs they need and rapidly achieve full recovery.

In America sufferers are charged \$84,000 by Gilead Sciences for new Interferon-free medicines which are quicker and have less side effects. The imports from China, India and Bangladesh cost between \$1,000 and \$2,000 for a cure.

The companies argue that

the high prices are to cover the expense of research. But this does not explain how these companies are spending more on marketing and political lobbying than research.

In fact, some of these vultures do not spend a cent on research and development. Take for example former hedge fund manager and Turing Pharmaceuticals CEO Martin Shkreli.

Turing bought the marketing

rights of Daraprim which is used to treat a potentially deadly parasite. The medication had been on the market for 62 years. Shkreli jacked up the price overnight by 5,000 percent from \$13.50 a pill to \$750. Who can afford to buy 30 pills at that price?

His response to the media on twitter was:

"And it seems like the media immediately points a finger at me
"So I point one back at em, but not the index or pinkie"
(@martinshkreli)

In another scandal, Rodelis Therapeutics acquired Cycloserine, a tuberculosis medication, from the Purdue Research Foundation. The price rocketed from \$US500 for 30 capsules to \$US10,800. Public embarrassment when it was outed,

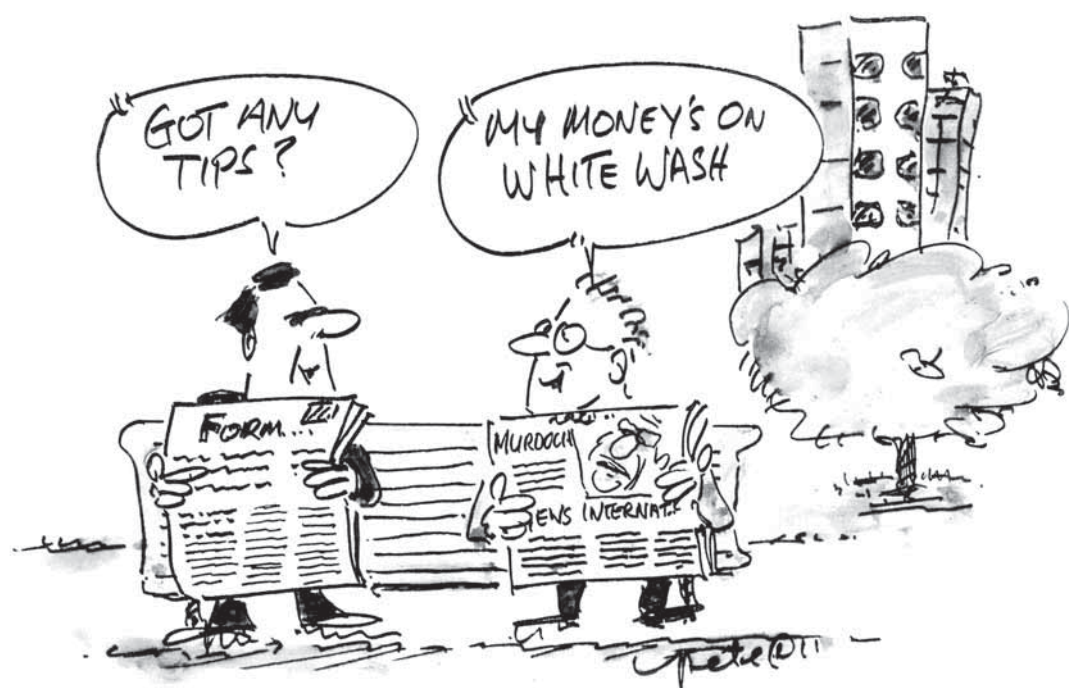
saw the price reduced to \$US1,050 for 30 capsules.

Again, who can afford that, in particular in poor countries where tuberculosis is likely to be found.

The system of private-for-profit production and so-called intellectual property (patenting) is sentencing millions of people to death. It is nothing short of criminal.

The research and manufacture of medications should be by the public sector. This would overnight make them cheaper by removing the massive layer of profits, marketing and political lobbying costs. It also removes any incentive to fraudulently distort research outcomes and removes the conflict of interest that arises when maximisation of profits is the prime goal, not health outcomes.

Pete's Corner



Sydney

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Property in hands of weetaipoona

Jillian Mundy

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) has handed over the title to Murrayfield Station, to weetaipoona Aboriginal Corporation at a ceremony last month on the 4,100 hectare property on Bruny Island, off the south-east coast of Tasmania.

Murrayfield was acquired by the ILC in 2001, and is one of 20 land grants the ILC will make in its 20th anniversary year. Three-quarters of the 251 properties it has acquired have now been granted to Indigenous groups, creating opportunities for an economic basis for future generations.

ILC chairperson Dawn Casey labelled Murrayfield a significant property in the Indigenous estate that represented exactly what the ILC was set up to do – to assist Indigenous people to acquire and manage land to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

“Perhaps uniquely, it combines a rich traditional presence, wonderful environmental values and a first-class commercial sheep enterprise, producing 40,000 kilograms of fine wool and 2,000 prime lambs a year,” she said.

“The ILC acquired Murrayfield Station for its great cultural significance. The purchase of Murrayfield and the decision to grant the land to weetaipoona was a decision the ILC approached with careful consideration.”

In Tasmania, titles to most other areas purchased by the ILC and all land returned through legislation are held by a statutory body, the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, in perpetuity for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

The title for Murrayfield contains caveats – should weetaipoona no longer exist, the title would be returned to the ILC.

The ILC still owns the business, and has entered a 10-year lease agreement with the new owners. “Access to land on Bruny Island was denied to Aboriginal people and a major land acquisition like Murrayfield has allowed Tasmanian Aboriginal people a place to re-establish cultural traditions, hold social activities, and pursue economic opportunities,” Dr Casey said.

Since 2008, Murrayfield has provided access to hundreds of Aboriginal visitors to hold more than 100 cultural events, hosted training programs in agriculture and land management, with many Aboriginal people completing accredited training. The property caters to school and university groups, various interest and tourist groups – with 2,000 visitors each year.

Murrayfield now protects almost 300 Aboriginal heritage sites, is the site of George Augustus’ first Aboriginal mission, and is a crucial habitat for endangered species.

It is lauded as an example of profitable farming co-existing with heritage and environmental protection.



Official handover ceremony on September 18.

In conjunction with weetaipoona, the ILC has managed Murrayfield for 14 years and developed a successful agricultural business.

Before the title handover ceremony, weetaipoona signed a joint management agreement for National Parks on Bruny Island, some of which border Murrayfield, with Tasmania’s Parks and Wildlife Service.

Weetaipoona chairman Ben Sculthorpe hopes management will be stepped up for Aboriginal.

“Times are looking up,” said a visibly emotional Mr Sculthorpe.

“Today was one of the proudest moments that I’ve had as an Aboriginal person.

“It meant so much to so many people. The hours and hours of work that they have done to try and get to this stage has been remarkable.”

He said Murrayfield was a spiritually and culturally safe place to call home.

Founding weetaipoona member Rodney Dillon said it was time for

something like the ILC to be set up to buy resources back out of the ocean.

Another Aboriginal voice for Tasmanians

Chair of the recently-formed Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Community Alliance (TRACA) Rodney Dillon is hopeful more Aboriginal voices will be heard in discussions about land handbacks and world heritage.

“Organisations were frustrated with government not talking to groups, so we joined to make one bigger group to work with,” he said.

“TRACA was born out of frustration – we talk about self-determination, but we don’t always practise what it means.”

At the first meeting of TRACA, many Aboriginal people said they felt their views were not being heard because governments only dealt with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

“We don’t want to be seen as a threat to other groups – we’re not,” Mr Dillon said. “Whoever is advocating for land handbacks, well and good, let’s all have a fair go at it, let’s try to get land back in a lot of areas, not just a selective group.”

Mr Dillon said there were also concerns regarding state government consultation and process regarding the Tasmanian Wilderness and World Heritage Area.

The group is holding another meeting soon in Campbell Town, between Hobart and Launceston, where it will discuss negotiating a tripartisan agreement with state politicians so that Aboriginal issues cannot be used as a political football.

TRACA includes representatives from the Flinders Island Aboriginal Association, South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation, weetaipoona Aboriginal Corporation, Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation and the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation.

Koori Mail ☘

Changes won’t stop dodgy providers

The federal government’s so-called crackdown on dodgy providers in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, will make no improvement to what is a fundamentally broken system, the Australian Education Union (AEU) says.

A Senate Inquiry into the funding of VET released today has found serious flaws in the VET FEE-HELP scheme, and stated that its continued operation poses an “unacceptable risk to the Commonwealth”.

The Inquiry has also found that controls on providers have been “unacceptably loose” and there is “no effective price control” in the private VET system.

AEU federal TAFE secretary Pat Forward said the new standards would make no difference unless regulators were given the capacity to enforce them, and while dodgy providers still had lucrative incentives to mislead students.

She said the government should heed the Senate Inquiry’s call for a review of VET FEE-HELP, but should go further and immediately stem the flow of public funds by halting any new VET FEE-HELP sign-ups.

“If the government is serious about stamping out dodgy behaviour it needs to go a lot further than fiddling around the edges,” Ms Forward said.

“Regulators are overwhelmed and do not have the capacity or resources to enforce the regulatory standards which currently exist.

“Fees in the VET sector remain completely unregulated, in total contrast to HECS fees for universities. Some of our most vulnerable students have incurred debts of tens of thousands of dollars for worthless qualifications.

“We have seen VET FEE-HELP debts go from \$25 million in 2009 to an expected \$4 billion in 2015, as state governments shift the cost of training onto students and taxpayers through loans.

“Three-quarters of VET FEE-HELP loans are going to private providers, and this is channelling funds away from TAFEs.

“We need to ensure that at least 70 percent of funding for VET is reserved for TAFEs to ensure that they can remain at the heart of the training system. If we lose the quality, capacity and experience of TAFE, the standards of vocational training in Australia will fall.” ☘

Three workers killed every week in 2015

Australian Unions met last week in Canberra for the 2015 ACTU Occupational Health Safety and Workers Compensation Conference to discuss how to tackle significant workplace safety issues and barriers.

This came as Safe Work Australia figures show there have been 126 workplace fatalities in Australia already this year (to October 12). This equates to three fatalities each week on average. The highest number of recorded fatalities occurred in the transport, postal and warehousing sector, which have accounted for 42 deaths so far in 2015.

Data from the agency also shows 531,800 workers are injured – 118,000 of those seriously – each year, costing Australia more than \$60 billion annually.

The annual ACTU Conference brings together a range of

academic experts, along with legal specialists and union leaders to focus on the latest research and work through real-life issues in an attempt to help build a healthier and safer work force.

An additional area of concern that the conference will focus on is workplace mental health and bullying. Despite the introduction of anti-bullying legislation in 2014, workplace bullying remains under-regulated and affects both men and women causing long term physiological issues and in the worst cases, death.

In 2012-13 (the latest data available), 9.4% of all serious Workers Compensation claims made by women were for mental disorders and there was a 17% increase in the number of serious claims caused by mental stress.

“Worker safety is just another in a string of issues where the government is prioritising its big

business backers, rather than supporting the rights of everyday Australians,” said ACTU assistant secretary, Michael Borowick.

“With three workers losing their lives every week on average in Australian workplaces so far this year, it’s clear that this is an area that needs more attention, not less.

“As we’ve seen with the attacks on penalty rates, lack of action on the minimum wage, and proposed cuts to paid parental leave, this is a government prepared to cut corners in the workplace, with disastrous effects.”

“OH&S regulations and workers’ compensation rights are not prohibitive red tape to be cut in a misguided deregulation drive, they are a sensible, best-practice approach to ensuring workers can get on with their jobs without having to worry about the risk of injury or death.” ☘

Taking Issue – Rob Gowland

Cold War propaganda offensive (Part 2)

After WW2, the USA became the dominant capitalist power and anti-Communist and anti-Soviet propaganda intensified exponentially. Stalin, the personification of both Communism and Soviet Power, was demonised in a way we have become more used to in recent years. He was now a “dictator” without parallel, worse even than Hitler. People in Russia and in Eastern Europe, we were repeatedly told, lived in fear all the time. They could be grabbed by the secret police for no reason, at any time.

I remember being told at high school, that “people in Russia have to get permission to go shopping.” Years later, when I was working at the ABC, I was told in all seriousness, that a Skoda motor scooter had been “made by slave labour”. That ignorant nonsense was deliberately cultivated and endlessly repeated from every possible source so that it eventually became accepted as fact, despite its defying even common sense.

The huge number of people in the USA in particular but also in other Western countries employed in producing Cold War propaganda chose to demonise Stalin because he personified their ideological enemy. So useful was he in that role that they persisted with it even after he died.

There had been a time when Western audiences, encountering Stalin’s image in a newsreel, would spontaneously applaud. But decades of assiduous demonising has achieved its goal: otherwise intelligent people refer to Stalin these days as “dictator” or “monster” without turning a hair. As a recent article in *Newsweek* declared without blushing: “There is no commonly accepted figure for the number of people who died because of Stalin’s policies in the Soviet Union. Estimates range from just over a million to as high as 60 million.”

Did you get that? *Sixty million!* That’s more than twice the colossal number of people the USSR lost in WW2. For heaven’s sake! But



Joseph Stalin.

as everyone knows, if you throw enough mud, some of it sticks. Some of that huge figure comprises the victims of the famine in the south of the USSR mentioned above. To blame Stalin of all people for that famine is almost obscene, but it is now *derigueur* among bourgeois historians.

In 1956, three years after Stalin’s death (his death incidentally was greeted with universal, spontaneous mourning in the Soviet Union), Nikita Krushchev began a struggle for ideological leadership of the CPSU with Party members still loyal to Stalin’s chosen successor as General Secretary, Georgi Malenkov (whom Krushchev had displaced in

a “palace coup” not dissimilar to that staged recently by Malcolm Turnbull). Instead of attacking Malenkov’s policies, Krushchev identified his opponents as “Stalinists” and proceeded to “do a number” on Stalin himself (Stalin of course was safely not around to defend himself.)

Krushchev held the position of General Secretary of the CPSU and consequently held tremendous authority and respect with the international Communist movement. His speech denouncing Stalin’s former leadership was delivered to a closed session of the CPSU Sixth Congress, but curiously was leaked almost at once to the bourgeois media everywhere. The bourgeois media of course had a field day with Krushchev’s infamous “secret speech”. Here was Stalin, the embodiment (as far as they were concerned) of Communism, attacked by the world’s most important Communist leader at the time.

The propagandists of capitalism saw their opportunity: Stalin was now a weak point and they belaboured him rigorously. Communist Parties in general were abused with the same ferocity. Globally, the degree of disruption caused by Krushchev depended to a large extent on the ideological development of each Communist Party. The Chinese Party rejected Krushchev’s position outright, causing a serious split in the international movement. There were smaller splits in a number of other Parties, including in the Communist Party of Australia. Most of the party lined up behind Krushchev while the leadership conducted a witch-hunt to root out remaining “Stalinists”. For many years, nobody so much as mentioned Stalin’s name in company. Newspapers at the time reported

after Krushchev’s speech that Trotsky’s widow had packed her bags and was waiting for a call from the Kremlin to return in triumph to Moscow. The call never came, of course, for Krushchev was attacking Stalin only to bolster his own position in the party, not to open the way for counter-revolution.

As the years passed, the Communist movement rallied from the disruption Krushchev had caused and was able to successfully reassert its role in the class struggle. It was able to ignore and even to repel the jibes of the Trotskyists (as well as of avowed capitalist mouthpieces) who hurled the epithet “Stalinists” at the CPA in the apparent belief that it would sting.

In the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev, the Communist Party was moving – slowly and carefully – to overturn Krushchev’s disruption and restore Stalin to his proper place in the country’s political and historical record. I was there at that time with a delegation from the Socialist Party of Australia (as we were called then). When we visited Lenin’s rooms in the Smolny, the headquarters of the Revolution in 1917, we admired a large framed photograph of the Bolshevik Party leadership at the time, with Lenin of course in the front row. Our CPSU guide leant forward, and smiling broadly, surprised up by pointing out only one other person: Stalin.

It was a small thing but indicative of the direction in which things were heading. Then Brezhnev died, and a struggle began to keep Gorbachov from becoming General Secretary. He eventually outlasted the others and got the position, whereupon he did as Krushchev had done and used another denunciation of Stalin to silence his critics within the Party

leadership, most of whom had supported the moves to rehabilitate Stalin’s reputation.

Today it’s Putin who is the target of Western propaganda attacks, accused of “Soviet nostalgia”, which the West clearly thinks is a bad thing. Putin seems to take these attacks in his stride. When the 50th anniversary of Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union came around, Putin sent shock waves through the USA and the rest of the capitalist world by proposing to build a victory monument in the form of an enormous statue of Stalin, to be placed on the Easternmost border of Russia, looking towards Western Europe. He didn’t go ahead with it, and it was probably only put forward to stir up Russia’s enemies.

So, we are left with “Stalin the monster dictator”, an imperialist construct that is now supported on a huge pile of lies and distortions and on the works of honest, bourgeois historians who simply don’t know any better because, whether they know it or not, they are unable to overcome their class loyalties and see matters from a working class perspective.

In Russia today, American commentators are shocked to find that more and more people are of the opinion that Stalin was a great leader of their country. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the second largest party in the Duma, proudly boasts of Stalin as one of its heroes. They have a huge struggle on their hands, to overcome the years of fierce anti-Communist propaganda, much of it focussed on Stalin explicitly, and backed up as it by the well-funded rumour mills of Western, Cold-War propaganda.

It’s going to be a battle, but personally, I’d put my money on Stalin. ✪

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The tiny Lebanese village taking more refugees than Britain

Michaela Whitton

“So you’re a supporter of the Syrian cause?” Beirut taxi driver Michel asks aggressively while speeding through the streets of Lebanon’s capital city. Seemingly oblivious to the ambiguity of his response to a simple request for a quote, Michel’s xenophobic tirade proceeds to blame Syrians for all of Lebanon’s problems – highlighting the developing tensions in this overwhelmed country.

The size of the English county of North Yorkshire, Lebanon, beautiful yet bruised, is still licking the wounds of war. A reported 6 in 10 households own an automatic weapon and areas remain blighted by water shortages and electricity cuts.

With extraordinarily high living costs, fragile infrastructure and barely able to care for its own diverse population of four million people, Lebanon hosts more than a million registered Syrian refugees. Actual numbers are thought to be much higher and, unlike Jordan and Turkey, there are no formal camps, with aid provided mainly by civil society.

During British Prime Minister David Cameron’s fleeting visit to a camp near the Syrian border in September, he claimed that British aid to the region of US\$1.55 billion has helped ensure that only three percent of Syria’s 11 million refugees have sought refuge in Europe.

Boasting that Britain is the second-largest donor to the area will provide little consolation to the Syrians sleeping rough on Beirut’s streets, or the sisters in Shatila refugee camp – forced to alternate when they attend school, due to sharing a pair of shoes.

With a population of 15,000, the 2.8-hectare mountain village of Ketermaya, just two hours from the Syrian border, is a microcosm of Lebanon’s crisis. Dr Bilal Kasem, who doubles as the village dentist and Head of Municipality, explains to me that the steady flow of refugees since 2011 now totals almost 5,000. More than 400 families are hosted in the village itself, with over 50 in a makeshift tent camp.

Dr Kasem highlights the strains on the village’s already scarce resources and the labour market. “For example, there used to be three or four barber shops; now there are seven or eight,” he says. While donations of funds, food and clothing are spread among refugees, he

treats 80 percent of his patients for free. “They are already on aid; it’s too tragic for me to make them pay,” he sighs.

“We can’t do everything”

On a hill clothed with olive and fig trees, Ketermaya refugee camp is home to over 50 families from the Syrian war-afflicted centres of Aleppo, Homs and Damascus. After the village became saturated three years ago, landowner Ali Tafish donated his land to house the overflow. The reward for his endeavours was investigation by the Lebanese authorities and the confiscation of his passport.

As women sit under the shade of olive trees, some feeding new-born babies, Tafish explains that everyone in the camp has lost someone, and that there are many orphans. Each family of up to 10 people has a tent made of wood and plastic and 10 toilets are shared by more than 400 people. “It’s not enough,” he says. “People are standing in line every day.”

Tafish would take more refugees if he could but the camp is at full capacity. Anticipating a harsh winter with a shortage of money for fuel and stoves that need replacing, he feels the burden and claims that the UN hasn’t visited for two years.

“They have the best cars and buildings, while the people get nothing. They are thieves, cheating on our trust,” he adds.

Reliant on donations from individuals, he provides the camp with rice and vegetables, but no meat. He claims that 70 percent of families don’t receive the US\$13 per month that UN-registered refugees are given for food. The “US\$13 doesn’t even cover breakfast,” he says. “This is about corruption, and donor countries have no surveillance over their money.”

While frustrated, Tafish has no regrets. He says he does it for humanity: “This is something we don’t see in the UN, we don’t see them caring about humanity. Shame on them.”

Discussing difficulties faced by Syrians accessing healthcare, Tafish explains that hospitals are unable to cope and only treat simple cases. “The UN has enough money to build separate hospitals for Syrians only; they don’t need to count on Lebanese hospitals,” he says.

Tafish is grateful for a European audience. “Here is what I want you to tell the European Union,” he says. “We Lebanese have 1.6 million refugees, plus those not registered. Our



Ketermaya refugee camp is home to over 50 families from the Syrian war-afflicted centres.

country is US\$80 billion in debt and we are a failed economy. We have no income except tourism, which the Syrian war has blocked.”

Adamant that if Syria’s neighbouring countries are supported, people would stay in them, he asks where the European Union has been for four years while Lebanon has been “drowning in the crisis”.

Angry at the lack of people visiting to see the difficulties, he adds: “Sadly, the EU, with all its greatness, is arguing over how to distribute a few thousand refugees. It’s a disgrace!”

On the prospect of increased destabilisation of Lebanon, Tafish is concerned: “Imagine you need to feed a baby but don’t have the means. Either the baby dies or you steal, to feed him, from the nearest people – the Lebanese. It’s up to the EU and US to stop this before there are real problems.”

He adds that “it’s important for people not to go hungry – this brings problems. We can’t

give them everything, we do what God gives us, but we can’t do everything.”

“Can you help us?”

After a government missile demolished her home, 35-year-old Sanaa fled Syria to live with her mother in Beirut. When her mother died of cancer, the family of 10 was evicted and, after sleeping on a beach for three days, a woman discovered them and took them to Ketermaya.

Sitting on the floor of the two-room tent, feeding her youngest daughter, Sanaa describes life in the camp as tragic. “In winter it is so hard, with illnesses and no electricity. We don’t even have winter clothes or shoes,” she explains.

The monthly box of basic food items from the Red Cross lasts the family two weeks and her biggest worry is providing nappies and milk for her 18-month-old daughter. While some of Sanaa’s eight children attend the camp’s

The fate of America’s whistleblowers

John Kiriakou

What is it about whistleblowers that the powers that be can’t stand?

When I blew the whistle on the CIA’s illegal torture program, I was derided in many quarters as a traitor. My detractors in the government attacked me for violating my secrecy agreement, even as they ignored the oath we’d all taken to protect and defend the Constitution.

All of this happened despite the fact that the torture I helped expose is illegal in the United States. Torture also violates a number of international laws and treaties to which our country is signatory – some of which the United States itself was the driving force in drafting.

I was charged with three counts of espionage, all of which were eventually dropped when I took a plea to a lesser count. I had to choose between spending up to 30 months in prison and rolling the dice to risk a 45-year sentence. With five kids, and three of them under the age of 10, I took the plea.

Tom Drake – the NSA whistleblower who went through the agency’s chain of command to report its illegal program to spy on American citizens – was thanked for his honesty and hard work by being charged with 10 felonies, including five counts of espionage. The government

eventually dropped the charges, but not before Drake had suffered terrible financial, professional, and personal distress.

This is an ongoing theme, especially in government.

Chelsea Manning is serving 35 years in prison for her disclosure of State Department and military cable traffic showing American military crimes in Iraq and beyond. And Edward Snowden, who told Americans about the extent to which our government is spying on us, faces life in prison if he ever returns to the country.

The list goes on and on.

Baltimore Police Department whistleblower Joe Crystal knew what he was getting into when he reported an incident of police brutality to his superiors after witnessing two colleagues brutally beat a suspect. Crystal immediately became known as a “rat cop” and a “snitch.”

He finally resigned from the department after receiving credible death threats.

It’s not just government employees either. Whistleblowers first brought attention to wrongdoing at Enron, Lehman Brothers, Stanford International Bank, and elsewhere.

And what’s their reward? Across the board, whistleblowers are investigated, harassed, fired, and in some cases prosecuted.

That’s the conclusion of author Eyal Press, whose book *Beautiful Souls: The Courage and Conscience of Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* documents the struggles of whistleblowers throughout history. Press’s whistleblowers never recover financially or professionally from their actions. History seems to smile on them, but during their lifetimes they remain outcasts.

This is a tragedy. Blowing the whistle on wrongdoing should be the norm, not the exception.

I recently visited Greece to help the government there draft a whistleblower protection law. The Greek word for “whistleblower” translates as “guardian of the public trust.” I wish our own government’s treatment of whistleblowers could reflect that understanding.

Yet even legal guarantees of protection from prosecution and persecution aren’t enough – especially if, as in the case of existing law, national security employees are exempt from these safeguards.

Instead, society must start seeing things differently. Like the Greeks, all of us need to start treating whistleblowers as guardians, not traitors. And if we value what freedoms we have left, we should demand that our government do the same.

Information Clearing House ✪



Tom Drake – the NSA whistleblower.

ain

The ruin of Indonesian society

50 Years After the coup and the CIA-sponsored terrorist massacre

Andre Vltchek

Last year, I stopped travelling to Indonesia. I simply did ... I just could not bear being there, anymore. It was making me unwell. I felt psychologically and physically sick.

Indonesia has matured into perhaps the most corrupt country on Earth, and possibly into the most indoctrinated and compassionless place anywhere under the sun. Here, even the victims were not aware of their own conditions anymore. The victims felt shame, while the mass murderers were proudly bragging about all those horrendous killings and rapes they had committed. Genocidal cadres are all over the government.

After the 1965 coup backed by the US, Australia and Europe, some 2-3 million Indonesians died, in fact were slaughtered mercilessly in an unbridled orgy of terror: teachers, intellectuals, artists, unionists, and Communists vanished. The US Embassy in Jakarta provided a detailed list of those who were supposed to be liquidated.

The army, which was generously paid by the West and backed by the countless brainwashed religious cadres of all faiths, showed unprecedented zeal, killing and imprisoning almost everyone capable of thinking. Books were burned and film studios and theatres closed down.

Women from the left-wing organisations, after being savagely raped, had their breasts amputated. They were labelled as witches, atheists, sexual maniacs and pervers.

Professional militant Christian cadres from Holland and other Western countries landed in Indonesia well before the coup. They labelled Communists and other leftists as “dangerous atheists” and began an indoctrination and training campaign aimed to liquidate them.

The right-wing Chinese individuals, mostly traitors who just escaped from their Communist revolutionary homeland, happily joined the fascist putsch and later the murderous, treasonous regime of General Suharto. They joined it as snitches and “preachers”. The Chinese minority in Indonesia, while undoubtedly suffering from certain discrimination, had joined the most oppressive domestic and foreign forces, shamelessly collaborating with military fascism, Western imperialism and the savage capitalist system, which it itself had established.

Decisive role

Because of its control over the crucial part of the local “economy” (read: plunder of the natural resources) and its ownership of the countless brainwashing media outlets and private educational facilities, the Chinese minority in Indonesia has been playing a decisive and devastating role in the spectacular collapse of post-1965 Indonesia.

After the slaughters of 1965/66, everything resembling the Revolution and the People’s Republic of China was banned and obliterated in Indonesia, including the colour red, the Chinese language, and the word “Communism” itself.

After the genocide, the great selling of Indonesia began. Corruption and privatisation went hand in hand. Ideological and intellectual blindness were administered to the population.

The murder and rape of millions, the theft of everything that used to belong to the nation. Thus was committed one of the greatest treasons of the 20th century.

Roughly 50 years after this disaster took place, I broke my self-imposed ban and visited Indonesia once again.

But back to the deal between Empire and local “elites”.



President of Indonesia Sukarno (center) shakes hands with Vice President Lyndon Johnson as President John F. Kennedy smiles, Washington, D.C., April 25, 1961.

The deal was clear: the West allowed the putsch and their religious and “educationalist” lackeys to rob the nation, tolerating the lowest forms of corruption. But, in exchange, they had to guarantee that the Indonesian people would be kept thoroughly brainwashed and uneducated, never demanding the return of the Communist Party, never striving for great patriotic ideals and never questioning market fundamentalism and the indiscriminate looting of Indonesia’s natural resources.

The Christians that were put “in charge” were those from the most deranged evangelical sects, braced by the imported army of North American and Australian intelligence/religious cadres. “Prosperity Gospel” and “Pentecostals” were the most successful implants. The preachers listening to Voice of America and reading Western economic journals were suddenly in control.

Saudi-style Wahhabi Western allies shamelessly sidelined almost all socialist brands of local Islam, and the most militant and intolerant varieties of otherwise progressive and socialist Muslim religion began their destructive, totalitarian and intellectually ruinous activities.

The West, its media and academia, started unashamedly backing all fascist cultural dogmas: including regressive religious and family structures.

Not only that – they kept spreading the most grotesque lies: about “how tolerant Indonesia became”, and “how moderate” it is. “Third largest democracy” was how the Western demagogues have constantly described the country without one single pro-people or anti-imperialist political party. Indonesia is called “the largest economy of Southeast Asia”, a totally misleading definition, considering that Indonesia has more than three times more people than any other nation in the region.

And could it really be called an “economy”, something that produces hardly anything and lives predominately from the unbridled plunder of its natural resources, as well as from the resources of colonised Papua, where Indonesia has been committing horrific and silent genocide?

The local media has continuously quoted all this propaganda and disinformation, quite logically, considering that corrupt business interests own virtually all of it.

After the regime murdered around 40 per cent of teachers in Java alone, the education

system fell into the hands of totally ignorant but zealous morons: themselves collaborators with the West. These people were nothing more than cynical and money hungry business men and business women.

Dirt everywhere, horrendous immoral social contrasts on every corner... Range Rovers and Gucci boutiques right next to open sewers and children showing clear signs of malnutrition. There are hardly any parks in Indonesia, no waste treatment plants, and hardly any sidewalks or public playgrounds for children. There are no public educational television channels, while public libraries are almost non-existent – a shocking contrast to Malaysia. Water is, of course, privatised.

The nation stopped reading. One bookstore after another is closing down. It only translates a few hundred titles each year, most of them commercial. The translations are of horrendous quality.

Nothing, almost nothing, works. There are constant blackouts, and the roads are uneven and narrow. Even trans-Java “highways” are two-lane, narrow potholed tracks, of a worse quality than some village roads in Thailand or Malaysia. Traffic jams are all over, in the cities and countryside, as even poor people have to rely on private vehicles and infrastructure that has already collapsed many years ago.

Internet and phone signals are so bad that when I was editing my films, I was forced to fly to Singapore in order to upload some larger files.

Old ferries are sinking, aeroplanes are falling from the sky, and trains keep derailling.

No forests are left intact. The entire nation is logged out, mined out – ruined!

And the West is dancing on that Indonesian carcass, celebrating! Yes, celebrating! It loves, it adores this “democratic”, “tolerant” nation which is in ruins.

I saw so many fires and ashes, and so much intolerance, stupidity and hate! I saw what replaced a once great and proud nation governed by a progressive Muslim President who trusted and relied upon the great and democratic Communist Party of Indonesia.

I saw clearly what capitalism, what imperialism, ignorance and fascist indoctrination can do!

Abridged
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makeshift school, her eldest daughter Noor’s education ended when they fled Syria.

The children talk about violence all the time. After seeing their home demolished, Noor’s hair fell out. Although grateful for the support of other women in the camp, Sanaa says that she is tired and wants to travel to give the children a better future.

“Can you help us?” she asks. “We have nothing to go back to.”

Another woman describes her existence in Syria as “like heaven” and says she had a “life to be envied” there”. Forced to leave everything behind, they all agree that life in the camp is humiliating.

“If we go back we will be living in tents. We have nothing to go back to. However, it is more comforting to go back to your own country instead of living as a foreigner,” one of the women adds.

New Internationalist



Russian intervention exposes coalition lies

Felicity Arbuthnot

How speedily the lies of the “international community” in general and those of the US and UK in particular about the Syrian situation are unravelling since the participation of Russia.

Take UK Prime Minister David Cameron. On September 24 last year he addressed the United Nations, committing British aircraft to targeting IS/ISIL/ISIS in Iraq adding unequivocally that there would be no similar action in Syria and absolutely no “boots on the ground.”

Referring to Iraq he added that the West should not be frozen by “past mistakes.” If Iraq is a “mistake” Heaven alone knows what a catastrophe would look like.

Cameron of course was being economical with the truth. In 2013 Parliament voted not to be involved in Syria, making Cameron the first Prime Minister in 200 years to lose a Parliamentary war vote. It would anyway have been another illegal action, since they had not been invited by the Syrian President or government and had no UN mandate. However, in July this year it transpired that pilots of Britain’s Air Force have been “embedded” with US and Canadian Air Squadrons and been involved in flying: “intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike missions ...” according to the Ministry of Defence.

On September 7 Cameron also announced that a British drone strike in Syria had killed two UK citizens fighting with ISIS. What an irony, the UK has enjoined wiping out entire nations having accused their leaders of “killing their own people”, terrorists or not, now Cameron kills his “own people” in what Michael Clarke, Director General of London’s hawkish Royal United Services Institute has called a “targeted assassination”.

Those killed were: “... targeted in an area that the UK does not currently regard, legally, as an operational theatre of war for UK forces”, Clarke commented, adding: “The government insisted that, unlike CIA drones, they were never used for targeted assassinations in territories where we were not militarily engaged.” Another government lie pinned.

As for “no boots on the ground”, another seemingly whopping untruth. As Stephen Lendman has written: “On August 2 *The Sunday Express* revealed: ‘SAS dress as ISIS fighters

in undercover war on jihadis’ expanding that:

“More than 120 members belonging to the elite regiment are currently in the war-torn country’ covertly ‘dressed in black and flying ISIS flags’ engaged in what is called Operation Shader – attacking Syrian targets on the pretext of combating ISIS.”

A mirror image of Basra, Iraq, exactly ten years ago, September 2005, when British Special Forces, dressed in Arab clothing, were arrested by Iraqi police in an explosive laden car. Had the car detonated, “Iraqi insurgents” would, of course, have been blamed. The British military demolished the police station in order to free the would-be bombers. How many were not caught and “insurgency” for which Iraqis were blamed, killed, tortured, was actually “made in Britain” and the US, as Syria now?

In August it was reported that SAS troops in Syria “dressed in US uniforms, joined US special forces” in the assassination of alleged ISIS financier Abu Sayyaf and the kidnapping of his wife (*Independent*, August 10). It appears the British government only ever acts with, or at US behest, whilst sidelining its own Parliament.

Moreover: “Around 800 Royal Marines and 4,000 US counterparts were on standby to intervene on short notice if ordered”, wrote Lendman.

No wonder the Russians are being castigated for targeting the wrong kind of terrorists. In addition to being non-discriminatory and regarding a terrorist as simply that, they might also take the black flag waving SAS soldiers in fancy dress as terrorists. A “tangled web”, indeed.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is anything but selective about the head chopping, culture erasing monsters besieging Syria – CIA trained or not – stating last week: “If it looks like a terrorist, if it acts like a terrorist, if it walks like a terrorist, if it fights like a terrorist, it’s a terrorist, right?”

In a response which stunningly illuminated Washington’s selective stance towards terrorism US Secretary of State, John Kerry stated: “What is important is Russia has to not be engaged in any activities against anybody but ISIL”, he said: “That’s clear. We have made that very clear.” Breathtaking, it is for the Syrian government to specify the parameters.

The US and UK of course are both bombing and supporting insurgents



Cameron is following in the war-mongering footprints of Tony Blair, seen here in Iraq.

entirely illegally in Syria, having no UN mandate and no request from the country’s governing body. Did Kerry even blush when Lavrov remarked – over the unspoken questions as to whether Russia would extend its air coverage to terrorist groups in Iraq – that they had no such plans: “We are polite people, we don’t come if not invited”, he said.

Vladimir Putin had said: “We have ... an invitation and we intend to fight against terrorist organisations and them only”, possibly referring to allegations that the US has been targeting Syrian government sites and military personnel.

Russia’s diplomatic envoys were reasonably polite to the US too. Before embarking on air strikes, according to US State Department spokesman John Kirby: “A Russian official in Baghdad this morning informed US Embassy personnel that Russian military aircraft would begin flying anti-ISIL missions today over Syria.

“He further requested that US aircraft avoid Syrian airspace during these missions.” Russia had, in effect given the US one hour’s notice to leave Syria. The US speedily responded with a report of Russian attacks causing civilian casualties. Sadly it transpired that at the time of the reported attacks, Russian planes had not yet left the ground. By October 2, it seems panic had set in amongst the “US led coalition”

which: “... released a joint statement calling on Moscow to immediately cease attacks on the Syrian opposition and to focus on fighting ISIS.” (*UK Guardian* October 2, 2015.)

The statement was issued by France, Turkey, the United States, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Britain.

However the US cat had already escaped from the Pentagon bag and made its way to no less than the *Wall Street Journal* which, the previous day had a header: “Russian Air-strike in Syria Targeted CIA-Backed Rebels, US Officials Say.

“One area hit was location primarily held by rebels receiving funding, arms, training from CIA and allies.” Oooops.

Michel Chossudovsky has succinctly unravelled the unholy morass of the various groups coupling his piece with the *WSJ* story: “Affiliated to Al-Qaeda, Al Nusra is a US sponsored ‘jihadist’ terrorist organisation which has been responsible for countless atrocities. Since 2012, AL-Qaeda and Al Nusra – both supported by US intelligence – have been working hand in glove in various terrorist undertakings within Syria.

“In recent developments, the Syrian government has identified its own priority areas for the Russian counter-terrorism air campaign, which consists essentially in targeting Al Nusra. Al Nusra is described

as the terrorist arm of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

“While Washington has categorised Al Nusra as a terrorist organisation (early 2012), it nonetheless provides support to both Al Nusra and its so-called ‘moderate rebels’ in the form of weapons, training, logistical support, recruitment, etc. This support is channelled by America’s Persian Gulf allies, including Qatar and Saudi Arabia as well as through Turkey and Israel.

“Ironically, ‘the UN Security Council in a May 2012 decision’, namely the ISIL ...”

At the Russian intervention, US Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power took to Twitter, stating: “We call on Russia to immediately cease attacks on Syrian opposition and civilians.” Such action, she warned: “will only fuel more extremism and radicalisation.” Chutzpah outdone – until 2003 and the US-UK blitzkrieg there were no US sponsored organ eating, dismembering lunatics. Syria and Iraq were two of the most secular countries in the region.

Syria, from lies, to heartbreak, to cultural destruction has become a microcosm of the demented, ridiculous “war on terror”. The lies and subterfuge to justify the horror have become more desperate but only the most obtuse can avoid noticing that terrorists R US.

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More Palestinians killed as Obama backs Israel

Charlette Silver

Five more Palestinians were killed in one day last week as Israel's crackdown against anti-occupation protests continued. Israeli forces shot dead three Palestinians at protests in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, while one Palestinian was summarily executed after he attacked an Israeli soldier with a knife.

Shawiq Jabr Obeid, 37, who was critically injured by Israeli fire in Gaza last week, succumbed to his wounds. The latest deaths came as US President Barack Obama offered unqualified support for Israel's "right to maintain basic law and order and protect its citizens from knife attacks and violence on the streets."

Obama's comments at a press conference appear to step back from the timid criticisms offered by the State Department earlier this week over Israel's use of "excessive force" against Palestinians.

Israel has arrested hundreds of Palestinians and occupied East Jerusalem remains on lockdown.

Thirty-seven Palestinians have been killed since October 1 to October 16, and hundreds more have been seriously injured by Israeli forces firing live ammunition at demonstrators.

Seven Israelis have died in recent attacks.

Israel's apparent policy of extrajudicial executions of Palestinians allegedly involved in knife attacks continues to receive criticism from international human rights organisations.

One victim of the policy encouraging Israelis to shoot first and ask questions later may have been Israa Abed. The 30-year-old Palestinian citizen of Israel was shot six times and severely injured by police at a bus station in Afula, a city in the north of present-day Israel, a week ago.

Abed was a medical researcher at an Israeli hospital and the daughter of a Muslim leader in the Galilee known for his interfaith reconciliation efforts, according to *Times of Israel*.

While officials claimed she was brandishing a knife, video shows she posed no threat: she was shot while

her hands were raised. Now, according to *Times of Israel*, police say they believe she had mental health issues to help explain why Abed would carry a knife but not perpetrate any attack on her bus ride from Nazareth to Afula.

Police drew their guns on Abed after a security guard at the bus terminal allegedly saw her pull a knife out of her purse. Given the threat Palestinians face amid escalating anti-Arab incitement, some may carry knives for self-defence, a possibility not apparently considered by Israeli police.

Yahya Abdulqadir Farahat, 24, was shot in the head while protesting in northern Gaza near the Erez crossing on Friday, Ma'an News Agency reported.

And in central Gaza, Mahmoud Hatim Hmeid, 22, was shot dead while protesting near Shujaiya, an eastern neighbourhood of Gaza City.

More than 100 Palestinians were injured as demonstrations continued along the besieged territory's boundary with Israel.

The Electronic Intifada ✪



Palestinians hold posters depicting US President Barack Obama in an Israeli military uniform.

Thousands of steel jobs to go

Peter Lazenby

BRITAIN: The future of Britain's struggling steel industry was dealt another blow last week as India-owned Tata Steel warned of thousands more potential job losses in the north and Scotland.

The news came as steel unions, company owners and politicians met in the former steel town of Rotherham in Yorkshire to discuss the industry's plight. Tata warned that 1,200 jobs are under threat in Scunthorpe, in Lincolnshire, and in Scotland.

The news follows the closure of ISS steelworks in Teesside with the loss of 3,000 jobs, and more in ancillary industries.

Unions and employers are demanding government support for the industry — but the government maintained its steadfast refusal, with one Tory minister drawing widespread criticism for saying

that the Teesside closure was just a "distraction" from the government's other plans for a so-called "Northern Powerhouse."

The "distraction" comment came from Tory MP James Wharton, who is government "Minister for the Northern Powerhouse."

Labour shadow secretary for business, innovation and skills Angela Eagle said: "These comments from the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse are truly shocking. They reveal the government's true attitude to steelmaking on Teesside."

At the Rotherham steel summit, unions and employers spoke with one voice on the need for government intervention and support.

Steel industry union Community general secretary Roy Rickhuss said: "The government scandalously missed opportunities to intervene and protect the industrial assets in Redcar, which has left a community

devastated and taxpayers picking up a bill of hundreds of millions to clean the site.

"This must not be allowed to happen again and what has happened in Redcar should focus everyone's minds."

He said the current tragedy in the industry was largely due to the government's lack of a strategy.

Unite assistant general secretary Tony Burke said: "The steel industry is at crisis point. Unless the government pursues an industrial strategy with a 'steel heart' then soundbites like Northern Powerhouse and March of the Makers will be nothing more than empty rhetoric for communities who rely on skilled jobs in steel and manufacturing."

Trade body UK Steel director Gareth Stace said: "We need action that will have a material positive impact on the sector as we cannot afford for this to be a talking shop." *Morning Star* ✪

Politics in the Pub Perth

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Organised by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) – WA Branch For more information: perth@cpa.org.au or 0419 812 872



Region Briefs

According to a statement issued by the Organisation Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the party plans to recruit more members in trade unions, social groups and NGOs, establishing more party groups in these organisations to "guide them in the right political direction". The statement asks organisations that have more than three party members to form a local party group, "mobilising and educating workers to stand against negative influences and illegal activities".

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) Embassy in Vietnam celebrated the 70th founding anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). The DPRK ambassador, Kim Myong Gil, reviewed the country's achievements in national development and defence in the past 70 years. He also praised the ongoing traditional ties between the two parties, two countries and two peoples. Deputy Head of the Vietnamese Party Central Committee's Commission for External Relations, Tran Dac Loi, congratulated the WPK and the achievements that the country had made under WPK leadership, and he said Vietnam would continue fostering a bilateral relationship for prosperity, peace, cooperation and development.

The Chinese Ambassador to Vietnam, Hong Xiaoyong, led a delegation to the Dao My Cemetery in Vietnam's northern province of Bac Giang, paying respect to Chinese martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the Vietnamese war against US invasion in the 1960s. Bac Giang Provincial People's Committee Chairman, students, reporters and local residents also joined the delegation and visited the cemetery. One local cemetery staff member said that he hoped the traditional relationship between the two countries would last forever, continuing to strengthen solidarity and cooperation in all areas including people to people exchanges. The chairman said that the Chinese martyrs buried in Vietnam sacrificed their lives for the country's independence, and they had been taken good care of as their Vietnamese comrades. The cemetery buried 217 Chinese martyrs who died in 1967 and 1968, and there are 40 more similar cemeteries across 22 Vietnamese provinces. Three-hundred and twenty thousand Chinese troops joined the Vietnamese army, fighting against US invasion in the 1960s upon the request of Vietnam.

According to the Japanese Defence Ministry, 13,041 workers in the private sector were forced into paramilitary training at the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (SDF) in 2014. NTT Corporation, the largest telecommunications company in Japan, for example, compelled 18 workers into paramilitary training at SDF camps in 2014. The company claimed the training increases a sense of discipline and friendship, benefiting both the workers and the company. But in fact, the company had agreements with the government, supporting the new war bills and militarism. Many big private companies in Japan did the same as NTT in exchange for government protection.

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Don't penalise workers

The people who are on penalty rates are no fat cat high flyers who take more than their fair share.

These are average hard working Australians who give up their precious after hours and weekend time from friends and family to earn a little more.

Don't penalise people who are just trying to make an honest living. It's always easy to pick on the weakest target.

Martin Mostaard

Where is the duty of care?

I have been in the health industry for over 40 years now. Penalty rates have always been a major part of mine and every nurse's wage.

We are not paid a high hourly rate and therefore without penalty rates our wage would not allow us to live day to day. This is no exaggeration!

Regarding weekend penalties, Yes! We know before we start that nursing is a 7 day 24 hour roster, and that is fine, when you are compensated for working weekends.

The government needs to remember that we are humans! We need to feed, house and clothe ourselves and our families. This cannot be done without weekend penalties.

If penalty rates are going to be taken away, then our hourly wage rate needs to substantially increase if not doubled.

Nurses are university educated! Smart and clever. Yet continue to be treated as second class!

Staff shortages are already a big issue and they will only become worse if penalty rates are not maintained. We have a duty of care to the community we look after when they present to the hospital *but* where is the governments duty and care for us? The bottom line seems more important than people!

Christine Thompson

Penalty rates tests a fair go

Australians have always been about the fair go, that's why people are paid a little bit extra for missing out on weekends watching their kids or themselves playing sports, missing out on family functions, missing out on special events including Christmas, New Year and Easter. When the rest of

you are relaxing with friends and family, we are looking after you.

Looking after their own pockets, I note that business and government departments pushing for scrapping weekend penalty rates do not themselves work weekends, but profit from others who do!

Scrap the weekend penalty rates; well, I for one will no longer work on weekends!

Kate Keys

Meta surveillance

On October 13 the government drastically increased their surveillance of you, me and every other Australian.

The data retention scheme, which the Abbott government passed after Labor capitulated and voted with them, mandates that your internet and mobile phone provider store information about your activities for two years.

The numbers you call, the time you sent an email, where you were when you SMSed. Every time.

Then Prime Minister Tony Abbott suggested in February of this year that the total cost would be around \$400 million dollars.

I'm not sure which is worse to be honest; that both the government and the opposition in a democracy like ours believe they should have the power to spy on their citizens, or that the chief architect of the scheme – our new Prime Minister – can go on TV and describe a number of ways to get around the legislation he just created at a cost of nearly half a billion dollars.

There should not be one rule for Malcolm Turnbull and one rule for everyone else.

In less than 15 minutes, you can activate a number of easy-to-use tools to defeat the Turnbull/Shorten data retention scheme.

Scott Ludlam
The Greens

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

The rule of the rich

It is a feature of modern life much remarked upon, that "democratic elections" now cost a small (or more commonly not so small) fortune. So much so that candidates are increasingly drawn from the ranks of the very rich, who, once in office, are naturally keen to advance their own class interests.

From the US to Australia to Ukraine, millionaires (or even billionaires) are making a play for the job of being the country's leader, with the backing of big business, especially military-industrial complexes, media corporations and the top financial institutions.

Australia's new Prime Minister, put in the top job by a party room coup not an election, we should remember, is a filthy-rich merchant banker. His harbour-side mansion in Sydney is so posh that he has no qualms about deciding to use it in preference to the official PM's residence Kirribilli House.

There was a time when working people regarded such people with well deserved suspicion if not outright hostility. Their lives were so much more comfortable than ours. The "quality" saw themselves as not only privileged (which they certainly were) but *deservedly* so. They saw nothing wrong in living so much better than the majority of people, especially in living better than the people who toiled in their mines, mills and factories. "Common workers" were, after all, just that: common.

The people, however, never accepted this rule by the rich and privileged without a struggle: the "jacques revolts" in France, the peasant revolts in Bohemia, Britain and Germany, the runaway serfs who established an independent Cossack community in the south of Russia and

told the Tsar what he could do with his threats. In the culmination of these revolts, the French Revolution, they chopped heads off the rich and privileged, but the working class was not leading that revolution and inevitably it failed.

Over the next hundred years, the landed gentry were joined by the owners of capital in exploiting the labour of the workers, while the best thinkers among the working class and their allies developed the theory and tactics of revolutionary change and a plan for a different type of society. Ultimately, while inter-imperialist rivalry for more riches led the world into the first World War, the people of Russia, Hungary and Germany said "enough is enough!"

The working people in these countries proclaimed an end to the rule of the rich. Imperialism, however, fought back, crushing the revolutions in Hungary and Germany, and trying to throttle it in Russia. There, they failed, defeated by the Russian workers and peasants' determination and by the international solidarity of workers everywhere.

Ever since, the propagandists of capitalism have worked assiduously to convince the poor and oppressed of the world that socialism does not work, that it is evil (akin to Nazism, in fact), and that capitalism is benign and friendly, the best of all possible systems. That so many of the super-rich can now be put forward as potential leaders of the masses shows just how successful this brainwashing has been.

During one of the PR exercises that in the USA pass for meaningful debates among the candidates for President, on September 18, Republican candidates were asked to name a significant woman to place on the country's

\$10 bill. Hardly a deep and meaningful question (in fact, the only female candidate, Carly Fiorina, dismissed the whole idea as "an empty gesture"). Nevertheless, it produced some interesting results.

Two of the candidates nominated their mothers (aw shucks) while billionaire Donald Trump nominated his daughter (ew!). Jeb Bush, brother of that other big business mouthpiece named Bush, put forward a reactionary he truly admired, Margaret Thatcher, no less. "A strong leader is what we need in the White House, and she certainly was a strong leader that restored the United Kingdom to greatness." Really Jeb? The bosom-buddy of Pinochet? You must have a peculiar definition of greatness – and of "strong leadership".

There were two sensible suggestions: Wisconsin governor Scott Walker put forward the founder of the American Red Cross, Clara Barton, while Senator Rand Paul opted for reformer and feminist Susan B Anthony.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, the USA's crocodile tears over the plight of the people of war-ravaged Syria were revealed yet again when the US government sought to have Greece deny Russian aircraft the use of Greek airspace to fly humanitarian aid to Syria. When Athens proved reluctant, Washington got NATO hopeful Bulgaria to comply. The war that has raged in Syria since 2011 is instigated and funded by the US and its client Saudi Arabia, with these two primarily providing the arms used by the forces trying to overthrow Syria's anti-imperialist President Bashar al-Assad, especially the Islamist militant groups Nusra Front and Islamic State.



Displaying a different mindset, on September 3, armed troops from 11 countries joined the Chinese Army to march in the country's Victory Day parade.

Displaying a different mindset, on September 3, armed troops from 11 countries – Belarus, Cuba, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia and Tajikistan – joined the Chinese Army to march in the country's Victory Day parade.

China's anti-fascist war began on September 18, 1931, when the Japanese army invaded north-eastern China. China's war-time casualties totalled more than 35 million, accounting for one third of the world total. American writer Wesley Marvin Bagby in his book, *The Eagle-Dragon Alliance*, quoted US President Franklin D Roosevelt: "If China goes under, how many divisions of Japanese troops do you think will be freed?"

And former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who was at the Parade along with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, said "The successful resistance put up by the Chinese people at great sacrifice was a very important contribution to ending the Second World War."

In China's near neighbour Japan on the other hand, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose grandfather ran the country's war economy and who speaks today for Japan's wealthy, is trying to revive Japanese militarism. He calls the country's post-war peaceful constitution "anachronistic" and wants to change it. A rally in early September outside the Japanese parliament drew 120,000 people to oppose Abe's pro-war changes.

Only big business profits from war. For ordinary people it means death, destruction and sacrifice. ☘

Film review by Bill Meyer

Our Brand is Crisis



Sandra Bullock as "Calamity" Jane Bodine.

TORONTO: The Bolivian election of 2002 is the focus of two films with the same title. The 2005 documentary *Our Brand is Crisis*, was directed by Rachel Boynton, her first feature, and the newer narrative film with the same title stars Sandra Bullock and Billy Bob Thornton, produced by George Clooney (who was considered for the star role), directed by David Gordon Green and premiered at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival.

Both films show the extent to which America influences and meddles in foreign elections. Greenberg Carville Shrum (GCS), an international political consulting firm based in Washington, DC, was hired by former president and now unpopular candidate, Gonzalo (Goni) Sánchez de Lozada, to boost his chances of winning a new term after severe anti-privatisation protests racked the country in 2000. The neo-liberal endorses globalisation and privatising as a solution to saving the worst economy in Latin America.

Boynton had unlimited privileged access to people in power, as she did in her extraordinary 2013 doc, *Big Men*, which exposed a Texas oil company's exploitation of the Nigerian Niger Delta. In *Our Brand is Crisis* she followed closely the inner workings of James Carville, Tad Devine and the GCS consultants as they brought about a miracle by getting Lozada elected against the will of the people.

We watch the lizard-like Carville, whom we all remember as Clinton's election consultant, and later

Mandela's, work his magic by creating a "crisis" scenario, urging voters to defend the status quo candidate, and reject candidates like socialist Evo Morales and his Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party who want to expel the IMF and nationalise the oil industry.

Several days before Bolivians went to the voting booths, US ambassador Manuel Rocha warned the Bolivian electorate that if they voted for Morales the US would cut off foreign aid and close its markets to the country. Morales nonetheless received nearly 21 percent of the vote, putting him only a couple of points behind Sánchez de Lozada.

The film seemingly takes no position but simply exposes the many under-handed ways that consultants use deceptive commercials and scare tactics to get their candidate elected. Because of Boynton's privileged access, she presented her rough cut to the bigwigs at GCS who proclaimed it "fair," but apparently didn't like their depiction in the film. The ensuing protests and violence that followed the election, which GCS takes no credit for, eventually forced the wealthy Lozada to resign. Many feel that he was isolated from the public and never should have been elected in the first place, except for the excessive campaigning by GCS.

The new version of *Our Brand is Crisis* is a star vehicle for Sandra Bullock, who assumes the Carville role with a vengeance, and although it uses the Bolivian election and the GCS involvement as the basis for the story, makes some major plot alterations.

Here it's the story of a powerful businesswoman, "Calamity" Jane Bodine, who eventually got burnt out after losing four times in campaigns against her arch-rival, Pat Candy, a bald headed Carville look-alike. She is drawn out of retirement when she finds out he's representing her opponent in Bolivia. The film is a battle of campaign consultants. Many of the lines and actions are taken from the 2005 doc, but for those who know the realities of Bolivia, it's confusing when she assumes the Carville character, yet is competing with another strategist who resemble Carville.

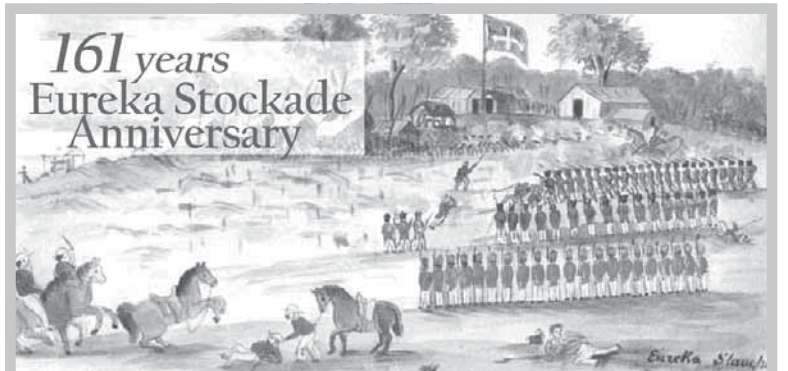
There are many comical scenes in the entertaining film, and Bullock stretches her image by playing a highly shady character who cares little about how she looks and how her actions are perceived.

This film shines a light on political strategists whose faulty definition of democracy is "opening countries for American exploitation and globalisation," even if they sincerely believe this will solve the country's problems.

Ironically, their arch-nemesis, Evo Morales, was eventually elected in 2005 by a landslide, the first Indigenous person to be elected president in Bolivian history. He immediately nationalised the oil industry and legalised coca, and has won the majority support of his people ever since.

This caused a consultant at GCS to reason that apparently Bolivians didn't want democracy because they rejected globalisation. As if they are synonymous.

People's World ✪



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POLITICS IN THE PUB

October 22

HIDING CHILD ABUSE IN DETENTION CENTRES: THE HEALTH, MORAL AND LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS

David Issacs, Prof, Paediatrician, Health Assessment for Refugee Kids, Westmead Children's Hospital;

Ebony Birchall, Lawyer in the Medical Law Practice Group of Slater and Gordon, Sydney;

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SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SCHOOLS: IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL INSTITUTION SUSTAINABLE? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GONSKI PLANS UNDER ABBOTT & SHORTEN?

Raewyn Connell, Prof, Education Department, University of Sydney; **Maurie Mulheron**, President NSW Teachers Federation;

November 5

THE COMMONWEALTH HOMELESSNESS BILL – PROGRESS, RESISTANCE AND RHETORIC: WHY NEITHER SIDE OF POLITICS UNDERSTANDS THE URGENCY

Katherine McKernan, CEO Homelessness NSW; **Mary Perkins**, Shelter NSW;

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Tenpa Dugdak, Free Tibet Movement; **Karen Collier**, CPACS;

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Palestinian youth show how to resist



Nadia Naser-Najjab

The Palestinian generation that came of age in the first intifada during the late 1980s has frequently decried its successors. Many times we have accused younger generations of being apolitical and politically uneducated. I have lost count of the number of times that I have heard the accusation that younger Palestinians are self-absorbed; that they do not understand the meaning of collective resistance and sacrifice.

Upon listening to these complaints, you would be forgiven for believing that the very idea of popular resistance did not exist until my generation came along. But recent events in Palestine have shown us just how wrong and unfair these criticisms were – there was nothing unique about the generation that came of age in the first intifada.

As philosopher Frantz Fanon taught, popular struggle originates within the conditions of colonialism itself, within the various ways in which it impinges upon, and steadily degrades, the conditions of everyday existence.

Admittedly, some things never change. The response of the Israeli government to recent events clearly derives from an unwavering and unyielding colonial mindset. Thus, by virtue of the fact that the natives cannot have political demands, the Israeli colonial administrators have deemed the current “disturbances” to be a “law and order” issue.

Order and tranquillity will be restored once the native population are engaged with blunt force – this, after all, is the only language “they” can be expected to understand. For Palestinians, these words have a wearying familiarity – the likes of Benjamin Netanyahu and Moshe Yaalon are part of a colonial lineage which can be traced back to Yitzhak Rabin and beyond.

During the first intifada, Rabin, then defence minister, called upon the Israeli army to “break the bones” of Palestinian protesters; now the current administrators of colonial power effectively call for the same.

Challenges

But some things do undeniably change. Aside from anything else, the challenges which confront young Palestinians are considerably more imposing than the ones faced

by my generation. During the first intifada, our main opponent was the Israeli army.

The colonial settlement of the West Bank was still limited and the settlers’ involvement in the first intifada was equally as limited. Today, many new settlements are constructed in close proximity to Palestinian population centres.

Additionally, in the first intifada, Palestinian activists enjoyed relative freedom of movement and were able to travel through cities, villages and refugee camps to organise sit-ins, vigils, strikes and seminars. Arab and international opinion was also more supportive. Israeli solidarity groups lent their assistance to our struggle and worked to change public opinion in their society.

Changes in all of these respects have introduced new dimensions to the question of Palestinian struggle.

The younger generation has found innovative ways of responding to this changed reality. It has identified new ways of creating political and social consciousness – “Resist to exist” was one particularly striking slogan which I saw posted on Facebook the other day.

Images of incarceration, brutalisation and dehumanisation now circulate through social models, creating new solidarities and vernaculars of struggle. The two elements imply each other: as the political realities adjust, so too do the forms of resistance.

However, the challenges which confront young Palestinians are more than just geographical; they are also political. Limited Palestinian political autonomy, along with the creation of a self-governing political entity – the Palestinian Authority – has become one of the ways in which the occupation has strengthened and consolidated its hold over territory and population.

Upon reading and watching interviews with younger Palestinians, I am frequently struck by how far their political mindset diverges from that of my own generation.

We looked to phrase our struggle within an internationally accepted political vernacular, and to align ourselves with broader political dynamics; we looked to the Unified National Leadership to coordinate the day-to-day tactics and strategies of resistance during the first intifada, and to the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the symbolic embodiment of the Palestinian national struggle.

In vivid and direct contrast, one member of the younger vanguard recently informed the Ma’an News Agency that “we don’t care about leaders. We will be the leaders,” while another interviewee abruptly referred to the Palestinian Authority as “traitors.”

The ongoing developments within the West Bank correspond to a pronounced crisis of Palestinian political leadership. The current antagonism appears to be directed as much towards one of the central mechanisms of colonial power – a discredited Palestinian political leadership that has effectively perpetuated a subcontracting of the occupation – as to its originating point.

Strategic management

In a number of key respects, any distinction between the two is, of course, redundant. In addition to its formidable array of instruments of coercion and force, the occupation is therefore secured by more subtle forms of political influence which co-opt and strategically manage the agency of local partners – the PA being a case in point.

From this perspective, the formal peace process can be retrospectively analysed as a reconfiguration of relations of domination and control: “compromise” has entrenched occupation; “self-governance” has sanctified inefficiency and corruption; “peace” has become equated with moral and political degradation.

All of this perhaps goes some way towards explaining why I have not heard the younger generation issue one single appeal to the Palestinian political leadership.

It is time for those of us who engaged in the first intifada to admit our essential irrelevance. Not only because circumstances have changed, but also because the strategies and approaches which we advocated have since been so thoroughly discredited.

For all our efforts, sacrifices and limited advances, we ultimately contributed to a political settlement which reinforced and consolidated the conditions and relations of occupation. We lost sight of the essential fact that, as Fanon once observed, “colonialism never gives anything away for nothing.”

Far from teaching the new generation of Palestinians “lessons” about our struggle, it is my generation who should be seeking to learn.

The Electronic Intifada ✪

“I’m still alive...”

Yes
I’m still alive
I can still breathe
I’m still beside other people
I can still be happy for the happiness of others
I can still laugh
And even I can make others laugh
I’m still alive
I can still mutiny
I can still revolt against those whose hands are washed in the blood of toilers.
Against those that have banquets because of the labour of the oppressed
I can still protest oppression by anyone anywhere

And yet, I can defend the oppressed
I can still say that I do not want Islamic rule
I can still say that I am demanding a secular government
I still love socialism, I can strive for the bright future
I can still shout: Long live freedom! Long live equality!
I can still fight
against any tyranny
looting and destruction

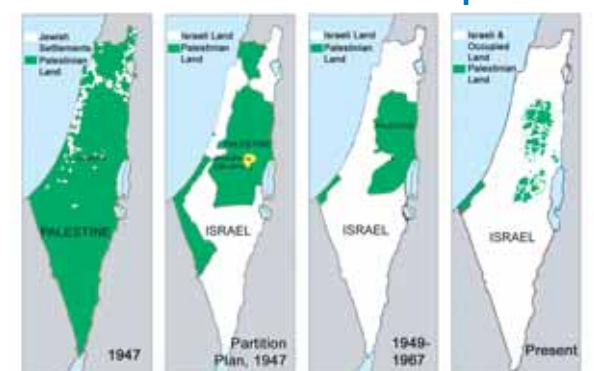
I can still ask for happiness.
For the people of my homeland
and for oppressed people the world over
Yes! I’m still alive but ...
If I couldn’t laugh ... if I couldn’t cry ... if I couldn’t protest ...
If I couldn’t revolt
Such a life would be worthless!

The first hours of the morning, October 1, 2015

Setareh.Tehran (Ashraf Alikhani) Iran-Tehran

Setareh was a political prisoner in Iran who was put under torture

Palestinian loss of land 1947 to present



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